

Integrating Culturally Relevant Learning in Nunavut  
High Schools:  
Student and educator perspectives from  
Pangnirtung, Nunavut, and Ottawa, Ontario

by

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## Abstract

The current emphasis in Nunavut high school education, and curriculum development, is to more effectively integrate culturally appropriate learning while also preparing students for their post-graduation goals. Working with students and educators in Pangnirtung, Nunavut and Ottawa, Ontario provided an opportunity to investigate how this goal is manifesting within and outside classroom activities, as well as how this supports student engagement, success, and pride in cultural identity. There are strong joint intentions and efforts being made by Inuit and Qallunaat (non-Inuit) educators alike to work together, involve community members, and bring *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ - Inuit ways of knowing, being and doing) principles into their school and/or classrooms. However, there are challenges with the practical implementation of an integrated learning approach, resulting in a disconnect between cultural and academic learning. Insights gained through this research aim to provide examples and recommendations to contribute towards ongoing efforts to make improvements for future generations of Inuit.

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## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

### **1.1 Education in Nunavut**

The history of education in Nunavut has seen several significant changes over the last 60 years. Missionaries travelled to the arctic in the 1900s and established religious, health and educational institutions, which was the beginning of drawing Inuit into a mainstream education system. In later years, the federal government took control of education and established the residential school system, across the arctic, which had considerable impact on Inuit students and their families by disrupting experiential learning and intergenerational knowledge transfer. Control of education was then transferred to the territorial government of the Northwest Territories in 1999, and ultimately to Nunavut with its establishment through Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA). The current education system in Nunavut was initially derived from the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) curricula. The GNWT adopted curricula from the Alberta education system in the 1950s, and also developed some resources more relevant to the realities of life in the North (McGregor 2010b). Today, the GN still uses much of the Alberta curricula and some of the curricula developed from the GNWT, recently there are also concerted efforts to create new curricula that is more relevant to the Inuit students which make up a large proportion of Nunavut classrooms.

This colonial legacy in northern Canada, and external control of Inuit education, has negatively impacted student engagement and success in the classroom and the development of strong cultural identities. These changes have resulted in many challenges for students in the classroom, including a lack of connection to Inuit heritage,

low levels of engagement in learning material, low graduation rates and a lack of preparation to engage in the wage economy (Berger 2009). Because educational institutions have the ability to empower students through the development of a positive cultural identity and preparation for post-graduation goals, efforts are being made to integrate culturally appropriate learning more effectively in the Nunavut education system. This is being done through a number of initiatives, including:

- **The Inuuqatigiit (people to people) curriculum document** - this curriculum was developed by the GNWT in 1996 to reflect Inuit Elders' perspectives around the goals for education;
- ***Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ - Inuit ways of knowing, being, and doing) principles*** - this includes the articulation of 8 guiding principles that provide the basis for the development of new curricula and teaching approaches and resources;
- The Nunavut Education Act, which outlines the importance of physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual well-being of students in Nunavut education; and,
- **Local cultural programs** - many Nunavut communities and schools have developed their own local educational initiatives, such as land camps, which connect students with their Inuit heritage and teach important survival skills.

These developments in Nunavut education have led to the advancement of more culturally appropriate education; however, much remains to be done and it is to this process that this thesis hopes to make a contribution.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

This research is driven by the following two key research questions:

1. How is culturally appropriate learning for Inuit youth in Nunavut being integrated into local school programs and curriculum development?
2. Are these efforts contributing to student engagement and success inside the classroom, and to the development of a more positive cultural identity?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

In undertaking qualitative research to address these research questions, the objectives are to:

- i. learn how local and curricular school programs incorporate culturally appropriate material;
- ii. understand how students and educators respond to, or play a role in facilitating, cultural activities in local and curricular education; and,
- iii. evaluate the effectiveness of a more integrated approach to cultural and academic learning from Inuit student, Inuit educator and Qallunaat (non-Inuit) educator perspectives.

### **1.4 Case Study Overview**

To address the research questions a case study approach was used to understand student and educator perspectives in a particular community in Nunavut. Pangnirtung was chosen because of previously established collaboration through a larger project, 'Nunavummi Nunarjuattigut Illinniarniq - Learning in Nunavut Through Our Earth' (Appendix 1). This was one of the International Polar Year (IPY 2007-2008) education outreach projects funded under the Canadian federal IPY program. It was led by Fraser Taylor at Carleton University, building on on-going research since 2003 by my supervisor, Gita Ljubicic, who was also one of the co-applicants for this project. Attagoyuk Ilisavik (High School) in Pangnirtung, was one of three teams involved in the project and Cathy Lee, a co-principal at the high school, was also a co-applicant on the overall project. Therefore, this established collaboration and community interest provided the principal rationale for selecting Attagoyuk Ilisavik in Pangnirtung, as a case study (Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1 View from the south: Pangnirtung Fjord and the community of Pangnirtung (Pangnirtung, May 2010, Carmelle Sullivan)

Pangnirtung has a total population of approximately 1,425 people, (StatsCan 2011) and 94% Inuit (StatsCan 2006). The community is located on the eastern part of Baffin Island, in Pangnirtung Fjord, just off of Cumberland Sound (Figure 1.2). The Turbot fishery is one of the larger economic activities in Pangnirtung, and the community is also home to the Uqqurmiut Centre for Arts & Crafts, known for their impressive weaving and print making. The main office for the Auyuittuq national park is nearby which attracts tourists to the area. Pangnirtung is also part of the decentralized territorial government, with several branches of the GN housed in the community, including a section of the Department of Education.

Attagoyuk Ilisavik in Pangnirtung, has a student population of approximately 240 youth from grades 6 to 12, with a staff of 28, including support staff (Hamlet of Pangnirtung 2012). I worked with students and educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik to gain diverse perspectives on the education system. Attagoyuk Ilisavik is an example of a school that is quite progressive in their efforts to improve the integration of cultural learning and academic learning, both within and outside the curriculum. Therefore, results from this project aim to develop recommendations that may be relevant for other

schools in the Baffin region, and perhaps across Nunavut. Although, other schools would still tailor the recommendations to their culture, language and environmental influences.

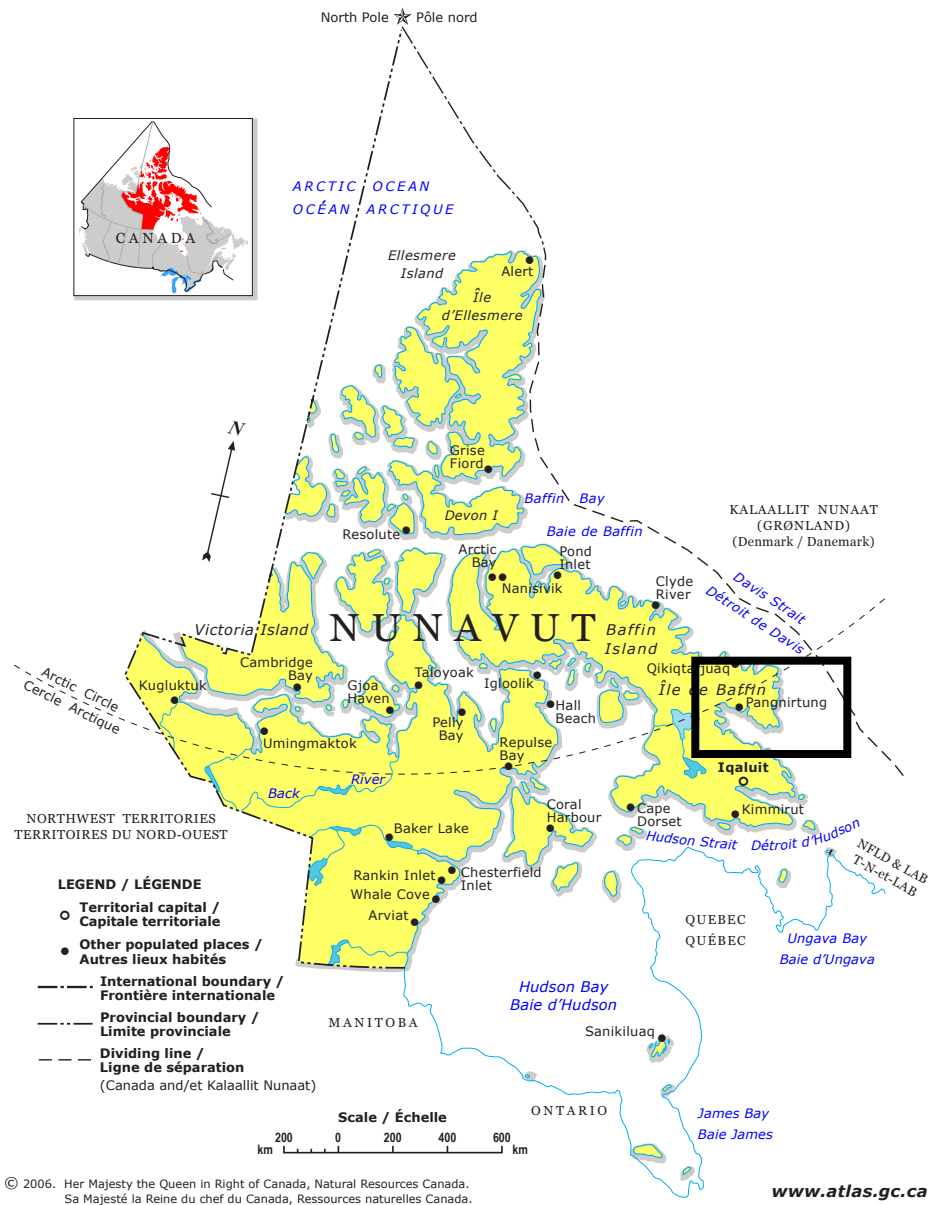


Figure 1.2 Map of Nunavut, highlighting the case study community of Pangnirtung (NRC 2006)

I also interviewed several students and one educator from the Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS) training program in Ottawa, Ontario. NS is a unique college program

designed to prepare Inuit youth from Nunavut for the educational, training, and career opportunities that were created through the NLCA and the new Government of Nunavut. The students at NS are graduates of high schools across Nunavut, which helps to expand the relevance beyond Pangnirtung. However, they have also had a year or two to reflect on their high school experiences as well as the opportunity to learn more about Nunavut and its history, especially in relation to the NLCA. So they provide added diversity to student views from Attagoyuk Ilisavik. This program also helps them to develop more pride in themselves and develop more concrete ideas of what they want their future to look like. Their perspectives complement those of the students and educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik to give a broader understanding of high school experiences and hopes for the direction of education in Nunavut.

### **1.5 Thesis Overview**

This introductory chapter has highlighted some initial research context, the research questions and objectives, as well as an overview of the Attagoyuk Ilisavik case study with complementary perspectives from NS. The background on education will be expanded in Chapter 2, the literature review.

Chapter 2 contains a literature review describing how Indigenous identity and values are shaped by mainstream educational experiences in both positive and negative manners. A history of education in Nunavut is provided, as well as a description of how increased cultural learning has been implemented through local school programs, new curriculum developments and government policies.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodology used in this study. The theoretical framework informing this research draws from critical pedagogies, which promote the analysis of the current dominant ideologies in education and argue that the identity and values of all students should be central to the educational process. More specifically, critical Indigenous pedagogies are used to emphasize the importance of Indigenous experiences. Place-based learning is also used as it recognizes the significance of environmental factors shaping the cultural learning in Nunavut communities. Then, research methods are described, including interviews, focus groups and participant observation. The empirical evidence for this study was gathered by a series of interviews and focus groups, the majority of which were held with students and educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik in Pangnirtung. In addition, interviews and focus groups were also held with students and one educator at Nunavut Sivuniksavut in Ottawa. Participant observation and experiential learning were also used to develop a deeper understanding of the context and circumstances around many of the activities and examples provided by participants in interviews and focus groups. Used in combination, these multiple methods help to achieve a greater understanding of participants' perspectives regarding the integration of cultural and academic learning in the current Nunavut education system, which informs the analysis as well as recommendations for future improvements.

Chapter 4 provides a summary of results from the interviews and focus groups, grouped according to student and educator perspectives for ease of presentation, including: i) Inuit students from Attagoyuk Ilisavik; ii) Inuit educators from Attagoyuk

Ilisavik; iii) Qallunaat educators from Attaogyuk Ilisavik; and, iv) participants from Nunavut Sivunkisavut. Results are then organized according to emergent themes, such as: perspectives regarding curriculum development; how cultural learning currently occurs in the high school; and perspectives regarding student engagement, success and identity development throughout high school experiences.

Chapter 5 provides an analysis and discussion of the results. Student and educator perspectives are jointly interpreted, along with links to the literature, to provide insights into opportunities and challenges with efforts to improve culturally appropriate learning. Increasing the integration of culturally appropriate learning is seen as important to promote student success and engagement while also fostering pride and confidence in cultural identity. There are strong joint intentions and efforts being made by Inuit and Qallunaat educators alike to work together, to involve community members, and to bring IQ principles into their school and/or classrooms. However, students and educators all agree that there are challenges with the practical implementation of an integrated learning approach, which results in a disconnect between cultural and academic learning, including: i) describing Inuit culture through the traditions associated with living on the land; ii) seeing Inuit and Qallunaat cultures as separated into “two worlds”; iii) differing approaches to education; iv) lack of funding and cultural resources; and, v) social issues.

Finally, Chapter 6 draws the major findings of this thesis together and suggests directions for the future. Recommendations are compiled based on specific suggestions from students and educators, as well as those which emerged through the process of this research.

There has already been tremendous progress in tailoring northern education to northern cultures and needs since the era of residential schools. All the drive and guiding principles are well in place to successfully integrate cultural and academic learning in Nunavut high schools; however, it remains an ongoing challenge to put the theory into practice within and outside the classroom. Insights gained through this research aim to provide some examples and recommendations to contribute to ongoing efforts to make improvements for future generations of Inuit.

## **Chapter 2 - Background**

Traditionally, education of Inuit youth was the responsibility of community members, based on the need to survive the climate of the Arctic. Today in Nunavut, Inuit students are currently being taught using similar ideologies to that of mainstream schools in Southern Canada. As a result, it is not Inuit knowledge, values, and identities which are being instilled in the students but that of what has been described as an “imposed hegemony” where the dominant ideology is continually reproduced (Denzin & Lincoln 2008a, Freire 1985). Hegemony can be understood as, “the capacity of one group to dominate and oppress another primarily through a combination of coercion and consent of those dominated, and also occasionally by force” (Rundstrom 2009: 314). Asante (2006: ix) explains:

As we engage the legacies of colonialism we are more certain today that the nonmaterial legacies are as important in our thinking as the material ones when we engage questions of resistance and recovery. *The colonizer did not only seize land, but also minds*<sup>1</sup>. If colonialism’s influence had been merely the control of land that would have required only one form of resistance, but when information is also colonized, it is essential that the resistance must interrogate issues related to education, information and intellectual transformations.

This approach to education is rooted in the assimilationist ideologies inherent in the historical colonial treatment of Indigenous groups in North America (McCarthy 1990). When the approach to curriculum and pedagogy exercised in the school is in conflict with the identities of home and community this can - and often does - lead to a host of challenges and issues inside the classroom and beyond the school walls. Berger et al. (2006: 182) argue that there are many aspects which contribute to making resistance and

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<sup>1</sup> Author’s emphasis

poor student performance predictable and inevitable, including: “The clash between contemporary Inuit culture and [Western] school culture, problems with current school practices, and the region’s colonial past and present.” Historical and current influences in Nunavut schools where foreign educational ideologies and value systems have been imposed leads to a host of challenges in the development of Inuit identity for students. Challenges also arise inhibiting student engagement and success in learning material and activities.

The Nunavut Department of Education, the District Education Authority (DEA) for each community, as well as school leaders, educators and community members are working towards increasing Inuit approaches to teaching and learning into the school system (DE 2009). The Minister for the Department of Education is responsible for the administration of the Education Act and ensuring that DEAs and the schools are provided with the resources necessary to implement this Act and the regulations, including curriculum development (Ibid). The minister must also comply with the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) and provide opportunities to participate in the development of social and cultural policies and services while also reflecting Inuit goals and objectives (Ibid). The DEA is an elected body made up of community members that regularly meets to discuss, plan and make decisions regarding education issues that affect schools in their jurisdiction (DE 2012). Every community in Nunavut has a local DEA that collectively participates in the DEA Coalition, the territorial body for DEAs (Ibid). The role of the DEA is to: 1) set school policies; 2) monitor school programs; 3) aid in hiring school staff; 4) provide direction to principals on the administration of schools; 5) participate in

school activities; and, 6) involve the community and parents in development of school policies and plans (Ibid).

These groups work to integrate *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ - Inuit ways of knowing, being and doing) principles into the education system in the hopes that this will help preserve Inuit culture and aid in youth development of positive individual and community identities. The Inuuqatigiit curriculum, the Nunavut Education Act and local cultural programs have been developed with the intention of integrating Inuit knowledge and values as well as IQ principles.

## **2.1 Indigenous Identity and Values in Mainstream Education**

Mainstream education has become ubiquitous in the lives of many people globally. Sociologists Davies and Guppy (2006), argue that Canada has now become a 'schooled society' in which mainstream education has migrated to the centre stage of social life especially in the last century. High school graduation rates have increased dramatically, and an increasing number of jobs and career paths require educational certification, often from a university or college. Therefore, post-secondary education has become a requirement for income generation and employment success. Higher education is becoming a major route for social mobility and many people who were often excluded from positions of power - such as women and racial minorities - are now encouraged to attain higher levels of schooling as a means to achieve upward social mobility and social justice (Davies & Guppy 2006). As a result of this migration of education into professional and social realms of life, mainstream education has also become key in the development of identity as well as cultural, social, and economic values (Davies &

Guppy 2006; Lewis 2009; McCarthy 1990). Formal education consists of a set of institutions for the production of local, national, class, global, and values-based identities (Lewis 2009). However, Lewis (2009: 390) explains that “one key axis of struggle in the politics of education is its contradictory potential to produce knowledges, subjects, and measures of worth that may be either emancipatory (however differently conceived) or conservative (even repressive).” In the history of state-imposed education in Indigenous communities, education tends to lean on the side of conservative, often reflecting the ideologies of the state.

When education is viewed from the perspective of Indigenous groups, the impact of this situation becomes even stronger. As a result of the impact of colonialism worldwide, Indigenous groups have often been subjugated to the educational ideologies of foreigners. In North America, this was often done through the imposition of residential schools which attempted to assimilate Indigenous youth into the dominant culture. Castellano (2000a: xi-xiii), explains that the basis of residential schools for Inuit, First Nations and Métis, was to assimilate children into Canadian society and “lift Aboriginal peoples from their savage state and introduce them to the benefits of civilization.” Indigenous youth experienced a loss of connectedness with their language and traditions as these were “disparaged and devalued” as part of a larger project to suppress Aboriginal culture and identity, enforced through teachers behaviors and established curricula (Stout and Kipling 2003: 34). As a result of these negative effects, Inuit, First Nations and Métis are contending with a complexity of social difficulties and challenges in developing positive individual and community identities (Berry 1999; Stout and Kipling 2003). Berry

(1999) found that a number of Indigenous individuals recognized that their cultural needs were not fulfilled in school and had subsequently impacted very negatively on their cultural identity.

The adverse approach and outcomes resulting from the ethnocentric views and the invasion of Aboriginal societies supported by the government have only been successfully challenged in the present generation. This resistance was provoked by the continuing failure of provincial and federal schooling to alter the social and economic disadvantages suffered by the majority of Indigenous people in Canada; disadvantages which were not being suffered by non-Aboriginal people (Castellano 2000a). To overcome these challenges, efforts were made to incorporate Aboriginal approaches to education within the formal system. This practice began to gain acceptance in the late 1970s and it is now becoming more common for First Nations and Inuit to have control of their own schools. Aboriginal school boards are being established under land claims settlements and and/or self-government agreements, while other schools are involving community participation in planning the curriculum (Castellano 2000a).

Even today, after residential schools have been closed in Canada for many years there are still aspects of colonialism that remain present in the education system. A challenge which has arisen in the Australian context, and is mirrored in the Canadian system, is the "hidden curriculum" that reflects the many non-Aboriginal processes and procedures used in schools (Harris 2000). This neocolonial curriculum presents a threat to growing up Aboriginal, and includes obstacles such as the presence of the dominant culture's materials and resources throughout the classroom, the use of time in a Western

style, the administration of the school in a non-Aboriginal fashion, and transmitting knowledge by verbal or written means alone which takes away from any real-life context (Harris 2000). These are the mechanisms which continue to maintain colonial goals in the school.

## **2.2 Education As Hope For the Future**

It is evident that the colonial history in Indigenous communities has had severe impacts on the development of education and the students who pass through the system. However, it is stated in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples that (1996: 405):

Despite the painful experiences Aboriginal people carry with them from formal education systems, they still see education as the hope for the future and they are determined to see education fulfill its promise.

Furthermore, “Education is at the heart of the struggle of Aboriginal peoples to regain control over their lives as communities and nations” (Castellano 2000a: xii). Lewis (2009) explains that the potential and purpose of education are seen as revolutionary, enabling privilege and potential for positive change. The school is also seen as a venue for developing and restoring the healthy identities and values which may or may not have been deteriorated due to colonial efforts both in the past, and at present (Lewis 2009).

Abu-Saad and Champagne (2006: 10) explain:

Education can provide a means for strengthening individuals, families, and communities if it includes Indigenous knowledge, values, and methods of empowering Indigenous communities, preserving their cultures, and building their capacities for the future.

When a healthy sense of individual and community identity, as well as respect for one’s culture, are successfully achieved this leads to a sense of empowerment among students

and can thus engender many benefits both inside and outside the classroom. In a review of the literature, Goforth (2007: 23) found that:

The key to healing from residential school abuse, and its intergenerational effects, lies in the area of reclaiming identity. Reclaiming Aboriginal identity means recovering traditional values, beliefs, philosophies, ideologies, and approaches, and adapting them to the needs of today. This reclamation process encompasses both individual and collective identity.

Dene National Chief and Vice-Chair of the Arctic Athabaskan Council, Noeline Villebrun (2006: 14), has commented on how the beneficial outcomes of healthy values and identity can translate into a means of empowerment for students. She explains:

When I think about whom we are as a Nation and how we, the Dene people, want to be strong into the future, I think of how we share this vision in common with all Indigenous Peoples and minorities in the global community and of our hopes for education as a tool for community empowerment, as a tool for social development.

Furthermore, Poelzer (2007) states that community and individual well-being are strongly correlated with educational achievement. In order for these positive outcomes of education to become possible, Abu-Saad and Champagne (2006) state the need for the following to be upheld in a positive manner: value systems; children's experience in the classroom; their self-esteem; and respect by educators for traditional beliefs, through instruction or the curriculum.

To satisfy these goals, the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (in Castellano 2000b: 27) identified several changes that would remove or mitigate barriers to Aboriginal education, including:

- the creation of Aboriginal educational institutions;
- enhanced Aboriginal control of education and Aboriginal participation in post-secondary institutions' planning bodies and curriculum development;

- targeted access programs offering transition and guidance to Aboriginal learners to improve success rates;
- community-based delivery of programs;
- Aboriginal-specific support services; and,
- partnerships between mainstream and Aboriginal post-secondary institutions, and between Aboriginal communities and mainstream institutions.

Lewis (2009) emphasizes that education should ideally be imagined, delivered, and governed by communities. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) discovered that where Aboriginal people are in control of the education of their children, youth, and adults, preparation for employment or continuing education are much higher than National averages. Yet these instances are few and far between and more programs must be similarly designed. Thus, RCAP endorses Aboriginal control of Aboriginal education in the form of institutions authorized by Aboriginal governments, designated schools managed by Aboriginal authorities, and greater accountability on the part of integrated institutions serving Aboriginal students. Berger, et al. (2006) add that education must become a common and central community project. Where community consultation and control are present everyone involved in the system will ultimately benefit. Furthermore, Bonny and Berkes (2007) explain how the last century of colonial endeavors in the north have disrupted local practices, and the social relations and the language necessary for oral traditions to thrive, thus creating a need to record knowledge for reasons of cultural preservation and continuity. Concurrently, Indigenous researchers have been building capacity in Indigenous communities, developing ownership, and ensuring that knowledge is organized and presented in a culturally appropriate manner (Bonny & Berkes 2007).

## **2.3 History of Inuit Education**

Understanding the broad context for Indigenous education helps to identify many issues in common with Inuit communities. The following sections provide a more in-depth understanding of the educational context in Nunavut, beginning with a history of Inuit education.

### ***2.3.1 Traditional Inuit Education***

Traditional Inuit education was facilitated by family members, especially grandparents and Elders. These individuals drew from their own experiences and knowledge passed on to them by their family members to teach the youth. This particular approach to education centered on tasks and responsibilities of everyday life, as well as traditions for food sharing, spirituality, games and oral traditions, where youth learned through observation and experience (Bonesteel 2006; Friesen & Friesen 2005). Bernard Iquugaqtuq further explains the specifics of this learning:

Although children often acquired other skills, their gender determined the nature of their education. Boys, wanting to imitate their older male relatives, learned the skills of the outdoors: hunting, travelling, making tools and other equipment, and so on. Girls, following in the footsteps of their mothers, grandmothers, and aunts, learned the compl[e]mentary skills of the home: preparing skins, making clothing, tents and *qajaq* coverings, and the like. Once their sons and daughters knew the basics - and had an equally competent spouse - parents could be confident that their children had what they needed to begin making their own way in the world .  
(Bennett & Rowley 2004: 12-13)

Samonie Elizabeth Kanayuk, explains that if a father didn't have a son then his daughter would go out hunting with him when he needed help (Bennett & Rowley 2004).

Furthermore, James Muckpah observes:

Sometimes if a girl had often gone hunting with her father at an early age, she would be as capable a hunter as any man. She would also be respected as such... Some men also were good at sewing and could do housework themselves. They would reach the same level of skill as any good woman [...] This was not considered bad at all. As a matter of fact, it was considered all for the good. (Bennett & Rowley 2004: 14-15)

The environment played a huge role in Inuit education due to the harsh climate and nomadic lifestyle which influenced many of their daily activities (McGregor 2010b). The relationship of Inuit with the renewable resource base underlies almost every aspect of their lives, from songs and family customs to political organization and the settlement of disputes (Ibid). John Amagoalik (2001: 9), further exemplifies this relationship with the environment by explaining how: “The land shaped our mind and language, our culture, our legends, our philosophy and our view of life.” Each region had a unique ecology, therefore the hunting techniques that were developed in each region varied accordingly to take advantage of these differences (Bennett & Rowley 2004). This began to change with increased influences from outsiders.

### ***2.3.2 Arrival of Missionaries***

Inuit encountered Qallunaat in the Arctic as early as the 16th century. Qallunaat is an Inuktitut term referring to non-Inuit or outsiders. At the time of missionaries’ arrival, contact was sparse and sporadic, therefore the Inuit way of life was not affected in any sustainable way. In the early 1900s, missionaries established churches, hospitals and schools, usually near Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) posts, where they provided spiritual, health, and educational services for Inuit families when they came for trading or visiting purposes (Bonesteel 2006; Laugrand & Oosten 2009; McGregor 2010b). Many missionaries learned to speak Inuktitut and sometimes even went out by dogsled or boat

to visit families on the land (McGregor 2010b). Amongst many missionaries there was respect for Inuit and an understanding of the importance of the need to preserve Inuit values (Laugrand & Oosten 2009). Missionaries developed the Inuktitut syllabics still used today to translate gospels into Inuktitut and to teach syllabic literacy to the Inuit (Bonesteel 2006). Once the use of Inuktitut syllabics had spread, missionaries would offer basic instruction in Inuktitut literacy, Western hygiene, and arithmetic (McGregor 2010b). At this time, the goal for education was not explicit assimilation but rather to teach the Inuktitut syllabics to aid in reading the Bible and prayer books, for communication with others via written text, and some knowledge of global issues. Arithmetic and Western hygiene were taught to strengthen and aid in trading relationships (Ibid). Laugrand and Oosten (2009) state that even though the influence of the missionaries played a role in the assimilation of Inuit, their intentions and motivations were still radically opposed to those of the federal government which followed in later years. McGregor (2010: 83), details the purpose of early Qallunaat schools, and associated changes that were being witnessed:

Across much of the Eastern Arctic [...] Inuit children were exposed to the paternalistic, assimilative approach of Qallunaat educators. Inuit parents had no say as to how or what their children learned in school [...] Indeed, the purpose of early schools was to change Inuit children into knowing, being and doing like Qallunaat, to prepare them for employment on Qallunaat terms. It appeared that the Inuit system of experiential, learner-centered, environment-based education could not co-exist with that of the formal school system. Many Qallunaat and Inuit felt that this period marked the passing of the relevance of traditional Inuit knowledge, culture and education.

At this point in the history of Inuit education it became apparent that traditional learning was no longer the only source of education. Many people, both Inuit and Qallunaat saw

benefit in having a Qallunaat style education, especially in helping to strengthen relationships regarding trade and spirituality. However, no one could really foresee how detrimental this impact would be, much of this exacerbated with increased federal control of education.

### ***2.3.3 Federal Control***

The federal government had little interest in the North for many years. However, with increased military and economic interest, as well as political pressure to reinforce territorial claims, the federal government began taking more responsibility and control. Control over education transitioned to the Canadian government by the late 1950s, with small schools being built across much of the Eastern Arctic as well as the first residential schools in the North, in addition to those previously established by missionaries (Laugrand & Oosten 2009; McGregor 2010). Once this power shift occurred the education system became a form of assimilation as opposed to a tool for personal and communal strengthening and enhancement (Castellano 2000b; Laugrand & Oosten 2009). McGregor (2010: 88) outlines the purpose and outcome of the educational philosophy at this time:

Residential schools were also intentionally designed to impose Western standards in every realm of their lives, manifested by the disallowance of Inuktitut and Inuit clothing and food, and the devaluing of Inuit social norms, beliefs or practices. This imbedded in many Inuit youth a sense of shame about their own culture and heritage.

Some parents did not want to send their children to residential schools but felt pressured and obliged, and sometimes even fearful of what would happen if they did not. Threats of no social assistance were often a factor. Other families saw residential schools as a means to new possibilities (Laugrand & Oosten 2009).

The focus of this early Northern curriculum was on subjects deemed important by Qallunaat, and took time away from learning survival skills crucial for life in the Arctic. Residential schools were often far from the students' homes, thus they did not have the opportunity to go out on the land and sea ice during after-school hours. This decreased their ability to maintain a lifestyle of living on the land, often resulting in an increased dependency on government provisions (Bonesteel 2006). This movement off the land and increased dependency on the government were the first steps in relinquishing cultural identity, while Inuit searched for their position in a culture they did not understand. "This colonial process was carried out using methods that were alienating, repressive and traumatic to Inuit, although the Qallunaat perpetrators were largely oblivious of these results." (McGregor 2010b: 83) There was no respect or understanding of Inuit culture, and students were often harshly punished for speaking their native language. Mary Simon (2008) experienced this personally, describing how: "At school, whether it was in the classroom or playing outside in the school yard, we were not allowed to speak our Inuit language on school property. We were punished if we were 'caught' talking to our friends in Inuktitut (the only language we could communicate with!)." When responsibility for education was transferred to the federal government, the Inuktitut literacy which had been favored by missionaries prior to this time was rejected by educators in favour of English (McGregor 2010b). There was a strong focus on language within the schools because language and communication processes are integral for transmitting cultural values and unique world-views from one generation to the next (Castellano 2000b). These were tactics enforced through government policies to

relinquish Inuit identity and interrupt Inuit values and lifestyles as a means to assimilate Inuit into mainstream Canadian life. This would give the government more power to take control of the Arctic and its resources.

At this time of early federal schooling the approach to curriculum development was very similar to that which was being employed in southern Canada, as they borrowed from the Alberta curriculum. It was not until the late 1960s that the curriculum began to be adjusted, or newly created in some subjects, to better suit the needs and interests of the Inuit students, including cultural approaches to education such as the use of Inuktitut taught by Inuit teachers (McGregor 2010b). Much of this drive to improve the curriculum came from community members and educators who were becoming increasingly frustrated with the inadequacy of the curriculum and irrelevance of the teaching resources to the Arctic and Inuit context. Inuit parents requested that changes be made to the curriculum in order to increase the relevance to Inuit lives. These requests included involvement of Inuit parents in the classroom as storytellers and guest teachers, use of traditional languages for instruction, and the incorporation of Inuit cultural elements into the curriculum (Bonesteel 2006). Many of the curriculum changes began at the grassroots, in classrooms, by teachers who began to adjust lessons to be more relevant and appropriate for Inuit learners. However, there was still the issue that Inuit education and Qallunaat education did not easily coexist because they were employed using distinct methods which demanded different social and cultural skills and had contrasting goals in mind (McGregor 2010b).

### ***2.3.4 Territorial Control***

The responsibility of education once again transitioned, this time to the Northwest Territories as part of the devolution process which was occurring in most government sectors in the late 1970s. Transfer of responsibility for education to the government in Yellowknife began in April 1969 and was complete by 1970 (McGregor 2010b). This transfer of responsibility incurred a significant attempt to break with the past and aimed to produce a ‘made-in-NWT’ curriculum which was more Inuit-centered (Ibid)<sup>2</sup>. The goal was to engender a northern focused curriculum through:

- the provision of schooling in Native languages during the early elementary years;
- the development of programs and classroom materials that reflect northern content;
- the increasing involvement of community members and parents in the education process;
- expectations that teachers support students in moving towards any future they might choose.

(McGregor 2010b: 109-110)

One key factor in accomplishing these goals was the training of Inuit teachers; initially to aid in bridging the language barrier between students and Qallunaat teachers, and later, after the NWT Teacher Education Program was developed, as certified teachers managing their own classrooms (Bonesteel 2006; McGregor 2010b). Classroom assistants improved communication with students who spoke English as a second language, and improved communication with parents and the community. There was also more continuity in teaching staff as Inuit were less likely to be transient compared with Qallunaat educators, also contributing to increased cultural content in the curriculum (McGregor 2010b).

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<sup>2</sup> There are multiple First Nations and Métis groups in NWT to consider, but for our purposes we are just focusing on Inuit; it is not representative of all groups.

Unfortunately, the rhetoric about change was substantial but the reality and implementation of change was much less impressive. There is no evidence that the changes in Inuit education were in fact Inuit driven and were not really reflective of the needs and desires of Inuit students, parents and community members. “Integration of traditional Inuit values, knowledge and educational methods into the formal system would remain limited, and the experience of formal education still alienating and dislocating for many Inuit” (McGregor 2010b: 110). One of the main factors holding back the education system from achieving its goals was that the Qallunaat continued to believe that they knew what was best for Inuit education, as demonstrated through the fact that no Inuit were involved in any educational decision-making under the NWT (McGregor 2010b). Limited and negative experiences for Inuit in these educational institutions, including far distances travelled to schools, contributed to low attendance and high drop out rates (Bonesteel 2006; Berger et al. 2006). A move toward more Inuit-driven approaches was fostered with the establishment of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA).

