

## Inuit principals and the changing context of bilingual education in Nunavut

## Des Inuit directrices d'écoles dans le contexte changeant de l'éducation bilingue au Nunavut

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### Résumé de l'article

Malgré les politiques de valorisation de la langue inuit et de l'*Inuit qaujimaqatugangit* (IQ) dans tous les secteurs de la société du Nunavut depuis 1999, et bien que des lois imposant la langue inuit et l'IQ à tous les niveaux de scolarité aient été promulguées en 2008, de nombreuses écoles s'efforcent encore de surmonter des pratiques et des mentalités colonialistes qui ont entravé l'efficacité de l'enseignement destiné aux jeunes Inuit. Dans cet article, nous documentons les perceptions des élèves, des enseignants, des directrices d'écoles, des parents et des membres de la communauté en ce qui concerne la transformation de la scolarité initiée par deux Inuit, respectivement directrice et co-directrice de deux écoles secondaires au Nunavut. Leurs commentaires montrent que le fait d'avoir une directrice inuk a donné aux élèves de meilleures chances d'apprendre et de pratiquer la langue inuit et l'IQ par le biais d'un programme approfondi et localisé et une exposition accrue à la langue et à la façon d'être inuit. Les parents ont été mobilisés pour soutenir leurs enfants et défendre leurs intérêts, y compris en devenant membres d'une Administration scolaire de district, dès qu'ils ont pu discuter facilement et efficacement avec la directrice d'école, et ont vu leur savoir, leur culture et leur langue valorisés et pratiqués dans le système scolaire. Nous soutenons qu'une direction ancrée dans la communauté a permis d'établir les nouvelles fondations d'un véritable enseignement bilingue. Les résultats montrent l'importance du rôle des directeurs d'école dans la concrétisation des objectifs définis par la Loi sur l'Éducation, les mandats gouvernementaux et la législation sur la langue.

# Inuit principals and the changing context of bilingual education in Nunavut

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## RÉSUMÉ

Des Inuit directrices d'écoles dans le contexte changeant de l'éducation bilingue au Nunavut

Malgré les politiques de valorisation de la langue inuit et de l'*Inuit qaujimaqatugangit* (IQ) dans tous les secteurs de la société du Nunavut depuis 1999, et bien que des lois imposant la langue inuit et l'IQ à tous les niveaux de scolarité aient été promulguées en 2008, de nombreuses écoles s'efforcent encore de surmonter des pratiques et des mentalités colonialistes qui ont entravé l'efficacité de l'enseignement destiné aux jeunes Inuit. Dans cet article, nous documentons les perceptions des élèves, des enseignants, des directrices d'écoles, des parents et des membres de la communauté en ce qui concerne la transformation de la scolarité initiée par deux Inuit, respectivement directrice et co-directrice de deux écoles secondaires au Nunavut. Leurs commentaires montrent que le fait d'avoir une directrice inuk a donné aux élèves de meilleures chances d'apprendre et de pratiquer la langue inuit et l'IQ par le biais d'un programme approfondi et localisé et une exposition accrue à la langue et à la façon d'être inuit. Les parents ont été mobilisés pour soutenir leurs enfants et défendre leurs intérêts, y compris en devenant membres d'une Administration scolaire de district, dès qu'ils ont pu discuter facilement et efficacement avec la directrice d'école, et ont vu leur savoir, leur culture et leur langue valorisés et pratiqués dans le système scolaire. Nous soutenons qu'une direction ancrée dans la communauté a permis d'établir les nouvelles fondations d'un

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véritable enseignement bilingue. Les résultats montrent l'importance du rôle des directeurs d'école dans la concrétisation des objectifs définis par la Loi sur l'Éducation, les mandats gouvernementaux et la législation sur la langue.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Inuit principals and the changing context of bilingual education in Nunavut**

Although positive policies and laws promote the Inuit language and *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ) in all sectors of Nunavut society, including at all levels of Inuit schooling, many Nunavut schools are still struggling to overturn colonizing practices and mindsets that have hindered effective education of Inuit youth. In this article, we document perceptions of students, teachers, principals, parents, and community members related to school transformation under the leadership of an Inuk principal and an Inuk co-principal in two Nunavut high schools. These oral accounts show that having an Inuit principal enhanced students' opportunities to learn and practise the Inuit language and IQ through enhanced, localized programming and increased exposure to Inuit ways of speaking and being. Parents were mobilized and equipped to support and advocate for their children, including joining local District Education Authorities, when they were able to communicate easily and effectively with the principal, and saw their knowledge, culture, and language valued and practised in the school system. We argue that the strong, community-anchored leadership modelled in these two schools transformed the context for effective intercultural, bilingual education. Results point to the importance of leadership by school principals in actualizing the goals set out in Nunavut's Education Act (2008), governmental mandates, and language laws.

