



# **Inuktitut in Ontario: Best Practices Research Report**

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**Disclaimer:** Although this report is focused on the use of Inuktitut in Ontario, it is recognized that Inuit speak a variety of Inuit languages and dialects, including Inuinnaqtun, Inuvialuktun, Inupiaqtun, Yu’pik and Kalaallisut. Eastern Arctic Inuktitut is the strongest form in Ontario. As well, the term Inuktitut is used in this report as it has been commonly used in Ontario for some decades, but this report acknowledges the national trend to use the term Inuktut as an umbrella term for all dialects.

## **1. Report Summary**

This report provides an overview of Inuktitut in general and Inuktitut in Ontario specifically, and includes background research on best practices for revitalization. It is geared to government officials in Ontario with mandates involving Indigenous populations, programing, services and health and wellbeing outcomes. It is also intended to be a resource for anyone funding, creating and maintaining language programs for Inuit in Ontario and beyond.

Section Two provides background information about the Inuit population and the Inuktitut language, including its grammar, writing systems, and importance for Inuit. Inuit constitutional rights are discussed, as well as the return value of provincial investments into Inuktitut promotion and preservation.

Section Three reviews the current challenges facing Inuktitut. It begins with an overview of Inuktitut in Canada by region, followed by Inuktitut in Ontario and the issue of dialectical diversity among Inuit living in urban centres.

Section Four is an in-depth analysis of best practices in Ottawa, Toronto, and other regions in Ontario. The best practices identified are based on literature reviews conducted for this report, as well as on consultations and one-on-one interviews conducted by the researcher and by Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI). Section Five provides an overview of best practices from other jurisdictions.

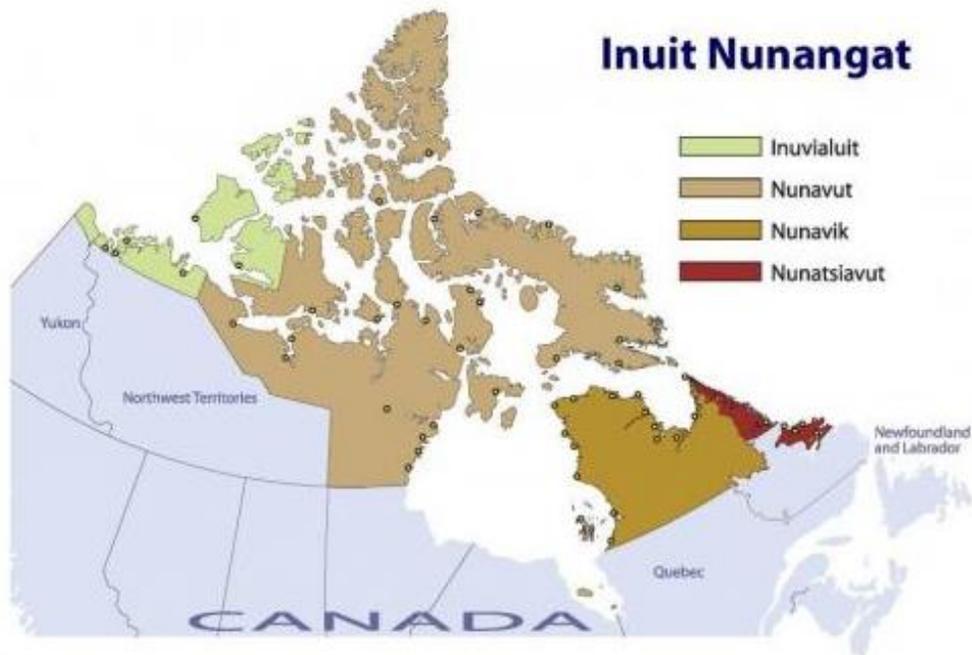
Appendix A contains the researcher’s biography. Appendix B contains recommendations based on the researcher’s experience. Appendix C describes how an Inuktitut Immersion Centre in Ottawa could form part of a viable model for Inuktitut revitalization in Ontario.

## **2. Overview**

### **2.1 Who are Inuit?**

Inuit (pronounced “ee-nweet”) are an Indigenous group who are connected culturally, historically and linguistically to the Arctic. Inuit traditionally live in Greenland, Arctic Canada, Alaska and Siberia. All Inuit groups share linguistic similarities. Worldwide, the Inuit population is approximately 160,000. Canadian Inuit comprise over a third of Inuit in the world, at over 55,000. Inuit in Canada originate from four traditional Arctic coastal regions: Nunatsiavut (Labrador), Nunavik (Arctic Quebec), Nunavut (territory), and Inuvialuit Settlement Region (MacKenzie Delta).