### ***2.3.5 Nunavut Land Claims Agreement***

The NLCA was signed in 1993 forming the basis for the creation of the territory of Nunavut in 1999; and thus the control of formal education. Tyler (2008: 13) explains how:

Nunavut’s creation as a territory enabled and empowered Inuit leaders to attempt to address the local, educational, social, and economic needs of its isolated northern communities... This was the first time that the Inuit had the opportunity to define and implement their vision of what constituted a quality education.

NTI (2004: 5) describes how the NLCA is a contract through which Inuit exchange Aboriginal

title to all their traditional land in the Nunavut Settlement Area for the rights and benefits detailed in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, including:

- Ownership of about 18 per cent of the land in Nunavut, including mineral rights to two per cent of these lands;
- A cash settlement of \$1.173 billion; and,
- Creation of the territory of Nunavut, with an elected government to serve the interests of all Nunavummiut<sup>3</sup>.

Within the territorial government a proportional percentage of Inuit representation is assured for Inuit employment; however, this goal has not been realized to date (Berger 2006). Many Inuit are employed in support positions, such as administrative or secretarial areas; however there is a need for Inuit with post-secondary education to fill the leadership roles in government, including manager positions. Although education was not specifically identified in the NLCA, thus not securing funding, policy or legislation, Berger (2006) explains that in order for these rights and privileges to be realized education needs to become the focal point. Various efforts have been put forth to increase student engagement and success, and foster Inuit identity through school experiences. These efforts include *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ) principles, the original and revised Nunavut Education Act, local cultural programs and curriculum development efforts to integrate cultural and academic learning.

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<sup>3</sup> Nunavummiut refers to the people inhabiting the territory of Nunavut

## **2.4 Current Challenges**

Efforts have been made up to the present to improve the education system in Nunavut, to make learning more relevant for Inuit students, increase graduation rates, and help prepare students for their future endeavors. These efforts include various Nunavut-created resources for principals and teachers, as well as curricula created by NWT to integrate relevant learning. However, Berger (2009:55) describes that, “Sixty years after its inception, schooling in the eastern Arctic remains predominantly based on Euro-Canadian values, curricula and pedagogy, and privileging English over Inuit languages. Many studies have linked this model of schooling to poor academic achievement and assault on Inuit culture.” The government education system has not succeeded in graduating students who, for the most part, are more connected to their Inuit heritage, nor are they fully equipped to engage in the wage economy (Berger 2009). Nunavut high school education is still primarily based on the Alberta curriculum, thus contributing to similar negative effects to that of the early government approaches to education, inhibiting the ability to help students develop positive individual and community identities. The adverse conditions which many Inuit students have experienced to obtain (or attempt to obtain) a high school diploma have created a tumultuous classroom experience for students and teachers alike (Berger 2009). As a result, the rate of student graduation from secondary schools in Nunavut (26.9%) is quite low compared with the national average (71.3%) (Brockington 2009). Of those who do graduate, they are often not prepared to enter into post-secondary institutions and are further discouraged by the distance needed to travel, most often to southern Canada (Bonesteel 2006).

Language is an important aspect of Inuit education. Because the education system is based on the Alberta curriculum, and a large percentage of high school educators are Qallunaat, the primary language of instruction is English. Traditional languages, including Inuktitut, are the language of instruction from kindergarten to Grade 3 or 4, which studies have shown promotes language retention. However, the shift to English in later years makes for a difficult transition and can contribute to decreases in personal self-esteem (Bonesteel 2006). Generally, the Qallunaat based education system does not acknowledge Inuit values, knowledge and approaches to education. For example, in the Inuit tradition it is believed that when a child is born they receive the spirit of a recently departed family member. Therefore, giving a child orders would be the equivalent of doing so to a respected Elder. As a result, Inuit children were viewed as having the same autonomy as their parents; their actions were rarely interfered with and they were seldom questioned on their behaviour. This autonomy is important in the context of education because it meant that Inuit children would focus on a learning task as long as their attention held (Berger et al. 2006). Because the autonomy of the youth is greatly respected within the community and some parents and youth view attendance at school as voluntary, a negative experience may be the deciding factor in determining that school is no longer of interest or importance to students. In this regard, it is ultimately imperative that the education system be created around Inuit culture and interests to encourage students to remain engaged in school (Ibid).

Adding to these difficulties is teacher training and preparation in the Northern cultural context, which is often inadequate or non-existent (Berger et al. 2006; Laugrand

& Oosten 2009; McGregor 2010b). Without training, non-Inuit teachers are often overwhelmed by the cultural gap and experience severe culture shock. In addition, without teacher training and orientation it is the students who inevitably suffer in the long term (Berger et al. 2006). For teachers to succeed in their profession and aid students in achieving their full potential, the methods they use to teach must become as important as the material they are teaching. For this to become a reality, Inuit culture should become the basis of the pedagogy (Berger et al. 2006). Where teachers have not had the opportunity to undertake proper training for the specific Indigenous context in which they will be working, and are forced to teach from an inappropriate curriculum, it is understandable that issues such as classroom management problems and underachievement will occur. Student issues include (but are not limited to) lateness, frequent absences, and dropping out. These factors are embedded in the consequences of the history, values, and current practices of Western schools (Berger et al. 2006).

As a result of past colonial and assimilationist policies in the schools, parents are – because of their own experiences – often not great supporters of Western influenced schools. Mary Simon (2008) explains:

When you think about these moments, it is understandable why some Inuit parents today have hurtful memories of their school experiences and are distrustful of our education systems. Our language, our culture and the Inuit worldview had no place in those [residential] schools.

Consequently, the parents' feelings are epitomized in their child's performance and behaviour in the classroom. Berger et al. (2006: 198) noted in interviews with non-Inuit teachers that “although none of the [non-Inuit teachers] spoke directly of colonialism, several described a lack of parental support as an understandable consequence of poor

personal experiences in the school system, recent rapid changes in culture, and the feeling that schools are foreign entities.” Where ignorance or improper training are at play, teachers may often misinterpret this lack of interest on the part of the parents as a sign of disrespect. As a result, the teacher may respond ineffectively or disrespectfully towards the parents and students. If the daily routine of schools and classrooms are structured in such a way that is not compatible with the Inuit lifestyle then “some friction is predictable and unavoidable” (Berger et al. 2006: 188). There are also socio-economic barriers which discourage school attendance. This includes, but is not limited to, the high rates of overcrowded housing, which make it challenging to find quiet study space, and high rates of unemployment, which contribute to negative attitudes about the importance of education and the economic returns generated by completing secondary school (Bonesteel 2006).

## **2.5 Integrating Cultural and Academic Learning**

The current challenges highlight the need for culturally relevant educational curricula that will contribute to higher retention rates of Inuit students throughout primary and secondary grades (Bonesteel 2006). Various actors, such as Inuit organizations (e.g. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami), government bodies (e.g. the Government of Nunavut), and researchers (e.g. Berger et al. 2006), have identified the convergence of Indigenous and Western knowledge systems as an important approach to the education of Inuit youth (Inuit Circumpolar Conference 1992; RCAP 1996; Government of Nunavut 2008; ITK 2011). Champagne and Abu-Saad (2006) reiterate that this convergence must result in the education system being designed to support the continuity and future development of

Indigenous communities but should also facilitate access to mainstream institutions. To achieve successful outcomes of education, Berger et al. (2006) recommend the implementation of true Inuit control over the education of their youth, along with the meaningful consultation of community members, development of a curriculum which reflects Inuit pedagogies, and extensive cross-cultural and ESL (English as a second language) training for non-Inuit educators working in Nunavut. Increased teaching and learning in Inuktitut would also be a positive step forward.

With the establishment of the territory of Nunavut, the GN has undertaken the task of revamping the formal education curriculum in a way that encompasses traditional Inuit culture and skills while simultaneously focusing on the development of confident, responsible and capable individuals who can contribute to Nunavut society and preparation for enrollment in post-secondary institutions (GN 2008). There are also several government policies which are heading in a similar direction. Inuuqatigit, *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ) principles, and the Nunavut Education Act are guiding documents in achieving the goals of the Department of Education with regards to education and promoting successful Inuit youth.

### ***2.5.1 Inuuqatigiit***

*Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective*, is a curriculum document written in 1996, through the NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment. This document lays out an approach to education from the perspective of Inuit. It is written by Inuit educators collaboratively with Elders who provided the information they thought was important to remember, and is intended to link cultural and

academic learning. This curriculum document comes from Inuit philosophy and provides Inuit knowledge students should have from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Inuuqatigiit means: “Inuit to Inuit, people to people, living together, or family to family. It implies togetherness and family unity between people. This is the foundation of the curriculum: a unity of Inuit philosophy for the benefit of the children, teachers, schools, and communities.” (DECE 1996: 3). Inuuqatigiit focuses on the “enhancement and enrichment” of the language and culture of Inuit students. It also promotes the integration of Inuit knowledge with the mainstream curriculum. The core principles of Inuuqatigiit (1996: 5) are to:

- Maintain, strengthen, recall and enhance Inuit language and culture in the community and the school;
- Enhance unity within Inuit groups;
- Create a link between the past and the present;
- Encourage the practice of Inuit values and beliefs; and;
- Encourage pride in Inuit identity to enhance personal identity.

For each goal the document provides advice to tailor each aspect for different classrooms and grades.

### ***2.5.2 Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit***

IQ principles are Inuit ways of knowing, being and doing (Appendix 11). These Principles were written down as a GN initiative to promote the integration of Inuit knowledge and values into government functions. Shirley Tagalik (2010: 1), an educational consultant, defines more broadly what is involved in IQ:

*Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ) is the term used to describe Inuit epistemology or the Indigenous knowledge of the Inuit. The term translates directly as “that which Inuit have always known to be true.” Like other Indigenous knowledge systems, *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* is recognized to be a unified system of beliefs and knowledge characteristic of the Inuit culture. The term ‘*Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*’ was formally adopted by the Government of Nunavut; however, the descriptors used to capture the essence of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* are recognized as being consistent with Inuit worldview as it is described in various Inuit circumpolar jurisdictions. Inuit Elders in Nunavut have identified a framework for *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* which is grounded in four big laws or *maligait*. All cultural beliefs and values are associated with the implementation of these *maligait*, ultimately contributing to “living a good life” which is described as the purpose of being.

The Nunavut Education Act outlines IQ principles include<sup>4</sup>:

- *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq*: Concept of respecting others, building positive relationships, and caring for others
- *Tunnganarniq*: Concept of fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming, and inclusive
- *Pijitsirarniq*: Concept of serving
- *Aajiiqatigiingniq*: Consensus-Decision Making
- *Pilimmaksarniq*: Concept of Skills and Knowledge Acquisition
- *Qanuqtuurungnarniq*: Concept of Being Resourceful to Solve Problems
- *Piliriqatigiingniq*: Concept of Collaborative Relationship or Working Together for a Common Purpose
- *Avatimik Kamattiarniq*: Concept of Environmental Stewardship

The Bathurst Mandate, issued in August of 1999, requires government departments to develop working plans to ensure that their operations and services will reflect IQ principles, and to attempt to redirect health and social services in a manner that is respectful of the Inuit way of life (Aylward 2007). IQ principles have become a key resource for the development of local school programs, expectations for students and educators, curriculum development, and the establishment of educational policies

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to Appendix ( ) for a full description of each principle.

(Ibid). However, community consultation must continue: “It is not sufficient to base management decisions on traditional knowledge publications without consulting local knowledge holders, or to use them to teach young people without coordinating visits from local Elders” (Bonny and Berkes 2007: 251). Wenzel (2004) and Tester and Irniq (2008) point out the need ensure IQ principles are understood in combination with Inuit social and cultural history. If the principles are interpreted without that knowledge they may simply become a tool that is useful for filling gaps in scientific knowledge. Furthermore, “An examination of this history depicts IQ as a form of resistant practice that can seriously challenge characteristic assumptions of Western science, such as the separation of humans from other forms of life” (Tester & Irniq 2008). However, Inuit operating with a definition of IQ can be confronted with contemporary social, economic, and political realities that challenge and inhibit the use of IQ principles in the management and development of Nunavut (Tester & Irniq 2008).

Geographical location and accessibility of northern communities, as well as the timing of colonial interest in the Arctic, meant that widespread residential schooling and assimilationist goals for education only lasted one generation. This allowed for many aspects of Inuit culture to endure through this period of oppression (McGregor 2010b). For this reason, as well as the current transition with the implementation of the NLCA, it is momentarily important and timely that IQ principles become the basis of the education system while Inuit knowledge, lifestyle, and traditions are still thriving. During the current period of flux in the territory with the creation of Nunavut and re-creation of

the education system it is the time to take advantage of this malleable state to help transform education into the best it can possibly be.

The accessibility of IQ principles allows Nunavut schools and the Department of Education to move forward more adequately in integrating more culturally appropriate learning into the education system. Bonny and Berkes (2007: 243), explain: “Given that there is now a substantial accumulation of these traditional knowledge documents, we can begin to discuss how best to communicate the traditional knowledge contained therein.” The GN Department of Education, is currently developing a new environmental science curriculum that integrates IQ principles with current scientific information about land, oceans and weather systems. Part of the Department of Education’s mandate is to create a made-in-Nunavut curriculum that reflects Inuit, particularly culture and language (McGregor 2010a). The Grade 10 course is on nuna (land), the Grade 11 course is on tariuq (sea) and the Grade 12 course is about sila (weather). Curriculum developers worked with Elders on content for the courses, as well as International Polar Year projects in Nunavut (Ibid).

Aulajaaqtut is a curriculum based on IQ principles developed by the NWT Education, Culture and Employment Department and is currently employed in Nunavut high schools. It focuses on Inuit values, setting personal goals related to values, developing and nurturing healthy relationships, and recognizing the issues related to overall personal wellness. “The curriculum creates a critical understanding of Inuit identity, social history, the impact of colonialism on the Inuit, and the contribution of Inuit to northern exploration and development. Throughout the curriculum there is a

focus on leadership within the context of Inuit culture” (McGregor 2012). There is also a practicum requirement which involves students in self-directed projects with younger children, the community and the global world.

### ***2.5.3 Nunavut Education Act***

The Education Act outlines IQ principles and states that they are a fundamental principal of the act. The introduction to the Education Act (DE 2009a: 1) declares that the goal of the Nunavut education system is to:

- Focus on students, their intellectual development and their physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual well-being;
- Promote a high quality education for the development of confident, responsible and capable individuals who can contribute to Nunavut society;
- Support life-long learning and opportunities for continued personal development, post-secondary education, training and employment;
- Affirm that all children can learn, that the process is individual and that diverse learning needs and abilities should be supported through inclusive education;
- Recognize the relationship among learning, language and culture and support a bilingual education to contribute to the preservation, use and promotion of Inuit language and culture;
- Recognize that communities should be significantly involved in education to reflect local needs and values, that parents have a special responsibility, and that
- Elders can make important contributions;
- Affirm the rights of Inuit under the Constitution Act, 1982 and the minority language rights of the francophone linguistic community;
- Support the effective implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and its focus on Inuit self-reliance, Inuit cultural and social well-being, and Inuit goals and its commitment to involving Inuit and reflecting Inuit goals when developing education policies, programs, services and curriculum.

The Nunavut Education Act lines up with all the important goals for education indicated through IQ principles and Inuuqatigiit, and if it is applied with the kind of care and attention emphasized in the previous documents then it can be a positive force of change.

Amendments have been made to the New *Education Act* for Nunavut emphasizing the need to base decision making in IQ principles and increase parental and community

involvement. Sections 1 and 2 state that “The Minister, District Education Authorities (DEAs) and education staff are responsible for ensuring that the public education system is founded on Inuit Societal Values and *Inuit Qaujimagajatuqangit* (IQ)” (DE 2009b: 1). Sections 7 - 22, relating to school programs, states that the school program, including delivery of the curriculum, local programs, and other programs offered by the school, should be developed by the principal under the direction of the DEA, while the Minister establishes the curriculum and teaching standards, including approving local programs. There is a duty on the principal and DEA to include parental and community involvement. Sections 23 - 29 which deal with language of instruction have been amended to promote bilingual education, where “Every student shall be given a bilingual education to produce graduates who are able to use both languages competently in academic and other contexts” (DE 2009b: 2). Models of bilingual instruction will be chosen by DEAs after consultation with communities.

#### ***2.5.4 Local Cultural Programs***

Several schools in Nunavut have developed local cultural programs such as camping trips on the land or sea ice, which teach survival skills and other cultural values which are relevant to their people and communities. One in particular is Attagoyuk High School, in Pangnirtung, where they have developed an annual spring camp program which has been running for over 20 years where students of all ages are given the opportunity to travel and stay at a camp outside town and engage in traditional activities appropriate for the time of year. Activities in which the students engage include: survival skills, ice fishing, seal hunting, and caribou hunting. The guides are experts in various

traditional skills and this gives the students a chance to connect with their culture outside of school. It is also with students and educators at Attagoyuk that I engaged with in interviews and focus groups to better understand the meaning of ‘culturally appropriate learning’, how spring camp plays a role in this local school approach, and how they are supporting more integrated learning approaches in the school to meet academic and cultural goals.

## **2.6 Chapter Summary**

Inuit education has experienced many changes from various influences in the last century. Past and present challenges continue to arise, curbing student graduation rates and limiting their preparation for post-graduation goals. Despite the negative influences from missionary and government control, education is still promoted as a key area to promote engaged, successful Inuit youth who are confident in themselves and their cultural identity. Many efforts have been put forth to encourage the positive aspects of high school education, with a strong concentration around the increase of cultural learning and integration with academic learning, including the *Inuuqatigiit* curriculum document IQ principles, the Nunavut Education Act and local cultural programs.

## **Chapter 3 - Research Methods**

This chapter describes the theoretical framework that I drew from to conduct the research project and analyze the results. A project overview has been included, with a description of the case study at Attagoyuk Ilisavik (High School) in Pangnirtung, Nunavut. The research methods are highlighted which were used to help understand the perspectives of students and teachers at Attagoyuk Ilisavik and Nunavut Sivuniksavut, including: participant observation and experiential learning, semi-directed interviews and focus groups. Participant selection, interview protocols and reporting back will be discussed. Finally, the approaches to data analysis will be described.

### **3.1 Theoretical Framework**

#### ***3.1.1 Critical Pedagogy***

The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2010b) defines *pedagogy* as the art, science, or profession of teaching; especially education. In Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993), he describes his belief that pedagogical ideologies need to be acknowledged in order to challenge the politics of education including: 1) the assumptions made in curriculum development; 2) the lack of representation by oppressed groups in education systems, and; 3) the ways in which oppression is upheld through dominant approaches to education. Through his research he developed Critical Pedagogy as a framework to analyze, challenge and overcome oppression in the education system. This work is necessary for "... the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well" (Freire 1993: 44). Freire's *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed was followed up by Pedagogy of Hope (1994), describing how change cannot occur where there is no hope for the future.

Since Freire's introduction of critical pedagogy there have been many responses and interpretations of how critical pedagogy should be understood and applied. Critical Indigenous pedagogies and critical pedagogy of place are the main theoretical frameworks which inform this research. Critical Indigenous pedagogies are applied to ensure the focus remains always on the Inuit and the colonial and post-colonial realities of the north. Critical Indigenous pedagogies value and emphasize the importance of Indigenous and subjugated knowledges to inform research and drive change (Denzin & Lincoln 2008b). With a link to geography, Gruenewald (2003) describes how to unite critical pedagogy and place-based education to produce a critical pedagogy of place. Critical pedagogy of place is important to understand the effects of learning in a manner that connects people to their social and environmental surroundings (Gruenewald 2003; Rosenthal 2008). This belief is a key principle informing the current direction of the education system in Nunavut at this time, which is striving to integrate more Inuit cultural learning that is inevitably connected to the land. An important aspect of these approaches is the ability to produce research as a process of decolonization.

Gruenewald (2003) understands critical pedagogy as an analytical approach that works within educational institutions and media to challenge assumptions, practices, and outcomes in dominant culture and conventional education which have become ingrained and unquestioned over time. Critical pedagogies are necessary to raise questions about power inequalities in an education system where the main goal for educating youth is to

prepare them for the marketplace (Gruenewald 2003). Place-based education is an interdisciplinary approach which roots learning in the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum (Ibid). The emphasis is on hands-on, real-world learning experiences and contributes to an increase in academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to the community, enhances their appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens. As a result, community vitality and environmental quality are improved through the active engagement of local citizens, community organizations, and environmental resources in the life of the school (Rosenthal 2008). Gruenewald (2003: 4) describes how critical pedagogy and place-based education conjoin to produce a theoretical framework appropriate for acknowledging and challenging “standard” approaches to education promoted through dominant ideologies and replacing these with more appropriate understandings of education related to the realities of the local people:

Being in a situation has a spatial, geographical, contextual dimension. Reflecting on one’s situation corresponds to reflecting on the space(s) one inhabits; acting on one’s situation often corresponds to changing one’s relationship to a place. Freire asserts that acting on one’s situationality, what I will call decolonization and reinhabitation, makes one more human. It is this spatial dimension of situationality, and its attention to social transformation, that connects critical pedagogy with a pedagogy of place. Both discourses are concerned with the contextual, geographical conditions that shape people and the actions people take to shape these conditions.

This approach to education is especially important in the context of Inuit communities where the major focus in schools is to increase the proportion of cultural learning so as to preserve Inuit culture and the language and to help youth develop positive cultural

identities to equip them with the pride and confidence to move forward as a resilient community.

Critical pedagogy of place acknowledges its significance for Indigenous communities. Sutherland and Swayze (2012), state that Gruenewald's critical pedagogy of place provides a valuable theoretical framework for examining place-based education in Indigenous contexts. However, I have also incorporated critical Indigenous pedagogies to help focus specifically on the Indigenous context. Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) are working to expand a form of critical indigenous pedagogy which they describe as an effort to act educationally and politically in response to the diversity and justice in academia. Furthermore, "Such an effort seeks an intercultural/interracial effort to question the hegemonic and oppressive aspects of Western education and to work for justice and self-direction for Indigenous peoples around the world" (Kincheloe & Steinberg 2008: 135). This is very much the reality in Nunavut right now where the education system is based on curriculum from southern Canada and does not recognize Inuit knowledge or approaches to education. Critical Indigenous pedagogies value the transformative power of Indigenous, subjugated knowledges and the pedagogical practices that produce these knowledges (Denzin & Lincoln 2008b). Furthermore, this type of research should be ethical, performative, healing, transformative, decolonizing, and participatory. So that it can "disrupt[s] taken-for-granted epistemologies, by privileging Indigenous interpretive pedagogies and inquiry practices" (Denzin & Lincoln 2008b: 5).

Decolonization is a common theme throughout all of these approaches to education. Tuhiwai-Smith (1999: 20) describes decolonization as, “a process that critically engages, at all levels, imperialism, colonialism, and postcoloniality. Decolonizing research implements Indigenous epistemologies and critical interpretive practices that are shaped by Indigenous research agendas.” The research I have undertaken is not able to apply all aspects of decolonization but has indeed been guided and shaped by the direction for education established by Inuit to integrate more culturally appropriate learning while preparing students for success in post secondary education. Furthermore, this research delves deeper into the potential for education to help students develop a positive sense of identity and resilience which promotes engagement and success inside and outside of the school. As Villebrun (2008: 18) explains:

To decolonize education is to retrench and retrieve our traditions in the classrooms and in our communities[...] Whenever possible we need to teach others about who we are as Indigenous peoples, to share in all schools our stories of who we are in the lesson plans teachers follow so that our stories are told respectfully and responsibly.

Part of my research is to understand how culturally appropriate learning is occurring from the perspectives of those experiencing it, the students and educators. I am also trying to understand their perspectives on future directions for education and what culturally appropriate learning should entail, in an effort to move away from a curriculum transplanted from Southern Canada in order to engender more educative autonomy for Inuit. This is where the critical Indigenous pedagogies come into play in regards to this research project.

Questioning and applying processes of decolonization are a way to move forward from the negative impacts which accompanied colonization. Villebrun<sup>5</sup> (2006: 18) describes how, “We are living with a history of colonization [...] Decolonization and healing are acknowledgment that we are colonized - not that we accept colonization but that we are aware of the fact that this incredible pressure and movement has swept over us like a flood.” The main priority of my research is to engage in a process of decolonization, both in the research process itself as well as the broader impacts of the final results. The research process is conducted in a way that is guided by Inuit desires for the direction of education. The broader goal of integrating more culturally appropriate learning while preparing students for post-graduation goals has been established over the years and guides this work, but I also spoke with the co-principals at Attagoyuk Ilisavik, for input during the proposal stage and to ensure the goals reflected interests in the school. My supervisor, Gita Ljubicic, has a lot of knowledge and experience researching in Nunavut and has also helped to guide me and the research in a respectful manner. Her prior involvement with Attagoyuk Ilisavik meant that research goals and relationships had been previously established.

### **3.2 Project Overview**

#### ***3.2.1 Case study: Attagoyuk Ilisavik, Pangnirtung, Nunavut***

Attagoyuk Ilisavik is an educational institute dedicated to providing a learning environment which helps promote the development of able human beings through programming grounded in IQ principles (Lee 2010). In 2009, Cathy Lee (a longtime

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<sup>5</sup> Although Villebrun is Dene, these ideas can be extended to emphasize the importance for Inuit as well because of similar historical and colonial circumstances, including missionary and government dominance in education.

northerner) and Lena Metuq (Inuk resident of Pangnirtung) became co-principals of the high school. Prior to my visit in Pangnirtung, Gita and I exchanged several emails and phone calls with Cathy and Lena making plans, asking permission, and asking for guidance for the focus of the research project. In an initial letter I explained what the research would entail, how I would like to proceed, how students and educators could be involved, and how this research could be aligned with the goals of the school (Appendix 2). In response, through emails and phone calls, Cathy and Lena gave their support for the research, and wanted to see how culturally responsive programs are linked to student achievement and overall development as an "able human beings". Rhoda Karetak, an Inuit Elder, is the originator of this term which describes able human beings as understanding their strengths as well as their needs for growth and improvement and can contribute to creating a healthy and productive society in Nunavut, Canada and the world (DE 2006).

I traveled to Pangnirtung in the spring of 2010 and stayed for 6 weeks in the community. Gita introduced me to Cathy, Lena, school staff and community members. This was also the beginning of spring camp, so I was able to help with preparation and participate in week-long activities (Figure 3.1). Once we were back in town, Cathy and Lena helped to set up interviews and focus groups with students and educators and provided a classroom where they took place. This involvement with spring camp and time to communicate with educators and students through interviews and focus groups provided an opportunity to explore and understand how different groups of people

involved with the school view and define cultural learning and how they would like to see it further developed and integrated into the education system.



Figure 3.1 Gita and I (front) at Spring Camp, with co-principals Lena Metuq and Cathy Lee (back left) (Spring Camp, May 2010, Carmelle Sullivan)

### 3.3 Research Methods

Using a case study approach (3.2.1), this research engaged a number of qualitative research methods including: participant observation, experiential learning, focus groups, and interviews, with the participation of students and educators from Attagoyuk High School in Pangnirtung, Nunavut, and from the Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS) program in Ottawa, Ontario. The research trip to Pangnirtung was from April 19th to May 27th, 2010. Interviews and focus groups at NS took place in April 2010 and May 2011. The variety of qualitative methods complement one another by providing various layers of perspectives and context around education in Nunavut which may not have emerged using one method individually. Participant selection, interview protocols, reporting back and ethics will also be described.

### ***3.3.1 Ethics***

This research had previously been approved through the Nunavut Research Institute (NRI) research license for 'Learning In Nunavut Through Our Earth'. Nunavut Research License number was 0205710N-M which covered the period of April 2010 to March 2011. Once I developed the research proposal and interview guides the license was updated. Interview guides were reviewed and approved through Carleton University Research Ethics Board. Interview and focus group participants signed consent forms with options to use their name or have general acknowledgement or a pseudonym. They could also choose between having their contributions shared freely, where direct quotes could be used, or they chose to have their contributions summarized with others. Participants also indicated where they wanted recordings of interviews saved, including Nunavut Arctic College, GN Dept. of Education, Geomatics and Cartographic Research Centre, a destination of their choice, or recordings only used in this project (Appendix 3). All interview and focus group responses in this thesis are referenced by consent levels chosen by participants.

### ***3.3.2 Participant Observation and Experiential Learning***

Kearns (2000) defines participant observation as a contextual and in-depth understanding of a time and place through experience. Participant observation can provide a descriptive complement to more controlled methods such as interviews and focus groups, meanwhile taking into account that every participant observation situation is unique (Kearns 2000). Because I had never spent a significant amount of time in a northern community, participant observation and experiential learning were an important

part of my learning process in understanding the dynamics and complexities of the high school and community in Pangnirtung. The first week of being in the community I met many people in the school community and learned a lot about how the school functions and some differences and similarities with my own high school experiences. The second week I participated in the annual spring camp and experienced first-hand how Attagoyuk Ilisavik makes local efforts to integrate cultural learning into their curriculum. The final month of my stay in Pangnirtung was occupied with facilitating interviews and focus groups, but the participant observation and experiential learning continued as I participated in various social events and built rapport with students and educators.

These experiences provided me with background and context to help understand responses from students and educators in interviews and focus groups. For example, in focus groups when students were describing Elder involvement in spring camp, I had been to a planning meeting with camp staff and Elders prior to camp where they discussed and planned how the camp would run. I also saw the Elders in action out at camp, teaching students how to cook fish out on the lake or properly cut a seal (Figure 3.2). Without that first hand experience and the visual memories I would not have as much knowledge and understanding of what students were talking about when they voiced the need for more “Elder involvement” in the school.



Figure 3.2 An Elder demonstrates how to properly cut a seal  
(Spring Camp, May 2010, Carmelle Sullivan)

### ***3.3.3 Semi-Directed Interviews and Focus Groups***

Semi-directed interviews and focus groups were conducted to understand the various events, opinions and experiences of those involved in the Nunavut education system: students, principals, educators/teachers, support staff, and former students. These methods provided the opportunity for participants to indicate the relevant information which is pertinent to their experiences, and go into the depth necessary for each topic (Dunn 2000). I followed an interview guide approach with a set of key questions, but also allowed for flexibility to jump between topics or follow up on particular themes, by tailoring questions to best suit what participants wanted to talk about. Where people were uncomfortable doing a one-on-one interview, or it did not fit into their schedule, there was always the option of participating in a group interview (focus group) instead.

Focus groups are a beneficial method of qualitative research because group members often enjoy interacting together, offering their points of view, and learning from one another (Cameron 2000). Focus groups can also lead to a better understanding of the research material for the participants as well as for myself as the researcher (Cameron

2000). A focus group was the primary means of interviewing five students at NS, as suggested by the program coordinator as a way to help students feel more comfortable in the process. At Attagoyuk Ilisavik students felt most comfortable working with their peers and some also enjoyed the fact that they could get out of class for an hour or so and hang out with their friend(s). These sessions developed more like group interviews as opposed to focus groups but it worked well with students taking turns answering questions and sometimes reflecting and responding to one another. With Qallunaat educators, a focus group was used and the conversation flowed easily amongst the participants with minimal facilitation from me. Discussion did get off topic at times but I believe this was important to let people talk and learn about what was important to them rather than me being overly controlling with facilitation. I would often ask the main questions from the interview guide and follow-up with questions that were generated from listening to the responses and comments. The Inuit educators preferred to participate in individual interviews, generally because this fit best into their schedules. Similar questions were used for individual and group interviews.

The interview/focus group question guide consisted of six themes:

- Personal background
- Cultural learning in high school
- Spring Camp
- Draft Curriculum
- Evaluating education

Each of the questions within these themes helped to address research objectives by focusing on school activities where cultural learning is increased and/or integrated with academic learning. 'Personal background' provided context for the kinds of post-

graduation goals that students are working towards so that we can see how students feel their high school education is preparing them to reach their goals. ‘Cultural learning in high school’ set the context for the current integration of cultural learning and students perspectives on this, as well as how they define culturally appropriate learning and how they would like to see it integrated in the future. Questions relating to ‘spring camp’ were used to understand the practical application of how cultural learning takes place at Attagoyuk High School. In ‘draft curriculum’, I outlined the proposed environmental science curriculum for grades 10 to 12 and the idea of developing units around environmental themes and incorporating all the relevant information, as opposed to dividing all the information on a particular theme into the standard core subjects, such as geography, math, physics, etc. For example, a unit on seals would incorporate the traditional knowledge, Inuktitut terminology, hunting techniques, history, as well as the Western science including biological dissection, and chemical experimentation to test for biological accumulation and other pollutants. ‘Evaluating education’ revolves around student engagement and success; how students define these terms and how they can be improved. Ultimately, the questions in these themes were developed to help understand how the education system can contribute to the development of “able human beings”. Although the themes were similar across all interviews, questions were tailored to each general grouping of high schools students (Appendix 4), high school educators (Appendix 5), NS students (Appendix 6), NS instructor (Appendix 7).

### ***3.3.4 Participant Selection***

Attagoyuk Ilisavik includes grades 6 to 12; however, I mainly focused on interviewing students and educators in grades 10 to 12 because these are the grades covered in the new environmental science curriculum (Section 2.5.2). The week after spring camp, after I had the opportunity to build rapport with some of the high school students, I went around to all the high school classes - grades 10a, 10b, 11, and 12 - and gave a short presentation, describing how students could be involved through group interviews. This consisted of explaining to students that I am a graduate student at Carleton University in Ottawa, doing a research project about education in Nunavut and I would like to learn from their experiences to try and contribute to improving the Nunavut education system. I explained that I would be asking questions about what they like and do not like about school, and how they would like to see things change, and that there were small gifts for all participants. I also provided a written project description of which copies were distributed to each student for additional information and to give to their parents. A copy of this letter also went to the District Education Authority (Appendix 8). There was interest from some students but because they needed parental consent before they could participate in interviews or focus groups I gave each student a consent form (Appendix 3) to take home and decide whether they would participate at a later time. I created a timetable with various time slots for the interviews and focus groups to take place and allowed students to choose what time they would like to meet and which of their peers they would like to participate with. In total, I was able to speak with fifteen (15) Inuit students from grades 10 to 12 at Attagoyuk Ilisavik (Table 3.1).

I interviewed ten (10) educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik (Table 3.1). I invited educators to participate in interviews and focus groups by approaching each person individually during school hours to explain the goals of the research and the interview process. I also explained they would have the option of doing the interview individually or with coworkers and allowed them to choose a time during school or after school that would best work for them. Five Inuit educators and five Qallunaat educators volunteered to share their perspectives and experiences. In using the term Qallunaat I recognize that it is a pretty loaded word with many associated contexts, and not everyone prefers to use it. However, because this term is used by Inuit and in much of the literature, it is used in this paper to indicate non-Inuit.