## **Introduction**

Despite half a century of efforts by Indigenous movements across Canada, and around the world, to secure Indigenous control of Indigenous education (National Indian Brotherhood 1972; United Nations 2008), and despite recognition of such rights (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2010), Indigenous languages, knowledges, and cultures remain marginalized in many schools purportedly serving Indigenous learners, especially at the high school level. Bilingual education is part of the promise to provide more relevant and effective education, being defined as schooling that “uses and values more than one language [...] recognizes and values [...] different lived experiences and cultural worldviews, and [...] tak[es] as its starting point the knowledge students bring to the classroom [...] moving toward their participation as full and indispensable actors in society” (Hornberger 2009: 198). Favourable policies and laws, such as Nunavut's Education Act (2008), its Inuit Language Protection Act (2008)<sup>1</sup>, and the National Strategy on Inuit Education (National Committee on Inuit Education 2011), are helpful in building local control and overturning colonizing practices. However, policy alone is not enough.

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1. In keeping with terminology in Nunavut's language legislation, we use “the Inuit language” as an inclusive term for all Inuit dialects. “Inuktitut” is used when referring to this dialect specifically.

Research into the implementation of bilingual education policies in international Indigenous contexts shows that theoretically sound policies may be thwarted by persistent homogenizing ideologies enacted by school teachers and administrators (Aylward 2009; Berger 2009; Hornberger 2009; Valdiviezo and Nieto 2015). As Fullan (2007) has argued, school principals are agents and gatekeepers of educational change, influencing which policy changes are embraced within the school and which are ignored. Indigenous principals (and others culturally and linguistically anchored in the community) are particularly well-suited to lead school transformations that reflect the community's values, language(s), and knowledge, thus improving learning effectiveness (Bell 2004; Lewthwaite 2007; Fulford 2007; Walton et al. 2016).

This article documents efforts in two Nunavut high schools to implement laws and policies supporting Inuit language and *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ), which includes “[Inuit] values, world-view, language, social organization, knowledge, life skills, perceptions, and expectations” (Louis Tapardjuk, in Nunavut Social Development Council 1998: 2).<sup>2</sup> We argue that a fundamental force driving more effective bilingual and intercultural education is the local Inuit principal and co-principal's leadership together with the ability and willingness to make IQ the foundation of school practices.

## Situating the research

### Research objectives

Our research was conducted in 2010, 11 years after the creation of Nunavut, and two years after the passage of Nunavut's Education Act and two language acts. The objective was to document innovative methods, practices, and strategies that were based on *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit* and which engaged Inuit students, parents, and communities with potential positive impacts on educational outcomes in high school (grades 10-12). For this article, we have focused on outcomes that showed Inuit leadership furthering the goal of decolonized, bilingual Inuit education.

### Research team

The project was collaborative, participatory, and community-based. It was funded by ArcticNet, and conducted in partnership with the Nunavut Department of Education and the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities (CNDEA).<sup>3</sup> The community-based research leaders were Inuit, holding graduate

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2. Although *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit* is sometimes roughly translated as ‘Inuit traditional knowledge,’ Tapardjuk's definition emphasizes that IQ includes ways of being, knowing, and doing that remain highly relevant in all aspects of Inuit society today.

3. District Education Authorities (DEAs) represent Nunavut parents and guardians and were created as community-based links between Nunavut's Department of Education and local schools.

degrees in education. Jukeepa Hainnu and Lena Metuq are long-serving Inuit educational leaders, working respectively as the principal of Quluaq School, Clyde River, and the co-principal of Attagoyuk School, Pangnirtung, at the time of the research. They contributed as research leaders and as participants. Cathy Lee, co-principal of Attagoyuk School at the time, also contributed to data collection in Pangnirtung. In addition, two Inuit M.Ed. graduates, Saa Pitsiulak and Elisapee Flaherty, who worked for the Department of Education, acted as project researchers. The Chair of the CNDEA, Jeeteeta Merkosak, accompanied the researchers and facilitated dialogue with the District Education Authority (DEA) in Pangnirtung. DEA Chairs Jayco Jaypoody and Sakiasie Sowdluapik were research collaborators as well as participants. James Arreak acted as the research facilitator in both communities. Fiona Walton, the university-based principal investigator, was a long-term Northern educator. She worked in the Nunavut educational system from 1982 to 1999. Mark Sandiford, a documentary filmmaker with many years of Northern experience, video-recorded all the interviews, and this work led to the creation of a documentary film (Walton et al. 2011).

