

CHOOSING OUR PATH FORWARD >>

The 2018-2019 *Education Act and Inuit
Language Protection Act* Consultations Report



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A Message from the Minister



I am pleased to present *Choosing Our Path Forward: The 2018-2019 Education Act and Inuit Language Protection Act Consultations Report*.

Nunavummiut are passionate about education. They want to see the children and youth of this territory be given the best opportunities possible. Education is one of the ways young Nunavummiut can obtain the tools and skills necessary for a rapidly changing world, while still holding true to their language, culture and identity.

This passion is what made the consultations for the proposed amendments to the *Education Act* and the *Inuit Language Protection Act* such an eye-opening and fruitful experience. Officials from the Department of Education and Department of Culture and Heritage heard from over 800 Nunavummiut who participated in the consultation process. Many people and stakeholders offered their ideas and raised concerns about the best way to continue improving the education system with made-in-Nunavut solutions.

I would like to thank all the communities of Nunavut, who warmly welcomed the consultation team and who participated in the consultations, whether at the meetings or by providing feedback by comment card, email, or the consultation website.

The consultations could not have happened without the contribution of Department of Education and Department of Culture and Heritage staff, as well as representatives from Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. and the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities. Their work was essential to this process and I thank them.

Finally, this report is dedicated to Nikki Eegeesiak. As the Executive Director of the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities, she travelled as part of the consultation team. Her dedication and passion for education will be missed.

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Hon. David Joanasié

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Minister of Education

Minista Ilinniaqtuliriyitkunni

Ministre de l'Éducation



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Choosing Our Next Path for Education

On March 28, 2018, the Government of Nunavut released its current mandate document *Turaaqtavut*. One of the priorities outlined in the *Sivummuakpalliajuttivut* section was “amending the *Education Act* and the *Inuit Language Protection Act* to ensure quality schooling and improve student outcomes.”

Following the government’s mandate, in September 2018, the Department of Education and the Department of Culture and Heritage, accompanied by representatives from Nunavut Tunngavik, Inc. and the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities, launched territory-wide consultations to choose the next path forward for education in Nunavut.

In the spirit of *Havaqatigiingniq* and *Ikajuqtigiingniq*, the goal of the consultations was to meaningfully engage Nunavummiut on proposals to amend the *Education Act* and the *Inuit Language Protection Act*, obtaining their feedback to help shape and enhance the current education system.

In *Illinniarniliriniq Turaaqpalliajavut — Our Goals for Education*, the proposals fell under four themes:

- » **An Effective Approach:** The Roles and Responsibilities of the District Education Authorities and the Department of Education
- » **Language Proficiency:** Bilingual Education and Language of Instruction
- » **Strengthening Capacity and Advocacy:** The New DEA Council
- » **Nunavut Tailored Transition Regulations**

These proposals were the result of five years of review, consultation, and identified areas of improvement by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and the Nunavut Legislative Assembly’s Special Committee to Review the *Education Act*; and the feedback Nunavummiut provided during the 2016 *Education Act and Inuit Language Protection Act* consultations.

The 2018-2019 consultation process was designed to be as wide-reaching and inclusive as possible. Nunavummiut, partners and stakeholders had the opportunity to provide feedback through a variety of methods, such as:

- » community meetings open to the public;
- » meetings with local District Education Authorities (DEAs);
- » meetings with education partners and stakeholders; and,
- » comment cards submitted by email, by mail, on the consultation website, or in-person at local Government Liaison Office.

Department of Education officials were also available after community meetings to speak one-on-one with individuals who did not wish to raise concerns in public.



Consultations began September 11, 2018 with educational partners and stakeholders from:

- » Nunavut Tunngavik, Inc.
- » Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities
- » Inuit Uqausinginnik Taiguusiliuqtiit
- » Office of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut
- » Office of the Representative of Children and Youth
- » Nunavut Teachers' Association

Community consultations, held in all 25 Nunavut communities, began September 17, 2018, in Rankin Inlet and ended January 23, 2019, in Cambridge Bay. There were two meetings held in each community, one with the local DEA and another open to the public.