I spoke with Cathy Lee, Lucy Young, Meeka Alivaktuk, Rebecca Kanayuk, and one anonymous participant. Cathy Lee, is a non-Inuit educator who has lived in the north for many years and has been at Attagoyuk for 11 of those years. I included Cathy in the group of Inuit educators because her views and perspectives align more closely with that of the Inuit educators than the Qallunaat educators. Cathy teaches Aulajaaqtut at the grade 11 level. Lucy Young, has been a Student Support Assistant in the junior high and high school for over six years. She began as an educator in the 1980's as a Special Needs Assistant. Meeka Alivaktuk, has worked at Attagoyuk Ilisavik as a school community counselor since 1996, and has been involved in the in school for over 20 years. Meeka also teaches grade 10 Aulajaaqtut. Rebecca Kanayuk, is the sewing teacher as well as the Inuit bilingual teacher. Rebecca has been teaching at Attagoyuk Ilisavik for over 10 years.

Table 3.1 List of student and educator participants at Attagoyuk Ilisavik, Pangnirtung, Nunavut

<b>Group/Individual Interview</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Date of interview</b>
<b><i>Students at Attagoyuk Ilisavik</i></b>		
Attagoyuk Student Group 1	Charlie Nakashuk AnnMartha Evic	May 18/19, 2010
Attagoyuk Student Group 2	George Akulukjuk Trevor Kooneeliusee	May 19, 2010
Attagoyuk Student Group 3	Scott Angnakak MaryRose Kilabuk	May 20, 2010
Attagoyuk Student Group 4	Joseph Kilabuk Bobby Dialla	May 11/12, 2010
Attagoyuk Student Group 5	Janis Shukulaq Student 1 Student 2	May 21, 2010
Attagoyuk Student Group 6	Lisa Angmarlik Student 3 Student 4	May 10/11, 2010
Attagoyuk Student Group 7	Student 5 Student 6	May 11/12, 2010
Attagoyuk Student Group 8	Amy Rose Lewis	May 21, 2010
<b><i>Educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik</i></b>		
Individual interview	Cathy Lee	May 16, 2010
Individual interview	Meeka Alivaktuk	May 25, 2010
Individual interview	Rebecca Kanayuk	May 26, 2010
Individual interview	Lucy Young	May 26, 2010
Individual interview	Educator 4	May 5, 2010
Qallunaat Educator Group	Educator 1 Educator 2 Educator 3 Educator 5 Educator 6	May 19, 2010

These educators are all very involved in the organization of spring camp and Meeka was one of the founders. The Qallunaat educators interviewed chose to remain anonymous.

In April 2010, I had the pleasure of speaking with instructor Morley Hanson, and five second year students at Nunavut Sivuniksavut: Karen Tutanuak from Rankin Inlet, Nunavut; Kathleen Merritt from Rankin Inlet, Nunavut; Kevin Iksiktaaryuk from Baker Lake, Nunavut; Matthew Hall from Ottawa, Ontario; and, Charlotte Carleton originally from Pangnirtung but now in Ottawa. The following year, in May 2011, I was fortunate to return to Nunavut Sivuniksavut to speak with Danny Ishulutak from Pangnirtung, Nunavut and Adamie Ikkidluak, originally from Kimirut, Nunavut but now in Iqaluit, Nunavut. Both students took part in the first year program at Nunavut Sivuniksavut.

Morley Hanson is an instructor at Nunavut Sivuniksavut and has been working with the program since 1988. He has experience in alternative education projects in a variety of experiential settings, such as leading groups from young offenders in wilderness programs, leading Katimavik groups, and working with the school system in a Dene community in Northern Saskatchewan. These experiences provided him with a broad background and understanding of various educational settings to become an indispensable player in the development and maintenance of the Nunavut Sivuniksavut program. He has taught all the courses at various points over the years, and in 2010 when we spoke he was teaching contemporary issues, Inuit history, circumpolar studies, and mentoring in political studies, and research with second year students.

I interviewed students at NS because they have had some time between high school and their current program of study and thus could reflect on their high school experiences

from a different perspective. These students are also highly motivated so it was important to understand their perspective and how well they felt they were prepared in high school to take on challenges and opportunities. I interviewed Morley Hanson because he is an NS instructor and mentor and works with students almost everyday. He has also helped develop the NS program over the last several years as the program director. In total, I spoke with with seven (7) Inuit students and one (1) Qallunaat educator at NS (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 List of student and educator participants at Nunavut Sivuniksavut, Ottawa, Ontario

<b>Group/Individual Interview</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Date of interview</b>
<b><i>Instructor and coordinator of Nunavut Sivuniksavut</i></b>		
Individual interview	Morley Hanson	April 7, 2010
<b><i>Students at Nunavut Sivuniksavut</i></b>		
NS Student Group 1	Charlotte Carleton Matthew Hall Kevin Iksiktaaryuk Kathleen Merritt Karen Tutanuak	April 7, 2010
Individual interview	Adamie Ikkidluak	May 10, 2011
Individual interview	Danny Ishulutak	May 10, 2011

### ***3.3.5 Interview Protocols***

Group interviews with students were conducted in groups of two or three during class time at the school, as suggested by Cathy Lee. The students were given the option of who they wanted to work with and if they were undecided I would arrange groups for students, always ensuring they were comfortable with their group members. To begin the interviews and focus groups with students, I shared a photo album with pictures of my

family to help break the ice and help students get to know me so I became less of a stranger. Students looked at the pictures and asked questions, so I could tell them a bit about my family and background before I asked them to share details about their life and background, including their goals for after graduation. I also brought snacks to interviews and focus groups. During one of the first group interviews a student left for juice right in the beginning, so after that I brought juice as well so students had no excuses to leave! Interviews and focus groups took place during class periods and were completed over the course of one 45 minute period, or two periods taking an hour and a half. Interviews and focus groups were recorded using audio recorders and students could consent to having their photos used. Students also indicated where the recordings would be saved (Appendix 3). Students also had the option of consenting to use their names and if they did not want their name used they could chose to have general acknowledgement or a pseudonym. Students who chose pseudonyms were numbered: Student 1, Student 2, etc. Gifts for students included a \$10 gift certificate for the Northern Store, chocolate, gum, tea, hot chocolate, pens, and notepads.

All interviews and focus groups were conducted in English, except for one group with three students who were more comfortable communicating in Inuktitut. An Inuit educator in the school acted as an interpreter for this focus group. There are potential challenges which arise when using an interpreter, for example questions and interpretations might not be translated with the exact meaning I or the student was trying to convey.

The high school educators were all given the option of where and when they wanted to do the interview, as well as in a group or individually. I also explained in further detail what the research project was about and answered any questions they had. I interviewed all Inuit educators individually during school hours in their offices in the school at a time which was most convenient for them. I spoke with one non-Inuit educator at their home on a weekend. And the remaining five Qallunaat staff at one home after school hours. These educators preferred to do a focus group and explained that they had group discussions in the past together to talk about educational issues and experiences, and possible ways to address various challenges; therefore, they felt more comfortable sharing as a group. Interviews generally took about one to two hours per individual. The group interview with Qallunaat educators took three and a half hours. Interviews and focus groups were recorded using audio recorders and educators could consent to having their photos used. They also had the option of consenting to use their real names or pseudonyms. Educators who chose pseudonyms were numbered: Educator 1, Educator 2, etc. Educators also indicated where the recordings would be saved. During interviews and focus groups I brought tea, coffee and snacks and also had gifts of appreciation for all educators which included ground coffee and trail mix.

Students and instructors at NS were on a fairly tight schedule as their courses are quite demanding and they are involved in a lot of activities as part of the program; therefore, Morley Hanson, suggested times that were best to interview him and the students. Interviews and focus groups took place at the old NS building on Rideau Street in Ottawa in 2010, and at the new building at 450 Rideau Street in 2011. In April 2010, I

interviewed Morley in his office on two separate days for about an hour and a half each, the second year students in one of their class rooms for a period of three hours with one break halfway. In May 2011, I interviewed two first year students individually with the interviews split over a period of two non-consecutive days. At the beginning of interviews, before turning on the audio recorder, I described the research project and went over consent forms where students could choose whether or not to use their names, photos, and also indicated where the recordings would be saved. I showed my appreciation for their time and insight with many thanks and small gifts. Coffee and tea for Morley, and a packet of chocolate, gum, tea, hot chocolate, pens, notepads, and iTunes gift card for the students.

### ***3.3.6 Reporting Back***

Upon my return to Ottawa, after completing interviews and focus groups with students and educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik, I wrote a trip report describing the purpose of the trip, the number of participants, and future steps for the research project (Appendix 9). I then sent copies of the trip report to the high school, to coordinator Chris Heide, at the Pangnirtung Youth Centre, and to Morley Hanson, at Nunavut Sivuniksavut to distribute to research participants and anyone interested in learning more about the project. The trip report is an important aspect of research because it aids with: keeping in contact with participants; providing updates with regards to the results of the research; and to collaborate with participants to ensure they are satisfied with the ways the insight they have provided is being portrayed correctly and respectfully. This is especially important when working in Indigenous communities where there is a history of

irresponsible research by researchers did not acknowledge the individuals who provided key information and would not inform participants of what became of the information and results. Due to this history, some people are distrusting of researchers who come into their communities for a short period of time and leave.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Express Scribe 4.05, is the software I used to transcribe all interviews and focus groups, verbatim. This process was very helpful to hear all the interviews again and begin to formulate common themes throughout the interviews. I then used ATLAS.ti 5.2 to manually develop thematic coding of interview transcripts. Hay (2010) explains that huge masses of data, in this case 25 transcripts of interviews and focus groups one to three hours long, can be difficult to interpret or digest all at once. For this reason, reduction, or abstraction, can be helpful to facilitate familiarity, understanding and analysis. This is done by organizing the information into smaller sections according to key themes. The codes applied were the themes initially indicated in interview guides; however, more codes which I had not anticipated were added as they arose throughout the interviews and focus groups. Code families include: Background, High School Experiences, Spring Camp, Draft Curriculum, and Evaluating Education. Codes that materialized through interview discussions include: Importance of social life, Influence of educators, Students generally only see connections to Inuit culture in obvious contexts, and Culture = Tradition (for a complete list of codes refer to Appendix 10). By extracting thematic selections related to each code, and compiling them into individual documents to facilitate writing summaries for each code, I was then able to complete a thematic content

analysis. Chapter 4, offers a descriptive presentation of this qualitative data. These selections have been summarized according to the three different groups of participants I interviewed: students at Attagoyuk, educators at Attagoyuk, and students and instructor at Nunavut Sivuniksavut.

The integration of all perspectives enabled results interpretation related to the opportunities and challenges related to implementing culturally appropriate learning (Chapter 4). In Chapter 5, these descriptions have been contrasted to understand how various perspectives interact, as well as to understand the similarities and differences amongst the groups of participants. Hay (2010: 333), notes that "... writing is not merely a mechanical process that reflects the 'reality' of qualitative research findings but rather constitutes in part how and what we know about our research. Writing is thus not so much a process of writing-*up* as one of writing-*in*..." Therefore, we recognize that Chapter 5 was developed through a process of writing-*in* where I have attempted to relate the perspectives of the research participants, but ultimately it is my understanding of how the information fits together and is presented due to my own realities. As Berger (2009: 58) explains "There were some limitations on the broader findings since I am non-Inuit and do not speak Inuktitut[...] This work is the product of a non-Inuit researcher's experiences, thinking, and writing." Through participant observation and experiential learning, I used my experiences in Pangnirtung and Spring Camp to contextualize information and interpret results.

### **3.5 Chapter Summary**

Critical Indigenous pedagogies are applied in this research to bring more understanding to the colonial and post-colonial realities of the north and to focus on the value and importance of Indigenous and subjugated knowledges to inform research and drive change. Critical pedagogy of place gives broader understanding to the importance of the connections between people and their social and environmental surroundings. This is important because this connection is inherent in Inuit cultural learning. Using interviews, focus groups and participant observation in a complementary manner will allow for a comprehensive understanding of student and educator perspectives from Attagoyuk Ilisavik in Pangnirtung, Nunavut, and Nunavut Sivuniksavut in Ottawa, Ontario. Interview and focus group questions are designed to understand the ways in which culturally appropriate learning for Inuit youth in Nunavut being integrated into local school programs and curriculum development, as well as how these efforts contribute to student engagement and success inside the classroom, and development of a more positive cultural identity. Participating in the annual spring camp with Attagoyuk Ilisavik allowed for participant observation of cultural learning to give some background and more in-depth understanding of responses from participants regarding spring camp activities.

## **Chapter 4 - Results**

Chapter 4 presents a summary of the responses with all participants from interviews and focus groups, including Inuit students at Attagoyuk Ilisavik, Inuit educators and Qallunaat educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik, and students and one educator from Nunavut Sivuniksavut. Thirty-three people participated in individual and group interviews in the spring of 2010 and the spring of 2011. Presented here are the participants' perspectives regarding: 1) the importance of cultural learning at the high school level; 2) the current approaches to cultural learning; 3) future development of cultural learning, including the importance of Elder involvement and community collaboration; 4) the importance of spring camp in encompassing these goals; and, 5) how these approaches contribute to student engagement, success, and development of Inuit identity in the school. In order to fully understand responses in interviews and focus groups, descriptions are also provided for how participants define: student engagement, student success, and Inuit identity.

### **4.1 Students at Attagoyuk Ilisavik**

#### ***4.1.1 Cultural Learning In High School***

Students generally agree that Inuit culture and traditional knowledge are a part of their high school education. Many areas of Inuit culture and traditional knowledge are incorporated into teaching in the high school through the curriculum, personal efforts and impromptu learning opportunities. Lewis (2010), a student at Attagoyuk Ilisavik describes how cultural learning is generally planned out by the co-principals of the high school and the DEA who discuss and develop what will be learned and who will teach it.

From the perspective of the students, these efforts are incorporated mainly by Inuit educators and some Qallunaat educators.

Lewis (2010) appreciates the quality and quantity of cultural learning at Attagoyuk Ilisavik, explaining that, “a lot of boys my age they don’t go out hunting as much as they used to a few years back because their parents and everybody’s so caught up in work and there’s just no time [...] they want to go out to experience it but who’s going to take them? So, we need more things like that.” Conversely, Lewis (2010) also feels that cultural learning is beneficial to student learning but is taking up a lot of time in class hours and Kilabuk (2010b) believes that if there was more cultural learning in school it would take away from academic learning.

The following sections will outline the ways in which cultural learning is currently functioning in the school from the perspectives of the students. When responding to questions in and group interviews students did not define how they understand culturally appropriate learning; however, they did provide many examples of what they feel encompasses cultural learning. Inside the school, students see cultural learning being taught through IQ principles and four main classes centered on Inuit learning: Inuktitut language, sewing, shop, and Aulajaaqtut. Cultural learning is also sometimes seen in other classes such as science. In addition to classes, cultural learning is a focal point in the Pangnirtung Youth Leadership Initiative (PYLI). There are many components of cultural learning which are taught by Elders and community members, which occur inside and outside of the school, through spring camp, story telling, and demonstrating traditional skills. In addition to outlining the various ways that cultural

learning is integrated into daily learning, students also discussed how their Inuit culture is celebrated in the school and how the school helps them feel proud to be Inuit.

#### *4.1.1.1 IQ Principles, Curricular Courses and PYLI*

Angmarlik (2010) and Student 4 (2010) talk about Inuit culture and traditional knowledge being integrated into the school through IQ principles. According to Attagoyuk Student Group 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 (2010), Inuktitut and culture is learned in Inuktitut class and through the Inuktitut teacher. In sewing class, students (generally female) learn how to make kamiks, which are seal skin boots, parkas and amautiks, a cloth version of a traditional parka used by women to carry babies on their backs (Attagoyuk Student Group 1, 6 & 8 2010). Students also learn about their culture in shop class, through making knives and listening to the shop teacher talk about hunting (Attagoyuk Student Group 1, 2 & 6 2010). Cultural learning is the focus of Aulajaaqtut classes (Section 2.5.2); however it was only acknowledged by two students as involving Inuit culture (Attagoyuk Student Group 7 2010). In the school, students also watch movies which portray skilled hunters, hunting for seals, caribou, and/or fish, and making qayaks and weapons. Science class was the only class taught by a Qallunaat teacher described as involving Inuit culture. Kooneeliusee (2010), explained how one Qallunaat educator in science class, incorporated the use of a sling shot (a traditional tool) to demonstrate how energy is used while it functions.

Students see their culture being practiced through the Pagnirtung Youth Leadership Initiative (PYLI). PYLI is an extra-curricular program run in the school where students learn and/or practice Inuktitut singing and Inuit dances and have the

opportunity, through fundraising and funding, to travel to other countries and perform and share these skills.

#### *4.1.1.2 Learning With Elders and Community Members*

Students generally agree that Elders have a respected role in the school (Attagoyuk Student Group 3, 4 & 8 2010). Kilabuk (2010b), describes this respect through the fact that everybody listens when Elders are speaking. It is important to have Elders in the school because students learn about their culture through the knowledge and stories of the Elders (Attagoyuk Student Group 2 2010). Lewis (2010) explains that “We’re so grateful they could come here [to] teach us what they know before, you know, they pass on. We gotta learn as much as we can. We just really respect them because they’re giving us this knowledge that their parents or Elders gave them. So, it’s really good.” Students appreciate the learning aspect of having Elders in the school but they also really enjoy their time spent together, describing this time as fun (Attagoyuk Student Group 2 2010) and really interesting (Attagoyuk Student Group 8 2010). They tell stories to the students that are exciting and engaging, but this can also depend on which individual is speaking (Attagoyuk Student Group 1 & 4 2010). Elders came into the school more frequently when students were in elementary and junior high (Attagoyuk Student Group 1 & 3 2010) but most students believe Elders should come into the high school more often than they do now (Attagoyuk Student Group 1 - 7 2010).

As Kooneeliusee (2010) explains, “[We learn] everything [from Elders]. Go hunting and learn new things and old things that they do in the past, so we can be like them when we grow up.” At various times of the year Elders will come into the school or

take students out on the land (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 2010). Lewis (2010), explains how when Elders are in the school “We just get together, just classes go see them in the library or something and they just tell us stories and how to do things. It’s really interesting.” Storytelling is a major component of this learning which generally involves aspects from their life before they moved to permanent settlements (Attagoyuk Student Group 1, 3, 4, 7 & 8 2010). The students really enjoy these stories, and as Nakashuk (2010) explains:

They were having an awesome time back then. Like, there might have been problems but every story they tell is like awesome [...] it feels like it would have been way better living back then than now. But there’s some stories that are, like when they had no food. That’s kind of scary.

Elders talk about the land (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 2010) and how they lived and hunted on the land (Attagoyuk Student Group 3 & 7 2010). They share stories about where their parents were born (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 2010), about living in outpost camps, and how they used to play games (Attagoyuk Student Group 3 2010).

Elders and community members come into the school to do hands-on activities such as making kamiks, seal and fish nets, and bows and arrows (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 - 8 2010). Community members come in and teach how to fix machines (snowmobiles) and how to make qamutiks (Attagoyuk Student Group 4 2010). Students also learn to how to do Inuit dancing and singing (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 2010). Impromptu learning is also incorporated into daily learning. For example: “At times when somebody catches a seal here, like an Elder, they would bring it to the school and just get everybody together and show them how it’s done” (Lewis 2010). One aspect of

being shown “how it’s done” would be learning how to cut seal (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 2010).

Learning with Elders also occurs outside of the school. Attagoyuk Student Group 2, 4, 5, 6 & 8 (2010) described how they learned from Elders how to make an igloo and how this knowledge equips a person with an essential survival skill when you are out on the land (Attagoyuk Student Group 2 & 6 2010). Student 1 (2010) learned that “When they make igloo [the Elders] explain[...] If it’s too soft the snow, there’s no way they can make an igloo out of that. And why they make an igloo, they explain that also. And what it’s used for. So there’s a connection there. Why and what you can’t use.” Angmarlik (2010), explains how on one occasion “The guys did the igloos. [The girls] did the seal skins. How to take the fat out and dry it. Make kamiks. Stuffs like that [...] We have to step on it to make it soft. Like after we take the fat out, dry it, step on it.” A lot of the outdoor cultural learning also occurs at the annual spring camp.

#### *4.1.1.3 Spring Camp*



Figure 4.1 Students and staff prepare machines and qamutiks to leave for spring camp (Pangnirtung, Nunavut, May 2010, Gita Ljubicic)

Spring camp is an experience which provides valuable time in the school year for students to learn traditional knowledge and skills from Elders and community experts (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 2010). Figure 4.1 depicts students and staff preparing machines and qamutiks to leave for the spring camp site. Most students have attended spring camp almost every year since kindergarten (Attagoyuk Student Group 1 - 6 2010). It is a busy time of the year however and some students miss spring camp due to sports tournaments and other commitments (Attagoyuk Student Group 3 & 8 2010). Students really appreciate this opportunity to go out camping every spring and enjoy various aspects of the program such as being out on the land, seal hunting, fishing, and helping the cooks in the kitchen cabin (Attagoyuk Student Group 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6 2010) (Kitchen cabin depicted in Figure 4.2). The students also have fun just hanging out with friends (Attagoyuk Student Group 3 & 5 2010), playing cards (Attagoyuk Student Group 4 2010), playing soccer (Attagoyuk Student Group 5 2010) and having freedom and feeling like, “You can do anything” (Kilabuk 2010b). Some students comment that there should be more spring camp because it is fun and they would be able to learn more from Elders (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 2010). However, Kooneeliusee (2010) has not attended spring camp since elementary school because his friends do not go.



Figure 4.2 Kitchen cabin at Spring Camp, with a view of Cumberland Sound  
(Spring Camp, May 2010, Carmelle Sullivan)

Students note various differences in what they learn now at camp versus when they were in elementary school. For some students, they used to learn more about fishing but now their learning is more focused on hunting. All the learning at camp is interconnected. For example, when students go fishing, they learn fishing techniques, how to clean and cook the fish, navigational skills in remembering how to get to the lake, and safety skills to understand where the ice is thin, and what to do if they get lost (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 & 7 2010). The various interconnected themes include: safety and survival skills, seal hunting, fishing, navigation, cooking, mechanical skills, and Inuktitut terminology. Table 4.1 provides examples from students which highlight each of these themes.

Table 4.1 Skills acquired at spring camp

Skills	Examples	Sources
Safety and survival skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying thin ice is so as to avoid it.</li> <li>- How to go camping without parents.</li> <li>- Building igloos and other shelters for protection from the elements.</li> </ul>	Attagoyuk Student Group 2 (2010); Attagoyuk Student Group 4 - 7 (2010)
Seal hunting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Different hunting techniques.</li> <li>- Good hunting locations.</li> <li>- Identifying seal pup dens under snow or ice.</li> <li>- How to approach a seal.</li> <li>- Preparation of meat and skin (cutting, skinning, cleaning).</li> <li>- Activities undertaken at camp will depend on equipment and resource availability.</li> </ul>	Attagoyuk Student Group 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 (2010)
Fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The best areas to find fish.</li> <li>- How to cut and clean the fish.</li> </ul>	Attagoyuk Student Group 1, 3, 5, 7 (2010)
Navigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Common routes to certain places.</li> <li>- Sites for camping, hunting, fishing, etc.</li> <li>- Learning placenames.</li> <li>- Learning how to make an Inuksuk and following back trails.</li> <li>- Staying with the group so as not to get lost.</li> </ul>	Attagoyuk Student Group 4 - 7 (2010)
Cooking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparing Inuit food, such as: seal, fish, caribou (i.e. caribou stew), and bannock.</li> </ul>	Attagoyuk Student Group 1 and 6 (2010)
Sewing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Making kamiks and parkas.</li> </ul>	Attagoyuk Student Group 1 and 6 (2010)
Mechanical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How to fix snow machines and qamutiks when you are out on the land</li> </ul>	Attagoyuk Student Group 1 (2010)
Inuktitut terminology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The names of body parts for animals such as seal or caribou.</li> <li>- Communicating in Inuktitut</li> </ul>	Attagoyuk Student Group 5 and 6 (2010)

Students learn many skills at camp but the teaching and learning methods used by Elders and camp staff are just as important as the skills themselves.

4.1.1.3.1 Approaches to Teaching and Learning - Students explain how the skills acquired at camp are taught through demonstration by Elders and camp staff while students

observe and then experience these skills (i.e. try for themselves) when there is an opportunity (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 & 7 2010) (Figure 4.3). There is also an individual aspect where the onus is on the student to pursue the topic they are interested in learning about by asking questions to those who are knowledgeable and can teach them (Attagoyuk Student Group 2 2010). Nakashuk (2010) also explains how students are made to feel comfortable enough in this learning environment to learn from their mistakes. At spring camp, experiential learning is the main approach to education. For example, one student recalls an experience which occurred at a time when there was a lot of fog and their group got lost so they were driving around for many hours. The students learned through this experience about navigation and following back their trails. Other students have learned that if they get lost they should build an Inuksuk or make a shelter such as an iglu (Attagoyuk Student Group 5 & 6 2010).



Figure 4.3 Students and camp guide observe a seal hole  
(Spring Camp, May 2010, Gita Ljubicic)

4.1.1.3.2 Connecting Spring Camp With Daily Life and Classroom Learning - The knowledge students learn at spring camp prepares students to be aware of the process and skills required for success in on-the-land endeavors. Students state that they can use this information to go camping on their own and can also pass this knowledge on to others (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 2010). Student 4 (2010) and Student 2 (2010) explain that without spring camp they would not be equipped with the necessary skills to survive. Students agree that their experiences at spring camp also help with classroom learning once they return from their week out on the land (Attagoyuk Student Group 3, 5 & 6 2010). Kilabuk (2010b), explains that the knowledge and skills acquired at spring camp help in Inuktitut class because they communicate mostly in Inuktitut with camp staff and peers. It also helps with Aulajaaqtut because the foundation for this class is Inuit culture and IQ principles, thus the learning styles are similar because they are rooted in Inuit ways of knowing, being and doing. Shukulaq (2010), believes the relaxed atmosphere at spring camp allows her to return to the school environment feeling more at ease than prior to the week away, contributing to positive attitudes in her classes.

#### *4.1.1.4 Celebrating Inuit Culture*

Inuit culture is also celebrated at Attagoyuk Ilisavik in addition to the learning that takes place in class, out at spring camp, and other learning experiences. Students shared many different ways that Inuit culture is celebrated in their school. Kilabuk (2010a), explains that Inuit culture is celebrated through school assemblies where students who have excelled in their academic pursuits as well as cultural pursuits, such as when a

student catches their first polar bear, are acknowledged. Kilabuk (2010a) and Nakashuk (2010) both say that their culture is celebrated through Inuit games, which are competitive activities based on strength and endurance. Attagoyuk Student Group 1 (2010) see their culture being celebrated through IQ principles. Angmarlik (2010) sees Inuit culture being celebrated when spring camp happens. Students also see Inuit culture celebrated through PYLI, through activities and performances such as drum dancing and fashion shows where traditional clothing are modeled (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 & 7). These aspects of the school environment reflect positively for students. In the following section are the perspectives of students which further expand on positive experiences in the school which contribute to engagement and success.

#### ***4.1.2 Reflecting on Student Engagement and Success***

##### ***4.1.2.1 Student Perspectives on Engagement***

Students explain that they are engaged in they learning when it appeals to their interests (Attagoyuk Student Group 1, 4, 5 & 6 2010). The range of interests really varies across the available classes. For some students, they enjoy reading or sewing and others really enjoy science class. Attagoyuk Student Group 1 and 2 (2010) agree that science class is very engaging, especially when conducting experiments, such as dissecting small animals. Student engagement in the classroom is also fostered when teachers are able to provide varied work for students at different learning levels and for those who get behind in the material and need to get caught up (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 & 8 2010). Having a “missed work binder” accessible to students at all times is especially helpful in the

regard. These perspectives of engagement also contribute to how students define success for themselves.

#### *4.1.2.2 Student Perspectives on Success in School*

Student perspectives of success in school really varied based on their individual lifestyle and interests. For example, two female students I spoke with have children and thus, for Lewis (2010), “success means just getting here. I have a son, he’s over one [...] I’m happy I could be here because of the day care, that’s a really great thing. I didn’t think I would be able to do it but I’m really happy I can be here.” For many students, feeling successful in school is based on accomplishing classwork (Attagoyuk Student Group 1, 2, 4 & 7 2010) and doing well on tests (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 2010). For Nakashuk (2010), the goal of graduation is the ultimate success for high school. Angmarlik (2010) and Student 5 (2010) explain that classroom success is intertwined with group dynamics; ability to concentrate and accomplish work are facilitated when students are quiet in class and working towards similar goals. However, students can help themselves to be successful by going to bed early so as not to be tired in the morning, ensure that they go to school, then focus on school work and not get behind. Attagoyuk Student Group 3 (2010) attribute a lot of their scholarly success to the support of their parents. Kilabuk (2010b) explains that, “Our parents make us go to school everyday [...] Some parents don’t give rules to their kids and they don’t like going school. They don’t feel like it ‘cause their parents are not telling them to do anything. It’s a good thing my mom gives me rules.” Such rules may include curfews and ensuring youth go to school.

#### *4.1.2.3 Student Perspectives on Success in Daily Life*

Social relations are important for Attagoyuk Student Groups 1 and 2 (2010); they feel successful when they respect others, can be a good friend, and help others such as family, grandparents and Elders (Attagoyuk Student Group 1, 2 & 7 2010). In other areas of daily life outside of school students talked about feeling successful when working (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 2010), fixing their bikes (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 2010), cleaning up after their dogs (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 2010), and playing in hockey tournaments (Attagoyuk Student Group 4 2010). Success is also defined by doing a job well-done and also being able to learn from your mistakes (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 2010).

### **4.2 Inuit Educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik**

#### ***4.2.1 Curriculum Development***

##### *4.2.1.1 Past Changes*

The general agreement about past approaches to education and curriculum in northern communities among the Inuit educators is that it has not been relevant to the realities of the students (Section 2.3.3) (Alivaktuk 2010; Kanayuk 2010; Lee 2010; Young 2010; Educator 4 2010). When many of these educators attended high school the language of instruction was also almost exclusively in English, there was little to no cultural content, and the learning did not relate to the lives and environments of the students (Kanayuk 2010; Educator 4 2010). For example, where students dissect fetal pigs in biology they could be dissecting animals that are caught in the immediate

environment, while learning the relevant cultural knowledge associated with it (Lee 2010).

#### *4.2.1.2 Current Development*

The current school system is seeing more culturally appropriate learning being integrated into teaching approaches and curriculum. Inuit educators are very excited, proud, and gratified to be a part of this shift; teaching students in their own language, seeing students exposed to this kind of learning, being able to understand where they come from, and developing pride in who they are and in their heritage (Kanayuk 2010; Lee 2010; Young 2010; Educator 4 2010). This current approach is striving to create a system around the students as opposed to making the students fit into an inappropriately designed system not originally intended for cross-cultural learning or students with English as a Second Language (ESL) (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010). At the curriculum level, there is now more cultural content and approaches to learning being applied, and there is more consideration for ESL learners. This helps students to develop their thinking and problem solving skills; however, students continue to struggle in these courses because their first language is Inuktitut (Alivaktuk 2010; Educator 4 2010).

At Attagoyuk Ilisavik, co-principals Cathy Lee and Lena Metuq, have made a distinct decision to make the school more reflective of their community. IQ principles are applied in various ways throughout the school to ensure that the learning fits with Inuit ways of knowing, being and doing. For example, if a student has caught their first seal or polar bear, this is acknowledged and celebrated in the school through school assemblies in order to bring school and community life together (Alivaktuk 2010; Lee 2010;

Educator 4 2010). School awards assemblies were also included in how students see their culture being celebrated at the school, so these efforts by educators are having the intended influence of students. Students react well to having IQ principles in the school, involving more Inuktitut learning, and more cultural content, such as making clothing and tools for traditional livelihoods (Kanayuk 2010). At the community level, the DEA has considerable input in what it is the students are learning so this helps to make the learning more relevant (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010). There is also consultation between the DEA and school, as well as with community members, including Elders and parents (Lee 2010). This increase in cultural content means that students are more familiar with their heritage and culture but are also learning science, math, English, etc, all of which will benefit them after graduation (Young 2010; Educator 4 2010).

Educators are critical to how the learning is brought into the classroom (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010). When the learning in the classroom does not seem purposeful for the students they may lose interest. Therefore, it is necessary for educators to clearly communicate the connection of the topic with the lives of the students. At Attagoyuk Iisavik there are very knowledgeable educators who can take the curricula and make it meaningful in the classroom through the kinds of activities they choose for the class. However, educators need to ensure that they are following the Nunavut approved curriculum guides (Section 5.2.5.2) in a way that promotes student heritage and pride (Lee 2010).

## ***4.2.2 Cultural Learning in High School***

### *4.2.2.1 Curricular and Extracurricular Cultural Content*

Young (2010) explains that teaching “Inuit culture is very important because the Inuit will be always here, [...] It is very important because when I was in school there was nothing like that.” Under the current curriculum, cultural content includes an Inuktitut language course, Career Technology Studies (shop and sewing), and Aulajaaqtut (Lee 2010). Hunters, Elders, and other experts are also hired to come into the school, or take the students out on the land, to learn about: hunting, fishing, sewing, igloo building, and travel safety and survival skills on the land and sea ice. Inside the school, students learn net making (for catching fish), cleaning and preparing seal skins (including scraping the skin, washing, scraping off fur, to put it on a stretcher), and then sewing with skins once they have been prepared.

### *4.2.2.2 Spring Camp*

Prior to 1991, educators, hunters, and Elders would take one class out on the land for weeklong periods hunting caribou and seal, and fishing. The larger spring camp operation that is now run with the elementary and high school was initially conceived in 1989 when Alivaktuk (2010) and the vice-principal at the time began planning for how to involve all the students. Parents and community members were also involved to aid in the planning process (Alivaktuk 2010; Educator 4 2010). With the success of the first year in 1991 they decided to try again the following year, and the camp has been running annually ever since. The success of spring camp is made possible through the commitment and program development of spring camp staff, and funding from various

sources (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010). The efforts of the school and community in organizing spring camp has resulted in an educational experience with defined goals and expectations. These efforts over the years have enabled the construction of several permanent cabins at Nasauyak Point where the spring camp base is found (Figure 4.4).