## Research ethics

We followed Indigenous research methodologies of generating knowledge through relationship and dialogue (Smith 1999). Our work is grounded in long-established, trusting relationships and mutual respect (Wilson 2008). Participants' real names are used with their permission. We use real names to acknowledge the source of insights shared and to increase the credibility and accountability of the oral accounts, in accordance with Indigenous ways of knowing (ibid.). Individuals were also able to contribute anonymously. Through our reflexive research process, and our partnerships with schools, government, and community organizations, we sought to conduct research that will contribute to Inuit-driven goals of transformed bilingual education (Amaujaq National Centre for Inuit Education 2013; National Committee on Inuit Education 2011).

## Research sites

Our research took place in Pangnirtung and Clyde River, two communities in the Baffin region of Nunavut, with populations of 1425 and 934 respectively. Over 92% of residents in each community identify Inuktitut as their sole mother tongue, with 88% in Pangnirtung and 96% in Clyde River identifying Inuktitut as the language they use most often at home. English is also widely known (70% and 80% of residents, respectively), although only 26% and 16% in Pangnirtung and Clyde River say that they use English at home (Statistics Canada 2012). In both communities, the traditional land-based economy continues to be important alongside the newer cash economy. Both communities have (limited) local post-secondary options, including Nunavut Arctic College programs offered sporadically at the community learning centres. Clyde River was selected as the primary site for Nunavut's cultural school, *Piqqusilirivvik*, opened in 2011 and

now administered by Nunavut Arctic College. The vision for bilingual education in these communities is drawn from the Nunavut Education Act (2008), the aim being to ensure equitable access to education in the language(s) students best understand (Berger 2006; Patrick and Shearwood 1999).

## Participants and data collection

Our research focused on Attagoyuk Ilisavik High School in Pangnirtung and the high school grades in Quluuq School in Clyde River. We employed purposeful strategic sampling (Creswell 2003) by interviewing principals (2), Inuit staff (7) and students (11), as well as parents (3), DEA chairs (2), DEA board members (7), and elders (6) who were familiar with education at the high school level. Participants in each category were split roughly between each community (15 each), for a total of 30 participants.

Inuit staff, students, DEA board members, and elders were interviewed in small groups (seven group interviews, three to six participants each). The principals, DEA chairs, and parents, as well as one or two elders and students in each community were also interviewed individually (11 individual interviews). We thus conducted a total of 18 semi-directed interviews.

The interviewers, at arm's length from the schools, were long-term respected Inuit educators with connections to the communities. Through a series of questions and prompts, they led dynamic conversations in Inuktitut about participants' experiences, perceptions, observations, and hopes relating to the incorporation of IQ in the community's high school. Interviews lasted, on average, 30 minutes, but were as long as 75 minutes or as short as 10 minutes, depending on how much the participant(s) shared.

The learning environments (in school and on the land) were also captured by the accompanying documentary filmmaker and made public in the resulting documentary. While such footage was not analyzed for the research, it allowed for observations that substantiated interviewees' comments. The combination of data collection techniques, as well as the diversity of research participants, allowed for a range of perspectives to be analyzed. Comments were deemed particularly salient if repeated by different categories of participants and confirmed in direct observations.

## Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed and then translated into English by Saa Pitsiulak and Elisapee Flaherty. Qualitative analysis used an adapted grounded theory methodology (Glaser and Strauss 1999[1967]). Using this phenomenological, data-driven approach, researchers immersed themselves in participants' oral accounts to identify key themes and patterns that reflected participants' own understandings of what influenced local, decolonizing education. We then systematically coded for these themes across all interviews using NVivo software. Themes identified included overturning unjust power relations, bringing back

and valorizing Inuit language and knowledges (IQ), modelling the knowledges, skills, and attitudes desired in graduates through teaching and practice, and engaging students, parents, and communities by reflecting the community's linguistic and cultural identities within school systems. Implicit and explicit statements indicated that Inuit leadership in the schools provided a foundation that led to success in these thematic areas. In accordance with the grounded theory approach, we reviewed the published literature following data analysis to consider how the lived experiences of our participants are reflected in other Inuit and Indigenous research.

### **Overturing unjust power relations**

Research participants placed their current experiences within the context of trauma from decades of assimilationist schooling that had sought to erase Inuit cultural and linguistic identities (Arnaquq 2008; McGregor 2010). Their comments reflected the need to address, and redress, oppression embedded in the educational system in order to move forward with new, more empowering intercultural models of schooling (cf. Battiste 1999). When we interviewed teachers, parents, and grandparents who had attended residential schools, they talked about their reluctance to engage in a system that had hurt them personally and which they still saw as assimilative. As Bobby, the Inuktitut language teacher at Quluaq School in Clyde River observed:

Yes [...] some children are discouraged to stay in school because it's giving up your children to the school. They feel that they are learning non-Inuit culture. That's the only way to learn now. [...] Learning institutions, I mean Inuit way of life so drastically changed overnight and it was overwhelming. [...] I think this resentment is very deep till this day. There are very few still that follow the system and encourage their children to do better. There are also parents out there that don't even want their children to go to school. Especially parents who had been abused by their teachers hold great resentment. They were forced to eat soap and beaten up with a stick. Some of them don't want their children to ever enter the school system to learn. As soon as they realize their child is unhappy in school, they assume the worst and feel that they are being abused and refuse to send them back to school.