Efforts were also made to seek input from past and present Nunavut students. Schools on the Connected North network, as well as Nunavut Arctic College students, were invited for consultations, resulting in meetings with students from Arviat, Baker Lake, and Nunavut Sivuniksavut.

Community consultations were well-attended, underscoring the importance of education for Nunavummiut. This report documents the voices of more than 800 parents, educators, students, partners, and community members from across the territory who participated in the consultations.

During the consultations, Nunavummiut expressed concerns on issues that went beyond the proposals. Much of this feedback will guide the future direction of the Department of Education's policies, programs and planning.

Part 1

Illinniarniliriniq Turaaqpalliajavut - Our Goals for Education

Overall, Nunavummiut were happy with the effort to consult with every community. However, they were disappointed that many of the previously proposed amendments from the 2016 consultations were reintroduced.

Despite this disappointment, Nunavummiut expressed that the education system must continue improving to meet the needs of all students. They feel students are not meeting the expected outcomes and worry too many are not speaking Inuktitut. Many Nunavummiut indicated that financial resources should be quickly put in place to increase the number of Inuktitut-speaking teachers and the number of teaching resources supporting Inuktitut instruction.

An Effective Approach

Roles and Responsibilities of the District Education Authorities and the Department of Education

The proposals to amend DEA duties and responsibilities were designed to reflect a common capacity to meet mandated obligations and increase consistency in the delivery of the education program across the territory.

Nunavummiut clearly stated that DEAs, as volunteer boards, need to be adequately supported and resourced if they are to



fulfill their obligations. As local members of the community, DEAs are well placed to make decisions that affect the delivery of education at the local level. However, some DEA members expressed that the workload can be overwhelming. Building capacity in DEA members by providing them with proper support and training is therefore crucial to ensuring success in their role.

“

We do our best to fulfill all our obligations under the [Education] Act but the DEA portfolio is overwhelming and enough for a full-time job. We are not always fully aware of our responsibilities under the Act and more training and support is needed.

– Gjoa Haven District Education Authority

”

Inclusive Education

Nunavummiut expressed concerns about the level of supports and services provided to students, including specialized assessments and supports for mental health, audiology, behavioural challenges, and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

Many parents expressed the need for improved communications from schools about the needs of students and the implementation of individual student support plans (ISSPs).

“
We need to promote a system of continuous support of students and education needs on a continuum of differentiated learning. This needs trained bilingual educators who use differentiated instruction/learning techniques and are also versed in teaching within a second language (and the techniques that are required for this).
– Pangnirtung community member

”
DEAs expressed a desire to maintain some involvement in inclusive education decisions as they are likely to have the confidence of parents and can act as liaisons between the school and parents, advocating on behalf of students.

Finally, students expressed the need for services and programs to support high achieving students as well as students who drop out.

Principal Appointment Panels

Many Nunavummiut and DEAs questioned the proposal for the Department of Education to administer principal appointment and reappointment panels. DEAs know the needs of their community, and they feel best placed to make the decisions that directly impact school leadership.

“
Preventing DEAs from being actively involved in hiring principals removes the ability for each community to determine ‘personal suitability’ for these key positions. Removing local input could result in further alienating the community from the schools.
– Pond Inlet District Education Authority



Education, School and Local Program

Nunavummiut expressed the need for DEAs to retain control over local programming in schools. These local programs are meant to ensure students learn and live Inuit culture, tradition and life skills, enhancing the curriculum.

Further, many Nunavummiut indicated that having DEAs provide direction to principals only on issues related to the local program might exacerbate existing communication gaps between DEAs and the school. They also feel that for DEAs to have real decision-making power, it is necessary that their choices are reflected in the education program delivered to students.

A majority of DEA members expressed a need for a collaborative working relationship with schools, to make sure they are fully involved in the decision making process with principals and regional school operations.

Finally, several Nunavummiut also expressed that the Nunavut Agreement was signed to protect and promote Inuit culture, traditions, and way of life and they indicated that the education system must do more to reflect and foster this intent.