Figure 4.4 Construction of a new cabin at spring camp, Nasauyak Point (Spring Camp, May 2010, Gita Ljubicic)

Inuit educators describe the purpose of camp as being integral in teaching students to survive on the land, connect with their heritage, and preserve Inuit culture using the skills passed on by Elders and other experts (Alivaktuk 2010; Kanayuk 2010; Young 2010) Young (2010), explains that “[t]he purpose of spring camp is to keep [our] culture alive.” When she was young her family lived on the land, much the way things are done at spring camp. Kanayuk (2010) describes, “the main focus [of spring camp] is to teach [the students] how we used to live when we were living out in the camps before we went to school.” According to Lee (2010), the overall objectives of spring camp are:

- To give students an opportunity to go learn on the land;
- To learn about their heritage;
- To learn who they are as young Inuit;
- To help give them land based learning knowledge skills that will help them learn in their path to be able human beings; and,
- To help them understand the important connection of the land to Inuit.

Students learn from everyone and everything around them, including camp staff (Elders, guides, cooks), their peers, and their environment. They learn about the richness of their heritage and how and why it is important today which helps them to feel proud of their ancestors and their family (Lee 2010).

The camp runs annually for students from kindergarten to grade twelve. Younger students attend camp during the day and return home in the evening. At this age, the main activities are fishing and learning the associated survival skills such as: 1) dressing appropriately for various weather conditions; 2) preparing fishing gear; 3) successfully catching a fish; 4) cleaning the fish; and, 5) being thankful for the food provided (Lee 2010). There is also the knowledge and culture associated with activities, such as the Inuktitut names of bones and what you can learn about a particular fish by each bone, as well as the legends connected with various bones (Lee 2010). As students get older they stay overnight at camp and have increasingly more responsibilities, and the skills and expectations also increase. At camp there are a list of expectations based on IQ principles that students must meet according to their grade level. Helping out is a very important aspect of the IQ principles and of camp; as students get older they are expected to help out more with the operation of the camp but are also entrusted to travel further and to go out on the sea ice and to the floe edge to hunt seal, caribou, and geese (Lee 2010; Kanayuk 2010). Through these experiences, students learn how to get ready for long

distance travel, navigate, prepare food, and what to do in emergencies, such as fixing machines if they break down (Alivaktuk 2010, Young 2010). When seals are caught older male students learn how to cut through skin and the meat and older female students learn how to *majjaktuq* (i.e. scrape the fat off the skin to prepare it for making clothing). Students are taught how to braid strings for kamiks, as well as some knitting and crocheting (Kanayuk 2010; Alivaktuk 2010). Students also learn to build shelters and to watch the weather to ensure their safety (Lee 2010). Elders, guides, and other camp staff teach students about the ice and how it breaks up in the high tides and low tides, about weather, and snow and wind patterns (Alivaktuk 2010; Lee 2010).

4.2.2.2.1 Challenges For Inuit Educators At Camp - Spring camp is a well run educational experience for students. However, there are still challenging aspects which educators must contend with. Financially running the camp is a major factor in its success every year. A lot of funding is required and must be actively and constantly sought after via the existing budget, third party funding, and fund raising (Alivaktuk 2010; Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010). Conflicting Inuit and Southern perspectives can also be a challenge, such as completing risk management forms, insurance coverage, and consent forms which must be consulted before students can use firearms or drive skidoos (Lee 2010). Running spring camp requires a lot of time and resources and maintaining the high school throughout the duration of spring camp can be quite a challenge to balance. For example, finding enough substitute teachers to fill in at the high school while others are out at camp (Lee 2010). Dealing with changing weather conditions and ensuring safety through

good, skilled, reliable, responsible staff is always a concern but they have been pretty fortunate in this regard (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010).

4.2.2.2 Challenges For Students At Camp - Challenges for students at camp, according to the Inuit educators, include: 1) personal issues which may be occurring at home but come with them to camp; 2) remembering they are in a school setting where there are rules established to ensure safety; 3) wearing inappropriate clothing that is not warm enough; 4) as well as comfort levels with being in a new setting (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010, Kanayuk 2010). Lucy jokes that the biggest challenge of being out at camp is not having access to junk food, aside from that, the students do not find it very challenging (Young 2010).

4.2.2.3 Importance Of Spring Camp For Knowledge Transmission - Spring camp is important for Inuit knowledge transmission because it can be adequately taught in the natural setting, out on the land, in the manner that knowledge was shared and passed on through generations in the past (Lee 2010). Traditionally, knowledge was passed on orally and through observation, experience, and under the guidance of experts, and so spring camp is modeled in this approach to learning (Lee 2010). This approach also helps generate respect between Elders and students because:

Elders and parents and community members can be valued [and respected] for their traditional knowledge and for their skills [...] And for kids to see that and to see how innovative their ancestors are and [...] how resilient, how incredibly intelligent, and how they used what they had from the land and how hard they had to work to do that to survive, and how they had to work together to get along, how they had to resolve conflict in everybody's best interest to be able to survive (Lee 2010).

For many students, spring camp is the only opportunity to experience and learn important survival skills out on the land. Some parents did not learn these skills in their youth and now are not equipped to teach their own children, but would still wish for them to have these opportunities so they can pass on the knowledge to their children. Some families have the knowledge but they do not have the necessary tools, such as machines which provide access to the land (Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010). Without the equipment to travel it becomes difficult to pass on skills and knowledge. Young (2010) observes that students retain what they learn at spring camp because after they have graduated they still remember the route to take to go out to the camp, or go fishing or hunting and can apply all the skills they have learned on their own with friends and family members. A group of students and staff follow the trail from Lake Avataqtu after a day of fishing back to the spring camp site at Nasauyak Point in Figure 4.5. If they wish to further their knowledge they have been provided with a base from which to begin. In this manner, students have the opportunity to hunt and/or work in the community because the school has provided these opportunities (Educator 4 2010; Young 2010). Educators are also given the opportunity to re-learn what the Elders know, or be exposed for the first time, enabling them to better understand what the students need to learn (Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010).



Figure 4.5 Students and staff follow the trail from Lake Avataqtu back to Nasauyak Point (Spring Camp, May 2010, Gita Ljubicic)

As students grow older and graduate they have the opportunity to return to spring camp as adults to be part of the camp staff as guides, cooks, and/or supervisors. They provide role models for the students and demonstrate how they can pursue the learning of traditional knowledge, but also students are learning how the camp is run and are being prepared to survive on the land, know of the dangers, and one day run the camp when the founders have retired. Thus, ensuring that the knowledge shared at camp will not be lost (Alivaktuk 2010; Educator 4 2010).

4.2.2.2.4 Importance Of Spring Camp Outside School - Spring camp is important for the development of students outside of school because it helps them to understand more about their heritage and who they are, and to be proud of themselves and their culture (Alivaktuk 2010; Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010). It also allows students to experiment with different approaches to learning and understand their own strengths and weaknesses. With this knowledge and experience they may move forward in their lives with a sense of

pride and confidence. This foundation is especially important in a time where Qallunaat culture is flooding the media and internet and can seem quite appealing to young, impressionable students (Lee 2010). Lee (2010) explains that if the youth are not exposed to “opportunities to see the positives of their own culture, their own heritage, they’re not going to fully appreciate who they are and be proud of who they are.” Therefore, the opportunities at spring camp provide experiences to aid students in their development.

4.2.2.2.5 Engagement and Success, During and After Camp - Every Inuit educator describes levels of engagement and success as very high while students are at camp (Alivaktuk 2010; Kanayuk 2010; Lee 2010; Young 2010; Educator 4 2010). Students are very interested in virtually all of the activities offered at camp (Table 4.1) (Alivaktuk 2010; Kanayuk 2010; Lee 2010; Young 2010; Educator 4 2010). The atmosphere at camp is very relaxed and calming and allows students to enjoy themselves while learning (Educator 4 2010, Kanayuk 2010). The most significant factor which Inuit educators feel demonstrates student engagement at camp is the fact that students are constantly inquiring about camp throughout the school year, communicating their desire to return to camp (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010). Another factor is the high percentage of students who participate in spring camp every year; almost all students attend camp except those who must work or look after their families (Alivaktuk 2010; Young 2010).

In regards to success of students at camp, Lee (2010) explains that the goals of the camp are being achieved because they are helping students: 1) connect to the land; 2) understand the importance of their heritage; 3) be proud of themselves as young Inuit and young northerners; and, 4) learn environmental skills and life skills towards becoming

more able human beings. Success is also achieved when alumni return to the camp as guides, hunters, and cooks or when they can continue these activities outside of the school camp (Lee 2010; Young 2010). Success of the camp is also demonstrated when students talk positively about their experiences after camp and by students who had positive learning experiences and wish to return to further develop those experiences (Kanayuk 2010; Educator 4 2010). For example, if they were successful with fishing or hunting they will feel proud and want to experience this again (Kanayuk 2010; Young 2010).

Spring camp allows students and educators to see one another in a different atmosphere. Educators may see a student who is not confident in class but is very competent at spring camp which may help them to facilitate the transfer of these skills, confidence, and competence back into the classroom (Educator 4 2010; Kanayuk 2010). Because spring camp is a relaxing atmosphere students feel rejuvenated when they return to the classroom and may help them to complete homework and assignments. Participating in spring camp helps students in their sewing, shop and Inuktitut classes because a lot of the skills learned at camp are directly related to these classes (Kanayuk 2010). However, it is difficult to say to a specific degree how spring camp helps the engagement and success of students in classes once they return from camp because there are various conditions at play. Because it is the end of the school year interest in classes begins to fade, and the days are getting long; almost 24 hours of daylight means that students may not be sleeping at night and too tired during class or sleeping during the day (i.e. attendance is typically low at this time of year) (Lee 2010).

Community collaboration and input is a critical factor in the successful development and maintenance of spring camp and this collaboration is also important inside the school.

#### *4.2.2.3 Importance Of Community Collaboration*

The Inuit educators agree that having Elder and community involvement is a critical aspect of successful educational programming (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010). Elders, parents, and community members need to continue to define the goals and expectations for programs such as spring camp, as well as within the school (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010). After spring camp a debriefing session occurs with camp staff, parents and community members. The discussion is recorded from everything that went well, as well as aspects that did not go so well, and for future planning purposes. The majority of feedback from parents is very positive and they are happy their children are able to participate in and learn at spring camp. However, some parents give negative feedback because they feel their child could have had a better experience. But the school is proactive, ensuring contracts are signed amongst staff, expectations of camp are established, standard police checks for staff are collected, and risk management forms are completed for the Department of Education (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010). Collaboration is important to get a general sense of what community members want for youth in their communities and acceptable approaches to facilitate learning, for spring camp and throughout the school year (Lee 2010). Without the support and input of parents and community members these programs would not be successful (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010; Young 2010).

Elders have the first hand knowledge of living on the land and are very familiar with the skills and practices to be taught to youth (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010; Alivaktuk 2010). It is also important for youth to see the collaboration of the school with hunters, guides, and Elders. Many Inuit experts are staff members at the school so it is important that collaboration occurs within the school as well as involving community members who are not as closely connected to the school (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010).

#### *4.2.2.4 Challenges Of Community Collaboration*

Historically, the government run school has been an entity in itself and the voices of Inuit were never heard or taken into consideration with regards to its operation. Many people have negative experiences with these schools due to: their children being taken away to attend them; students not being allowed to speak their language, and; having everything imposed on them inside and outside the school (Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010). When the school is disconnected and incongruent with community life this creates barriers to open communication and collaboration (Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010). When Inuit first became teachers they had to prove they were as qualified as any other Qallunaat teacher; respect and trust had to be gained from parents, students, and community members. Currently, there are more and more Inuit educators in the schools and their voice is becoming stronger and helping to shape how the school program is run. The current challenge is to help the community see that schooling is different now and that it does in fact belong to them (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010).

#### *4.2.2.5 Student Respect and Identification With Inuit Culture*

Inuit society is in a period of transition, between a traditional Inuit lifestyle (i.e. living off the land) and a more global or modern lifestyle (i.e. with the introduction of cable tv and internet). Students find themselves along a wide spectrum between the more traditional Inuit lifestyle and more global, Qallunaat lifestyle. Some students, with the support of their families, are proud and strong in who they are as young Inuit. Other students aspire to a more global idealism and are struggling with their Inuit identity (Lee 2010; Young 2010; Educator 4 2010). For the most part, students are interested in cultural learning as well as being connected to the global world, through technology, internet, and social networking sites such as Facebook and Bebo (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010).

In Pangnirtung, there is a high proportion of students who strongly identify with their Inuit identity and language compared with many other northern communities (Alivaktuk 2010; Young 2010; Educator 4 2010). Lee (2010), explains how “Pangnirtung tends to be fairly strong in guarding traditions, say relative to the further kind of west you go in Nunavut where there’s more proximity to Yellowknife and other kinds of lifestyles [...] there’s not been as much ability to keep the language strong with young people.” At Attagoyuk Ilisavik, students welcome the more Inuit centered learning and it makes them proud to be learning about their culture (Alivaktuk 2010; Educator 4 2010; Young 2010). However, Young (2010) explains that there are some students who do not respond to the increased cultural learning in schools.

Cultural learning must begin early in elementary school to contribute to the positive development of Inuit identity, including: learning in Inuktitut; participating in cultural

activities, such as spring camp; and, integrating IQ principles (Educator 4 2010, Young 2010). The importance of educators and staff in developing student identity is also very critical. Educators need to demonstrate and instill in their students who they are, where they come from and that Inuit language and culture is as important as the other, more global culture (Educator 4 2010; Young 2010). If an educator is not Inuit then they need to be aware they are teaching a different culture and have a willingness to learn and embrace both cultures (Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010).

#### *4.2.2.6 Integrating Cultural and Academic Learning*

Educators concur that integrating cultural and learning is a valuable approach to teaching and learning in Nunavut high schools (Alivaktuk 2010; Lee 2010; Young 2010; Educator 4 2010). At Attagoyuk Ilisavik there are staff who are very knowledgeable in taking curricula and making it meaningful and culturally appropriate at the classroom level through their approach to teaching and the types of activities they chose to do. Furthermore, these approaches to teaching need to be facilitated and taught to all educators, especially those who are not as familiar with Inuit culture and lifestyle (Lee 2010).

At Attagoyuk Ilisavik, the approach to teaching is heading towards theme-based education, similar to the environmental science curriculum being developed by the Department of Education (Section 2.5.2). This approach is interdisciplinary, integrating cultural learning as well as grouping competencies from academic classes according to a northern-relevant theme, such as whales and whaling. Involving Elders, parents, and other community members as a part of the planning process is critical in developing the

thematic approach because they have the expertise in traditional knowledge. Hiring trained and caring educators is the next important step to make the learning meaningful for the students (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010). There is also a need for more consultation between educators and government employees, such as curriculum developers, so educators can state what is important and ensure Inuit culture is kept strong (Young 2010). Lee (2010), gives examples of how cultural and academic learning are, and can, function together:

[I]f they're cutting up a seal for instance and they're learning all the parts of the seal and they're learning what parts, like if it's a first catch or or if you're if it's not a first catch and you're bringing it home, which parts would be given to which family members [...] to show respect to that person. So they can be learning [...] traditional knowledge about the seal but they can also be learning, at the same time more Western knowledge. Maybe they find you know something on the seal that looks a bit diseased or something so then you can bring in western scientific knowledge as well. So that kind of learning, what I've seen, when we've been doing that at the school the kids have been so engaged.

Furthermore, the learning does not need to be in the school building. If someone has caught a seal or a whale a class can go down to the beach to experience the process of preparing it right in the natural environment (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010).

### ***4.2.3 Reflecting On Student Engagement and Success***

#### ***4.2.3.1 Perspectives on Student Engagement***

Student engagement occurs when students are actively involved in all aspects of the learning, as facilitated by the teacher, including a cycle of: 1) planning; 2) participating; 3) assessing; 4) reviewing, and; 5) celebrating (Lee 2010). The learning must be student-centered, which helps make it relevant to the realities of the students, their environment, and experiences. This will also help students enjoy the learning process and wish to

pursue it (Lee 2010; Young 2010; Educator 4 2010). Young (2010) she sees students especially engaged in academic learning when they demonstrate a desire to prepare for college or university. The Inuit educators provide various examples of how and when students are most engaged in learning, as summarized in Table 4.2. When these activities can be linked together student engagement really increases. For example, experiments in science class are new, hands on, and can involve academic and cultural learning (Lee 2010). Impromptu learning in cases where students travel outside to learn about a seal or whale that has been caught by a hunter could incorporate these aspects.

Table 4.2 Areas of learning where student engagement is highest

Areas of engagement	Example	Source
Hands-on activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- project based learning</li> <li>- sports (tournaments)</li> <li>- spring camp</li> <li>- hunting</li> </ul>	Educator 4 2010; Kanayuk 2010; Lee 2010; Young 2010
Link to heritage and environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- spring camp</li> <li>- hunting</li> <li>- whales and whaling</li> </ul>	Educator 4 2010; Kanayuk 2010; Lee 2010; Young 2010
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- internet</li> <li>- iPods</li> </ul>	Lee 2010
Classroom environment	- a comfortable classroom environment contributes to student collaboration and confidence to seek help from teachers	Young 2010
New aspects of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sports (tournaments)</li> <li>- sewing class</li> </ul>	Educator 4 2010; Kanayuk 2010; Young 2010

These areas which contribute to increased student engagement in the learning material also help students feel more successful in their high school experiences.

#### 4.2.3.2 Defining Student Success

Student success as defined by the Inuit educators cannot be generalized to apply to all students (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010). There are successes in the classroom as well as

personal successes which are achieved when a student overcomes challenges which may impede their accomplishments in the classroom. Alivaktuk (2010), Lee (2010) and Educator 4 (2010) describe how success is achieved by students when they:

- advance their individual knowledge and skills;
- learn how to learn;
- are proud of who they are;
- confidently contribute to their family, community, and the world, based on their individual strengths;
- are excited about learning and how they achieved the finished product, demonstrated through verbal communication, artistic mediums, or in writing;
- are coming to school everyday, even though learning materials are challenging or there are extenuating circumstances outside of school;
- return to high school after having dropped out;
- mature and improve any negative behavior;
- understand they have done something wrong and can apologize for it;
- gain independence and the confidence to pursue their post-graduation goals.

#### *4.2.3.3 Preparing Students For Graduation*

Inuit educators feel that high school in Nunavut is helping to prepare students for graduation, and their post-graduation goals, with increasing success each year (Alivaktuk 2010; Lee 2010; Young 2010). Class sizes are not decreasing as much as less students are dropping out, and the number of graduates is continuing to climb across Nunavut. A lot of graduates are continuing on to Nunavut Sivuniksavut, college, and university. Since the 1990s, when more government offices were established in Nunavut, more graduates are also pursuing government jobs. The PYLI program has been an integral aspect in preparing students for NS, college, and university; whereas before the program was established students were not as prepared (Alivaktuk 2010; Lewis 2010). To further promote students towards graduation, students need to be exposed to opportunities and experiences where they can grow and discover more about themselves. These involve

activities that relate to who they are, can push them out of their comfort zone, and allow students to see and be involved in the world outside of Pangnirtung. In this manner students can experience other ways of living and then be able to come back and look at their own community and be proud of who they are and their way of life (Lee 2010). Opportunities to experience cities and cultures outside of their own communities also give students ideas for different goals that they can work towards and what to expect if they leave the community for work or school (Kanayuk 2010; Lee 2010; Young 2010). Students are offered these opportunities through exchanges and programs such as Students On Ice. Work experience is another important aspect in preparing students for graduation and what to expect once they enter the workforce or what they need in preparation to enter (Young 2010).

### **4.3 Qallunaat Educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik**

#### ***4.3.1 Curriculum Development***

The Qallunaat educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik have only been teaching in Nunavut for a short period (1-4 years) and have not seen or experienced many changes in curricula themselves. Therefore they could not comment on the kinds of effects these changes have had on the students or the school. Generally, Qallunaat educators have found that if they would like to bring more cultural content into the classroom they are required to modify any course material to make it relevant to Nunavut and the students (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). There are some relevant curricula, such as the Northwest Territories-created Grade 12 environmental studies course which Educator 1 (2010) describes as “really good. It’s very north centered [and...] really hands-on. It was very well made and it really

suits and I'm glad we still use that one because [...] you can actually go out on the tundra and study the things that you're reading about." However, Educator 3 (2010) believes that with the creation of Nunavut, the GN wanted to overhaul the old education system but they got rid of the old one before they had the new material to replace it. Subsequently, some newly developed modules within curricula are not created with an overarching framework; there are no curriculum guidelines or outcomes, and no clear idea of the intended direction (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Some locally developed material has been created with a lack of funding support in terms of qualified developers and researchers. Although Qallunaat educators have not spent as many years teaching in Pangnirtung as their Inuit peers, they are still fully engaged in the school and are working towards improving the student experience for each individual in their classes through academic and cultural learning.

#### **4.3.2 Cultural Learning in High School**

##### ***4.3.2.1 Spring Camp***

4.3.2.1.1 Building rapport between students and teachers - All the Qallunaat educators agree that spring camp is very beneficial in building rapport between students and teachers. At spring camp, educators have the opportunity to see students in a different setting where they are sometimes more confident and excel at activities that are not offered inside the school. Therefore, they are more confident with the teachers because they have now been seen as competent, as opposed to often being seen as doing poorly in regards to academic work (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). When the Qallunaat educators partake in the same activities it gives them the opportunity:

[T]o be able to think what it might be like sometimes in [the students'] shoes when they're in the classroom and they're trying to do something which you know they don't feel successful at and they're like 'I don't want to do it and like stop this process and let me do something else.' And that for me was a big wow, I can relate to them (Educator 1 2010).

Due to the change in environment students and teachers both have the opportunity to relate to one another in a more relaxed setting where educators do not have to discipline students as much so they can see each other on friendlier terms. Students and educators interacting in a different atmosphere which contributes to building rapport in a manner that "breaks away stereotypes and [...] preconceived notions of things" (Educator 3 2010), such as 'Qallunaat lifestyle' versus 'Inuit lifestyle' and what people might assume about one another. However, once they are back in class some students may struggle with the transition of seeing teachers in authoritative positions again (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010).

4.3.2.1.2 Engagement and Success, During and After Camp - Qallunaat educators explain that spring camp as contributes to student engagement. There is a small group of students who enjoy fishing and hunting, driving skidoos over the sea ice and doing chores, such as going to get water (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). They also enjoy hanging out with their friends and playing cards (Ibid). The students who go to spring camp enjoy themselves because there are many hands-on activities which are appropriate for the many kinesthetic learners and they also get to self-select the activities they participate in (Ibid). However, not all students are fully engaged at camp and may sleep during the day while others are out participating in daily activities (Ibid). From what students tell Qallunaat educators, there are those who do not attend camp for various reasons, some of

them being that they have children, or jobs, or do not have necessary clothing that will be warm enough. For some students, camp is boring or they go fishing and hunting with their families therefore they do not feel the need to go with the school (Ibid). One educator suggests that making camp mandatory might increase overall levels of participation in spring camp (Educator 1 2010), or perhaps it is a matter of having scheduled trips back into town at a certain time everyday for students who do not have access to machines (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). It is important to increase levels of participation at camp because “students are losing out by not taking part in it,” as it is such a great learning experience (Educator 6 2010).

The Qallunaat educators believe there needs to be more effort put into connecting camp with classroom learning. Educator 5 (2010) believes that the education at camp should be conducted in a manner which encourages and pushes students to challenge themselves to try new things and learn from these experiences. Educator 6 (2010) comments that this is an issue inside the classroom where students are so afraid of taking a risk and failing that they will not even try, so as to avoid feeling like a failure. Educator 5 (2010) and Educator 6 (2010) have witnessed the effects of students pushing and challenging themselves to try new things and it has been very beneficial because students feel successful and proud of themselves. When students are learning outside they feel more competent so you can build up their confidence outside of the classroom and then work to transfer that into the classroom. However, there needs to be more concentration in regards to how this transfer should take place. For example, prior to camp, educators could facilitate students setting their own personal goals and challenges where they will

try something they have never attempted. Then after camp discuss with the students if and how they were successful at achieving their personal goals in order to measure the outcomes of camp and connect the learning (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010).

A challenge in connecting spring camp learning to personal goals and curricular courses is that spring camp marks the end of the school year and there is only one month left of classes when students return from camp. Therefore, interest and engagement decrease because students are thinking about summer and looking forward to their time off. The thought of summer vacations, getting back into the school routine, and almost 24 hours of daylight provide many distractions for students which inhibit engagement in the classroom (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Qallunaat educators would like to see more planning and effort into making the connections between spring camp experiences and classroom learning.

#### *4.3.2.2 Student Respect and Identification With Inuit Culture*

There are a range of students in the school, some identifying more strongly with cultural learning, others who prefer the academic courses, and some are in between trying to contend with both (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Educator 6 (2010) comments on the interesting paradox amongst the students who sometimes identify very strongly with Inuit culture and at other times push it away. For example, students will apply artistic techniques or images of past Inuit art but then in the same class they push away doing something else in a particular traditional manner because they claim to not live the way their grandparents did and do not want to be identified as being an “old school” Inuk (Educator 6 2010). Educator 5 (2010) reflects on the fact that the students are teenagers: a

time for creating identity, trying to figure out who they are as individuals, and dealing with mixed emotions. In an informal class poll, Educator 5 (2010) described that about 90% of students identified with being Inuk first before being a member of a particular family and before being a Canadian or a northerner, concluding that they have a strong identifier with being Inuk. But there is also a generational gap, where the Inuit educators want education to be what they did not have growing up and the current students are trying to learn in a modern world with many global influences (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). So students may sometimes feel that they are in between two worlds which can be confusing (Ibid).

#### *4.3.2.3 Integrating Cultural and Academic Learning*

There are a limited number of culturally appropriate teaching resources available to the educators (Section 4.3.1). This includes the environmental science curriculum developed by the Northwest Territories, and there is also the Staking the Claim curriculum which was recently developed. According to Educator 3 (2010), the work book and dvd video provided for Staking the Claim are very nice and current; however, it attempts to incorporate approaches for multiple intelligences and learning styles but it mainly requires students to respond to questions and write the answers in the work book. Many of the educators see students struggling with literacy and so the heavy reliance on reading and writing is not appropriate for their students and they do not seem to be learning from it (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Educator 2 (2010), has students who do not seem to be interested at all and will not engage with the material. These resources attempt to integrate cultural and academic learning but there seems to be a disconnect

between the goals of the curriculum and how it is being interpreted and applied in the classroom. Qallunaat educators explain that students are often resistant to learning anything cultural when taught by a qallunaat educator (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010).

### ***4.3.3 Reflecting on Student Engagement and Success***

#### *4.3.3.1 Perspectives on Student Engagement*

Student engagement is described as students being interested, focused, attentive, and involved in what is taught (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Thus when actual learning is happening, and the class can get through the material in a set timeframe. Qallunaat educators agree that students are most engaged in the learning when conducting hands-on activities (Ibid). Educator 6 (2010), explains how this learning needs to be facilitated:

[The hands-on learning] needs to be something really specific [...] At this stage they're not confident enough in their own abilities to give them a really open ended project. Like exploration projects don't tend to go terribly well because they're not confident enough, they always want to know the right answer. But [with] a good, directed, structured, hands-on activity that has discrete steps [...] their attention is focused and it is the only time it is focused, from my experience.

The educators recognize that the students can efficiently memorize the steps in a process they are learning; however, they find it difficult to teach students to think through the process to apply it in various situations that might not follow the exact same steps each time (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). The educators often find themselves re-teaching a lot of the same material multiple times but the hands-on learning tends to be the most efficient way for the learning to “stick” (Ibid).

#### *4.3.3.2 Defining Student Success*

Success is student-dependent; each student has a personal and unique level of success, and part of being a teacher is figuring out where and what that level is. It is important to know the students and what they can achieve now, and how they can be pushed to achieve more in order to become a better person (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Success is also teacher-dependent in the manner that they can decide whether a student has achieved enough outcomes or learned enough of the material in a course (Ibid). Success is also based on a teacher confidently being able to move a student to the next grade, or to graduation, knowing they can function in society, and have the basic skills with which to cope and continue their own learning or to direct themselves towards their own goals (Ibid).

#### *4.3.3.3 Preparing Students For Graduation*

The Qallunaat educators acknowledge that the current education system, based on a non-Inuit approach to education, is not adequately preparing students for graduation (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). All Qallunaat educators agree, Nunavut curriculum development needs to be completed, driven locally in a culturally relevant manner, and expertly put together with a lot of resources and funding to support it. Data needs to be collected to establish where the curriculum is lacking, and should be developed around student levels of achievement, and not where the curriculum states they should be (Ibid).

There seems to be an absence in the area of goal setting with students, unless teachers personally take it upon themselves to have goal setting discussions with their students: “My biggest disappointment or frustration as a teacher in the north is that I

don't feel like I'm preparing any of my students" (Educator 6 2010). Oftentimes the students start thinking about their post-graduation goals midway through grade twelve and then panic because they do not know what to do and have not thought about it (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Educators also feel that students are not being prepared to continue on to university because they have not been academically trained to succeed at that level. Even though there are students graduating with above average grades compared with their classmates, they have not reached the necessary level of learning for university. This is often due to the dynamics of the classroom and the broad range of learners in each grade, from high-needs, illiterate students, to students who are working towards a university education (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). As Educator 1 (2010) explains, when a new semester begins a lot of time is dedicated to teaching content which should have been learned in previous years. By the time classes get to the content for their grade it is condensed into a very short time period. The students who are capable of independent work and critical thought are often left on their own to work because other students need more attention (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Consequently, "There will probably be a lot of people graduating in which I'm not sure they have the skills to carry them forward to whatever happens next and I feel like that will do nothing but discourage them. It's not doing them a service" (Educator 1 2010).

There is also a tendency to make classes sizes very large at the beginning of the school year, ranging anywhere from 30 to 45 students, making it impossible to connect with every student and support as needed. Educator 6 (2010) describes how in her first year teaching in Pangnirtung she had 44 students in one math class and when she

explained to her principal that there were not enough chairs for everyone the principal responded that half the students would drop out by the end of September anyway. Well, “It’s a self-fulfilling prophecy” exclaims Educator 3 (2010): “Of course they’re gonna drop out if they have to carry their chair with them from class to class” (Educator 6 2010).

Fundamental to this discussion is the fact that well-educated Inuit will be a critical factor in upholding the rights ensured through the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, as well as becoming educators and government employees (Section 2.3.5) (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Unfortunately, at the current time, the Qallunaat educators do not feel that students are being prepared in a manner that will equip them to fulfill these roles (Ibid).

The Qallunaat educators voiced many of their concerns throughout the focus group; however, they concluded by sharing:

I just want to say we all are very committed to our jobs and you heard a lot of frustrations come out here but we’re doing a really hard job with not enough support and with anti-support sometimes and it doesn’t mean that we don’t believe in what we’re doing on a daily basis (Educator 6 2010).

No. Frustration is just ‘cause we care. That’s the thing [...] If we didn’t care we wouldn’t be frustrated (Educator 5 2010).

## **4.4 Nunavut Sivuniksavut**

NS participants (first and second year students, as well as the program director) were interviewed as a part of this research project because their perspectives complement those of the students and educators at Attagoyuk to give a broader understanding of high school experiences and hopes for the direction of education. The students time away from high school and positive experiences with NS have allowed them to reflection on the their experiences in high school and the approaches to teaching and learning.

### ***4.4.1 High School Experiences***

#### *4.4.1.1 Cultural Learning in High School*

Cultural learning in the students' high schools generally included Northern Studies, Inuktitut, Aulajaaqtut, and Inuit History (often taught in other classes such as Social Studies). Unfortunately, the history they learned often did not cover recent events (NS Student Group 2010). Iksiktaaryuk (2010), Merritt (2010) and Tutanuak (2010) agreed that from their experience, their Inuit or northern focused classes were not challenging enough to make the material interesting. Hall (2010) and Carleton (2010) went to high school in Ottawa, Ontario so they were not exposed to Inuit culture in their schools unless they sought out related programs and activities on their own. In Iqaluit, the amount of cultural learning is fairly limited (Ikkidluak 2011; Lewis 2010). Conversely, in Pangnirtung Ishulutak (2011) explains:

[I]t's really special to have like spring camps or hunting days or all of those things with our culture. [A] lot of what we learn is all about Inuit culture, even when we get rewards. There's the IQ rewards where the most outstanding person that was helping somebody else in this month. So Pang was really good with our culture... being able to have lots of funding for going out hunting or for the ladies to learn how to sew."

Even though Nunavut as a whole adopted the Alberta curriculum it affected the communities across the territory differently. In Pangnirtung, where there is a community drive for more cultural learning the local people have ensured that cultural learning is upheld in the school system (Ikkidluak 2011; Ishulutak 2011).

#### *4.4.1.2 Challenges Of High School*

As for any high schools and its members, challenges arise throughout the day, and the year. Challenges that NS students encountered in high school related to curriculum expectations, integration of Inuit culture, lack of resources and support, social issues, and self-motivation.

4.4.1.2.1 Curriculum - Even though all schools follow the same curriculum, it was found that expectations for courses and requirements to graduate vary tremendously from community to community and sometimes even from teacher to teacher. Therefore, the skill levels and capabilities of students applying for, and entering, post secondary education range widely, putting many students at a disadvantage. Merritt (2010) comments that this predicament may be due to ‘social promotion’ where many schools are trying to push students through to graduation regardless of their academic achievements and preparation to continue on to post-secondary and/or the workforce. From the feedback that Hanson (2010) receives from NS students in regards to their high school experiences, along with his general observations, he explained that this predicament results from the resources and experience of teachers available in smaller schools versus larger schools. The smaller schools with less teachers will not be able to cover the range of specializations that a larger school with more teachers would be able

to, “So [the students] don’t get access to [...] the level and style of teaching that they would in a larger school” (Hanson 2010). There is also the “streaming system” to divert students into the advanced or the general stream. The two streams are usually offered in the larger schools but in the smaller schools it would only be the general stream. Those students in the general stream are typically not prepared to advance to college or university. In fact, the general level is not recognized by universities as preparation for grade twelve (Hanson 2010).

In regards to learning Inuit history and culture in high school many barriers to engagement result from classes that are not complex or challenging enough for students or which are too far removed from their lives, such as ancient history, resulting in a disconnect between students and the material because they can not relate to it (NS Student Group 2010). Learning about Inuit history and culture also becomes increasingly challenging if the teacher is not him/herself Inuk, or if their knowledge of the community or connection to the community is limited (NS Student Group 2010). Further challenges arise related to the primary use of English in curriculum. Ishulutak (2011) struggled with English classes because, similarly to many students in the Eastern Arctic, his first language is Inuktitut, and the education system is not specifically designed for students with English as a second language.

4.4.1.2.2 Resources and Support - Finding adequate resources and support in high school also proved to be a challenge for some of NS students (NS Student Group 2010). Merritt (2010) found that classrooms were often understaffed. Due to the various levels that students are at it would have been valuable to have more Student Support Assistants in

the classroom to help all students advance. While the teacher slows down the class to help those who are struggling other students get bored and lose interest.