Bobby's explanation points to the pain that blocks parents and grandparents from supporting their children through schooling. Parents are reluctant to send their children to schools that sometimes perpetuate cognitive imperialism by teaching English language and culture as if it were the only valuable knowledge (Aylward 2007; Battiste 2011).

Bobby went on to speak about how Inuit principals break down the hierarchy where non-Inuit were set above Inuit (Berger 2009) and how they fit into the broader movement for local control:

I think it is very beneficial to have an Inuk principal. It's a big thing for us, especially since Inuit were intimidated by Qallunaat<sup>4</sup> thinking they know everything and that they were the authority overall. I really feel that this has alleviated that way of thinking for the positive. Our principal is [...] Inuk and very competent. [...] Even the way we look at hierarchy has changed. The Qallunaat are no longer held at a higher level, just because of the colour of their skin. As Inuit, we are not a lower sub-species nor do we lack competence.

Indigenous principals (Agbo 2002) and powerful Indigenous teacher groups (Lipka 1998) are helping to overturn the damaging power relations in Indigenous education that underlie hegemonic ideologies. This shift in power is laying a more appropriate and solid intercultural foundation for educating Indigenous students.

Having Inuit principals brings local control to the locus of change (Fullan 2007). These educational leaders, with established intercultural skills (through their local upbringing and formal education) are positioned to spread intercultural awareness and support (as recommended, e.g., by Frawley and Fasoli 2012). Although the majority of teachers remain non-Inuit in most Nunavut schools, Inuit principals can lead in equipping and motivating their staff to recognize the hegemony of English and to incorporate IQ as the foundation for learning. Lena, the first Inuk co-principal at Attagoyuk High School in Pangnirtung, explained:

What I've seen most improved since I got here, is that the Inuit culture and language is at the same level as English subjects. [...] When we hire Qallunaat teachers, we try to prepare them [for] why we do things in a certain way in our culture. It has helped them tremendously and they come to realize they are here in Pangnirtung [...] the English culture and language isn't the only way you can learn to look at life. They're here with Inuit on their own land. If they try to force students to learn just from their narrow point of view or opinions, it's not going to work, like it never had, so we have to incorporate Inuit values and principles in order to be productive in this school.

Lena supported teachers in the process of “[r]epresenting the [...] Indigenous community knowledges and decentering European cultural knowledges, histories, and experiences” (Aylward 2007: 2). In these ways, she used her influence as principal to overturn unintentional but enduring attitudes about the superiority of English language and culture in high school education, thus creating a more favourable context for bilingual education.

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4. Qallunaat (sing. Qallunaaq) is an Inuktitut word, borrowed into local English, that refers to non-Inuit.



## Teaching, modelling, and valorizing Inuit language, knowledges, skills, and values

Indigenous bilingual education is driven by desires to pass on Indigenous languages, knowledges, and skills that were threatened by assimilationist policies, as well as to engage students by making schooling relevant. Luciusie, a DEA board member from Clyde River, explained how Quluaq School is now a place of linguistic and cultural revival, where traditional skills are documented, learned, and practised:

It's been a slow process but Inuktitut has been preserved and just recently [they] started teaching in Inuktitut curriculum. I think it [the school] had assimilated us and changed our ways but now that it's back into our literacy learning, we have preserved it. I feel the students don't feel as lost and that our Inuit traditional knowledge is being preserved and that they have now revived the wanting to learn, as evidenced by today's students' attendance levels. [...] Perhaps if we didn't have our elders to support us, we would have lost a lot of information that they hold within them, [that] has been recorded as history in the school, which includes every single thing that was used for survival.

Students and staff reflected that having an Inuk principal increased culturally relevant content. Luciusie's comment above, and others from Inuit elders and students, suggest that as Inuit knowledge is passed on, and its value recognized through practice, students are engaging more with the schools and wanting to learn.

Inuit principals, because they know, practise, and value IQ, are able to create a context where it is modelled and taught. Shawn, a Grade 12 student from Clyde River, shared this perspective:

When we had a Qallunaaq principal, I mean, we never learned IQ in class, there were no hunting or sewing programs. Now that we have an Inuk principal, it seemed to have improved things. [...] We learn our Inuit traditional values and principles we would otherwise have had not a chance to learn. Perhaps the contributing factor is that we now have Inuit leaders who have interest in teaching Inuit practices.