## Map of Inuit Nunangat (Inuit Regions of Canada)<sup>1</sup>



Statistics show that over 27% of Canadian Inuit live in outside of Inuit Nunangat, with the highest numbers of Inuit diaspora residing within Ontario.<sup>2</sup>

Inuit population numbers may seem small, as the city of Oshawa is about 160,000 people (the number of Inuit worldwide) and city of Belleville has a population of about 50,000 (just under the Canada-wide Inuit population). However, Inuit traditional territories in Canada comprise 35% of Canada's landmass and 50% of its coastline.<sup>3</sup> Inuit cultural and linguistic identity is a significant aspect of Canadian identity, past, present and future; Inuit art has received international acclaim; and there are growing Inuit contributions to literature, film and theatre which have garnered international recognition (see Section 7 for furthering reading on this topic).

### 2.1.1 Inuit in Ontario

Southern Canada is often referred to as "the South" by Inuit, and Inuit living in the South are sometimes referred to as "urban Inuit". Between 2006 and 2011 the percentage of urban Inuit living in Southern Canadian cities and environs increased from 22% to 27%.

<sup>1</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, "Maps Of Inuit Nunangat (Inuit Regions Of Canada)". Accessed 02.21.19.

<https://www.itk.ca/maps-of-inuit-nunangat/>

<sup>2</sup> Government of Canada, "Inuit population by residence inside or outside Inuit Nunangat, 2016." Accessed 02.10.19. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/mc-a001-eng.htm> Note: Ontario shows 3k+ and Quebec 12k+ but the Quebec number includes Nunavik, Arctic Quebec and doesn't reflect an urban population in Quebec. As well, the Ontario number is known by Inuit organizations as being more than double the Statistics Canada quote.

<sup>3</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, "About Canadian Inuit." Accessed 02.10.19. <https://www.itk.ca/about-canadian-inuit/>



## 2.2 What is Inuktitut?

The definition of Inuktitut is not clear-cut, as Inuit from various regions describe their language differently.<sup>7</sup> However, Eastern Canadian Inuktitut is generally understood to be an Inuit language which is traditionally spoken in Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut. The term Inuktitut is used as an umbrella term encompassing those Eastern Arctic regions. However, in Nunavik (Arctic Quebec), Inuktitut is called *Inuttitut*, and in Nunatsiavut (Coastal Labrador), Inuktitut is called *Inuttut*. Inuinnaqtun is another Inuit dialect which is related to Inuktitut, but exclusively referred to as Inuinnaqtun, and it is given special protection under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. In Nunavut, Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun are now referred to together as “Inuktut”. Inuktitut is part of a spectrum of Inuit languages spoken from as far west as Alaska to as far east as Greenland. For the purposes of this report, the term “Inuktitut” will refer to the Eastern Canadian Inuktitut as it is spoken in Eastern Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut, and as the term has been used for some decades now in Ontario.<sup>8</sup>

### Inuit Language Map<sup>9</sup>



There are several different dialects of Inuktitut, although the exact number is subject to debate by Inuit and linguists. Communities located close to one another are generally able

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<sup>7</sup> Inuit languages and dialects include Inuinnaqtun (western Nunavut), Inuvialuktun (MacKenzie Delta, N.W.T.), Inupiaqtun (North slope Alaska), Yu'pik (Central Alaska) and Kalaallisut (Greenland). As well, dialects are often expressed by the name of the land area they are spoken in, for example: Nattilingmiutut (dialect of the people of the place of the seal), Aivilingmiut (dialect of the people of place where there are walruses), or Utkuhikhalingmiut (dialect of the people of the place where soapstone can be found).

<sup>8</sup> There is a movement in Nunavut and Canada to use the term Inuktut rather than Inuktitut. However this report reflects the common terminology as still strongly used among Inuit in Ontario. More discussion on the nuances of this are offered throughout the report. When in Ontario the term “Inuktitut” is used, but it is also expressed as “Inuktut”.