Merritt (2010) also found that resources were lacking when she was learning about and applying for universities on her own: “I found it very discouraging when I wanted to go on to post secondary education and [...] I felt like I didn’t have the support to find my way through to that” (Merritt 2010). There was not much general knowledge within the community about this process to help inform her either because, other than the Arctic College, most colleges and universities are not within close proximity and not easily accessible.

4.4.1.2.3 Social Issues - There are many social aspects of high school which students find challenging (NS Student Group 2010). For Hall (2010), he found there was too much pressure on socializing in high school which contributed to increased stress. Ishulutak (2011) comments that he was negatively affected by the behavior of his peers during class time if they: were not working towards the same academic goals; were not motivated to try hard; and, distracted other students by not working or “acting out” in class. Carleton (2010) agrees that the pressures of social life can be stressful when starting high school because, “there [are] already groups formed and if you’re not wearing those clothes or talking the way they talk they don’t allow you in that group. But I guess I was fortunate enough to find [...] very outgoing people so I was [...] ok” (Carleton 2010).

4.4.1.2.4 Self-Motivation - Hall (2010) and Iksiktaaryuk (2010) both shared their challenges about motivating themselves to get work done in high school. Merritt (2010) commented that it can be more difficult to be committed to school because you do not

have a choice about being there; it is generally your parents who make school compulsory. Iksiktaaryuk (2010) explains that sometimes he had trouble staying motivated to do work because it was easy to procrastinate when others did the same or when there was something more interesting to do. He also did not always see how his courses would be beneficial or contribute to his life after graduation:

I think another challenge for me was being motivated to do something. Because, I mean growing up in a small town all you see around you is what's around you. Like it's hard for you to picture to be like, say you're going to be a rocket scientist or something; [...] you can't have that mental image prior to seeing it somewhere else (Iksiktaaryuk 2010).

Merritt (2010) expanded further on this by explaining that she had done a research project surveying youth in Rankin Inlet about their post graduation goals and she found that many people wanted to pursue employment similar to what other people in the community are doing and what they could see around them.

#### *4.4.1.3 Exchanges and Trips*

Various exchanges and trips are offered through Nunavut high schools and are seen as a beneficial aspect of education. Tutanuak (2010), Ishulutak (2011), and Iksiktaaryuk (2010) participated in school trips to southern Canada to visit and to learn about the differences between their community and the places they were visiting. Iksiktaaryuk (2010) also participated in Northern Youth Abroad and did a placement as a mechanic in Stouffville, Ontario. Hall (2010) participated in Outward Bound, near Thunder Bay, Ontario. Ikkidluak (2011) and Ishulutak (2011) participated in land camps with their schools. Ishulutak (2011) helped out with media development workshops related to the IPY education project that helped fund this current project (Section 1.4). He

took part in a project called Photos of Resilience to document climate change and its influence on participants. As well as traveling to Denmark for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change conference.

#### ***4.4.2 The Nunavut Sivuniksavut Program***

NS attracts a range of Inuit youth from the ages of 18 to 25 who are motivated and eager to learn. Many students who join NS hear about the program through friends who speak very highly of their experiences and recommend the program (Hanson 2010; NS Student Group 2010). Others are recommended by their high school teachers and guidance counsellors (Hanson 2010; Ikkidluak 2011). Some students think it would be something fun to try, or wish to understand more about Inuit culture. Still others are considering their post-secondary options but are not quite ready to jump into a college or university program and feel that NS can help prepare them for that (Hanson 2010; Ishulutak 2011; NS Student Group 2010). All the students spoke very highly of their experiences at NS, based on all the things they learn within the program and on their own. Students were able to improve their writing and analytic skills (Ikkidluak 2011; NS Student Group 2010), gain the confidence and grounding needed to move forward with further studies and future endeavors, and contribute to improving livelihoods for Inuit (NS Student Group 2010).

##### ***4.4.2.1 Learning at Nunavut Sivuniksavut***

The overall objectives of the Nunavut Sivuniksavut program are to prepare students to achieve their goals and learn what they need to know to realize their full potential. Over the years these goals have been expanded to include the various needs of

students, such as preparation for college and university (Hanson 2010). An unanticipated result of these goals has been the confidence and pride that are instilled in students and help them once they have graduated from Nunavut Sivuniksavut. Even though this was not originally incorporated into the set goals it has become a critical aspect for the development of students (Ibid).

When Nunavut Sivuniksavut first began in 1985 there were no set courses and no set curriculum; it was an experiential learning environment where students asked questions or were stimulated to analyze certain areas of their past, present, and future, while instructors responded to their questions by seeking out the necessary resources and people to facilitate that learning. The instructors developed a conceptual framework for presenting information and helping the pieces of the story fit together based on the “power curve”: A graph representing the independence, autonomy, power, control that Inuit society once had at one point for thousands of years. Further along the graph, it demonstrates the amount of power Inuit society had in the mid -to late-1960s. The NS program then studies the causes which invoked the changes and what is currently occurring to help restore autonomy. In the early 1990s, the conceptual framework was separated into specific courses<sup>6</sup> (Hanson 2010). Merritt (2010), explains how all the courses fit within the conceptual framework of the power curve:

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<sup>6</sup> For an overview of the various courses offered in the first year program visit: <http://www.nstraining.ca/courses.php>. For a description of courses as described by NS interview participants refer to Appendix 12.

There's all these individual courses but they work together to tell the story. [The power curve] tells the story of Inuit control right from the beginning of the social history and you learn about [...] the social history versus the archeology and stuff and how those two kind of work together [...] And then you learn about the different [...] waves of colonization [...], all the different stages and then how after those waves of colonization hit, Inuit control and Inuit power and all of that were at a much lower level, and that's where the curve is at the lowest level in the 70s. And then now how it's starting to rise up again now that we have tools put into place like the NLCA.

There is continuity between the first and second year program, the latter being more focused on preparing students for continuation to college and university, including a research course, circumpolar studies, public administration, Inuktitut, and assisting students in courses at the University of Ottawa, Carleton University, and Algonquin College.

The learning content is communicated in a way that is clear and understandable and teaches students to interpret info in their own way (Hanson 2010). They also learn to do the work for themselves and not for their teachers (Ikkidluak 2011; Ishulutak 2011). Aside from the skills and knowledge being taught in the classroom the students are learning valuable skills and knowledge about their Inuit heritage and cultural values and beliefs. They learn in a way that connects them to the history and instills pride and motivation which helps them successfully move forward into the next phase of their lives after NS (Hanson 2010; Ishulutak 2011; NS Student Group 2010). NS helps students to develop the necessary skills to participate in college or university, and also helps students improve their academic grade transcripts by taking courses at Algonquin College, Carleton University, or the University of Ottawa. This is also helpful to increase their

chances of being accepted into college or university if high school transcripts did not have high enough grades (NS Student Group 2010).

This learning process with Nunavut Sivuniksavut, does not finish when class is over for the day. As Hanson (2010) points out: “It’s 24 hr experience for the students. [T]here’s so much learning [that] goes on outside of the place.” The students have access to a range of experiences that may not have been possible without NS such as cultural performances, public speaking, attending conferences, and networking (Merritt 2010). These kinds of activities teach and motivate students to have the confidence to be more involved and outgoing (Hanson 2010; NS Student Group 2010).

#### *4.4.2.2 Importance of Culture*

Nunavut Sivuniksavut has the ability to educate students in the areas which will help them move forward to achieve their post-graduation goals, while simultaneously instilling confidence in themselves and pride in their culture. Students explain that before coming to Nunavut Sivuniksavut, their knowledge and understanding of Inuit heritage was somewhat limited and they were not fully engaged in the cultural practices and beliefs (Ikkidluak 2011; NS Student Group 2010). Merritt (2010) describes how, “Before, I always thought Inuit were just shy and quiet because they didn’t know stuff.” The NS program teaches students about their heritage and how to overcome these perceptions. Through NS, students learn about: 1) Inuit all across Canada; 2) the story of Inuit and the struggles they experienced during colonization; their achievements with the NLCA and creation of Nunavut; and, 3) the Inuit leaders who accomplished incredible feats at the age of the students in the Nunavut Sivuniksavut program. This kind of learning helps

students “to realize how amazing your culture is [...] I think all of us can say that pride is instilled in you and you want to do things to change, be more community involved and learn” (Merritt 2010). All NS students are inspired by the achievements that were made by their predecessors and are proud to be knowledgeable about the history of their people and have the ability to share that with others. Carleton (2010) explains, “I’ve got my ground now.” They are proud to be able to carry on those achievements and be more involved and learn more to make a positive difference (NS Student Group 2010). The students can also see that their family members and community members are proud of their achievements within the program and outside of the program, and that they are helping Inuit with what they are learning and how they are contributing to their communities (NS Student Group 2010). Iksiktaaryuk (2010) explains, “I’m really glad NS is here cause [...] in a lot of ways it’s helping Inuit.”

NS has helped students to become more familiar with the employment opportunities which are available to them, which they may not have been exposed to elsewhere. It has also given them a sense of belonging and the drive and motivation to work towards their goals and wanting to make a difference (NS Student Group 2010). Students are able to develop the skills to interpret their learning and express it in their own terms, which is vital to their development in the NS program because if the students cannot express their feelings and interpretations then they cannot do anything with it (Hanson 2010). Students are also prepared to move on to their next phase in life by answering a lot of implicit personal questions they are carrying around inside themselves, and helping them establish their identity and understand their place in the world.

#### *4.4.2.3 Challenges of Nunavut Sivuniksavut*

The students at NS are grateful for all the opportunities they are granted through being a part of the program; however the program does prove to be challenging at times. The workload for courses in Nunavut Sivuniksavut tends to be more demanding than in high school so students must work to develop the skills to deal with multiple tasks at once (Hanson 2010). This requires an increased amount of reading and writing as well as the ability to critically reflect on and interpret learning material. Students are expected to work independently on course material in an environment that is less structured than their high school experiences; therefore students may struggle to develop the necessary motivation to complete assignments on their own, and on time (Hanson 2010; Ishulutak 2011; NS Student Group 2010). In order to help students overcome these challenges, tutors are hired to work with them outside of classes (Hanson 2010).

Aside from classroom challenges, students contend with the unprecedented issues that accompany living on their own for the first time and being away from their families. Homesickness, experiencing a different culture, and learning to manage personal finances are three of the major issues outside of course demands (Hanson 2010; Ikkidluak 2011; Ishulutak 2011; NS Student Group 2010).

#### *4.4.2.4 Post-Graduation Goals*

Throughout high school, the students did not have very concrete ideas of what kind of goals they wished to pursue for themselves. The NS program has helped them develop short term and long term goals for themselves. At the time of the interview, Ishulutak (2011) wanted to get involved with his old high school to help motivate youth

to get engaged in education and to enjoy school and what they are doing. A program he wanted to initiate was to establish more activities in the community to engage youth. He would also like to further pursue his education at NS in the second year program. Tutanuak (2010) wanted to learn more about other cultures in Canada so she is pursuing a native studies program, and then aims to become a teacher. Merritt (2010) described her passion for helping and teaching people so she wanted to do something engaging and be able to help people. She was thinking of becoming a teacher, or taking journalism, or political science with a minor in Aboriginal Studies. Carleton (2010) was also working towards becoming an elementary school teacher. Iksiktaaryuk (2010) wanted like to take Canadian Studies at Carleton University.

#### ***4.4.3 Reflecting on Student Engagement and Success***

##### ***4.4.3.1 Perspectives on Student Engagement***

Hanson (2010) explains that student engagement occurs when the students are active partners in the whole learning process. They cannot be passive, nor can they be mere spectators. To develop this engagement in schools, conversations about how to actively engage students need to happen for every curriculum and every lesson, because education is not just about delivering knowledge to students to absorb like sponges; educators need to find ways to make it interactive. NS students describe engagement in school as being active in class by listening and comprehending what is being taught as well as participating in conversations and debates by asking questions and actively trying to understand the content (Ikkidluak 2011; NS Student Group 2010). Students also need

to enjoy what they are learning, have confidence in themselves, and work hard to meet the requirements of the course (Ikkidluak 2011; Ishulutak 2011).

The students' attitudes towards school have a strong impact on levels of engagement in the classroom. Students who attend school because they are obliged to by their parents often contribute to a negative environment in the classroom which can thus affect their engagement in learning materials as well as that of their peers. Peer to peer relationships at school also contribute to the engagement in the learning. Social groups who are positive and motivated will encourage others to follow suit (and vice versa). The educator also plays an important role in classroom engagement through their relationships with students, as well as through their attitude in the classroom (Ishulutak 2011).

#### *4.4.3.2 Defining Student Success*

Ishulutak (2011), Merritt (2010), and Tutanuak (2010) explain that they feel successful in school because they are confident and proud of themselves, based on their own measures and being engaged and working towards the end result; not contingent upon the kind of grades they receive in school. Tutanuak (2010) describes how her instructors and classmates help contribute to this pride and make her feel like she can accomplish anything. Her concern is how to bring that pride out of the classroom and apply it in other areas of her life. Successful students in school are attentive and listen carefully in class and work hard to understand lesson content, instead of just doing the bare minimum. Outside of class, success can be defined as ensuring access to the basic necessities, living on your own, and being your own person (Hanson 2010; Ikkidluak

2011). For Tutanuak (2010), success is making a difference in someone's life, for example when the students went to Europe to give presentations to government employees and bureaucrats to teach them about what they learn at NS. Merritt (2010) explains that they also did cultural performances in their communities which demonstrated to youth how important Inuit culture is which helped the youth and NS students to feel proud and successful. According to Hanson (2010), success is when students meet the goals of whatever they are engaged in.

#### **4.5 Chapter Summary**

Chapter 4 has outlined the various perspectives from students at Attagoyuk Ilisavik, Inuit educators and Qallunaat Educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik, and students and one educator from Nunavut Sivuniksavut, regarding how cultural learning is being integrated into the high school system at this time, how this compares with the past, and how it should be developed into the future. All groups agree that there is a need for more culturally appropriate learning and resources in the curriculum and educational activities, developed through community collaboration and involvement of Elders in the school. However, there is some difference in opinion with regards to balancing cultural and academic learning and how best to help students advance towards their post-graduation goals. Spring camp is an important program which encompasses many of these significant aspects, as developed in Pangnirtung. Hands-on learning is identified as one of the best ways to communicate information with students; thus contributing to the levels of engagement at spring camp, while developing Inuit identity. Inuit identity varies by individual but cultural experiences in the school contribute to identity at all stages of

development. Participants' definitions of student success, engagement, and Inuit identity, as well as approaches to promoting these aspects of learning, varied by group but generally it is understood to be defined according to each student's talents, gifts and strengths. Chapter 5 presents a comparative synthesis of these responses and elucidates the integrated efforts to improve culturally appropriate learning as well as some of the practical challenges that are encountered when trying to implement new educational approaches.

## **Chapter 5 - Analysis**

### **5.1 Culturally Appropriate Learning**

The goal for the Nunavut education system is to integrate culturally appropriate learning while preparing students to advance towards their goals, including post-secondary education. In order to understand how to most expediently move forward in pursuit of this goal we must first understand how students and educators interpret and define ‘culturally appropriate learning’ and what it entails.

#### ***5.1.1 Describing Culturally Appropriate Learning***

All participants agree that culturally appropriate learning needs to be reflective of the students’ environment and their community. Hanson (2010) and Merritt (2010) from Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS), and Lee (2010) from Attagoyuk Ilisavik, explain that the learning does not necessarily need to be taken directly from your immediate environment; as long as the connections are made between how something happened and the significance to your life today then it can be made culturally appropriate. NS students indicate that learning Inuit cultural practices is important for youth to remain connected to their culture; however, they must also understand the values and background knowledge associated with the practices (Section 2.3.1). The values and background knowledge may not always be obvious simply through observation so they need to be incorporated into the teaching of various cultural elements; otherwise the importance of the lesson may be lost (NS Student Group 2010). All students and educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik and NS identify the need for Elders, hunters and other knowledge holders to facilitate cultural learning with the schools because they are the experts with the

necessary knowledge; they are the ones who lived on the land and applied the necessary survival skills everyday (Alivaktuk 2010; Attagoyuk Student Group 4 - 6 2010; Ishulutak 2011; Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Laugrand and Oosten (2009: 124) reflect these perspectives by describing that when Elders and youth work together in educational experiences they become partners, “Without that special relationship, traditional knowledge easily becomes rather abstract and devoid of meaning to young Inuit.” Students agree that the involvement of Elders in the school is a necessary factor in helping them learn more about their culture (Attagoyuk Student Group 4 - 6 2010). Students and Inuit educators promote the idea of providing learning experiences for students outside the school (Ikkidluak 2011; Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010; Alivaktuk 2010). The learning should be taken out of the classroom to understand the experiential aspects specific to their locality (Sobel 2008; Gruenewald 2003; Rosenthal 2008), and to have the connection with the place the learning originated from (Lee 2010; Young 2010; Educator 4 2010). In defining culturally appropriate learning, many Inuit students at Attagoyuk Ilisavik gave specific examples of skills and knowledge related to Inuit traditions (Section 4.1.1). For example, the skills and knowledge they learn with Elders and community members in the school and out at spring camp, including the importance of the IQ principles (Section 2.5.2).

Educators from Attagoyuk Ilisavik and NS, explain that what is considered to be culturally appropriate needs to be defined by the community; the learning, goals and visions for the students needs to be defined within the school, the District Education Authority (DEA), and the community (Hanson 2010; Lee 2010; Young 2010; Educators

1-6 2010). This must begin right from elementary school and endure into high school in a cumulative manner, including the establishment of standards for the necessary skills to be learned by certain grades (Educator 4 2010; Hanson 2010; Merritt 2010). Qallunaat educators support the need for a community defined description of culturally appropriate learning. They do not feel qualified to define what culturally appropriate learning is because attempting to create a definition would not be respectful to the Inuit who are qualified to do this (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Educator 3 (2010) explains that, “It’s not our place really. That’s about being respectful too. Each community has a DEA so they can determine that. And unlike a previous generation of Qallunaats I think it’s pretty safe to say that we respect that.”

### ***5.1.2 Importance Of Culturally Appropriate Learning***

Culturally appropriate learning is seen as important in Nunavut education from Kindergarten to Grade 12 because it has been deemed so by Inuit parents, Elders and community members. Berger (2009) states that for many decades, Inuit have advocated for an education system which better reflects Inuit culture. This is also reflected in Chapter 4 where all participants agree on the need for more Inuit perspective in the learning materials in high school (Sections 4.1.1, 4.2.2.6, 4.3.2.3, 4.4.1.1). By rooting the learning in *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ) principles the approaches are coming from Inuit ways of knowing, being and doing, which means that it is developed from an Inuit understanding of education and will relate more strongly with the learning approaches the students have been raised with (Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010). A lot of the cultural learning is associated with traditional survival skills which equips the students with practical

knowledge and skills (Attagoyuk Student Group 7 2010; Educator 4 2010; Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Educator 6 (2010), a Qallunaat educator at Attagoyuk Ilisavik describes the importance of learning traditional survival skills:

[T]he actual culture events that we have and that we do [...] those have been extremely good [...] Most of [the students] had never built an igloo in their life. Igloo building is a really strong land skill, if you're out on your skidoo and a blizzard comes up, being able to build yourself a snow shelter is exceedingly important. It's survival skills. Like that is urgent, it's more than just important.

This learning also connects students with their heritage which provides strong roots with which to grow and develop capacity to overcome challenges. Through interviews with Inuit parents, Laugrand and Oosten (2009) describe the need for youth to be familiar with Inuit traditions so they can understand their heritage. An Inuit parent explains that “If we don't give our knowledge to the young people, they will never know about our traditions and just live for today without knowing where they came from. At least if we give our knowledge to them, they will know where they came from” (Laugrand & Oosten 2009: 120). Lee (2010) from Attagoyuk Ilisavik also reinforces that cultural learning is necessary to connect students with their Inuit heritage to help them develop their cultural identity and move forward successful with their future endeavors.

Berger (2009) advocates that successful schooling of Inuit students requires culturally responsive curricula and pedagogy as well as community ownership of schooling. Colonial influences in the North have contributed to many changes in the lives of Inuit and people are looking to education to contend with, and improve, challenges arising as a result of this time period (Section 2.3.2 - 2.3.5). McGregor (2010: 166) further exemplifies the need for an increase in culturally appropriate learning:

Since the first sustained contact between Inuit and Qallunaat [...] the relationship between Inuit, their land, and their Qallunaat colonizers has continued to change dramatically. Indeed, since as recently as the early 1970s, when the land claim process was first conceived, social, economic, cultural and especially technological changes have been drastic. The ways of living pursued by most Inuit no longer necessitate environmental knowledge and a close relationship to the land and sea for survival, as was the case for their ancestors [...] Yet Inuit continue to insist that the practice of their cultural traditions, most of which are essentially connected to the environment, are crucial to their sense of identity, to their understanding of their history, and to their capability to pursue successful and happy lives. Therefore, although the formal education system may have been erected with a different set of priorities, it should now assist in the pursuit of an Inuit education that reflects the IQ principles.

The integration of cultural learning is necessary for students to understand their heritage and know who they are as young Inuit so they can successfully move forward in their lives to achieve the goals they have for themselves (Lee 2010). The increase of cultural learning also contributes to engagement in classroom learning material because it is more connected to students' lives (Section 5.1.1).

The Inuuqatigiit curriculum document (1996) outlines the goals, indicated by Inuit Elders, for their children's education now and in the future (Section 2.5.1). This document contributes to the achievement of these goals because it is rooted in Inuit values, history, knowledge, and language. It emphasizes the importance of Inuktitut and Inuit educators for its successful implementation: "When integrating Inuuqatigiit into the subjects, we encourage the Inuit to brainstorm in their language first and then present it in English. Time for this must be respected. Inuit input cannot be adequately addressed as a last thought or in a rush nor always in the second language" (DECE 1996: 5). IQ principles are provided to work towards similar goals. As Tagalik (2010) explains, the cultural beliefs and values associated with the implementation of the IQ principles

ultimately contribute to “ ‘living a good life’ which is described as the purpose of being.” Therein holds the importance of increased cultural learning in the schools: to promote able human beings who are able to problem solve, think for themselves, work with others, and share their gifts (Lee 2010).

Increased engagement in learning materials will undoubtedly contribute to higher graduation rates which is critical for the future of Nunavut. As Berger (2006) explains, the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement identified key aspects of the Nunavut government, including two official languages, Inuktitut and English, and a representational government ensuring the Inuit population would be reflected in government with 85% of employment reserved for Inuit. However, barriers in the educational system hindering student graduation are deterring people from accessing those jobs. Furthermore, employment in executive, management, and professional categories have compulsory educational requirements. Berger’s (2006) solution is to invest in a bilingual system of education for Nunavut to better help prepare students to fulfill the goals of the NLCA. Inuit educators comment that when students graduate and travel away from Pangnirtung they come to see how strong their use of Inuktitut is in comparison with youth from other communities. They are grateful for the opportunity and encouragement to maintain and improve the language, even though they may not have appreciated it at the time (Lee 2010).

### ***5.1.3 Moving Towards An Integrative Approach***

Educators and leaders at Attagoyuk Ilisavik have promoted and emphasized the importance of integrating cultural and academic learning together in order to make the

learning more relevant to the lives of Inuit students and prepare them to further their education. Ishulutak (2011) from NS promotes the movement towards integration, explaining that “Because some people are losing our culture I’d [encourage] change [to include more] Inuit culture, but kind of mixing it with the western style ‘cause we need a job nowadays in order to get money because we’re dependent on it.” As part of the Nunavut Education Act’s Fundamental Principles, Section 1. (1) states that “The public education system in Nunavut shall be based on Inuit societal values and the principles and concepts of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*.” Furthermore, “It is the responsibility of the Minister, the district education authorities and the education staff to ensure that Inuit societal values and the principles and concepts of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* are incorporated throughout, and fostered by, the public education system.” Current curriculum development is therefore being rooted in IQ principles to inform the basis of the learning. Educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik also make a concerted effort to apply IQ principles in all areas of learning when possible. Lee (2010) explains that using IQ principles contributes to the enhancement of a more appropriate school environment, thus they are able to promote “able human beings who can meet their potential, and to create environments where kids can find out about themselves, be proud of themselves, and to be able to share what they are able to do, and to move to their potential.” Two primary goals of increasing culturally appropriate learning are: 1) enhanced engagement and success in the classroom, and; 2) enhanced pride in cultural identity.

### *5.1.3.1 Enhanced Engagement and Success*

Through interviews and focus groups with students and educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik and Nunavut Sivuniksavut, it became apparent that having more Inuit culture in the school contributes to enhanced engagement of students in learning activities. Students enjoy aspects of learning where they can see their own culture and they can also relate to the content more easily which contributes to their understanding of the concepts (Alivaktuk 2010; Young 2010). Student 4 (2010) from Attagoyuk Ilisavik feels that, “When we’re outside of school we have more energy. When we’re at school we just sit around, except in the gym.” This activity and engagement helps him to feel more successful. Students from Nunavut Sivuniksavut agree that learning materials need to be more focused on Inuit and northern life, such as Inuit history and modern culture and how it pertains to them today. Making the connections to student lives makes the learning material more relevant and increases student interest and engagement (Ishulutak 2011; NS Student Group 2010). Inuit educators at Attagoyuk have witnessed enhanced student engagement where there were hands-on, cultural activities including, Aulajaaqtut, sewing class, participating in the Pagnirtung Youth Leadership Initiative (PYLI), science, and especially at spring camp (Alivaktuk 2010; Kanayuk 2010; Young 2010). To engage students in the learning material, Qallunaat educators explain the importance of ensuring the material is relevant, is developed with clear expectations, and is “link[ed] to a lot of other things because the more enrichment you get the stronger the whole network of learning is and the more it makes sense [for students].” Thus, the more integration and

connections made between various topics the more enhanced the learning becomes (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010).

Tufts (1999), a Qallunaat educator, recounts the experiences of a land trip with a group of Inuit students from grades 9 to 12 during which an Inuit hunter caught a beluga whale. For many of the students this was the first time they had seen a beluga whale. The students noted an abnormality in one of its fins and theorized as to what it could be and the cause. The hunter butchered the whale while sharing traditional knowledge and responding to students' questions in Inuktitut. Tufts (1999: 2-3) describes:

Among the many experiences on the ice at the floe-edge that day was this bicultural (Inuit and Western) science lesson which we all experienced. The experience with the beluga provided for follow-up in-class science lessons for weeks. It turned out the whale was pregnant with a term fetus, which was approximately five feet in length. The students took the fetus to various classes in the school to show to their schoolmates as they shared their beluga experiences. They dissected the fetus, which also involved learning the traditional and non-traditional names of the external body parts and internal organs of the whale. They learned the location and function of whales in the northern food chain and traditional uses Inuit make of whales. I had never witnessed such student enthusiasm and interest in science. These experiences demonstrated the effectiveness for Inuit learners of active participation, student-initiated exploration of culturally relevant material and subject matter, and student-teacher collaborations in science education.

Through this example we can see how the experience with cultural learning integrated with academic learning directly influenced the engagement of students. Similar to land/ice experiences for students in Pangnirtung, Inuit and Qallunaat educators state that engagement of students at spring camp is very high. The learning is student driven where they pursue the learning which is of interest to them, and for the most part the activities

are very hands-on. This type of learning has been identified by educators as being very engaging for students.

In order to encourage engagement in the classroom, educators at Attagoyuk Iisavik ensure the learning is made relevant to the students' lives and environment by making every possible connection by linking to IQ principles (Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010). Inuit cultural learning has strong ties with the surrounding environment as it most often relates to survival skills and 'life on the land'. This geographical aspect of learning relates to Gruenewald's (2003:7) understanding that learning connected with places (or peoples' surrounding environments): "increase[s] student engagement and understanding through multidisciplinary, experiential, and intergenerational learning that is not only relevant but potentially contributes to the well-being of community life." Furthermore, by applying a pedagogy which promotes student engagement in the learning process it can increase academic achievement and help prepare students to go beyond learning which is only devoted to market competition (Gruenewald 2003). The use and promotion of Indigenous languages is another important aspect in student engagement in the learning. Lees et al. (2010), note in a study of four Indigenous language programs in four different countries, the use of the Indigenous languages improved retention rates of students who are able to have increase success in classes because of their bilingual/bicultural education. Learning to speak and read in more than one language increases cognitive, academic, social and economic pathways for Indigenous children (Lees et al. 2010), thus contributing to their confidence to learn encouraging them to continue their education. Berger (2006) recommends a fully bilingual model of education for Nunavut high

schools. Nunavut currently uses an "early exit immersion" model where most students are abruptly switched from Inuktitut to English in Grades 4/5. The loss of a first language can significantly delay academic progress, and the transfer to English in Grades 4/5 means students to not develop fluency in either Inuktitut or English (Berger 2006). It has been demonstrated that effective academic use of a student's second language (English) is enhanced through the promotion of the first (Inuktitut) (Ibid). Inuktitut is also "the vessel of Inuit culture" of Inuit culture because it has developed out of the Inuit worldview; therefore, it is an integral aspect of Inuit identity (Berger 2006: 24). The aim of this bilingual model of education is to affirm Inuit identity, improve educational achievement and strengthen the Inuktitut language while improving ability in English (Ibid).

#### *5.1.3.2 Enhanced Pride in Cultural Identity*

Increasing the integration of cultural learning in the school is an important contributing factor in fostering the positive development of Inuit identity in students. As Villebrun (2006) (Section 2.2) explains, education is tool for the development of positive cultural identities, which in turn contributes to individual and community empowerment. In the early era of government education in the North parental influence or input, and the unique identity of Inuit was of no importance inside the classroom (Section 2.3.3, 2.3.4). This contributed to problems of lost identity and dismantled self-esteem, which continue to influence Inuit students in education systems across the Arctic. Through a study with students at Nunavut Sivuniksavut, Hanson (2003: i) explored the development of positive Inuit identities and the importance behind the need for an increase in culturally appropriate learning:

Rapid social change in the Canadian Arctic has led to circumstances which make it increasingly difficult for young Inuit to develop and maintain a distinct cultural identity. Inuit, and many other Aboriginal groups in similar circumstances, are looking to education to play a role in cultural maintenance and revitalization [...] The findings indicated that the students experienced positive changes in all areas of ethnic identity, developing attitudes of pride and respect for their culture, an increased sense of belonging to it, an understanding of their cultural history, as well as an understanding of the relationship of Inuit with the majority society.

It is important for schools to provide resources for the positive development of Inuit identity for students because, as one participant from Berry's (1999: 22) study regarding identity remarked, "While searching for my identity, the comfort of the culture takes away the confusion. You feel like you are more at home." Even though students are on the journey of figuring out who they are, being surrounded by as many cultural aspects as possible will contribute to their positive development. Being on the land and feeling a close connection to cultural activities was defined as central to cultural identity in Berry's (1999) study. Furthermore, "Traditional activities [...] brought communities together and reinforced the value of their culture. Many participants felt that there was real need to provide opportunities for these activities again in order to reestablish strong cultural identities" (Berry 1999: 26). Similar to the norwegian concept of *Friluftsliv*, which Takano (2002: 2) advocates as an approach to outdoor education and deeper connections with the natural environment to promote quality of life which is linked with culture and identity:

*Friluftsliv* seeks a deeper relationship between people and the natural world which emphasises emotional ties, and an implication for a lifestyle which leads to sustainable living. *Friluftsliv* is also a value statement which calls for the recognition to consider the strong and harmonious connection to the natural environment as "rich" and favourable quality of life.

Takano (2002) applies the concept of Friluftsliv to programs of outdoor education in one school in Alaska and another in Japan. The universal values contained Friluftsliv in conjunction with the Alaskan and Japanese context include: 1) seeking deep relationships with nature through a simple encounter and interaction with natural environment; 2) respect for nature; and, 3) culture and identity (Takano 6). The annual spring camp provides opportunities for students to experience these deeper relationships with nature which may contribute to positive development of cultural identity.

Inuit educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik note that the cultural content in school is increasing and it is contributing to student Inuit identity; however, it is a very slow process (Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010; Young 2010). Inuit and Qallunaat educators advocate spring camp as an important experience to contribute to the development of Inuit identity by connecting with Inuit culture through the practice of traditional Inuit life skills (Lee 2010; Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Lee (2010) explains that the goals of the camp are to help students: i) connect to the land; ii) understand the importance of their heritage; iii) be proud of themselves as young Inuit and young northerners, and; iv) help them learn environmental skills and life skills towards becoming more able human beings. However, Qallunaat educators do not see spring camp as a transformational experience, suggesting that perhaps there is a need to make the connections to learning more obvious than would have been the tradition in the past. Because students do not necessarily learn the same way now out on the land as they would have in the past when people lived in camps (Section 2.3.1) the connection to students' lives today therefore needs to be emphasized (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Students did not specify

spring camp directly as an aspect of their learning which helps them feel proud to be Inuit, but they did refer to cultural activities in general.

When I asked the students if school helped them feel proud to be Inuit many of the responses centered on learning and experiencing traditional Inuit activities and lifestyle (Attagoyuk Student Group 7 2010). Students talked about things they learn in class that make them feel proud to be Inuk. For example, Evic (2010) feels proud to be Inuk when she is making kamiks in sewing class. Students talked about things they learn in class that make them feel proud to be Inuit, especially in relation to IQ principles in Aulajaaqtut class (Attagoyuk Student Group 7 2010). Inuit educators reinforce this idea, claiming that the course is beneficial to students because they can easily understand where the concepts originate as they are rooted in their own culture (Alivaktuk 2010; Lee 2010). For other students, learning about the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA), especially when Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. were voting for independence from the Northwest Territories, contributed to the feelings of pride in their culture. The NLCA is an important topic for NS students who also develop pride in themselves and their heritage by learning about the history of their people, including the fight for the NLCA and the people involved in securing this agreement who have now become their role models. Outside of curricular education, one Inuit educator explains that PYLI is a source of pride for some students because they are able to connect with traditional lifestyle, including traditional songs, dancing, and drumming, as well as learning leadership skills (Alivaktuk 2010; Student 4 2010). Akulukjuk (2010) and Student 5 (2010), students at Attagoyuk Ilisavik, explain that it is the cultural activities undertaken outside of the

school which bring them a sense of pride in Inuit culture, including igloo building, Inuit games, Inuktitut dancing, and hunting. Laugrand and Oosten (2009) describe how Inuit enjoy pursuing traditional activities on the land because being out on the tundra connects a person directly to the land and the animals. Life outside of settlements is also considered to be healthier (Ibid). Many Inuit equate life on the land with the life of their ancestors, and being healthy, which contributes to wellness (Laugrand & Oosten 2009; Lincoln 2010). “It is thought to reinvigorate people and today young people in trouble are often taken out on the land as part of a healing process” (Laugrand & Oosten 2009:119). In a study with Inupiat and Yupiit in Alaska, Lincoln (2010) explains that learning and understanding traditional activities can be used to achieve individual and community wellness. Through this knowledge and connection, people can “draw from an array of cultural values to inform their decisions. The past is echoed in present activities, helping people to draw strength from family members, previous experiences, and culturally specific values for their upcoming plans” (Lincoln 2010:54).