Inuit leaders were transforming schools because they were committed to IQ and connected to the people, places, and activities through which IQ is most effectively modelled and taught.

The local Inuit principals and teachers could use their community connections and understandings to mobilize community resources for IQ land trips (hunting, fishing, camping) and in-school programs (sewing, skin and meat preparation, building *qamutiit* [traditional sleds], and toolmaking). Gina, a Grade

12 student from Clyde River, explained how IQ learning programs opened doors for deep, meaningful learning:

[We are taught] to survive following Inuit ways [...] so that we can know our culture better, because we learn too much of the European ways at school. In that case the material they offer does not allow us to work in our language equally. However when older Inuit are hired to teach us, then they understand our traditions more. [...] When we're taken out hunting, work at the wood shop, or sewing, they also give us advice as these happen. They teach us traditional words. We learn many things we were not aware of, about how words were used long ago, and how it is today, or how things used to be. That is what they teach us.

As the Inuit teachers and students worked together, especially on culturally relevant learning, students were exposed to rich forms of Inuktitut language use, which expanded their own repertoire. They received valued advice and were inspired by stories of Inuit resilience in the times when these practices, which are still highly relevant, were the only way to survive.

Inuit principals recognized, from their insider perspective, learning processes and outcomes that might not have been visible to someone who neither spoke Inuktitut nor was immersed in Inuit culture. Jukeepa, for example, confirmed the breadth of understanding gained through IQ learning:

The hunting and sewing programs seem small but the content learning is huge. There is no prescribed curriculum for *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit*. Teaching using advice is not a visible element. For example, 'You will not live by just getting [everything] [...]. You will not be that way.' And if they give just up during sewing, 'You will seek solutions and not [give up] [...] you will pursue further.' These are learning tools because life is a struggle. They are portrayed through IQ, and not by writing. We try to show this in our school and annually.

Jayco Jaypoody, Chair of Clyde River's DEA, emphasized how these learning opportunities impact student well-being:

The youth are so much happier in their lives when we start taking them out on the land during the school year. [...] It's like, they are more motivated when they get used to going out hunting. You can see the changes in them! [...] It's evident that some of them become healthier. They start to get curious about what they are being taught and ask questions and how they should try something in another way. It's these foundations of life they are learning they otherwise don't learn in the classroom; [they] learn skills they will be able to use themselves in life. It's obvious in their growth.

The process, as well as the content, of IQ was transforming student learning. Jayco's comments, and those by others, show how teaching IQ and through IQ

passed on essential skills and dispositions to students for survival and healthy living. It inspired cultural pride, curiosity, and a desire to learn more. It empowered students to recognize they could make positive choices in their lives, and they appeared happier.

Teachers, parents, and students further explained that, in addition to having more IQ programs, having an Inuk principal supported Inuit content across the curriculum. A Clyde River Inuit staff member explained how the planning process encouraged English-program teachers to incorporate IQ, congruent with what was happening in classrooms taught by Inuit:

During the school year, even if they are teaching English subjects, they are still part of our three-year planning process, it's our guide to excellence: 'While we're trying to cover a specific subject, please include [it] in the English program this month.' Traditionally everything had been imported from down South and all the material were southern-based ideas. Since they have been included to make sure what they are teaching includes Inuit foundations, *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit*, cultural values and principles are our main focus. It is obvious that it has its benefits.

An Inuk principal is able to provide invaluable leadership and support in this area to non-Inuit teachers who might be well-intentioned but who felt ill-equipped to incorporate IQ (Berger 2007; Berger and Epp 2007). This contribution is key to mobilizing non-Inuit teachers to support IQ, as well as encouraging Inuit staff.

Co-principal Lena confirmed that she was working toward the goal of incorporating IQ into every subject and classroom, for the benefit of the students. For her, and for other leaders in Inuit schools, IQ goes far beyond content learning and permeates the values and atmosphere of the school: "[W]e are trying to make sure they learn IQ in every subject area they are learning. Our values and principles relating to social standards [...]. That is the only way the children will feel these, is if we put them to use by practically learning them." Even as Inuit principals were imbuing programs throughout their schools with Inuit language and culture, at a deeper level they were transforming the school climate and creating informal learning opportunities through their everyday practice. Inuit leadership in these two schools was thus creating a transformative context in which Inuit language, knowledge, and related skills were valued and a wide range of opportunities provided for learning IQ in a holistic sense.

### **Transformative practice through *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit***

The principal sets the school climate (Fullan 2007), and can support the local language becoming the norm for communication within the school (Menken and García 2010; Shohamy 2006). Here, conversations between the principal and other Inuit staff modelled adult, professional forms of Inuktitut for the students. Speaking to the principal in Inuktitut gave students more opportunities for meaningful

communication in Inuktitut, with a wider range of goals and content, thereby giving them the type of practice they needed for acquiring adult-level competencies.