Early Childhood Education Programs

Most Nunavummiut, including education partners and DEAs, support the proposals concerning Early Childhood Education (ECE) programming.

Moreover, Nunavummiut view effective ECE programming as essential to the mental, social and emotional development of children. They feel steps should be taken to ensure ECE programming is available to all children in every community.

“
It is the Representative for Children and Youth’s (RCYO) view that every child, in every community in Nunavut, should have equal access to quality ECE programming. The RCYO recommends that these programs be made affordable for Nunavummiut and delivered by qualified, bilingual ECE teachers who are employees of the Government of Nunavut.

– Representative for Children and Youth, Nunavut

School Calendars

Nunavummiut, including DEAs, education partners and community members, oppose the proposal to establish between 3-4 school calendars.

All communities want their school calendars to reflect their local seasons and hunting patterns. To ensure this, they believe DEAs should maintain the ability to determine school calendars. Moreover, school start dates must have

the flexibility to change from year to year to align with the community's annual weather conditions.

Each community is different and has local knowledge about the seasons. The seasons in the high arctic are different from the seasons in other regions and school calendars need to reflect these differences. School calendars involve community knowledge which is the responsibility of the local DEA.

– Grise Fiord District Education Authority

Language Proficiency

Bilingual Education and Language of Instruction

The proposals to amend both the *Education Act* and the *Inuit Language Protection Act* were designed to ensure students receive adequate and effective instruction in Inuktitut and English, and to address the current shortage of Inuktitut-speaking educators.

The Inuit Language Protection Act

While it is widely acknowledged that the Department of Education will not meet the implementation deadlines for bilingual education as currently set out in the *Inuit Language Protection Act* (ILPA), Nunavummiut, particularly education partners, oppose proposals to amend any of ILPA's provisions. Any changes to the Act are seen as a diminishment of Inuit language rights.

With the existing legislative requirements, the Department has failed to take the necessary action to deliver Inuktitut LOI [Language of Instruction].

– Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.



Furthermore, Nunavummiut wish to see a detailed timeline and plan for developing Inuit educators and Inuktitut resources before they can support the proposed plan. The consensus is action must quickly, decisively and holistically be taken to prevent further Inuktitut language loss. This action must include significant investments to increase Inuktitut-speaking educators and to further develop and deliver Inuit Language curriculum and resources as currently required in ILPA.

The Education Act

Nunavummiut across the territory expressed concern over the loss of Inuktitut among the youth. Increasingly, youth are using English over Inuktitut to communicate with each other, making them unable to communicate with unilingual elders. This inability to communicate with elders is particularly concerning, given the critical role elders play in the preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge.

“

Students are not able to read, understand or speak Inuktitut so there is a divide between youth and elders in the community. Elders have begun speaking English to communicate with their grandchildren.

– Resolute Bay community member

”

Beyond the erosion of Inuktitut among the youth, many Nunavummiut are also concerned about the loss of local dialects. They overwhelmingly expressed a desire to see their local dialect reflected in classroom resources and materials. As well, some Inuktitut-speaking teachers expressed challenges using the standardized Inuktitut in these resources because they are not familiar with the standardized terminology used by the Department of Education.

Furthermore, Nunavummiut expressed concerns about the quality of language instruction students are receiving. Education partners and parents are concerned bilingual teachers need more training on how best to teach in Inuktitut. Students are also worried that the Inuktitut instruction they receive is limited as they move to higher grade levels and not sufficiently rigorous to develop high proficiency levels.



“

While recognizing the challenges associated with delivering on these legal obligations, it is our view that the existing legislation must be used as a tool to help leverage the required resources to allow for increased investment in educator training; development, use and sharing of teaching and learning resources; and other actions to support Inuktitut instruction in our school system.

– Apex District Education Authority

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When discussing the language of instruction models, Nunavummiut stated the current models need to be reviewed because they believe students are graduating without proficiency in either Inuktitut or English. A wide range of perspectives was given on how much emphasis should be placed on language in the classroom. Some expressed a desire for schools to focus only on academics, leaving parents to teach Inuktitut at home. Meanwhile, others want Inuktitut to be a mandatory course required by all students for high school graduation.