<sup>9</sup> Tusaalanga, “What is Inuktut?” Accessed 02.10.19. <https://tusaalanga.ca/node/2502>

to communicate between dialects, whereas communities farther apart may not be able to.<sup>10</sup> In Nunavut, the following dialects are generally recognized:

### **Inuit Dialects in Nunavut<sup>11</sup>**

<b>Inuinnaqtun</b>	Qurluqtuq (Kugluktuk) Iqaluktuuttiaq (Cambridge Bay) Ulukhaqtuq (Ulukhaktok, in N.W.T.)
<b>Nattilingmiutut</b>	Uqšuuqtuuq (Gjoa Haven) Talurjuaq (Taloyoak) Kuugaarjuk (Kugaaruk)
<b>Qamani'tuarmitut</b>	Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake) Kangiqñiniq (Rankin Inlet)
<b>Paallirmiutut</b>	Tikirarjuaq (Whale Cove) Arviat (Eskimo Point)
<b>Aivilingmiutut</b>	Naujaat (Repulse Bay) Igluligaarjuk (Chesterfield Inlet) Salliq (Coral Harbour) Kangiqñiniq (Rankin Inlet)
<b>North Qikiqtaaluk</b>	Ikpiarjuk (Arctic Bay) Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet) Kangiqtugaapik (Clyde River) Iglulik (Igloolik) Sanirajaq (Hall Beach) Qausuittuq (Resolute) (with an Arctic Quebec variation) Ajuittuq (Grise Fiord) (with an Arctic Quebec variation)
<b>Central Qikiqtaaluk</b>	Panniqtuuq (Pangnirtung) Qikiqtarjuaq (Broughton Island)

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Tusaalanga, "Inuit Dialects in Nunavut". Accessed 02.10.19. <https://tusaalanga.ca/node/2503>

**South Qikiqtaaluk**      Iqaluit (Frobisher Bay)  
Kimmirut (Lake Harbour)  
Kinngait (Cape Dorset)

**Sanikiluaarmiutut**      Sanikiluaq (an Arctic Quebec variation)

Inuktitut, Cree and Ojibwe were the three most common of the 60 Aboriginal languages reported in the 2011 census.<sup>12</sup> Despite Inuktitut's relative strength at this time, it also suffers decline and, in some regions, endangerment. However, out of all Indigenous languages in Canada, Inuktitut has the highest number of speakers as a percentage of the total population, and the highest number of unilingual elders.<sup>13</sup> Significantly also, Inuktitut is the most spoken Indigenous mother tongue in Ottawa.

Studies show that Indigenous languages such as Inuktitut reflect unique worldviews and values that are conveyed through their structure.<sup>14</sup> The following section elaborates on some key features of Inuktitut to illustrate the connection between worldview and values.

### 2.2.1 Inuktitut Grammar

Inuktitut is classified within polysynthetic agglutinative languages - ones that have many parts that fit together like Lego blocks. Parts can be substituted for other parts in the process of creating meaning. As with most Indigenous languages in Canada, Inuktitut emphasizes verbs over nouns. The legendary myth of "100 words for snow" is actually based on how many verbs the language has to express what the snow is *doing*. "Aput(i)" is the only word for snow. Other more specific terms include: *piqsigtuq* (blizzard), *qanniqtuq* (snow flakes falling), *natiruviaqtuq* (blowing ground snow), along with dozens of other words that are verb-based.

Relating to the emphasis on verbs, is a feature of the language that involves verb endings that are referred to as "doubles". Doubles involve both the subject and the object in the ending, so if "I" (subject) see (verb) "you" (object), it is simply *takujagit* (taku- = see), so the double ending -jagit is "I-you". The ending changes with the change of a subject or object, for example: *takujakka* (see, I-them), *takujaatigut* (see, he-us). With regards to

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<sup>12</sup> Statistics Canada, "Aboriginal Languages in Canada", Census 2011. Accessed 02.01.19.  
[https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-314-x/98-314-x2011003\\_3-eng.cfm](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-314-x/98-314-x2011003_3-eng.cfm)

<sup>13</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, "Inuit Express Disappointment with National Indigenous Languages Bill", 02.05.19. Accessed 02.06.19. <https://www.itk.ca/inuit-express-disappointment-with-national-indigenous-languages-bill/> According to one report, the majority of Inuit elders in Nunavut are unilingual: North Sky Consulting, "GN Report Card: Analysis and Recommendations" at p. 27.