Students experienced greater well-being in school because they could use their full communicative repertoire with the principal. Luciusie explained: “Our school has an Inuk principal. When our students are having problems with school they have to talk to the principal. [...] Ever since we hired an Inuk principal, there have been a lot of changes for the better. [...] If we were to hire a Qallunaaq principal, like it was mentioned earlier, we require an interpreter to interpret into English what we’re trying to convey.”

Shawn’s mother, Rosie, also said, “What I’ve noticed is that having an Inuk principal seems to have improved for the better. They are able to communicate in their own language and [are] viewed as a fellow Inuk. [...] It’s very positive.” Jayco confirmed, “Having an Inuk principal who supervises in Inuktitut language has improved morale amongst the staff, students, and the parents all around. It has even opened the line of communications.” These open lines of communication are in stark contrast to the documented barriers between English-speaking teachers and Inuktitut-mother-tongue students (Berger 2009). Because they could understand what was going on in the school, and felt like what was happening aligned with their values, Inuit students’ and staff members’ experiences in school were transformed. They felt more positive, and were more engaged.

This enhanced mutual understanding extended beyond use of a common language to use of shared norms of communication (Hymes 1964). Prior research in Inuit and other Indigenous settings has documented misunderstandings and false assumptions about student intelligence and engagement when teachers interpret behaviour through lenses that reflect Western norms of communication (Corson 1992; Crago et al. 1997; Douglas 1998). While non-Inuit teachers can (and must) be trained to recognize and respond to Inuit communicational styles (e.g., Kawagley 1993), the Inuit principals’ styles naturally corresponded to local norms. As one example, Jukeepa contrasted the authoritarian way Qallunaat principals come across (probably due to a combination of cultural expectations and Qallunaat communication styles, which seem aggressive in Inuit culture [Kawagley 1993]) with the ways Inuit communicate a welcoming attitude:

As a young person I saw students a bit scared in school, so I empathized with them and thought of how I could help in any way. I wanted to be part of initiating change for the better, for the students. [...] Sometimes the Qallunaat way portrays as authoritative, and very successful. With this it causes one to be inferior, and difficulty arises. [...] As administrators, we should not be condescending. We must be approachable.

Students feel welcomed when they are spoken to in their mother tongue and can follow familiar norms. Jukeepa pointed out, “Once students feel welcomed they succeed more.”

The Inuit principals, students, and parents benefited from a common language and shared norms of communication in another area: discipline and counselling. Jayco explained:

We see it being reinforced more, since our principal is Inuk. It's understandable because she knows more Inuktitut. When she talks with students, she follows the traditional Inuit way, and with parents too. This style of talking with people is different from the European method [...]. If the principal is having problems with my child in school, the principal can explain the issue to the parent in their own language, and that is the most beneficial of it all. I feel my peers who are unilingual would probably say the same, that when you have an Inuk principal, they can see the same smooth communication process. When you have to talk to a Qallunaaq principal, you have to end up looking for an interpreter and lose the momentum. [...] Also, the parents can come to the school to express how they feel. They can volunteer advice, where and how we can improve things, and that can contribute to the school.

Students and parents alike felt welcomed and encouraged. Communication improved between parents, students, and the principal, helping everyone to take ownership of the learning and disciplinary processes. The bilingual principals laid a foundation for intercultural, bilingual education by establishing Inuit ways as the primary norm throughout the school, not only when taught as a subject but also when practised as a way of being.

## **Bilingual education in, for, and with the community**

One of the reasons why bilingual education is implemented is to increase congruence between home and school. It can thus decrease students' alienation from school. In addition, our research shows how Inuit-language practices emanating from an Inuk principal also decreased parental alienation. Bilingual Inuit leadership increased parental involvement, thereby further contributing to student success (cf. National Committee on Inuit Education 2011).

A Pangnirtung DEA board member reflected on how alienating schools had felt when the language, the content, and most of the teachers were foreign to parents and grandparents: "Imagine what goes through the minds of our elders who are unilingual and can't speak English and have no idea what subject their children are learning and what their homework entails. [...] Imagine how frustrating and demeaning it must be not being able to help them with these foreign subjects!" Jeeteeta added that parents felt welcomed in schools where IQ was practised: "It is good to see that [Inuit learning styles are] being incorporated now, and that some Inuit adults do not feel incompetent as much as before. They feel less scared/intimidated about going into schools."

Similarly, Jayco pointed out that parents were more willing to communicate with school leadership when they could do so in their mother tongue, especially without going through an interpreter:

Having an Inuk principal has given an Inuk parent someone they can talk to. They can talk with them in their own mother tongue, what they have been feeling. [...] Yes, we have seen a huge impact since we got an Inuk principal here. [...] Local parents are more comfortable in coming here because they know her and will understand her. The ability to understand and speak to each other is the main factor for improvement in our community. [...] The parents have become vocal. Because they know they will be understood, more people come here now. Although they wanted to come in the past, when we had Qallunaat administrators, they required translation. That created a barrier.