“

Once we get into higher grades from elementary schools, we start to forget what we learned in Inuktitut because there are not many academic Inuktitut teachers for high school.

– Baker Lake, Grade 11 student

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Despite these varying viewpoints, Nunavummiut all agree that students need to learn Inuktitut from a holistic and integrated approach that extends beyond the classroom. Learning Inuktitut needs to start at home and be fostered and strengthened from preschool through to grade 12, with a gradual and dedicated increase to Inuktitut instructional time.

Strengthening Capacity and Advocacy

Establishing a New DEA Council

The proposals to establish a DEA Council were designed to provide DEAs with greater day to day operational support and to establish clear lines of accountability

between the Council, DEAs and the Department of Education.

There were varying perspectives on the proposal to establish a DEA Council, which would replace the existing Coalition of Nunavut DEAs (CNDEA). Some Nunavummiut expressed confusion about why a new DEA Council was proposed to take on the duties of the CNDEA. However, other DEAs supported the proposal for the new Council because they feel this new body will offer them better support and represent their interests.

Although DEAs were appreciative for the support they have received from the CNDEA, some DEAs in smaller communities raised concerns that they have limited interaction with CNDEA, at times only hearing from the CNDEA during its Annual General Meetings. Some DEAs also indicated that they feel their interests are not well represented by the CNDEA.



“

We appreciate the support we receive from the Coalition but interaction with them is limited and we often only hear from them during the Annual General Meeting or through email. We should have mandatory training to ensure that DEA members can understand and properly implement the [Education] Act.

– Gjoa Haven District Education Authority

”

While the majority of DEAs neither expressly supported nor opposed these proposals, they all expressed a need for more resources, financial training, and a closer connection to the organization that represents them. More significantly, local DEAs want to feel connected to each other so they can share best practices and learn from each other. Many DEAs indicated that they feel they have nowhere to go to for this necessary support since the dissolution of the divisional school boards.

Transition Regulations

There was little discussion by Nunavummiut on the proposal to provide the Minister of Education with the authority to make transitional regulations. However, some acknowledge that shifting this authority will not address the issue of developing the Nunavut specific regulations needed to support the *Education Act*.

“

Transference to the Minister will make it easier to renew regulations but also may make it easier to not deal with properly updating these important regulations that have hung in translation limbo for too long.

– Pangnirtung District Education Authority

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Part 2

Beyond the Proposals

During the consultations many Nunavummiut expressed their concerns and ideas that went beyond the proposed amendments made by the Government of Nunavut. As stated earlier, these comments will inform future policy, planning and programs for the Department of Education.

Retaining and Revitalizing Language and Culture

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

Overwhelmingly Nunavummiut stated the education system needs to reflect and incorporate the principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit so students can successfully learn to navigate the world with a strong sense of their Inuit heritage and culture. Furthermore, several said that new teachers should receive orientation and cultural training so that they can better incorporate Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit into the curriculum.



Nunavummiut stated the need for schools to expose students to a much higher level of cultural content in the classroom. Specifically, more time needs to be dedicated to teaching Inuit traditional skills, including hunting, sewing, equipment making, and on-the-land survival skills. Such activities not only help students understand Inuit tradition and culture, but they also play an essential part in increasing attendance, as many students look forward to learning these skills—particularly the on-the-land activities.

“

Nunavut needs an education system based on Inuit culture, values and belief with current education programs like English, math, science, but as social studies, Inuit should learn about their history and current culture, as well as replace gym activities with on the land activities like fishing, sealing, hunting, gathering, learning how to make Inuit tools, art, clothing instead of learning about the presidents of the USA. Make education relevant to Inuit. The students need to learn about our land, our people and our culture, see how rich it is in terms of language, and identity.

– Gjoa Haven community member

”

Nunavut Specific Curriculum

In addition to incorporating Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, many Nunavummiut feel the curriculum should be taught from an Inuit perspective, including subjects such as math, science, biology and social studies. They indicated the curriculum currently being used is not culturally relevant to Inuit, prioritizing non-Canadian, non-Inuit social and cultural topics over Nunavut specific ones.