Nunavut Sivuniksavut has the amazing ability to educate students in the areas which will help them move forward to achieve their post-graduation goals, while simultaneously instilling confidence in themselves and pride in their culture. Students explain that before coming to Nunavut Sivuniksavut, their knowledge and understanding of Inuit heritage was somewhat limited and they were not fully engaged in cultural practices and beliefs (Ikkidluak 2011; NS Student Group 2010). For example, Merritt (2010) describes how, “Before, I always thought Inuit were just shy and quiet because they didn’t know stuff.” NS students have had the opportunity through the NS program to

develop positive cultural identities as well as reflect on their past experiences and how they have contributed to their current perspectives. Hanson (2010) explains that the students have subconscious attitudes about themselves and their place within the world within Inuit society, and the place of Inuit society in the world. Resulting from the influence of colonial experiences students may not see themselves as having equal ability or opportunity with people outside of their community. For many youth, they also will not see themselves as being equal within Inuit society because they have not learned all the knowledge and skills associated with traditional Inuit culture, which are highly respected. When students graduate from NS this becomes the counterpoint for realizing they were not proud before, but the program helped them to address those attitudes and better understand them, allowing them to exclaim that they are now proud to be Inuk (Hanson 2010).

#### ***5.1.4 Current Efforts Towards Integration of Academic and Cultural Learning***

Section 2.5 describes government involvement in the integration of cultural and academic learning, including *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*, the Inuuqatigiit curriculum, the Education Act, and there are also various resources currently being developed by the Nunavut Department of Education. At Attagoyuk Ilisavik, there are also many local efforts to apply these resources and ensure Inuit ways of knowing, being, and doing (*Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*) as the basis for learning. It is important for local involvement, from school leaders, Elders, parents, and DEA, to adjust the standard curriculum to the particularities of the local culture and environment due to the unique differences and influences between each community (Section 3.1.1 and 5.1.4.1). Nunavut is so big, and

with such a varied landscape, that Inuit culture and language use varies greatly across the territory (Berger 2009). Berger (2009) emphasizes the importance of DEA to drive educational change in their communities and ensure it is in line with the goals of community members. The DEA must also work with the leaders of schools. This influence and guidance is a means of achieving the two objectives of Gruenewald's (2003) critical pedagogy of place: reinhabitation and decolonization. Reinhabitation refers to the need to connect learners with the local social and ecological environment, which can be achieved through cultural learning and academic learning. The objective of decolonization is meant to acknowledge the ways in which the learning can be brought more in line with the realities and ideologies of the students and their communities. The annual weeklong spring camp organized locally by Elders, community experts and school staff is organized around the traditional Inuit skills, knowledge and activities developed over time and adapted to the landscape and geography of the area. Collaboration among DEA, co-principals at Attagoyuk Ilisavik, as well as Elders and community members, these objectives can be achieved.

#### *5.1.4.1 Co-Principalship*

The co-principalship of Lena Metuq and Cathy Lee demonstrates the commitment to a community school based on, and reflective of, community members, goals and values. Lena Metuq and Cathy Lee work together to ensure both academic and cultural learning are integrated into the school with the goal of a balanced approach. Lees et al. (2010) found that in a similar situation with a Qallunaq and Inuit co-principalship, the strong leadership at the principal level was a critical factor in developing a long-term

vision for success at the school. Effectiveness in successful education is linked to school leaders who have a strong vision and high standards for their schools and are confident in challenging the way things are currently run. These leaders, much like at Attaogyuk Iisavik, worked with staff members to create a welcoming atmosphere grounded in Indigenous culture, language and traditions (Lees et al. 2010). This co-principalship is fairly unique in Nunavut and is only practiced in a few high schools.

#### *5.1.4.2 Community Involvement*

Inuit educators at Attagoyuk explain that Elders are the ones who hold first hand knowledge of living on the land and are experienced with the skills and practices to be taught to youth (Alivaktuk 2010; Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010). Therefore, Elders, hunters, and other community experts are hired to come into the school, or take the students out on the land, to learn critical survival skills to thrive on the land. Their involvement is also key in defining the goals and expectations for programs such as spring camp, as well as within the school. Without the support and input of parents and community members these programs would not be successful (Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010).

Many Elders acknowledge the importance the schools may have in transmitting their knowledge; however, experiences on the land/ice are a more suitable context for the transfer of knowledge from Elders to youth (Laugrand and Oosten 2009). Experiences on the land/ice are also better suited to Inuit ways of teaching where Elders prefer to demonstrate practices and techniques as opposed to talking or lecturing about them (Laugrand and Oosten 2009).

Sutherland and Swayze (2012:85) argue that education needs to focus more on real-world issues based in the realities of students' lives and communities to provide meaningful opportunities for rooted in experiential, inquiry-based and place-based learning. In Pangnirtung, Elders, community experts and educators provide their youth with land/ice experiences annually through the weeklong spring camp. Lee (2010) describes how Elders are involved in pre-spring camp learning and making connections with curricula:

[S]ome Elders come and have a planning session together with the high school science staff and plan activities [...] for getting ready for camp that would fit into the curricula.

Lee gives the example of tracking temperature change over the school months prior to spring camp to see if they can recognize any trends occurring. This data could then be linked to information about temperature and ice conditions which Elders would be able to discuss with students from their own perspectives and first-hand knowledge over a 40 or 50 year lifespan.

And they bring both of those knowledge pieces together and they have Elders there as part of the planning process, like what should kids know about sea ice travel before we go out to camp and then the Elders say they need to know this, they need to know what to look for in the ice, they need to know like looking at the sky, looking at weather patterns, animal behavior (Lee 2010).

Students agree that spring camp helps students in their courses once they return to the classroom afterwards (Attagoyuk Student Group 3 and 5 2010). Kilabuk (2010b) explains that the knowledge acquired at spring camp helps in Inuktitut class because they communicate mostly in Inuktitut with camp staff and peers. It also helps with Aulajaaqtut because the foundation for this class is Inuit culture and IQ principles so it is related to

learning aspects of camp. Students generally see how the knowledge acquired at spring camp helps in their Inuit cultural classes but not in academics, even though Qallunaat educators talk about how they have discovered many learning opportunities out at camp.

Local involvement with spring camp as well standard curriculum is critical because, as Gruenewald (2003: 8) explains:

In place of actual experience with the phenomenal world, educators are handed, and largely accept, the mandates of a standardized, “placeless” curriculum and settle for the abstractions and simulations of classroom learning. Though it is true that much significant and beneficial learning can happen here, what is most striking about the classroom as a learning technology is how much it limits, devalues, and distorts local geographical experience. Place-based education challenges all educators to think about how the exploration of places can become part of how curriculum is organized and conceived.

Elders and community experts are important to help tailor the curriculum to the unique perspectives of the area, in collaboration with Inuit and Qallunaat educators. In the context of Nunavut education where many high school educators are Qallunaat, local involvement is even more important for educators who may not have much knowledge of the local area or Inuit customs and values.

#### *5.1.4.3 Efforts by Inuit Educators*

Inuit educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik place strong emphasis on integrating cultural learning into the education system and have developed unique activities for students through the annual spring camp as well various opportunities to learn skills from Elders. Because of these local efforts students have many opportunities that are not standard across the territory (Attagoyuk Student Group 8 2010). Community involvement in the school and at spring camp occur because Inuit educators have developed and promoted

this partnership over time. Not only do students have access to cultural activities but they are engaging with educators, leaders and peers in their native language, Inuktitut, which is facilitated by Inuit educators and community members. IQ principles are applied in the school by Inuit educators to integrate cultural learning into all aspects of education and ensure that the learning fits with Inuit ways of knowing, being and doing. For example, if a student has caught their first seal or polar bear, this is acknowledged and recognized in the school in order to bring school and community life together (Alivaktuk 2010; Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010).

#### *5.1.4.4 Efforts by Qallunaat Educators*

Qallunaat educators believe there is a need for more Nunavut-created curricula that integrates culturally appropriate learning, developed with defined and clear expectations, accountability, structure, and respect (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Qallunaat educators make efforts to modify curriculum resources in subject areas throughout the school year to increase the relevancy of the learning to the lives of their students. This extra work is done on their own initiative by seeking out available resources, including internet and communication with Inuit educators and community members. For example, Educator 6 (2010) partnered with the Uqqurmiut Arts Centre (<http://www.uqqurmiut.com/>) to incorporate Inuit perspectives and techniques into art classes. Educator 5 (2010) found a story about how the Inuit traded for wood and soapstone with the Cree and integrated this into a lesson about trading in the past compared with trading today and how the rate of trading has increased substantially. An

Inuit educator (Student Support Assistant), who was in the classroom that day, was also able to elaborate on this story using her own knowledge.

Qallunaat educators also make efforts to emphasize connections between spring camp and curricular courses. Educator 6 (2010) recounts that “I’ve done art projects with kids out there [...] I’ve had an unbelievable number of teachable moments about science with [students] out at Spring Camp.” For example, Educator 6 (2010) was able to relate the physics and chemistry of heat to processes of heat transfer in the environment at camp. Qallunaat educators are willing to integrate opportunities for cultural learning into their classes even when it often means going beyond available time and resources.

Educator 1 (2010) and Educator 5 (2010) explain the importance of knowing your students and being able to work with the flow of the class. In this manner educators can teach what is going to work at that time and not try to force a lesson that will not register with the students or may not teach them something as important. For example:

[I]f there’s an opportunity for them to develop a resume or there’s an opportunity to teach a lesson sometimes I’ll go in favour of the thing I didn’t have planned for the day. Because I think that that teaches them much more than maybe my lesson would have and let that go for another time. And then getting to know [...] how they [...] work and what they’re capable of. So I have one group in the morning where they want to just come in, pick up what’s on the table, go sit down and individually read it and answer the questions [...] And then other groups we have to [...] do it together as a class step by step on the board. [...] it’s just knowing what each class is sort of capable of and a lot of the times I’m searching for material that meets the level for which they can work, and it’s hard (Educator 1 2010).

So learning and knowing when you can push the students to challenge themselves and work harder versus letting them work at their own pace is a daily balancing act for teachers and if the balance is not created then they lose the engagement of the students

and will have a hard time facilitate learning until that balance has been reestablished. It is important that curriculum is not too prescriptive and allows the classroom teacher to adapt it to the needs and interests of the students, “Because that’s how you get kids interested. If you find out they’re interested in snowmobiles well like you can do something with that, you could relate that to globalization, you could relate that to science” (Educator 5 2010). Educators must be familiar with the learning approaches of their students as well as the appropriate cultural content. Sutherland and Swayze (2012:91,89) discovered that providing this flexibility for educators to adapt the curriculum contributed to students success:

[T]eacher autonomy was a huge component of program success [...] where there was a high degree of autonomy and access to Elders, programming was described as being more effective [...] This flexibility enabled the teachers to design programs with a stronger focus on the students [...] and] mak[e] connections to the local land to support learning.

Educator initiative and interest also plays a role in how the curriculum is adapted to the classroom so proper resources and supports must be available to help promote educator motivation.

There are many positive contributions towards student engagement, success and identity development due to increased integration of cultural learning at Attagoyuk Ilisavik. These achievements are made possible through the commitment and motivation of school leaders, DEA, community members, and educators. Attagoyuk Ilisavik is a really progressive school in regards to the integration of IQ principles and are making great strides towards improving the educational experience for students. However, there are still challenges to address before the integration of cultural and academic learning can

be achieved most effectively. There are various factors contributing to a disconnect between cultural and academic learning which will be outlined in the following section.

## **5.2 Disconnect Between Academic and Cultural Learning**

Although there is a drive towards integration, where it is seen to provide a more appropriate approach for education in the North, there seems to be some incongruity between this broad goal being emphasized and the realities amongst students and educators in the schools. A lot of efforts are being made to develop a culturally integrative education system to support Inuit youth, in practice there still seems to be a disconnect between academic and cultural learning, and true integration remains an incredible challenge. Part of this disconnect arises from the definitions of the approaches to learning, which contributes to a host of challenges to address in moving towards integration. Cultural and academic learning is defined as it is understood for this thesis.

### ***5.2.1 Definitions of Learning***

#### ***5.2.1.1 Cultural Learning***

Cultural learning is generally considered to be experiential where students learn through direct experience and hands-on activities, and knowledge is passed on orally and through observation under the guidance of experts (Lee 2010). Darnell and Hoëm (1996) explain that culture is defined as shared knowledge and worldview which informs ways of living and education and systems of education are inextricably a part of ensuring intergenerational knowledge transfer. In school, the classes described by Inuit students and educators as being the “cultural” classes (Inuktitut language, sewing, shop, and Aulajaaqtut) tend to fall into this description of experiential learning. Cultural learning

which takes place outside of standard curriculum involves Elders, hunters, and other experts coming into the school, or taking the students outdoors, to learn the necessary skills to survive on the land by experiencing and practicing what they will need to know to be successful (Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010). Going out onto the land is an important aspect of learning because it is in this environment where the skills and knowledge originated (Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010; Young 2010). High schools need to go beyond what is currently available in regards to cultural learning because there are some aspects of Inuit culture that cannot be learned on paper, by reading it, or making a photocopy of it. This is important because student interest increases when there is something new about their culture they are going to learn, especially when the learning takes place outside (Alivaktuk 2010; Educator 4 2010). All Inuit and Qallunaat Educators (2010) describe how the significance of experiential learning is portrayed via the students who demonstrate their competence in educational environments where they can apply their skills of observation and learning through doing.

#### *5.2.1.2 Academic Learning*

Academic learning is defined more by reading and writing about topics that may seem more abstract or distant from the realities of daily life. Stavenga de Jong et al. (2006) describe academic education as learning from texts and, to some extent, classroom learning. Academic learning is encompassed by the education provided through the Nunavut curriculum, the bulk of it being based on the old Alberta curriculum, with some additions from the NWT government, and now Nunavut. This education is derived from “Southern” disciplines and ideas of what is important to learn, including math, science,

English, etc. There are experiential approaches to learning these topics and practical applications of the skills acquired; however, the bulk of the learning requires students to sit at a desk and listen, read, and/or write. As Angmarlik (2010) describes, “In school we write it and not like see it or feel it,” emphasizing the need to be able to feel or experience the learning. These two varying approaches to learning can cause challenges for students. Where cultural and academic learning are seen to be distinct categories this hinders students’ progress in courses that are intended to integrate the two approaches to learning.

### ***5.2.2 Culture and Tradition***

Students generally define cultural learning in the school by the types of classes that are offered, including: Inuktitut, sewing, shop, and Aulajaaqtut. For a lot of Inuit students and educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik, culture is commensurate with “old stuffs” (Student 2 2010); things that were done in the past when Inuit lived on the land (Section 2.3.1). Culture is often described as how things “used” to be done when older generations lived on the land: “How they used to play games” (Angnakak 2010); “Hunting. How they lived” (Kilabuk 2010b); “The main focus [of spring camp] is to teach them how we used to live when we were living out in the camps before we went to school” (Kanayuk 2010). Student 6 (2010) explains that she feels proud to be Inuk when she is learning “what they used to do and how they used to do it.” Two Inuit educators describe cultural learning as local programs run by local people including, survival skills, going out on the land and hunting, and making traditional clothing such as parkas, amautiks, canvas tents, etc (Alivaktuk 2010; Kanayuk 2010).

It seems that perhaps Inuit students and educators are equating culture with tradition, and that is where differences may arise in how this relates to implementation in education. This thesis research seeks to understand how Inuit students and educators define “culturally appropriate learning” based on the premise that “culture” involves “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; also: the characteristic features of everyday existence shared by people in a place or time” (Merriam-Webster 2012). The definitions from Inuit participants of cultural learning are very much linked to past practices. Definitions of cultural learning based on past practices are possibly due to semantics and different understandings of the terminology. Even so, culture and tradition are closely linked because of how they interact together. If we look at Vansina’s (1990) interpretation of “tradition” it is defined as dynamic and adaptable. Traditions are “a changing, inherited, collective body of cognitive and physical representations shared by their members,” (Vansina 1990: 259) similar to the definition of culture. McGregor (2010b) and Laugrand and Oosten (2009) describe how the traditional hunting culture of the Inuit was dynamic and flexible, adapting to environmental influences as required, through the development of new materials, implements, technologies, or means of subsistence. Furthermore, Ishulutak (2011) from NS describes Inuit culture as:

Being able to hunt for our food traditionally, and watching ladies sew, and just using our language, just practicing our songs and dances and ladies throat singing and men dancing... ‘Cause we adapt to things really easily [...] For example, playing square dancing’s really popular and we adopted that from the whalers. So our culture changes a bit.

Defining Inuit culture and culturally appropriate learning is a unique process for each community. However, it may lead to challenges with curriculum development if different groups are working towards increasing and integrating the amount of cultural learning but are employing different definitions of what this learning should entail.

### ***5.2.3 Two Worlds***

In conversations with many students and teachers in Pangnirtung, Inuit society and Qallunaat society were often referred to as “two worlds”; two separate worlds which students need to navigate in order to understand how and where they “fit in” (Kanayuk 2010; Lee 2010; Young 2010; Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Inuit educators explain that there are two cultures in their community, but the main culture of students is Inuit. Lee (2010) explains that there are a range of students in the school with various levels of identification along a spectrum of Inuit culture and Qallunaat culture:

We're in a period of transitioning and I think young people today are going through a [...] transitioning between two worlds; between a more traditional Inuit lifestyle to a more modern kind of global lifestyle[...] I think some of our kids who have strong family support, are strong in who they are as young Inuit and they're proud of who they are. Other kids who are struggling with that identity and seeing you know with cable, with the internet access, with seeing kind of Southern or European culture and aspiring to have things like computers and cell phones and that kind of a lifestyle. So you've got a real range.

Therefore, school leaders need to help students understand they are in a place where there are two sets of cultures and how to be successful with them (Educator 4 2010; Young 2010).

Contributing to this idea of “two worlds” is the fact that current students are only the 3rd generation of Inuit to live in permanent settlements. So a lot of their parents and

grandparents grew up on the land, living full or partial subsistence lifestyles and speaking Inuktitut. There is a generational gap, where the Inuit educators want education to be what they did not have growing up, and the current students are trying to learn in a modern world with many global influences (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). So students may sometimes feel that they are in between two worlds, which can be confusing (Ibid). Due to this separation of Inuit and Qallunaat worldviews students often feel they need to choose between one or the other (Alivaktuk 2010; Young 2010). In Section 4.4.2.2, Hanson (2010) describes how subconscious attitudes of students are influenced by colonial experiences which inhibit their feelings of competence and success in Inuit society and with people outside their community. In comparison, some Inuit educators explain that they do not have a lot of difficulty in maintaining aspects of a traditional lifestyle because they only had the influence of Inuit culture growing up, until they began to attend government schools (Section 2.3.3) (Alivaktuk 2010; Young 2010). Berry (1999) notes that positive cultural identities are generally strengthened when they are clear and consistent. Conversely, identity confusion may occur where identities are “‘conflicted’ or inconsistent in the sense that individuals don't know who they really are, or they have incompatible ideas and feelings about themselves (Berry 1999). The following five qualities make up the components of Berry's (1999:5) understanding of identity:

- Perception (Do I see myself as an Aboriginal Person?);
- Importance (Is it important or not to be an Aboriginal Person?);
- Esteem (Do I like being an Aboriginal Person?);
- Maintenance (Do I want to remain an Aboriginal Person?); and,
- Behavioural Expression (Do I express my Aboriginal Identity in my daily behaviour?).

When there is a negative orientation, inconsistency or uncertainty among the five components this may contribute to a “confused identity” (Berry 1999: 7). Hanson (2010) describes how many Inuit graduates arrive at the NS program with some characteristics indicating a “confused identity”, where some Inuit youth may feel ashamed of their heritage because of negative views and stereotypes relating to Inuit. Section 4.4.2.2 describes how NS helps student address implicit questions in their sub-conscience which fosters their ability to establish cultural identities and understand their place in the world.

There are distinct differences between Inuit and Qallunaat cultures which need to be acknowledged and respected. Amongst some Inuit students and educators, there seems to be a strong emphasis on keeping cultural and academic learning styles separate (Attagoyuk Student Group 6 2010; Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). For example, there are camp staff who do not want any Qallunaat influence in how the spring camp program is run (Section 5.2.4.2). As Young (2010) explains, “Southerners [...] were dominating our culture when we [were] students. Now [it’s the] other way around [and it] seems to be better, to me anyway.” However, there is a disconnect in regards to viewing Inuit and Qallunaat cultures as two separate worlds because if people do not see them as working together then how can they be expected to be integrated in teaching and learning at the school. If the two knowledge systems are perceived by students and educators as being totally separate then it does not seem possible that the goal of integration of Inuit and Qallunaat education can be achieved. In a study which analyzed the perspectives of non-Inuit high school educators across Nunavut regarding the challenges of working in a cross-cultural setting, Aylward (2009) discovered a clash of the “two worlds” of Nunavut

students. She claims this clash is attributed with a possible explanation of the lack of student engagement in Nunavut high schools because their lifestyle does not fit with the processes of education. Darder (1991) defines the concept of “two worlds” as biculturalism; a process where individuals learn to function in two distinct sociocultural environments: their primary culture, and the mainstream culture of the society in which they live. This kind of bicultural lifestyle for students “separates life from school and establishes a permanent division between formal schooling (i.e., mostly within school buildings) and traditional, culturally relevant learning (i.e., in the community)” (Aylward 2009: 86). Aylward goes on to explain that this understanding of biculturalism is helpful to elucidate and plan for the challenges students may experience as barriers to their success and engagement. However, “biculturalism and metaphors of ‘two worlds’ severely restrict the students’ perceived options and [can] potentially contribute to further marginalisation” (Aylward 2009: 86). Students may feel alienated from both cultures or, given the proper supports, are able to contend with both and will experience bicultural affirmation (Darder 1991). If students can successfully achieve biculturalism, studies have shown that they will have relatively good mental health and a positive cultural identity (Berry 1999). This bicultural affirmation is experienced by many students who attend the NS program in Ottawa (Section 4.4.2.2).

Aylward (2009) notes that viewing the school as having two distinct cultures may also influence how educators assess student engagement, as well as attitudes and perceptions of family members in regards to school. Unidentified biases of Qallunaat educators may contribute to understanding difference in Inuit success and engagement in

the classroom as a learning deficit, or learning disability (Aylward 2009; Berger 2009). Aylward (2009:88) explains that “Although the educators’ gaze is sympathetic, their biases will discourage them from seeing themselves as playing an active role in changing schooling, from taking responsibility for their own actions, and from establishing respectful relations with Inuit parents.” The lack of teacher training to prepare Qallunaat educators for working at Attagoyuk Ilisavik may contribute to unidentified biases propagating student marginalization instead of bicultural affirmation.

#### ***5.2.4 Differing Approaches to Education***

##### *5.2.4.1 Differing Pedagogies*

Incongruities arise in the pedagogies of Inuit and Qallunaat educators surrounding the purpose of education. Douglas (2009:35) describes that:

[S]chool, an institution of mainstream Canadian society, promotes an expression of personhood that is inconsistent with its counterpart in Inuit society, which has traditionally socialised children to overcome egocentric concerns in the interest of group survival. In contrast, school socialises children for competitive individual survival in a wage economy.

Qallunaat educators explain that they work to implement the curriculum they were hired to teach and prepare students so they can be successful in future academic endeavors (and ultimately survival in the wage economy). Qallunaat Educator 3 (2010) explains how “[W]e’ve brought up concerns about you know the quality of the education. I think everybody has the best interests of the students at heart. I think it sometimes becomes competing philosophies of what education should be.” Berger (2009) found that among Inuit educators the goal to preserve Inuit identity was a high priority, and one of the lowest priorities amongst Qallunaat educators. This is reflected in interviews and focus

groups with educators at Attagoyuk Ilisavik. For instance, Educator 6 (2010) comments how she wants students to succeed with their individual goals and be the best prepared that they can for their post-graduation endeavors through the best means possible. If some of the focus in school needs to be taken away from the integration of Inuit culture to allow more time for individual preparation then this should be prioritized. Educator 6 (2010) explains, “I am far more interested in my individual students’ success as individuals regardless of their cultural background [...] I’m more interested in that than I am in preserving a specific culture as a whole.” However, Educator 1 (2010) believes that even when the focus is not on promoting culture, a solid foundation in high school still contributes to the collective society because well prepared students can have success and contribute to their communities in a positive manner.

The above mentioned perspectives from the Qallunaat educators are important and valid; however, they do not align with the direction of promoting students to be confident in who they are as Inuit and as part of their Inuit communities, which is a critical component of education as described by co-principal Cathy Lee (2010). Berger (2009) argues that the Eurocentric ideologies of Qallunaat educators and bureaucrats (however well intended) continue to maintain the status quo in schools, inhibiting the control of Inuit leaders and educators and their ability to make changes towards a more culturally appropriate learning experience. Furthermore, “Eurocentrism hinders well-intentioned non-Inuit teachers, hurts systemic initiatives for change, and paralyzes national action that might otherwise facilitate school change and increase the well-being and academic success of Inuit students in Nunavut” (Berger 2009:57-58). Unfortunately,

many well meaning Qallunaat educators are unaware they are working within a system which marginalizes Inuit students and they are not provided with the help or resources to understand their own Eurocentrism (Berger 2009). Section 4.3.3.3 demonstrates how much Qallunaat educators care about their students and want them to be confident successful adults. However, lack of training prior to their commencement as teachers at Attagoyuk Ilisavik and lack of ongoing supports to help them thrive in a cross-cultural learning environment inhibits their ability to identify and overcome Eurocentric barriers as described by Berger (2009).

#### *5.2.4.2 Challenges with Integration*

Aylward (2009) states that before engaging in a dialogue regarding Indigenous language, cultures, curricula and education, an in-depth consideration of cultural difference must occur. Aylward (2009), Berry (1999), and Darder (1991) advocate for the “both worlds” or bicultural approach to education which can lead to Inuit worldviews becoming more highly valued in curricula than what is currently in practice. The drive to integrate cultural and academic learning into the high school is supported by many experts at the local and government level; however, there are still some people who do not believe cultural learning can take place within the school. Some students at Attagoyuk Ilisavik believe that cultural learning only occurs when students go out on the land to participate in and learn Inuit activities, such as hunting (Attagoyuk Student Group 2 and 5 2010). Another student does not support the integration of cultural and academic learning in any way because he does not like the idea of mixing hunting and science or learning about traditional activities in English; he only wants to hear the Inuktitut version

(Attagoyuk Student Group 6 2010). There is also resistance from Inuit staff in changing the way things are done at spring camp, especially if the suggestions are coming from Qallunaat (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Qallunaat educators explain that the idea of spring camp is to preserve Inuit culture; thus, incorporating more academic aspects might make it too “southern” or too “Qallunaat” (Educator 6 2010). Tufts’ (1998) research concludes that Inuit approaches to science should become a standard part of curriculum for high schools, but that it cannot and should not be integrated with Qallunaat science because the content and method cannot be accommodated through the government school system the way it is designed today. McGregor’s (2010: 140) research also highlights how “This study reveals the lasting discontinuities between two systems of knowing and doing that continue to be experienced by Inuit students.”

#### *5.2.4.3. Cultural Learning and Qallunaat Educators*

Qallunaat educators outline various ways that they attempt to integrate cultural and northern relevant content into their classes such as in science, math, English, and social studies (Section 5.1.4.4). Interestingly, students only see cultural learning in classes and activities directly related to Inuit culture - Inuktitut, sewing, shop, spring camp, awards assemblies, spring camp and various educational experiences with Elders (Attagoyuk Student Group 1, 4, 6 and 7 2010) (Section 4.1.1). Students from Nunavut Sivuniksavut explain that learning about Inuit history and culture becomes increasingly challenging if the teacher is not him/herself Inuk, or if their knowledge of, or connection to, the community is limited (NS Student Group 2010). Qallunaat educators also note that many students are not receptive to learning cultural content from them because they are

not Inuit (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Educator 6 (2010) comments how, “I always face the issue that I'm not Inuk so I don't know what I'm talking about. [...] There's this line, this culture and academic [line], and you're a teacher and you're from the south and you're academic, you're not culture.” Qallunaat educators teaching the new Staking the Claim curriculum, which revolves around the accomplishment of the NLCA, have had varying experiences but for the most part they are finding the material very difficult to implement in the classroom, having little success with student participation. In interviews with high school students Tufts (1999), a Qallunaat educator, deduced that there are barriers to integrating cultural and academic learning attributable to the differences in values and beliefs between Qallunaat and Inuit, as well as the fact that most science teachers do not have experience in traditional Inuit science. Other contributing factors are that traditional Inuit science was gained through experiential learning, which often cannot be gained in the classroom (Tufts 1999). Douglas (2009) and Tufts (1999) suggest that a contributing factor to student resistance in learning from Qallunaat educators are the differing pedagogies educators apply in their classrooms (5.2.3.1). Douglas (2009: 43) explains how students face many challenges due to the differences in Inuit and Qallunaat approaches to teaching and learning:

When students shift to English and individual subjects, they start learning how to compartmentalise abstract knowledge out of context. They find this novel learning style challenging for several reasons. First, they are accustomed to appropriating new information in context and over time, thereby accommodating the knowledge in greater depth. [...] Second, school knowledge is standardised and impersonal: one teacher provides the same knowledge simultaneously to a group of students who are assessed individually. [...] Third, because they are used to focused thinking, some students have trouble skipping discontinuously from one idea to another.

Because Inuit approaches to learning are rooted in a different pedagogy from what is used in mainstream education this can lead to challenges for students. The ways in which Qallunaat educators communicate the learning with their students may differ from the ways in which this information is interpreted by students and lead to challenges in how it is processed.

Educator 2 (2010) and Educator 6 (2010) believe that bringing an Elder into the classroom to teach the cultural aspects of the curriculum would be very valuable “because sometimes the kids will sit and listen and be respectful; maybe that will take it closer to home” (Educator 2 2010). Educator 6 (2010) also describes how she has increasingly more success with her students due to having spent multiple years in the community. Gruenewald (2003:10) further explains that “Part of the critical synthesis posed by a critical pedagogy includes the acknowledgement that the shared experience of everyday places promotes the critical dialogue and reflection that is essential to identifying and creating community well-being.” Because Educator 6 (2010) has the shared experiences with students, she explains “I can sometimes have an effect with my students that I wouldn’t be able to have otherwise, because I can be very southern in the way that I teach sometimes but I can get away with it sometimes because I have the rapport outside of class with them.” Thus, contributing to a more positive classroom environment. The time is much less than Inuit educators, for who the community is home, but higher than the average turnover rate for Qallunaat educators. The time spent in a community, as well as personal relationships with students, can contribute to more

understanding and experience of Inuit culture allowing Qallunaat to have more success in teaching curriculum which integrates content relevant to students' lives.

#### *5.2.4.4 Inuit-Qallunaat Relations*

Inuit and Qallunaat educators both recognize an element of segregation between staff at the school. Some Inuit educators feel that Qallunaat educators need to attempt to participate more in community life (Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010). Conversely, Qallunaat Educator 3 (2010) feels that there may still be a level of resentment towards the Qallunaat because Inuit were colonized and mistreated, contributing towards negative views of Qallunaat. Some Qallunaat educators also feel that because there is so much focus on Inuit culture there is not much emphasis on having respect for other cultures (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Qallunaat educators do not feel they can voice their opinions in the school regarding the approach to teaching and preparation for graduation (Educator 2 2010). Educator 1 (2010), explains that, "We need an appreciation of both sides [...] it's extremely segregated, like in every aspect, the activities are segregated, the staff is for the most part segregated, not always but for the most part. [... The students are] shown like different worlds basically and they're trying to make sense of both." Inuit and Qallunaat educators explains that if students cannot see their own educators working together in a united front then there is no way they can be expected to do any different (Educator 4 2010; Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Taken more broadly, if students do not see Inuit and Qallunaat educators working together then they may not be able to see Inuit and Qallunaat worldviews working together, continuing to create challenges for the integration of cultural and academic learning.

### *5.2.5. Lack of Resources*

Key areas described in interviews and focus groups where resources are needed include funding and cultural resources. Hanson (2010) describes how the a lack of resources for Nunavut high schools is creating a challenges to the improvement of the system:

[T]hey're hampered by lack of funds and lack of people to do all the things that need to be done. It's a whole system to be re-created. And perhaps they're lacking in creativity and how they can actually do that. So they're methodically mapping things out and they've done some very interesting things, meeting with committees, advisory committees involving Elders and youth.

Aylward (2009: 83) further exemplifies how the lack of cultural resources creates challenges for students:

Inuit culture, history, and land activities were seen as student strengths and desired course areas for improving graduation options. However, lack of culturally relevant resources, too few bilingual secondary school teachers, and adherence to Alberta curricula and examinations were viewed as barriers to student graduation. In addition, lack of relevant and appropriate resources was a reported barrier to educator effectiveness.

#### *5.2.5.1. Lack of Funding*

Lees et al. (2010:16) discovered that, "The need for stable, long-term, consistent and adequate funding is a major concern throughout the research literature [regarding Inuit education]." The annual weeklong spring camp run by Attagoyuk Ilisavik each year is an incredible opportunity for students, supported by the schools as well as the community. This community support is the reason that the camp is able to stay in operation year after year because the amount of effort that goes into organization, securing funding, hiring staff, ensuring student safety, etc. Outdoor cultural activities are

important opportunities because high schools need to go beyond what is currently available in regards to cultural learning because there are some aspects of Inuit culture that cannot be learned on paper, by reading it, or making a photocopy of it. This is important because student interest increases when there is something new about their culture they are going to learn, especially when the learning takes place outside (Alivaktuk 2010; Educator 4 2010; Kanayuk 2010). Financially running the spring camp, and other outdoor cultural activities, is a major factor in its success every year. A lot of funding is required and must be actively and constantly sought after via sources within the existing budget, third party funding, and fund raising (Alivaktuk 2010; Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010). Berger (2009) found that despite the general agreement that Inuit culture should play a larger role in the schools, limitations are quickly discovered, lack of funding being the most frequently cited barrier. Berger (2009: 62-63) states that this lack of funding must be viewed suspiciously and is not just a device to avoid implementing constitutional and human rights:

It is troubling that the Nunavut Department of Education (2006) claims that the educational system should be based on Inuit ways and values while no funding is earmarked for permanent hiring of Elders and little money is available for teaching specific Inuit skills—things that must certainly be just initial steps in a more fundamental transformation of schooling. Nevertheless, while lack of money is certainly a real obstacle, it can also be used to justify maintaining the status quo.