This bilingual context thus extended beyond student interaction; it mobilized parents to take an active voice and role in the school.

The Inuit principals prioritized the Inuit value of welcoming people, in part by informing parents about school events orally and in writing, in Inuktitut. Jukeepa explained the importance of humble and empathetic school leadership that values Inuit parents and the perspectives they bring:

[...] I want [the school] to be welcoming for people, everyone, no matter where one comes from. [...] Yes, we try to be exposed to the community. We invite everyone to events. [...] We share news through the local radio, letters and by inviting them here. The invitation is open. I mention this regularly that if anyone has something to share with us, or concerns to come see me.

According to comments from students, parents, DEA board members, and community members, the principals' messages were getting out to the community more effectively with an Inuk principal in place. Parents felt more comfortable, came in more often, and believed this improved communication made a difference in students' outcomes.

Parents could play a more active role because they were receiving effective communication about what was happening in school and were being advised on how they could support their children. Daniel, an Inuk staff member from Clyde River explained, "When the parents have adequate support they tend to encourage their children more [...] or if they have homework they have to do at home, the parents are more willing to help their children." Shawn's stepfather confirmed the importance of support from the school, which he felt improved with Inuit principals and school-parent communication in Inuktitut:

It has benefited us to have Inuit leaders. [...] It seems more students are attending school because of that. [...] They have made some public

announcements through the radio, encouraging parents and everyone else to help the students to go back to school and try again. So, as parents, we have been given advice in our own language and it seems that ever since then, we have had better response from our children.

As the principal is often the voice and face that welcomes parents to the school and addresses concerns, having an Inuk in this role went far in mobilizing parents to engage with their children's education. Parental leadership at home encouraged students to attend and learn, in turn contributing to student success.

Finally, by having a principal who shared a common language, common cultural practices, and common cultural values with community members, a cycle of greater community leadership was launched. DEA board members asserted that having an Inuk principal encouraged them to join the board. As Arnaq, a Clyde River DEA board member, explained:

The information we are getting is not all in English anymore. We're now being informed in Inuktitut. Before I became a Board member, we had a Qallunaaq principal. I kept being asked to be on the Board but we kept hearing that they couldn't understand the documents they were receiving that were written in English, like the information they used to take home. [...] Also, meeting in your own language and speaking to the board without having to pause [...] makes it so much easier and faster.

With a principal who practised Inuit culture and who led board discussions and work in Inuktitut, it became more pleasant, welcoming, and efficient for people to serve on the board. DEA board members (and parents), by better understanding their mandate and communications from the school, were in turn better equipped to advocate for and support Inuit leadership and IQ in schools.

In addition to the benefits of a mobilized community, the principal modelled the use of Inuit language and values in a professional setting as she engaged with parents, community members, and the DEA board in Inuktitut. Just as the Inuk principal's leadership brought more pervasive use of Inuktitut into school hallways and into administrative offices, the principal's role of meeting and reaching out to the DEA in Inuktitut enabled parents and community members to use Inuktitut when speaking about school or speaking at school-related events. Community dialogue about school in Inuktitut implicitly challenged the dominance of English as the language for everything related to school. To the extent that students observed these adult-to-adult professional interactions, they had further contexts for learning through rich exposure and were more motivated to see Inuktitut as a useful language in new domains such as formal schooling.



## Flying when you have both wings

While we have emphasized the value of Inuit leadership, and pointed to practices that increase Inuit language and culture in education, these factors are only part of the picture. Lena described the value of effective collaboration that balances English and Inuit languages and knowledges, and the gap when either perspective is missing:

There are two principals, Cathy and I, fortunately she speaks Inuktitut and we work well together [...]. We have different gifts to offer our students. I bring IQ knowledge from the view of our elders and Cathy brings, with her, her English traditional knowledge and culture. Together, Cathy and I, with our individual talents, balance each other out by using what we both know. [...] If Cathy is not at work [...] it seems I have one wing missing. It's an Inuktitut metaphor that when someone or something vital is missing we say we are flying with one wing [*isaqqaqtuq*] [...].

Nils Helander (quoted in Inuit Circumpolar Council 2015), a Saami-language scholar and activist, referred also to languages as the bilingual person's two wings. Just as the Inuit principals have learned language, knowledge, skills, and practices associated with Qallunaat ways, through life experience and schooling within and outside Nunavut, so too can non-Inuit principals and teachers, anchored in the Northern community, grow in knowledge and practice of Inuit ways of being (e.g., Arnaquq 2008; Tompkins 1998). Bilingualism is seen as a pair of wings that enables schools, their students, graduates, teachers, and leaders to soar.