Several Nunavummiut expressed concerns that students are not learning about the central role and significance of the *Nunavut Agreement* or the formation of Nunavut, but instead are learning about this only after leaving the territory to pursue post-secondary studies.

Furthermore, Nunavummiut indicated that the curriculum also lacks consistency. They see educators relying on curricula from other jurisdictions for kindergarten to grade 8, then switching to the Alberta curriculum used in high school. As a result, educators are often expected to adapt their teaching methods to the different curricula, creating confusion among educators, students and parents.



Inuktit Education Resources

In every community, Nunavummiut, particularly Inuktit-speaking teachers and residents, expressed continued concern with the slow pace of Inuktit resource development. More significantly, they feel Inuktit-speaking educators are not adequately supported as the quantity and quality of available Inuktit resources and materials are far below that available to English-speaking educators.

“

Being an Inuk teacher in high school is hard. Not many Inuktit resources are available in high school for all grade levels.

– Cape Dorset community member

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While English-speaking educators can choose from a variety of resources, including videos, apps, websites, manipulatives and books, similar resources are not always available to support Inuktit-speaking educators. Because of this lack of Inuktit resources, many Inuktit-speaking educators often spend a significant amount of their time creating materials for students. Moreover, these educators also want a way to share resources they create so they can learn from educators in other communities.

Finally, it was expressed that Inuktit-speaking educators need training on how to use the Inuktit resources that are available because, as stated earlier, many educators are not comfortable teaching the standardized vocabulary used in the resources.

Elders and Traditional Knowledge

Closely connected to the discussion on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and language preservation is the issue of elders in schools. Nunavummiut expressed a clear desire for more elders in schools and for them to have an enhanced role in teaching students Inuktut, particularly the local dialects, and traditional knowledge.

“

Elders are the keepers of traditional knowledge and language and should be paid at the highest level.

– Apex community member

”



Many feel students are losing traditional skills and knowledge and view elders as one of the best ways of reconnecting students to Inuit culture. As a resource of language and tradition, they view elders as a school's most valuable asset.

However, there are concerns that schools are struggling to hire elders, in part due to the low hourly wage budgeted for elders. Many feel the pay elders receive from schools need to reflect the significance of the role they play in education and society.

Strengthening School Capacity

Inuit Educator Retention and Recruitment

Connected to language and culture retention and revitalization, concerns were raised about the urgent need to retain and recruit more Inuktut-speaking educators.

Throughout the community consultations, Nunavummiut stated the Nunavut Teacher Education Program (NTEP) needs to be reviewed and redesigned to address the needs of the Inuit students. For example, many indicated that NTEP courses are delivered in English, not Inuktut, and that its offerings are limited to a very few communities. In particular, people in smaller communities indicated that NTEP has not been delivered in their communities in years, despite the urgent need for Inuktut-speaking teachers.



“

NTEP needs to be revamped with a focus on getting the program into smaller communities, if only on a rotating basis. Many students from smaller communities do not want to or are unable to leave home to attend school which creates a barrier to them accessing the program. Also, NTEP students need more financial support if we want to attract and retain more students to the program.

– Resolute Bay community member

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Graduates of the program also shared the significant challenges they experienced in the program, including financial barriers and family obligations preventing them from leaving their home community. They also expressed a desire to teach higher grades and in Inuktitut, neither of which are currently supported by NTEP.

Finally, many suggested that the Department of Education should:

- » Pay teachers competitive bonuses to make the profession more attractive;
- » Increase support to current Inuit educators to promote retention and decrease burn-out;
- » Actively promote teaching as an exciting and rewarding profession to students starting in the early years of school; and,
- » Pursue other means to actively develop Inuit educators outside of NTEP.