Running spring camp requires a lot of time and resources and maintaining the high school throughout the duration of spring camp can be quite a challenge to balance. For example, finding enough substitute teachers to fill in at the high school while others are out at camp (Lee 2010). Furthermore, if motivated people do not take over for camp staff when

they retire it will not continue to operate. Because it is a local initiative then it does not continue to exist without the community drive. Without the support and input of parents and community members these programs would not be successful (Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010). Without standard funding for this program the more challenging it becomes to ensure all the various aspects are maintained.

Educators may also struggle to secure the proper resources for their classroom making the curriculum a challenge to teach. This includes physical resources such as projectors, lab supplies, etc. The issues of curricula are currently being addressed through various curricula such as Staking the Claim and the environmental science curriculum. However, proper resources need to accompany the curricula to ensure its success.

#### *5.2.5.2 Lack of Cultural Resources*

There are limited amounts of culturally appropriate teaching resources available to educators. Various schools in Nunavut organize land camps for their students; however, this experience is not standard across the territory because it is not a standard program in the education system. For this reason, these programs require a lot of local initiative and funding (5.2.4.1). Language resources are not readily available for most high school classes and continues to create barriers for students whose first language is Inuktitut (Alivaktuk 2010; Educator 4 2010). Contributing to this is the fact that the school curriculum is taught in English, in a manner not designed for students with English as a second language (Alivaktuk 2010; Educator 4 2010). Many Qallunaat educators see students struggling with literacy and so the heavy reliance on reading and writing in academic classes is not appropriate for their students and they do not seem to

be learning from it (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). The number of culturally relevant resources are also still quite limited.

Although culturally relevant curricula are currently being developed, educators are struggling to supplement the need for more resources at this time. All educators support the aim of increased culturally appropriate learning in the school because it teaches students very useful and beneficial skills, but there also needs to be clear outcomes and expectations for students to achieve (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Aside from the few curricula and resources, if educators want more culturally relevant learning in their classroom it is up to them to find learning material related to course work (Ibid). This is more manageable for Inuit educators and Qallunaat educators who have been teaching in the North longterm. Considering the limited amount of preparation time and limited resources educators are given this can be an overwhelming task, especially for new educators (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010):

[I]t's very frustrating because we have nothing. We have to modify everything that we use. And so when [...] I modify something I try to angle it towards what's going to be relevant to the people that I'm teaching [...] I think that's the problem with any of the core subjects, like I can incorporate bits of northern relevant things in [but] there's nothing specifically in the curriculum because it's Alberta curriculum (Educator 6 2010).

The Nunavut Approved Curriculum and Teaching Resources provided by the Department of Education (2010) indicates the strong reliance on Alberta curricula, dating from 1987 to 2008, for most courses including, English Language Arts, Reading, Art, Math, Science, Social Studies and Physical Education. Inuktitut, Inuuqatigiit, Northern Studies and Aulajaaqtut are NWT developed curricula which integrate cultural learning. There are

some supplemental cultural resources provided the NWT and GN available for almost all courses but are not specifically integrated into them. Thus, the lack of cultural resources is inhibiting the progress of integrating IQ principles into the education system, especially for educators who are not familiar with Inuit culture.

At this time, *integration* of the two knowledge systems has not been achieved in the curriculum or classroom. The ‘integration’ of cultural learning, as opposed to ‘incorporation’ or ‘adding on’, is necessary so that the two knowledge systems are working together instead of against one another. Educators can feel that, at various points throughout the year, they are not given enough time to teach the students the curriculum due to the many extra curricular activities that take place during class time, often for cultural learning (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Aylward (2009: 85), found that “aspects of Inuit language and cultural programs were still largely considered ‘extras’ of Nunavut schooling and at present could not meet the educational standards required for better graduation outcomes.” I believe that the lack of integration is leading to tensions which arise from feeling that cultural and academic learning are working against one another, taking valuable time away from being able to learn either one in a comprehensive manner. Students Lewis (2010) and Kilabuk (2010b), appreciate the quality and quantity of cultural learning at Attagoyuk Ilisavik; however, they feel that cultural learning takes a lot of class hours away from academics and might be implemented more successfully through after school programs:

Here, we're really struggling with students getting their work done. This is a small school, small community, we don't have as much teachers and here their first language is Inuktitut so it's really hard to understand like what they're being taught here, so... I like it when the Elders come, it would be good if they came more but I think they should make like more activities outside of school to do it. Not in school because when you do it here - I like it, doing kamik making and all that - but it interferes with the school work so. We need more time now to do the school work than anything else because it's not fun when you're behind doing these other things (Lewis 2010).

The Qallunaat educators also feel that cultural and academic learning are competing against one another for available class time. They believe the school needs to decide whether it will be more focused on academics or culture because at this time the school is trying to incorporate more than can be learned in the available hours of a regular school day. Educator 1 (2010), explains:

[W]e're trying to do two things, at least in my mind, we're trying to teach about Inuit culture and then we're also trying to teach the academic side of things and sometimes we marry the two well, and that's great when we can do that. But I find we're trying to do too many things and nothing is getting done well, 'cause there's just too much going on, way too much going on [...] There's not enough hours in the day to meet the needs of both, or at least that's how I feel. And so neither is getting done properly.

This tension is so strong that it seems insurmountable to some participants. Educator 3 (2010) believes the school "can't really be all things to all people," suggesting a need to be more focused and have more defined goals and objectives for what is trying to be achieved. There is also a need to ensure the content comprehensive enough so as not to exclude important learning experiences. As Educator 6 (2010) recounts:

I've been told many times by students as a group, 'Are we gonna study Nunavut animals again? What about the rest of the world?' These guys are curious. Maybe it's partly because I work with kids who are really keen to travel, so they're already curious about the rest of the world but I hope that it's balanced. I hope that it's not completely north centered for their sake because they want to know, they're extremely curious about the world.

Educator 5 2010 proposes that the school could ask students what it is they would like to learn about. If it is not related to academics and they do not have a need for a high school diploma they could be given alternative educational opportunities. Youth who are not ready to learn in the school could have their needs catered to somewhere that will not distract the students who are thriving in the school environment (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). The students who are thriving in school are seen to be excelling at academics by some educators; however, if cultural and academic learning were more integrated together then this might decrease the gap between the two or create less of a distinction.

### ***5.2.6 Social Issues***

Social relations came up time and time again in interviews and focus groups even though I did not ask questions specifically pertaining to this area of school. Nunavut Sivuniksavut students describe how much their social relationships affected their high school performance. Matt attributed household factors with how he felt throughout the day at school but also explained that his mood could be affected when he struggled with certain work. Charlotte's friends had a big impact on her mood at school and that they were very happy throughout their high school experience. Danny's peers also had the most impact on his mood due to the negative attitudes that certain people had regarding school. These attitudes derived from students being forced to attend school against their

choice by their parents, who would then try and sleep in class or swear at teachers. Danny also felt bad for not being able to help those students appreciate how beneficial school can be for you.

Berger (2006) outlines the many other social issues occurring outside school which can have an impact on a student's success in education, including: crowded homes, average lifespans lower than the rest of Canada, higher high-school drop-out rates, alcoholism and suicide. Educator 6 (2010) explains that:

We're dealing with a group of extremely high risk students [...] From November to November there was something like 14 or 15 suicides in town. And three or four of them directly impacted the school. Two or three of them were current students and like, so you have students who are extremely high risk, they're at risk for all sorts of things: huge problems with alcohol, with drugs, with suicidal tendencies, with depression, pregnancy, like there's so much going and there's no support.

Influencing factors occur outside of school which may impact student engagement and issues occur inside the school which also deter student success and engagement. The school atmosphere may yield challenges for students; however, it also provides a social arena for bonding in peer groups (Douglas 2009). Therefore, students may continue to attend classes for social purposes only, causing distractions for students and educators as well as influencing other students through peer pressure (Ibid).

### ***5.2.7 Impacts on Student Engagement, Success and Identity***

All Qallunaat educators see that many of the challenges faced by students, which deter engagement and success, result in a lack of confidence to pursue academic work. Aylward (2009) explains that challenges to student engagement, including attendance, motivation, assignment completion, and lifestyle choices, result from systemic barriers.

Lack of guidance or school/community counsellors, as well as erratic student attendance and understanding of how the high school system will contribute to their lives and post-secondary options, are systemic barriers inhibiting student success and engagement as well as teacher effectiveness Aylward (2009). Furthermore, there is school board policy of social promotion which moves students along with their own age groups even if they have not met the requirements for the school year (Douglas 2009). This may free some students from pressure to work and increase student confidence. However, the result is often low or ambiguous class standards (Douglas 2009). Similarly, due to the “adding-on” dilemma, is the challenge to uphold certain standards and expectations for students in regards to curricular courses because they do not have the class time to complete the necessary amount of work (Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Educator 6 (2010) argues that “there has to be a minimum standard. You have to hold to those sort of expectations for students because if you don’t have any expectations they’ll never rise to meet them.”

A result from the lack of integration of cultural and academic learning is a need for the cultural learning to be further developed. Merritt (2010), Tutanuak (2010), and Iksiktaaryuk (2010) from Nunavut Sivuniksavut comment that their Inuit, or northern focused classes, were often not complex or challenging enough to keep students interested. Or, the material was too far removed from their lives resulting in a disconnect between students and the material incurring challenges to engagement. Furthermore, Iksiktaaryuk (2010) did not always see how his courses would be beneficial or contributory to his life after graduation: “I think another challenge for me was being motivated to do something because I mean growing up in a small town all you see around

you is what's around you, like it's hard for you to picture to be like, say you're going to be a rocket scientist or something; [...] you can't have that mental image prior to seeing it somewhere else" (Iksiktaaryuk 2010). Kathleen expanded further on this by explaining that she had done a research project surveying youth in Rankin Inlet about their post graduation goals and she found that many youth wanted to pursue employment similar to what other people in the community were doing and what they could see around them. Understandably, students cannot be motivated to pursue cultural or academic work if they cannot see how it connects to their lives or how they will benefit from it.

### **5.3 Chapter Summary**

Understanding the ways in which Inuit students, Inuit educators, and Qallunaat educators define culturally appropriate learning is important to understand how it can be integrated and developed in the school system. An increase of integration is important to promote student success and engagement while contributing to the development of cultural identity. There are many positive contributions and developments at Attagoyuk high school by Inuit and Qallunaat Educators to further integrate IQ principles into the teaching and learning. Co-principals, community members, Inuit educators, and Qallunaat educators are all making efforts in the school to promote the integration of cultural and academic learning because they believe it will contribute to student experience and preparation for graduation. There are still many challenges to address in the education system, many of which are contributing to a disconnect between cultural and academic learning. Areas of disconnect include: describing Inuit culture through the traditions associated with living on the land; seeing Inuit and Qallunaat cultures as

separated into “two worlds”; differing approaches to education; lack of funding and cultural resources; as well as, social issues. These areas contributing to the disconnect of cultural and academic learning are hindering the integration of these learning approaches and impacting the successful development of student engagement, success and identity.

## **Chapter 6 - Conclusion**

### **6.1 Integration Of Cultural and Academic Learning**

This research sought to understand how cultural and academic learning are combined within the Nunavut education system, and how this approach contributes to both student success and engagement in the classroom, as well as helping develop an increased sense of Inuit identity. Based on the perspectives of student and educator participants, and literature regarding education in Nunavut, this thesis argues that the integration of academic and cultural learning is an important approach to encouraging student engagement and success in the learning process. If students are more interested in the materials they are asked to learn, and they can effectively relate this to their own lives, then it is suggested that graduation rates will increase for Inuit youth and they will be better prepared to meet their future goals. Indeed, Attagoyuk Ilisavik is highly progressive in this regard, with many local school and community initiatives already well established. All educators are working towards creating the most beneficial educational experience possible for students; however, at times there seems to be a disconnect in how they strive to achieve this. Therefore, efforts to integrate cultural and academic learning result in some practical challenges related to fostering Inuit identity, finding a balance between the two forms of pedagogies, collaborating on educational leadership, and recognizing other social influences.

#### ***6.1.1 Fostering Inuit identity***

Attempts to combine or integrate the cultural and academic pedagogies may contribute to student engagement and academic achievements, but may not be the most

appropriate for helping students develop their Inuit identity. The development of Inuit identity in Nunavut should be a focus within schools but this programming should not be forced to fit within the constraints of Euro-Canadian educational expectations. For instance, *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ) principles are presented as a means of ensuring the learning is rooted in Inuit pedagogies; however they are often disconnected from the knowledge bearers: Elders and community experts (keep ref in that you had before). Learning Inuit knowledge and skills are a necessary part of learning, but they must be connected with Inuit values and understanding otherwise the importance of the lesson may be lost (NS Student Group 2010). Experiences on the land/ice with Inuit Elders help to build student-educator relationships and bring meaning to the learning (Section 5.1.1). Thus, there should be more precedence (and funding) placed on Elder knowledge and involvement in the school with the flexibility to adapt the learning in the most appropriate manner to connect students with their Inuit heritage and foster identity. This flexibility and increased Elder involvement would also help to ensure more Inuit control over education (Berger et al. 2006). However, increased cultural learning and Elder involvement in the school still needs to be integrated in a balanced manner with academic learning.

### ***6.1.2 Finding a Balance Between Cultural and Academic Learning***

Ensuring a balance amongst educational subject areas within the Nunavut high school system is a key theme that emerged from interviews and focus groups. Section 5.2.4.2 highlighted many comments from students and educators who believe that cultural and academic approaches to learning cannot work together in the school. These

perspectives possibly arise due to the the manner in which they are currently integrated high school, which is not balanced. At times Qallunnat educators struggle to find the time to teach the full curriculum, because of so many opportunities for cultural or extra-curricular learning. Other times, the Inuit educators struggle because of the emphasis on academic learning which leaves little room for incorporation of associated cultural connections. It is important to find a balance between cultural and academic learning to ensure enough teaching hours in the year to prepare students to move forward competently in all areas of learning. All groups in the school believe in the need to promote successful students who are engaged and confident; however the approaches used, and standards of evaluation, to foster student achievement tend to differ. If Inuit and Qallunaat educators could jointly define the target balance, and how to achieve this, then they could more effectively work together to integrate cultural and academic learning where most relevant, and to maintain separate foci when needed.

### ***6.1.3 Collaborating on Educational Leadership***

The co-principalship established at Attagoyuk Ilisavik has already demonstrated a strong commitment to an integrated approach to education in Pangnirtung, whereby IQ principles and cultural learning are emphasized in all aspects of school policy and practice. This strong leadership is essential, to provide role models for staff, and to ensure unified directions and strategies for the high school. Nevertheless, it seems that both Inuit and Qallunaat educators identify varying degrees of separation in terms of their roles in supporting more integrative approaches to teaching and learning. This may stem partially from their practical roles within the school. The majority of Inuit educators who shared

their perspectives in this research were student support staff or taught courses with a strong cultural focus such as Alaujaaqtut, sewing, Inuktitut, etc.. On the other hand, Qallunaat educators were teachers assigned to specific disciplinary subjects like math, science, English, Environmental Studies, etc. This presents a challenge whereby Inuit educators may not feel they have enough influence in the majority of subjects required in the high school curriculum, while the Qallunaat educators want to try to incorporate cultural learning into their classes but meet strong resistance because they are not of Inuit heritage. Each group, and individual educator, has their own unique skills and expertise to contribute in the learning process, so perhaps this just needs to be better recognized and supported so that they can apply their strengths more collaboratively. Furthermore, training and hiring more Inuit teachers, and encourage Qallunaat teachers to live and engage in the community over longer timeframes, could also go a long way to facilitating more integrated approaches to learning that would benefit students by setting positive examples, providing continuity, and having strong community connections.

#### ***6.1.4 Recognizing Social Influences***

While it helps to identify potential strategies for educators to better support integrative learning to foster student engagement, success, and identity, there are no simple answers. There are so many external factors that also affect the learning process, which became especially apparent through student interviews and focus groups. Of greatest consideration seems to be social interactions amongst their peers, as well as with their teachers, and various social influences including outside media, home situations, and being young parents. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that these students

were teenagers, in the midst of their high school experiences with many varying pressures, and so it may have been challenging to take a step back to reflect deeply on their experiences. However, their perspectives were still insightful to provide the student viewpoints on various practical opportunities and challenges with having a more integrated high school curriculum guided by IQ principles. NS students were better able to reflect on their experiences because they have had time and distance away from their high school experiences to acknowledge the efforts towards increased cultural learning and the benefits of an integrative approach. They were also in a better position to actually contribute towards these goals themselves because the NS program has helped them in this direction.

Based on the analysis in Chapter 5, and some of the key conclusions highlighted here, a number of recommendations were identified from student and educator perspectives that could help contribute to the goal of more culturally appropriate learning in Nunavut high schools.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

The recommendations presented are targeted towards educators and principals in Nunavut, as well as government curriculum developers, departments that provide funding, and policy-makers. Recommendations include: increasing cultural learning; increasing the number of cultural learning opportunities; increasing the use of Inuktitut in curriculum and classroom; increasing the number of Inuit educators and leaders; increasing local involvement in planning and directing; promoting student-centered learning; encouraging student engagement; promoting respectful relationships;

developing educator training; emphasizing the need for guidance counsellors; establishing an adult high school; developing standardized education; and, committing dedicated funding.

### ***6.2.1 Increasing Cultural Learning***

All participants agreed on the need for increased cultural learning in Nunavut high schools. This can be fostered by: increasing the number of cultural learning opportunities; increasing the use of Inuktitut in curriculum and classrooms; increasing the number of Inuit educators and leaders; and, increasing local involvement in planning and directing education.

#### *6.2.1.1 Increasing the Number of Cultural Learning Opportunities*

Cultural learning can be increased by developing more opportunities for students to engage in cultural topics or approaches to learning, including:

- having Inuit culture visible throughout the school; displayed on the walls, through pictures, tools, books, etc.;
- increasing Inuktitut teaching resources;
- increasing Inuit perspectives and approaches to teaching;
- understanding more about the current situation in Nunavut and student roles in fulfilling the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement; and,
- developing land camp opportunities for multiple seasons.

(Alivaktuk 2010; Educator 4 2010; Hanson 2010; Ikkidluak 2011; Ishulutak 2011; Lee 2010; NS Student Group 2010; Young 2010)

#### *6.2.1.2 Increasing the Use of Inuktitut in Curriculum and Classroom*

Inuit educators promote the increased use of Inuktitut in curriculum and the classroom. Berger et al. (2006) state the a need for a fully bilingual system of education. Hodgkins (2010) promotes the idea that fluency in a first language significantly improves academic success in general, but also contributes to learning a second language. Lees et

al. (2010) also promote the idea that early language immersion initiatives improve students' academic achievement and enhances their sense of self, as well as supporting language retention in Inuit communities. Specific practical recommendations include:

- making Inuktitut as language of instruction for increased number of courses;
- using Inuktitut language everywhere; and,
- creating spaces in the school that are Inuktitut only.

(Alivaktuk 2010; Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010; Young 2010)

### *6.2.1.3 Increasing the Number of Inuit Educators and Leaders*

There is a significant need for Inuit educators and leaders in the school, as emphasized by researchers (Berger et al. 2006; Berger 2009; Lees et al. 2010), as well as Inuit and Qallunaat educators (Alivaktuk 2010; Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010; Qallunaat Educator Group 2010; Young 2010). Therefore, having more trained Inuit educators in the high school to teach courses relating to Inuit history and culture (or to better integrate these into various standardized course topics) would also help make that connection for the students and thus make the learning more meaningful (NS Student Group 2010). The process of increasing cultural learning in schools would be significantly improved by the presence of Inuit educators, as they are well-positioned to bring Inuit language, culture and worldviews into Nunavut schools (Berger 2009). Inuit educators have a positive impact on student self-esteem and can help improve student academic performance (Berger 2009; Lees et al. 2010). Researchers suggest that schools should be:

- prioritizing the hiring of Inuit educators;
- ensuring Inuit educators are familiar with the community they are teaching in; and,
- ensuring Inuit educators are emphasizing the importance of the local community, traditions and environment.

(Berger 2009; Sutherland & Swayze 2012)

#### *6.2.1.4 Increasing Local Involvement in Planning and Directing Education*

All educators and students would like to see increased cultural learning with Elders and community members. Increased cultural learning can result from more community consultation, including planning and directing educational development. The District Education Authority (DEA) in each community has significant input in learning content to help make the learning more relevant (Lee 2010; Young 2010; Educator 4 2010). Elders are also seen to play a key role in this process, as students believe Elders should come into the high school more often than they do now (Attagoyuk Student Group 1 - 7 2010). Schools must also continually seek pathways to involve parents in their child's education (Lee 2010). Specific practical recommendations include:

- making the school a more comfortable community space;
  - improving communication with parents;
  - increasing parental, Elder and community involvement;
  - having Elders in the school at least once a week; and,
  - having Elders teaching regular high school classes.
- (Attagoyuk Student Group 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 2010; Educator 4 2010; Lee 2010)

#### *6.2.2 Promoting Student-Centered Learning*

Student-centered learning was advocated by some students (Attagoyuk Student Group 1 and 2 2010), Inuit educators (Lee 2010; Young 2010) and NS participants (Hanson 2010) to help promote success and engagement. Student engagement occurs when the learning is student-centered because it helps make learning relevant to the realities of the students, their environment, and experiences (Lee 2010; Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). Such an approach enables students to become actively involved in all aspects of the learning, as facilitated by the teacher (Lee 2010; Educator 4 2010, Young 2010). Specific practical recommendations include:

- facilitating the learning *with* the students, as opposed to lecturing;
- discussing with students what is expected of them in regards to the purpose and direction of learning for specific assignments *before* they begin;
- acknowledging the needs and goals of students so as to define what courses should be offered at the school;
- facilitating goal setting with students and learning about pathways to achieve the goals;
- having elective classes, and varied options within classes, for students to choose from;
- promoting more essay writing, grammar, and research courses to provide practical skills for post-graduate goals;
- providing opportunities for peer tutoring or group work so students can help each other;
- recognizing various types of learners: academic, artistic, kinesthetic, etc;
- encouraging student-led/taught lessons;
- coordinating student involvement in areas outside of the school: in the arts community, economic development, mining exploration, geological studies, etc; and,
- acknowledging students' interests so they can see their teachers care about them and their ideas.

(Attagoyuk Student Group 3 2010; Educators 1-6; Ishulutak 2011; Kanayuk 2010; Lee 2010; NS Student Group 2010; Young 2010)

#### *6.2.2.1 Encouraging Student Engagement*

To further encourage improved success within the school system, students and educators made several recommendations for ways to improve student engagement, including:

- making some classes more challenging and others less complicated;
- providing opportunities for students to advance in their learning if they have fallen behind the rest of the class (i.e. a “missed work binder”);
- discussing with students the expectations, responsibilities and involvement related to engagement;
- employing learning materials that relate to the students' lives or topics they are passionate about;
- facilitating learning in a manner that will help re-focus student attention on the lesson;
- giving learning options in class so students can choose what they want to work on; and,
- increasing opportunities for hands-on learning.

(Attagoyuk Student Group 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8 2010; Ikkidluak 2011; NS Student Group 2010; Qallunaat Educator Group 2010)

#### *6.2.3 Promoting Respectful Relationships*

All groups of participants identify the need for relationship-building among students and educators, as well as among all staff members. Once this foundation has been set the class can be successful and move forward with the learning. Without these relationships behavioral issues may arise in the classroom (Educator 4 2010; Qallunaat Educator Group 2010). This is also the main focus in the IQ principle *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* (the concept of respecting others, building positive relationships, and caring for others). Relationship-building is an important theme which is found throughout many of the IQ principles.

To promote positive student-educator relationships, educators are encouraged to work towards:

- promoting positive encouragement and positive attitudes.
- facilitating community building
- considering the potential value in a camp experience at the beginning of the school year to further contribute to building rapport and understanding between students and teachers at the outset.
- encouraging students to stay in school.
- recounting Inuktitut legends and share personal stories from educators' experiences.
- having flexibility and patience to find alternative teaching approaches and strategies.
- understanding that the experience and long-term commitment of teachers in communities is also a key factor in the success of students.

(Alivaktuk 2010; Attagoyuk Student Group 1, 2 and 4 2010; Educators 2-4 2010; Educator 6 2010; Hanson 2010; Ishulutak 2011; Kanayuk 2010; Lee 2010; NS Student Group 2010; Young 2010)

To promote positive Inuit-Qallunaat partnerships, educators are encouraged to work towards:

- being open to learning from one another;
- being understanding and compassionate of everyone in the educational and larger communities;
- applying their strengths more collaboratively to achieve school goals;
- creating environments where everyone feels they belong;
- providing and be accepting of, feedback from peers;

- understanding IQ principles, the history of the community and experiences of parents with school;
  - following Nunavut approved curriculum guides in a way that promotes student heritage and pride; and,
  - taking advantage of opportunities to participate in school and community activities.
- (Educators 2 - 6 2010; Lee 2010; Young 2010)

#### ***6.2.4 Developing Educator Training***

An integral area of promoting respectful relationships and positive educational atmospheres for students is through initial and ongoing training for educators (Aylward 2009). Increased educator training is advocated by Inuit and Qallunaat educators in Pangnirtung, as well as various authors (Aylward 2009; Berger et al. 2006; Lees et al. 2010; Tompkins et al. 2009). Educator training contributes to retaining and promoting Inuit educators and leaders (Lees et al. 2010). Educator training is especially important in the Nunavut context where the schools are intercultural and educators and students must often adapt their learning and teaching approaches in unfamiliar ways, which can lead to discomfort as well as tremendous stress for some (Aylward 2009). Improved training is suggested to include:

- establishing clearer expectations for staff;
  - increasing exposure to, understanding of, IQ principles;
  - learning about the history of the community and the experiences of parents with school;
  - learning Inuktitut through language lessons; and,
  - facilitation in identifying a support network to help in transitioning to a new school, provide dialogue, and share ideas.
- (Kanayuk 2010; Lee 2010; Qallunaat Educator Group 2010)

#### ***6.2.5 Emphasizing the Need for Guidance Counsellors***

Students at Attagoyuk Ilisavik and NS advocate the need for well-trained and well-informed guidance counsellors to aid students with goal setting, dealing with

personal issues and educational guidance (Attagoyuk Student Group 1 2010; Ikkidluak 2011; Ishulutak 2011; NS Student Group 2010). Merritt (2010) explains that in order to meet the proportion of government jobs which have been allotted through the NLCA Inuit students need to know what kinds of jobs there are, imagine themselves fulfilling these roles, and how to work towards them. If the students can see the value in these jobs and how they can help their communities then this might encourage them to work towards this kind of employment. Specific practical recommendations include:

- informing students about their post-graduate options and how to pursue them; and,
- helping students complete applications to pursue academic learning in college and university and achieve their goals.

(Ikkidluak 2011; Ishulutak 2011; NS Student Group 2010; Young 2010)

#### ***6.2.6 Establishing an Adult High School***

Currently, there is a challenge for some students to stay in school (Young 2010). Some students drop out permanently and others return, sometimes multiple times. Mature students need a place where they can return to school to complete their high school diploma or take individual courses to advance them in their careers in an atmosphere where their peers are working towards similar goals. Specific practical recommendations include:

- designating a classroom in the high school, or even a separate school, where students who have dropped out may return to school and enter into a program specific to their needs and goals;
- linking programs with Nunavut Arctic College could also help create courses around student interests.

(Young 2010)

#### ***6.2.7 Developing Standardized Education***

Merritt (2010) and Hanson (2010) from NS, explain that having consistent standards for all students, regardless of where they are geographically situated, is critical for students to move forward to post-secondary education and have equal opportunities.

Specific practical recommendations include:

- providing a well rounded education, with set levels of competency, understanding, and skills for each grade, established by students, parents, and community experts.
- expanding activities for independent thinking and reflection; teaching students to interpret information and express it in their own terms.
- progressing away from moving students towards graduation if they have not been equipped with the required skills demanded by curriculum and diploma, nor the preparation for their post-secondary goals

(Hanson 2010; NS Student Group).

#### ***6.2.8 Committing Dedicated Funding***

Inuit educators identify the need for dedicated funding for cultural learning. Funding is another key area in promoting Inuit culture in schools and going beyond the existing classes (Inuktitut, shop and sewing) and taking the learning into the outdoors for experiences such as spring camp. Going beyond the existing class is important because there are aspects of Inuit culture which cannot be learned in the classroom setting; the learning must go beyond the classroom walls and into the environment where it originated (Lee 2010; Young 2010; Educator 4 2010). However, such activities are very expensive, and require annual applications in most cases, which is a considerable amount of effort. Some practical recommendations drawn from educators describing the challenges of funding spring camp over the long term include:

- establishing funding for cultural activities as a standard part of government education funding;
- providing application support and training when different educators take on these responsibilities;

- providing opportunities for multi-year funding agreements, to reduce the amount of time dedicated to applications annually, and to maintain some year-to-year continuity;
- ensuring adequate training and support for accounting for funds received, to ensure that financial accountability is maintained and does not compromise future applications.

### ***6.3 Moving Forward***

At this time in Nunavut, there is a lot of opportunity to make positive changes in the high school education system. There are many motivated students and educators who are making efforts to increase the amount of cultural learning to support students to the best of their ability. By recognizing the successful efforts, and addressing the challenges that contribute to the disconnect between cultural and academic learning, educators, school leaders, and curriculum developers may work together to support more culturally appropriate learning in Nunavut high schools. This, in turn, would contribute to more positive educational experiences for students, which promote student engagement, foster success, and help develop positive cultural identities. In this manner, high schools can work to advance more high school graduates who are able to achieve their post-graduation goals, and work towards achieving the goals for education and employment as laid out in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. Education is the hope for the future so recommendations and feedback from those involved in the system must be continually encouraged, supported and applied to achieve the goals for Inuit education in Nunavut.

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**Appendix 2**  
**Letter to Cathy Lee and Lena Metuq (co-principals of Attagoyuk High School, Pangnirtung, Nunavut) seeking guidance and collaboration**

02/26/10

Hi Cathy and Lena,

My name is Carmelle Sullivan and I am working with Gita Laidler on the education project. I am in the first year of the masters program at Carleton University and am interested in learning more about education in Nunavut. I find the efforts that your school puts into cultural programs to be very inspiring and would also like to learn more about these accomplishments. It is very exciting to be able to travel to Pangnirtung in the spring and I look forward to meeting both of you, as well as the students and staff.

I am currently in the process of developing a thesis research proposal and would really appreciate your guidance, comments and suggestions. The main focus is on the ways that culturally appropriate learning is taking place and being incorporated in to the education system. As a follow-up, I would like to learn how these activities and programs are leading to success and engagement by the students inside and outside of the classroom. It would be really interesting to talk to students who attend spring camp and learn how this activity has impacted their views on school and their community and if this has changed the way they participate in both (or either). It would be equally interesting to learn the views of staff and Elders who also participate in the camps. Involvement from students, staff, and Elders in the research project would mean participation in interviews and/or group workshops where there would be questions and activities relating to the objectives of the research.

My main concern is that this research must be of interest - and benefit - to the people who will be involved (students, staff, and Elders). Do you believe that this research is of relevance to the community of Pangnirtung? Are there specific aspects that could be focused on more than others? Are there ways that this research could be aligned with the goals of the school? Is there anything I can help with specifically, such as having certain aspects of learning documented? Would there be any interest from students and staff in participating in this research? General comments and suggestions would be really helpful in focusing the research proposal. I really appreciate the time and effort on your behalf in responding to my questions and again, I look forward to meeting you.

Thank you,

Carmelle Sullivan

**Appendix 3**  
**Copy of consent form used for interviews (English and Inuktitut)**

**CONSENT FORM**

***Nunavummi Nunarjuattigut Illinniarniq - Learning in Nunavut Through Our Earth***

I am aware of what this project is about. I have been informed of what it means to participate in this project, and am willing to contribute and provide feedback as part of **workshops, interviews, focus groups**, and/or **land/ice trips/camps** as appropriate. I understand that by participating in project activities I may be **photographed and recorded by audio or video**. I may also contribute **pictures, video, mapping** information or **GPS** points/tracks. I would like to contribute to the development and refinement of educational approaches, tools, and materials to help this project, and thus I consent to the above participation, under the following conditions.

***Identification***

I remain the owner of the information and opinions I have contributed, but for the publication of project results and sharing this information with others I wish to be identified in the following way (*check one*):

- I **DO** want my name to be used to provide due credit (this information will be attributed to me)
- I **DO NOT** want my name to be used, but general acknowledgement can be provided (example credit: "Resident of \_\_\_\_\_ (community), Nunavut" or an appropriate pseudonym (fictitious name))

***Sharing of information***

I understand that information and opinions I share will be used to compile and communicate the results of this project in **reports, publications, or related project outputs**. An important part of sharing this information will be using **multi-media web-based tools** to allow students to access learning materials and activities online over the **Internet**. Therefore, I understand that the information and opinions I share will be used to collectively improve activities and materials under development, and that these will be made **publicly available** to schools and college campuses across Nunavut, as well as over the Internet (which means world-wide access) for non-commercial, education purposes. I understand that my contributions may also be used to improve college or high school curriculum in Nunavut, and thus will be shared with the staff responsible for **curriculum development** at Nunavut Arctic College or the Government of Nunavut Department of Education. In making my contributions publicly available, the following conditions must apply (*check one*):

- share my contributions freely**, where original recordings or quoted statements can add context and detail to collective materials
- OR**
- only share my contributions in a summarized or collective manner** (i.e. feedback considered and incorporated, but individual contributions are not identifiable)

In addition, I agree to have original recordings stored and accessible for future use by (*check all that apply*):

- \_\_\_\_\_ [name of school or college campus]
- \_\_\_\_\_ [name of local community repository]
- \_\_\_\_\_ [name of central Nunavut heritage archive]
- Nunavut Arctic College**, for program staff
- Government of Nunavut Department of Education**, for curriculum development staff
- Geomatics and Cartographic Research Centre**, to support future educational/research initiatives
- none of the above**, I only want original recordings used in this project



**Appendix 4**  
**Interview Guide for Students at Attagoyuk High School**

Background

1. Can you please tell me your full name, and what grade you're in?
2. Can you start by telling me a little bit about yourself and where you're from?
3. And is this where you grew up?
4. What elementary school did you go to?
5. Did you always go to school here?
  - a.(If not) Where were the other schools and what were they called?
6. Through this interview I'll be asking about topics related to your high school experiences, your experiences at Spring Camp, and developments related to new curriculum for Nunavut, in the context of how Inuit culture (and culturally-appropriate teaching and learning) have been or will be included more into the northern education system. How would you describe Inuit culture? How much do you identify with Inuit culture? If you talk about your culture, what are you referring to, or how would you describe it? I realize these are hard questions, but they're really important for me to be able to interpret your comments afterwards.