Also, while we have extolled the benefits of Inuit leadership in schools, we acknowledge that such leadership is not easy for Inuit to move into and comes at a personal cost to the principals (Frawley and Fasoli 2012; Kauki 2015). Naullaq Arnaquq (2008: 150) outlined some of the challenges Inuit principals faced, as she observed them during her role as Supervisor of Schools:

Inuit teachers did not want to take on school leadership positions in their communities because of the demands of the job, relationships, community dynamics, lack of training and or education, and lack of opportunity for individuals to learn and be mentored and often because of family responsibilities. [...] One needed to [...] be [...] better than a Southerner [...] because you were going to be unsupported or criticized just because you were an Inuk by all people alike, other Inuit as well as the Qallunaat. This type of position required a mental paradigm shift because it was and always had been held by Southerners [...]. Inuit cultural attitudes and customs, as well as lack of opportunities to develop leadership skills, were also probably at the root of a lack of confidence that Inuit teachers had which prevented them taking on leadership positions.



Culturally and linguistically sensitive principals make it much easier to implement bilingual education, yet changes are needed to support them and other Inuit educational leaders in their roles. Policy and programming can help by equipping and supporting Indigenous educational leaders at all stages of their careers, training, and practice (Frawley and Fasoli 2012; O'Donoghue 1998; O'Donoghue et al. 2005; Tompkins et al. 2009) and by prioritizing training and orientation for non-Inuit teachers and principals to step outside the hegemony of English and embrace and enact the language and culture of the community in which they are teaching (Battiste 2011; Berger 2009; Shohamy 2014).

## **Bilingual education reflects and transforms society**

Favourable policies are not enough. To transform high schools that have long been English-language domains into bilingual learning environments, educational leadership must be motivated and equipped to support *Inuit qaujimagatuqangit*. There is ample evidence that teachers and school administrators are creators of *de facto* language policies that may or may not align with formal policy (Menken and García 2010; Wyman 2009) and that they shape the climate in Indigenous schools (Fulford 2007; Fullan 2007; Lewthwaite 2007; Tompkins 1998). Our research provides two cases of Inuit principals who transformed their high schools and thus created a strong foundation for bilingual education. Anchored in the community, and in Inuit language and culture, they brought Inuit ways of being to the leadership position at the schools. They helped other teachers to respect and incorporate IQ. Through their positive attitudes and active practice of IQ, they created learning environments rich in motivation and opportunities for students to advance. They nourished a bilingual environment within the school and reached out in Inuktitut to parents and community members, who became more motivated and better able to be involved because the school authorities were welcoming them and providing access in their mother tongue. These Inuit principals are strong agents and symbols of a true hierarchical shift that has transformed the context of bilingual education by making the Inuit language more visible and practised in all aspects of high school activities.

Bilingual education equips students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed and valued in Nunavut today, both for thriving in the natural environment and for working as bilingual Inuit, thus imbuing all sectors of society with Inuit ways of being (Lévesque 2014). In many ways, teaching and practising IQ in the schools is about congruence and overcoming the alienating dichotomy that “there’s life, and then there’s school” documented by Douglas (1998). Bilingual education engages students and parents because it creates a learning context in which their identities, knowledges, skills, and values are reflected, esteemed, and practised (Barnhardt 2008). Incorporating Inuit languages and ways of being contributes to teaching the whole person, thus grounding students in identity and culture and supporting their overall well-being and engagement (Cummins

1996, 2000; Tagalik 2010; Taylor and Wright 2003). Incorporation of IQ is now mandated by Nunavut legislation and governmental and educational policy. This research shows that Inuit leadership in schools is helping to implement this legislative and policy mandate.

Bilingual education is laying a foundation for ongoing transformation in Inuit communities. When Inuktitut mother-tongue students are more exposed to teachers and to the principal speaking in the Inuit language, they are more protected against the subtractive bilingualism that they report when sheer hours of exposure to English leave them in an English-speaking mindset, and build a norm of using English among peers (Dorais and Sammons 2002; Tulloch 2004). Bilingual education equips students with professional Inuit-language competencies that they can use after graduation as they move into jobs in Nunavut. Enhancing Inuit language literacy helps to shape an emerging workforce that can increasingly use the official language in various capacities within the Government of Nunavut. In many ways, the working model of the Inuit principals in these high schools reflects the realization of a vision behind Nunavut: Inuit working and serving other Inuit, as Inuit, with Inuit language and ways embraced in all sectors of society, including schools. As students are educated with this powerful example, they and their parents are equipped and inspired to join the ongoing effort to establish and maintain Inuit ways at the heart of all areas of Inuit society.

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