Preparing for Post-Secondary Studies

Nunavummiut want to see their children succeed academically and pursue post-secondary studies. However, several of them have concerns about social promotion because they feel many students are graduating without the required academic courses and skills needed to pursue post-secondary studies programs, particularly chemistry, physics or math. There is also concern that the quality of education students are receiving does not sufficiently prepare them for programs at the Nunavut Arctic College.

“

Students are not being challenged in school. They are graduating from high school but they can't read or write. School should focus more on teaching the foundations, such as math, science and reading and preparing students for post-secondary studies. Students lack confidence when they leave the community in order to pursue higher education.

– Arctic Bay community member

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Students who pursued post-secondary education at southern institutions also expressed they often felt unprepared for their university or college programs and had to do significant work to catch up to their southern peers.



Improving Attendance

Nunavummiut stated that one of the biggest hindrances to education is the often-low attendance rates of students. They indicated that regardless of attempts by the Department of Education to strengthen legislation, improve educator retention and recruitment and develop Inuktitut resources, none of these efforts will benefit students who do not attend school on a regular basis.

“
A big problem is that many of our children do not attend school. I am aware that in our region, attendance in our schools can be in the range of 50-60% in the higher grades. None of the proposed changes to the 2008 Education Act address this most glaring of issues.

– Cambridge Bay community member

Although Nunavummiut acknowledge the many socio-economic challenges students face, they urge the Department of Education to work collaboratively with DEAs, parents and communities to develop and evaluate strategies to improve student attendance.

Effective Collaboration

The transformative change Nunavummiut desire for the education system requires the combined and concerted efforts of everyone in the territory, including the Department of Education, education partners, community groups, parents, and students. In developing its programs, policies and initiatives Department of Education will continue to work collaboratively and openly with its partners and Nunavummiut, consistently communicating the goals, priorities and successes of the education system.

“
Language instruction needs a holistic approach instead of a linear approach. Instead of just relying on schools to teach language, parents, partners and the community as a whole need to be involved in developing bilingual students.

– Baker Lake community member

Part 3

Charting a New Course Together

Over the course of five months, Nunavummiut expressed a diversity of experiences and perspectives. Each one helped to shape a better understanding of the issues facing the entire education system. The next challenge is to put forward a bill that best balances the interests of all Nunavummiut. Drafting this bill will require thoughtful analysis, careful planning and balanced decision-making. Nunavummiut will have further opportunities to give feedback once a bill is tabled in the Legislative Assembly in June 2019.

Working together, the education Nunavut's students receive will successfully prepare them for anything they wish to pursue. It is time for all of us to choose the next path forward.

If you would like more information on proposed amendments to the *Education Act* and the *Inuit Language Protection Act*, visit www.ourgoalsforeducation.ca.



Appendix A

Community Consultations

Community	Date of Meeting	# DEA members	# Town Hall
Apex	November 27, 2018	7	15
Arctic Bay	October 15, 2018	8	63
Arviat	December 10, 2018	5	21
Baker Lake	September 27, 2018	6	29
Cambridge Bay	January 22, 2019	2	15
Cape Dorset	November 19, 2018	6	25
Chesterfield Inlet	September 18, 2018	4	14
Clyde River	October 11, 2018	6	36
Coral Harbour	December 3, 2018	0*	60
Gjoa Haven	October 3, 2018	5	30
Grise Fiord	October 17, 2018	5	17
Hall Beach	December 11, 2018	4	35
Igloolik	November 14, 2018	4	21
Iqaluit	November 26, 2018	4	40
Kimmirut	November 20, 2018	4	25
Kugaaruk	October 1, 2018	7	35
Kugluktuk	September 26, 2018/ January 21, 2019	6	25
Nauyasat	September 24, 2018	7	31
Pangnirtung	October 9, 2018	5	28
Pond Inlet	November 13, 2018	7	30
Qikiqtarjuaq	October 10, 2018	6	19
Rankin Inlet	September 17, 2018	3	30
Resolute Bay	October 16, 2018	1	17
Sanikiluaq	November 21, 2018	3	14
Taloyoak	October 2, 2018	5	17
Whale Cove	September 19, 2018	4	13
Total		124	705

*Combined DEA and community meeting