Cultural learning in high school

7. I'd like to first learn about your high school experiences. Can you please describe your high school for me, and any physical aspects or general experiences that really stand out for you?
  - a.Can you describe what your typical day at school is like?
    - i.What classes are you taking?
  - b.What are your favorite classes?
  - c.What are the things you like most about your high school? Can you describe why?
  - d.For you, what is the most interesting thing about your school, and why?
  - e.What is the most fun? Can you please describe this aspect.
  - f.What kinds of things do you find the most challenging (hard)? Can you please describe.
  - g.How would you describe your mood throughout your regular day at school? What kinds of things affect how you feel about school at different times? Does this change with different classes/subjects or different teachers?
8. How much emphasis does your school place on teaching about Inuit culture and/or language as part of various subjects?
9. How much northern content would you say is included in your different classes? (ask to explain/specify for different topics)
- 10.Does your school, or specific teachers, have different/unique ways of teaching about Inuit culture?
- 11.Did you ever take part in research projects or educational exchanges/trips? (ask to describe)

- a. What kinds of things did you learn?
- b. What was the most interesting thing about it?
- c. What was the most fun thing that you did?
- d. What was the least interesting thing about it?
- e. What was the most difficult (hardest part) about it?
- f. How did those experiences during trips or exchanges influence your experiences at school later, or just in life in general? (ask to describe)
- g. What kinds of recommendations would you give about expanding or improving such programs, based on your own experiences?

### Spring Camp

I understand that spring camp is an important part of yearly activities at the school. I'd like to learn more about the program, how you've been involved and what it means to you.

- 12. Have you been to Spring Camp in the past?
  - a. How many times have you been?
  - b. Can you describe how you remember the camp from when you were younger?
    - i. Were the activities different?
    - ii. How did it feel when you finally got to do the 'big kid' activities?
  - c. Did camps change in older grades?
- 13. Did you attend Spring camp this year (if not already mentioned)?
- 14. Can you tell me about what interested you in going to Spring Camp?
- 15. What kinds of things do you learn at camp? Please describe.
- 16. What was/were your favorite part(s)? Can you please describe these?
- 17. What was the most fun? Please describe.
- 18. What was the least interesting? Please describe.
- 19. What did you find the most difficult? Please describe.
- 20. How do you feel (describe your mood) when you're participating in spring camp activities?
- 21. How do you feel (describe your mood) when you get back into town? What about when you are back in class?
- 22. Do you feel like attending Spring Camp helps you at school with your classes?
- 23. Do you think that the things you learn at camp are important to help you in other ways outside of school? Please explain.
- 24. How would you describe the importance of Inuit culture to you before attending (or if you had not) attended Spring Camp?
- 25. How much did you identify with, or feel connected to, Inuit culture?
- 26. Do you feel your cultural values or beliefs have changed throughout high school, and why?
- 27. Has Spring Camp played any role in this? (explain)

### Draft Curriculum

28. How do you think the kinds of learning that are used at camp can be brought into the school?
- a. Do you have any examples or suggestions for how these things could be incorporated into the classroom?
15. Have you heard about the new curriculum the Government of Nunavut, Dept. of Education is developing for Nunavut schools? (if yes, please explain) (if not, I will describe).
16. How do you feel about these changes?
17. Have you been involved in any pilot classrooms where the new curriculum was used?
18. If yes... Can you describe what happened in these classes?
- a. What did you think about this?
    - i. Was it helpful? Please describe.
    - ii. What was the most interesting? Please describe.
    - iii. What was the most fun? Please describe.
    - iv. What was the most difficult? Please describe.
    - v. What was the least interesting? Please describe.
  - b. How was this different from the way that things are currently/normally done? Please describe.
39. Based on your previous experiences, if you were asked to help design the high school curriculum, what would you do? Is there anything you feel is missing? Are there aspects you think that are present but should be emphasized more? What kinds of topics would you focus on? What would learning activities look like?
40. If you could then pick three main things that would be most important to include what would they be?
- a. What kinds of topics, activities, or experiences in high school do you think best help to prepare students for graduation?
  - b. What kinds of topics, activities, or experiences in high school do you think best help to prepare students to achieve their goals after graduation?

#### Media Documentation

41. Have you ever used digital cameras, video or audio recorders to document your experiences either at camp or in different school activities?
42. Can you explain how you would use the camera/video/audio?
- a. What kinds of things were you documenting?
  - b. For what purpose? (i.e. personal, class project, request for research project, option, special case)
43. Did you like this kind of activity?
44. What did you learn? Please describe.
45. Did this use of multi-media help you to learn more about the particular subject/ whatever you are documenting?
46. Do you have ideas for new uses with this kind of technology in school activities?
47. Is there anything you would like to learn more about (*in regards to documenting*)?

48. Do you share your pictures, video or audio clips with others outside school? How do you do this? (Website, email, posters ,etc)

Evaluating education

49. Given all the things we have already talked about, if you hear the description of “student engagement”, what does that mean to you? We’re trying to refer to student involvement in, interest in, and gain from educational activities and curriculum. To you, what are the best ways of developing this? (please explain) Would you use different terminology to describe this?

50. We also hear a lot about ensuring student success. How would you define success, as a student, and as a person (outside of school)? What would you recommend as the ways in which you have helped yourself to be successful? Do you think this would work for others...what would you suggest?

51. The efforts with the GN and northern schools now are to ensure more culturally-appropriate learning, while still ensuring student success for any career they’d like to pursue. What do you consider culturally-appropriate learning? Can you give some examples? Do you have any other suggestions for things to try? Would you like to see more of this in your classes? Who is it that defines the ‘culturally appropriate learning’ that takes place at SC? In other local cultural school programs? In the curriculum?

Wrap-up...is there anything else you’d like to add, or any final comments you’d like to make? Is there anything you’d like to clarify, or go over again? I really appreciate you taking the time to respond to these questions. We can learn a lot from your experiences, and would like to circulate draft results/reports to you for further comment. Would you be interested in seeing these? Can you please provide the best mail and email address to contact you with? It may be a little while before we have these reports done, so please keep me posted if you move or change addresses (I will also be sure to provide my contact information, and encourage them to contact me at any time if they change their minds of things they’d like included in the research, if there are things they’d like to add, or if they have any questions).

**Appendix 5**  
**Interview Guide for Educators at Attagoyuk High School**

Background

1. Can you please tell me your full name, your role at at Attagoyuk High School, and how long you have been teaching/working here?
2. Can you start by telling me a little bit about where are you from, and how you got involved in education?
3. What are the different courses/subjects that you teach this year? Have you taught other kinds of courses here in the past?
4. How many years/months of employment/collaboration in/with:
  - a. Education in general
  - b. in Nunavut
  - c. at Attagoyuk
5. How much more time do you plan on spending at Attagoyuk High School?
6. Through this interview I'll be asking about topics related to your experiences of working with students at Attagoyuk, based on your understanding of their high school experiences, as well as their participation in Spring Camp, and developments related to new curriculum for Nunavut, in the context of how Inuit culture (and culturally-appropriate teaching and learning) have been or will be included more into the northern education system. How would you describe Inuit culture? How much do you identify with Inuit culture? If you talk about your culture, what are you referring to, or how would you describe it? I realize these are hard questions, but they're really important for me to be able to interpret your comments afterwards.

Cultural learning in high school

I'd like to first learn about your familiarity with the high school experiences of various students at Attagoyuk. Let's first go through this more specifically based on your understandings and impressions from students you work with directly, and/or who participated in Spring Camp (those that I will be interviewing as well). Then, afterwards, we'll go over these questions again if you have any additional general comments you'd like to make based on your experience with other groups of students you've worked within the past, or who have not participated in Spring Camp.

7. Can you please describe your familiarity with the Nunavut High School programs (either based on this high school, or more generally with the curriculum currently in place, or changes over the years)?
8. How would you describe the general attitudes of students when they begin high school? (in relation to their interest in school, respect for/identification with Inuit culture, respect for themselves, confidence in themselves, their future goals, etc.)
9. Can you please describe the kind of courses offered at Attagoyuk High School, the general content, and approach to teaching and learning?
  - a. How would you describe the overall goals of the high school program (including how it may have changed over the years)?
  - b. Are there other aspects of the program that go beyond classroom instruction?

10. How much northern content or cultural content would you say is included in high school classes and programming? (ask to explain/specify for different topics)
11. How would you describe the importance of Inuit culture in high school programs?
  - a. How much do you feel students identify with, or feel connected to, Inuit culture?
  - b. Do you notice a transition in students' attitudes towards school, or their expression of cultural values or beliefs, from the beginning of the high school program to the end?
  - c. Do you feel that high school curriculum or activities have played any role in this? (explain)
12. What kinds of activities/topics do you find students are most interested in at high school?
13. Which seem to be most difficult?
14. How do you go about encouraging student engagement and success?
15. Do you know of specific teachers here at Attagoyuk, or other schools/teachers in Nunavut, who have different/unique ways of teaching about Inuit culture?
16. How do you encourage engagement, foster interest/success, address challenges in terms of course content or related activities?
17. How well do you feel high school prepares students to achieve their post-secondary goals and/or to pursue other post-secondary education?
  - a. Do you think there are things that should be focused on more in high school to prepare students for a program like NS, or post-secondary, and the kinds of goals they have for themselves?
18. What feedback do you generally get from students about their high school experiences?
  - a. What things seem to stand out to them (positive or negative), based on the number of times you hear about different experiences, activities, or programs? (please explain each)

Spring Camp (SC)

I understand that spring camp is an important part of yearly activities at the school. I'd like to learn more about the program, how you've been involved and what it means to you and the students.

19. Did you attend Spring camp this year (if not already mentioned)?
  - a. What was your role?
20. Have you been to Spring Camp in the past?
21. How many times have you been?
22. Did you enjoy Spring Camp?
23. What were your favorite part(s)? Can you please describe these?
24. What was the most fun? Please describe.
25. What did you find the most difficult/challenging? Please describe.
26. What are the overall objectives/goals of spring camp?

27. Can you please describe the kinds of activities included in Spring Camp, the general content, and approach to teaching and learning?
  - a. What kinds of learning and skills are focused on? Please describe.
28. Can you describe the differences between the program for younger and older students?
29. Are there many students who return from year to year? Do you know why/why not?
30. What kinds of activities/topics do you find students are most interested in at SC?
31. Which seem to be most difficult?
32. How would you describe the importance of Inuit culture in SC programs?
33. How would you describe levels of success and engagement in students when they are at spring camp?
34. How would you describe levels of success and engagement in students when they get back into town? What about when they are back in class?
35. Do you feel that attending Spring Camp helps students at school? With classes? Engagement and success?
36. Do you think that the learning and skills acquired at camp are important to help students in other ways outside of school? Please explain.
37. How would you describe the general attitudes of students before attending Spring Camp? (in relation to their interest in school, respect for/identification with Inuit culture, respect for themselves, confidence in themselves, their future goals, etc.)
38. Do you feel that SC helps students identify with, or feel connected to, Inuit culture?
39. Do you notice a transition in students' attitudes towards school, or their expression of cultural values or beliefs, from before and after SC or perhaps over many years of participation?
40. Do you feel that SC played any role in this? (explain)
41. Do you think that students' cultural values and/or beliefs change throughout high school, and why?
42. Has Spring Camp (and other culturally appropriate learning) played any role in this? (explain)
43. Do you see Spring Camp as an important aspect of students lives? In what ways?
44. Do you get feedback from parents on the SC program? If so, please describe.

Draft Curriculum

45. Have you heard about the new curriculum the Government of Nunavut, Dept. of Education is developing for Nunavut schools? (if yes, please explain) (if not, I will describe)
46. How do you feel about these changes?
47. Have you been involved in any pilot classrooms where the new curriculum was used?
  - a. If yes...in what way?
  - b. How would you say students responded to this new approach to teaching?
  - c. What did you think about this experience?
48. Did you notice a change in the engagement or success of students?
49. Did students enjoy the activities associated with the new curriculum?

50. Based on your previous experiences, if you were asked to help design the high school curriculum, what would you do? Is there anything you feel is missing? Are there aspects you think that are present but should be emphasized more? What kinds of topics would you focus on? What would learning activities look like?
51. If you could then pick three main things that would be most important to include what would they be?
- What kinds of topics, activities, or experiences in high school do you think best help to prepare students for graduation?
  - What kinds of topics, activities, or experiences in high school do you think are best help to prepare students to achieve their goals after graduation?

#### Media Documentation

52. Have the students ever used digital cameras, video or audio recorders to document your experiences either at camp or in different school activities?
53. Can you explain how they would use the camera/video/audio?
54. What kinds of things were they documenting?
55. For what purpose? (i.e. personal, class project, request for research project, option, special case)
56. Do they enjoy this kind of activity?
57. What do you feel that they learn from this? Please describe.
58. Did this use of multi-media help them to learn more about the particular subject/ whatever they were documenting?
59. Do you have ideas for new uses with this kind of technology in school activities?
60. Are there other areas you believe could be explored using this kind of activity?
- Can you describe how you think this should be undertaken?
61. Do the students share pictures, video or audio clips with others outside school? How do they do this? (Website, email, posters, etc)

#### Evaluating education

62. Given all the things we have already talked about, if you hear the description of “student engagement”, what does that mean to you? We’re trying to refer to student involvement in, interest in, and gain from educational activities and curriculum. To you, what are the best ways of developing this? (please explain) Would you use different terminology to describe this?
63. We also hear a lot about ensuring student success. How would you define success, as students, and as people? What would you recommend as the ways in which you have helped students to be successful? Do you think this would work for others...what would you suggest?
64. The efforts with the GN and northern schools now are to ensure more culturally-appropriate learning, while still ensuring student success for any career they’d like to pursue. What do you consider culturally-appropriate learning? Can you give some examples? Do you have any other suggestions for things to try? Would you like to see more of this in high school classes? Who is it that defines the ‘culturally appropriate

learning' that takes place at SC?In other local cultural school programs? In the curriculum?

Wrap-up...is there anything else you'd like to add, or any final comments you'd like to make? Is there anything you'd like to clarify, or go over again? I really appreciate you taking the time to respond to these questions. We can learn a lot from your experiences, and would like to circulate draft results/reports to you for further comment. Would you be interested in seeing these? Can you please provide the best mail and email address to contact you with? It may be a little while before we have these reports done, so please keep me posted if you move or change addresses (I will also be sure to provide my contact information, and encourage them to contact me at any time if they change their minds of things they'd like included in the research, if there are things they'd like to add, or if they have any questions).

**Appendix 6**  
**Interview guide for students at Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS)**

Background

1. Can you please tell me your full name, and what year you are in at NS?
2. Can you start by telling me a little bit about where you are from?
3. And is this where you grew up?
4. What elementary school did you go to?
  - a. Were your elementary and high schools in the same building?
  - b. (If not) What was your high school called?
5. Through this interview I'll be asking about topics related to your high school experiences, your time at NS, and developments related to new curriculum for Nunavut, in the context of how Inuit culture (and culturally-appropriate teaching and learning) have been or will be included more into the northern education system. How would you describe Inuit culture? How much do you identify with Inuit culture? If you talk about your culture, what are you referring to, or how would you describe it? I realize these are hard questions, but they're really important for me to be able to interpret your comments afterwards.

Cultural learning in high school

6. I'd like to first learn about your high school experiences. Can you please describe your high school for me, and any physical aspects or general experiences there that really stand out for you?
  - a. Can you describe what your typical day would be like?
  - b. What were your favorite classes? Can you explain why (for each one)?
  - c. What were the things you liked the most about your high school? Can you describe why?
  - d. For you, what was the most interesting thing about your school, and why?
  - e. What was the most fun? (ask to describe)
  - f. What kinds of things did you find most challenging (hard)? (ask to describe)
  - g. How would you describe your mood throughout your regular day at school? What kinds of things affected how you felt about school at different times?
7. How much emphasis did your school place on teaching about Inuit culture and/or language as part of various subjects?
8. How much northern content would you say was included in your different classes? (ask to explain/specify for different topics)
9. Did your school, or specific teachers, have different/unique ways of teaching about Inuit culture?
10. Did you ever take part in research projects or educational exchanges/trips? (ask to describe)
  - a. What kinds of things did you learn?
  - b. What was the most interesting thing about it?
  - c. What was the most difficult thing about it?

- d. What was the most fun thing that you did?
- e. What was the least interesting thing about?
- f. What was the most challenging (hardest part) about it?
- g. How did those experiences during trips or exchanges influence your experiences at school later, or just in life in general? (ask to describe)
- h. What kinds of recommendations would you give about expanding or improving such programs, based on your own experiences?

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- 11. Can you tell me about what interested you in coming to NS?
- 12. How do you like being at NS so far?
- 13. What is your favorite part about it?
- 14. What do you find most challenging?
- 15. What kinds of things do you learn about? (in different classes?)
- 16. Do the courses at NS build on topics covered in high school? If so, how? If not, what is new/different about the NS program?
- 17. How would you describe the importance of Inuit culture to you before coming to NS? How much did you identify with, or feel connected to, Inuit culture? Do you feel your cultural values or beliefs have changed since high school, and why? Has NS played any role in this? (explain)
- 18. Have you ever been involved in any trips with NS?
  - a. Can you describe them/it?
  - b. What kinds of things did you learn?
  - c. Most interesting
  - d. Most difficult
  - e. Least interesting
  - f. Most fun
- 19. Do you know what you want to do when you are done at NS?
- 20. Do you feel like NS is preparing you to achieve your goals?
  - a. Has this program enhanced your preparation for the kind of employment you are looking for?
  - b. Do you feel like attending NS has helped (*to give you the confidence to be successful and achieve your goals?*)
- 21. Do you think there are things that should be focused on more in high school to prepare you for a program like NS, and the kinds of goals you have for yourself?

Draft Curriculum

- 22. Have you heard about the new curriculum the Government of Nunavut, Dept. of Education is developing for Nunavut schools? (if yes, please explain) (if not, I will describe)
- 23. How do you feel about these changes?
- 24. Based on your previous experiences, if you were asked to help design the high school curriculum, what would you do? Is there anything you feel is missing? Are there

aspects you think that are present but should be emphasized more? What kinds of topics would you focus on? What would learning activities look like?

25.If you could then pick three main things that would be most important to include what would they be?

a.What kinds of topics, activities, or experiences in high school to do you think best help to prepare students for graduation?

b.What kinds of topics, activities, or experiences in high school to do you think best help to prepare students to achieve their goals after graduation?

#### Media Documentation

26.Have you ever used digital cameras, video or audio recorders to document your experiences either at camp or in different school activities?

27.Can you explain how you would use the camera/video/audio?

28.What kinds of things were you documenting?

29.For what purpose? (i.e personal, class project, request for research project, option, special case)

30.Did you like this kind of activity?

31.What did you learn? Please describe.

32.Did this use of multi-media help you to learn more about the particular subject/ whatever you are documenting?

33.Do you have ideas for new uses of this kind of technology in school activities?

34.Is there anything you would like to learn more about (in regards to documenting)?

35.Do you share you pictures, video or audio clips with others outside school? How do you do this? (Website, email, posters ,etc)

#### Evaluating education

36.Given all the things we have already talked about, if you hear the description of “student engagement”, what does that mean to you? We’re trying to refer to student involvement in, interest in, and gain from educational activities and curriculum. To you, what are the best ways of developing this? (please explain) Would you use different terminology to describe this?

37.We also hear a lot about ensuring student success. How would you define success, as a student, and as a person? What would you recommend as the ways in which you have helped yourself to be successful? Do you think this would work for others...what would you suggest?

38.The efforts with the GN and northern schools now are to ensure more culturally-appropriate learning, while still ensuring student success for any career they’d like to pursue. What do you consider culturally-appropriate learning? Can you give some examples? Do you have any other suggestions for things to try? Who is it that defines the ‘culturally appropriate learning’ that takes place at SC? In other local cultural school programs? In the curriculum?

Wrap-up...is there anything else you’d like to add, or any final comments you’d like to make? Is there anything you’d like to clarify, or go over again? I really appreciate you

taking the time to respond to these questions. We can learn a lot from your experiences, and would like to circulate draft results/reports to you for further comment. Would you be interested in seeing these? Can you please provide the best mail and email address to contact you with? It may be a little while before we have these reports done, so please keep me posted if you move or change addresses (I will also be sure to provide my contact information, and encourage them to contact me at any time if they change their minds of things they'd like included in the research, if there are things they'd like to add, or if they have any questions).

**Appendix 7**  
**Interview guide for educators at Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS)**

Background

1. Can you please tell me your full name, your role at at NS, and how long you have been teaching here?
2. Can you start by telling me a little bit about where are you from, and how you got involved with teaching at NS?
3. What are the different courses that you teach?
4. Through this interview I'll be asking about topics related to your experiences with teaching students at NS, based on your understanding of their high school experiences, as well as their time in the program at NS, and developments related to new curriculum for Nunavut, in the context of how Inuit culture (and culturally-appropriate teaching and learning) have been or will be included more into the northern education system. How would you describe Inuit culture? How much do you identify with Inuit culture? If you talk about your culture, what are you referring to, or how would you describe it? I realize these are hard questions, but they're really important for me to be able to interpret your comments afterwards.

Cultural learning in high school

5. I'd like to first learn about your familiarity with the high school experiences of various NS students. Let's first go through this more specifically based on your understandings and impressions from students who are currently in either the first or second year program at NS (those that I will be interviewing as well). Then, afterwards, we'll go over these questions again if you have any additional general comments you'd like to make based on your experience with many groups of students over your time at NS. Can you please describe your familiarity with the Nunavut High School programs (either based on specific high schools you are familiar with, or more generally with the curriculum currently in place, or changes over the years)?
6. What feedback do you generally get from students about their high school experiences? What things seem to stand out to them (positive or negative), based on the number of times you hear about different experiences, activities, or programs? (please explain each)
7. How much northern content or cultural content would you say is included in high school classes and programming? (ask to explain/specify for different topics)
8. Did you know of specific schools or teachers who have have different/unique ways of teaching about Inuit culture?
9. How well do you feel high school prepared students to come to NS, and/or to pursue other post-secondary education?
10. What is the process/criteria for selecting NS students? What is the success rate, compared to number of applicants?

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10. How would you describe the general attitudes of students when they begin at NS? (in relation to their interest in school, respect for/identification with Inuit culture, respect for themselves, confidence in themselves, their future goals, etc.)
11. Do the courses at NS build on topics covered in high school? If so, how? If not, what is new/different about the NS program?
12. Can you please describe the kind of courses offered at NS, the general content, and approach to teaching and learning? Are there other aspects of the program that go beyond classroom instruction? How would you describe the overall goals of the NS program (including how it may have changed over the years)?
13. *How would you describe the importance of Inuit culture in NS programs? How much do you feel students identify with, or feel connected to, Inuit culture? Do you notice a transition in students' attitudes towards school, or their expression of cultural values or beliefs, from the beginning of the NS program to the end? Do you feel that NS played any role in this? (explain)*
14. What kinds of activities/topics do you find students are most interested in at NS?
15. Which seem to be most difficult?
16. How do you foster interests/address challenges in terms of NS course content or related activities?
17. Do you think there are things that should be focused on more in high school to prepare students for a program like NS, and the kinds of goals they have for themselves?

#### Draft Curriculum

18. Have you heard about the new curriculum the GN is developing for Nunavut schools? (if yes, please explain) (if not, be prepared to describe)
19. How do you feel about these changes?
20. Based on your previous experiences, if you were asked to help design the high school curriculum, what would you do? What kinds of topics would you focus on? What would learning activities look like?
  - a. If you could then pick three main things that would be most important to include what would they be?
  - b. What kinds of courses or content focus do you feel are important to prepare students for high school graduation? To prepare students for after high school graduation? NS graduation?
    - i. Answer = classes that lead to employment of choice -> does your school offer the courses you will need to achieve your goals?
21. If there was anything you could say to help the people designing the curriculum what would it be? [I think this is pretty much covered in earlier questions, could leave out]
  - a. Is there anything you feel is missing?
  - b. Are there things/aspects that are present but should be emphasized more?

#### Media Documentation

22. Have the students ever used digital cameras, video or audio recorders to document your experiences either at camp or in different school activities?
23. Can you explain how they would use the camera/video/audio?

24. What kinds of things were they documenting?
25. For what purpose? (i.e. personal, class project, request for research project, option, special case)
26. Do they enjoy this kind of activity?
27. What do they learn? Please describe.
28. Did this use of multi-media help them to learn more about the particular subject/ whatever they were documenting?
29. Do you have ideas for new uses with this kind of technology in school activities?
30. Are there other areas you believe could be explored using this kind of activity?
31. Can you describe how you think this should be undertaken?
32. Do the students share you pictures, video or audio clips with others outside school? How do they do this? (Website, email, posters ,etc)

#### Evaluating education

33. Given all the things we have already talked about, if you hear the description of “student engagement”, what does that mean to you? We’re trying to refer to student involvement in, interest in, and gain from educational activities and curriculum. To you, what are the best ways of developing this? (please explain) Would you use different terminology to describe this?
34. We also hear a lot about ensuring student success. How would you define success, as students, and as people? What would you recommend as the ways in which you have helped students to be successful? Do you think this would work for others...what would you suggest?
35. The efforts with the GN and northern schools now are to ensure more culturally-appropriate learning, while still ensuring student success for any career they’d like to pursue. What do you consider culturally-appropriate learning? Can you give some examples? Do you have any other suggestions for things to try? Who is it that defines the ‘culturally appropriate learning’ that takes place at SC? In other local cultural school programs? In the curriculum? Who is it that defines the ‘culturally appropriate learning’ that takes place at SC? In other local cultural school programs? In the curriculum?

Wrap-up...is there anything else you’d like to add, or any final comments you’d like to make? Is there anything you’d like to clarify, or go over again? I really appreciate you taking the time to respond to these questions. We can learn a lot from your experiences, and would like to circulate draft results/reports to you for further comment. Would you be interested in seeing these? Can you please provide the best mail and email address to contact you with? It may be a little while before we have these reports done, so please keep me posted if you move or change addresses (be sure to provide your contact, and encourage them to contact you at any time if they change their minds of things they’d like included in the research, if there are things they’d like to add, or if they have any questions).



**Appendix 9**  
**Pangnirtung Trip Report (English and Inuktitut)**

**Nunavummi Nunarjuattigit Illiniarniq**  
**Learning in Nunavut Through Our Earth**



**Trip Report (April 19 - May 27, 2010)**

**Purpose of the trip:**

- Experience and participate in high school programs geared towards cultural learning.
- Work with high school students (grades 10, 11, 12) and educators at Attagoyuk High School to learn about:

- a) the current changes in the high school curriculum;
  - b) efforts to integrate culturally appropriate learning; and
  - c) how this is contributing to student success and engagement inside and outside the classroom.
- For M.A. research at Carleton University on “Engagement, Success, and Empowerment: Moving towards culturally relevant learning in Nunavut High Schools.”

**Activities during this trip:**

- Participated in the annual Spring Camp with Attagoyuk High School and Alookie Elementary School and experienced how certain cultural activities are being integrated into the education system in Pangnirtung
- Interviewed students and educators who shared their opinions and views on the Nunavut education curriculum and student experiences with cultural learning in high school.
- Met with and interviewed 15 students at Attagoyuk High School, including: Amy Lewis,

- George Akulukjuk, Lisa Angmarlik, Janis Shukulaq, Tyler Kilabuk, Joseph Kilabuk, Bobby Dialla, Charlie Nakashuk, Trevor Kooneliusee, MaryRose Kilabuk, and 5 anonymous students
- Met with and interviewed several educators in the high school, including: Rebecca Kanayuk, Lucy Young, Meeka Alivaktuk, Cathy Lee, and 6 anonymous staff.

**Next steps:**

- Summer 2010: Type out each interview to have copies in text format to facilitate analysis.
- Read more about education in Nunavut, specifically the Nunavut Education Act and old NWT Education Act.
- Fall 2010: Begin analysis and summarize results into a concise report to send to interview participants for their reflection and comments.



*I'd like to thank everyone that I met in Pangnirtung for their help and advice in undertaking this research and also for making me feel welcome during my stay. This research could not have been possible without the participation and support of all the students and staff at Attagoyuk High School. I would also like to thank Chris Heide & Deborah Hickman and Donald & Meeka Mearns for their kind hospitality.*

**Questions? Comments?**

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**Appendix 10**  
**Codes used for thematic content analysis**

Advice for new student	e- student respect and identification with inuit culture
Aspects of school to help for/after graduation	e- students dropping out, sometimes coming back
Camp attendance	e- success (me)
Celebrating Inuit culture in school	e- transition in student inuit identity
Challenges of sc	e- two worlds/cultures
Challenges of school	Evaluating education
Cultural learning in hs	Examples of Student Engagement
culture = tradition	Examples of things that deter engagement
Draft Curriculum	Exchanges/trips/research
e- approaches to engouraging eng n succ	Favorite classes
e- background	Feeling proud to be Inuit
e- challenges for edus	Goals for after graduation
e- challenges of working with elders and comm	Hands on learning
e- challenging aspects of school	High school experiences
e- changes in curric and approaches to teaching	how students view/define culture
e- cultural learning	How well is cultural learning currently being integrated/leading to s&e?
e- defining culturally appropriate	Importance of regular involvement of Elders
e- defining success	Importance of social life
e- definition of aula	Importance of spring camp
e- eng (me)	Influence of educators
e- engagement	Inuit culture and traditional knowledge
e- esl	Learning at SC
e- feedback from students on hs experiences	Media Documentation
e- gaps in the syst	modern tradition and culture
e- goals for teaching and learning	ns- aiding in post grad goals

e- importance of elders and comm mems	ns- challenges
e- importance of social life	ns- importance of culture after NS
e- inclusion	ns- importance of culture before NS
e- influence/importance of educators	ns- learning
e- integrating inuit and southern learning	ns- motivation to join
e- involvement in edu	ns- Nunavut Sivunuksavut
e- IQ	ns- post graduation goals
e- media doc	ns- things in hs to prep for NS
e- northern/cultural content	ns- why it rocks
e- partnerships b/wn Inuit and non-Inuit staff	ns - mood in hs
e- period of transition/flux	Observations of physical environment
e- personal vision for hs	Personal background
e- preparing students for graduation	Perspectives of student engagement
e- sc- challenges for students	Perspectives on direction for curric
e- sc- challenges for edus	Post-graduation goals
e- sc- contr to connects w/ identity	Some classes more interesting than others
e- sc- enjoy	spring camp
e- sc- feedback from parents	Student concerns
e- sc- goals	Student Success
e- sc- importance for knowledge transmission	students generally only see connections to Inuit culture in obvious contexts
e- sc- importance outside school	System not set up to support the variety of students
e- sc- involvement of edus	things students identify as helping them do better in school
e- sc- succ and eng at and after	ways/room for improvement
e- sc- younger v. older diff	

**Appendix 11**  
**Principles of Inuit Qaujimaqatugangit**

**1 *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq*: The concept of respecting others, building positive relationships, and caring for others**

*Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* is showing respect and a caring attitude for others. When each person considers their relationships to people and behaves in ways that build these relationships, they build strength both in themselves and in others and together as a community. This is foundational to Inuit ways of being.

**2 *Tunnganarniq*: The concept of fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming, and inclusive**

*Tunnganarniq* is being welcoming to others, being open in communications, and being inclusive in interactions with people. Demonstrating this attitude is essential in building positive relationships with others.

**3 *Piliriqatigiingniq*: To develop collaborative relationships and working together for the common good**

The essential Inuit belief that stresses the importance of the group over the individual should pervade all teaching. Expectations for students will reflect working for the common good, collaboration, shared leadership and service. *Piliriqatigiingniq* also sets expectations for supportive behaviour development, strong relationship-building and consensus-building.

**4 *Avatimik Kamattiarniq*: To show environmental stewardship**

Inuit support and maintain environmental wellness through their respect for, and the importance they place on, relationship-building. Students are expected to articulate respect for mutually interdependent relationships and to demonstrate responsible behaviours that seek to improve and protect these relationships in ways that meet global challenges to environmental wellness and sustainable futures.

**5 *Pilimmaksarniq*: To be empowered and build capacity through knowledge and skills acquisition**

Building personal capacity in Inuit ways of knowing and doing are key expectations for students. Demonstrating empowerment to lead a successful and productive life, that is respectful of all, is a powerful end goal of the educational system.

**6 *Qanuqtuurungnarniq*: To be resourceful and seek solutions through creativity, adaptability, and flexibility**

The ability to be resourceful, seek solutions, use of resources innovatively and creatively, and to demonstrate adaptability and flexibility in response to a rapidly changing world, are strengths all our students should develop. Resourcefulness should be demonstrated in all learning and also thinking that seeks to improve the context in which Inuit live.

**7 *Aajiiqatigiingniq*: Consensus decision-making**

The concept of consensus decision-making relies on strong communication skills and a strong belief in shared goals. All students are expected to become contributing members of their community and to participate actively in building the strength of

Inuit in Nunavut. Across all curriculum areas, students are expected to think and act collaboratively, to assist with the development of shared understandings, to resolve conflict in consensus-building ways, and to enter into consultation respecting various perspectives and worldviews.

**8 *Pijitsirarniq*: To contribute to the common good through serving and leadership**

The concept of serving is central to the Inuit style of leadership as is the measure of the maturity and wisdom of an Inuk. Key here is the understanding that each person has a contribution to make and is a valued contributor to his/her community. Students will be expected to demonstrate this kind of leadership and commitment to serving the common good.

(McGregor 2010b: 173-174)

## Appendix 12

### Description of Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS) courses as described by NS participants

Course	Description
Inuit History	Learning how Inuit were isolated from other cultures, and were self-sufficient and autonomous for millennia. Studying the characteristics of Inuit society and culture, and the values and the beliefs at that time. Understanding the influence on Inuit of the different waves of outsiders that came to the arctic including explorers, whalers, traders, and the government. Transcripts of meetings in the sixties demonstrate how self-sufficiency and autonomy began to change and people felt they had no control over the important decisions in their lives. Understanding how Inuit history relates to people today.
Inuit-Government relations	The history of the government era from the 1920s to the 1960s. Looking at government policies in the areas of health and education, social assistance, the relocation of peoples, the movement of peoples into communities, the impact of epidemics, etc. Study of the relationship between the Canadian government and the aboriginal people of Canada. How treaties were formed, and the reasons behind them, such as resources and land.
Contemporary Issues	Looking at the work of some of the national and international Inuit organizations. Why they were founded, what issues they worked on over the years, what their focus has been, what they do, what their purpose is today. As well as other issues such as the animal rights movement, climate change, contaminants, etc.
Computers	Introductory computer course to familiarize students with basic programs and expectations.
Land Claims	Students read several articles from the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and discuss what it means and whether they agree with it or not, coming to terms with it is saying in legal language.
Inuit Music	The study of how Inuit composed their own songs and the inspirations for these songs, for example walking out on the land or hunting caribou, or other aspects of the environment and lifestyle of the time. Traditionally, each man or family had their own song and gave it to their wives so the wife could sing and the husband could drum dance.
Inuktitut	Intermediate and advanced classes offered. Understanding how the language is used.
English	Essay writing, business proposals, writing letters and cover letters.