<sup>14</sup> An excellent review is found in Sarah Kell, Aboriginal Education Team, BC Ministry of Education "Polysynthetic Language Structures and their Role in Pedagogy and Curriculum for BC Indigenous Languages" 06.04.14. Accessed 02-08.19.  
[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/aboriginal-education/research/polysynthetic\\_language.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/aboriginal-education/research/polysynthetic_language.pdf)

worldview, an interconnected and highly relational perspective is required to embrace this way of communicating. Both individuals and collectivities are intertwined. Subject and object are expressed as a unit.

Inuktitut is also not gender-specific, so “anijuq” (go out, he) could mean: he goes out, she goes out, or it goes out. The context is used to determine the meaning. This “high context”<sup>15</sup> awareness is normal when speaking Inuktitut. It requires a speaker to be more observant of context to interpret the meaning of the communication, and can lead to higher social awareness overall. As well, it gives speakers a direct experience of a linguistic universe within which both genders, as well as inanimate and animate objects are considered equal.

In terms of sentence structure, Inuktitut is the mirror image of English. For example, “I am going to go outside”, *silamuurniaqtunga*, is literally, “outside/going-to-go/am I”. Being bilingual in Inuktitut and English or French places a valuable and unique demand on the speaker, as he or she must move between mirror images of speech progression.

### 2.2.2 Inuktitut Writing Systems

There are two writing systems used for Inuktitut in Canada: syllabics and roman orthography. There are 15 consonants and 3 vowels in the writing systems. The writing systems are “phonetic”, meaning that each sound corresponds exactly to a letter or syllabic symbol. It should be noted that there are a few sounds in some minority dialects that are not represented phonetically in the writing system, such as some sounds from Nattilingmiutut in the eastern part of the Kitikmeot region in Nunavut. Writing system updates are being considered and piloted for those dialects. As well, while there are only three vowels in the writing system, some vowels change slightly in pronunciation when close to “guttural” consonants (consonants that engage the lower throat or glottis). The q and the r, for example, impact a connected vowel in the following way: in the word *nanuq* (polar bear), the u sounds like an o so that it matches the guttural location of the q. The word is pronounced “nanoq”, but the o sound is written as a u for simplicity. The guttural r (similar to the French r) also impacts the pronunciation of vowels. For example, *qaritaq* (brain) is pronounced qaretaq, because e (eh) is lower in the throat than i (ee).

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<sup>15</sup> See the work of Edward T. Hall who coined this phrase. Low context cultures depend more on verbal expression for meaning, while high context languages (Indigenous languages, along with Japanese and others) require keen observation skills to assess exact meaning. Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture*, New York: Anchor Books, 1976.

## Chart of Inuktitut Syllabics and Roman Orthography<sup>16</sup>

Δ	i	▷	u	◁	a	H
Λ	pi	>	pu	<	pa	<
∩	ti	∩	tu	C	ta	c
ρ	ki	∂	ku	b	ka	b
ρ	gi	J	gu	l	ga	l
Γ	mi	J	mu	L	ma	L
σ	ni	∂	nu	a	na	a
∕	si	∕	su	∕	sa	∕
c	li	∩	lu	c	la	c
∕	ji	∕	ju	∕	ja	∕
Δ	vi	▷	vu	◁	va	e
∩	ri	ρ	ru	∩	ra	∩
ρ	qi	∂	qu	∂	qa	∂
∕	ngi	∩	ngu	∩	nga	∩
e	&i	∩	&u	∩	&a	∩

Naamit  
 Finals

Nortox / 4C

Syllabics (left side of the columns above) are single characters that express a whole syllable (both a consonant and a vowel). The same character is used three different ways to indicate which of the three vowels is meant. Note the last consonant on the chart does not occur in English and is represented with a &. It is like the L in the Welsh language (a ‘dsl’ sound). The consonant on the second-to-last line is ng, which is one sound and one consonant, but written with two roman letters.

The syllabics writing system has been used in much of Nunavut and Nunavik since the early 1900’s when it was adopted from the Cree system through the work of Reverend Peck. Cree syllabics were themselves developed based on Pitman’s shorthand and Braille.<sup>17</sup> There is currently a movement in Inuit Nunangat to adopt a unified roman orthography system that all Canadian Inuit regions agree on, and which will be legible to Alaskan, Siberian and Greenlandic Inuit language users as well.<sup>18</sup> Both syllabics and roman orthography are valued by Inuit in Ontario, and thus both systems are taught and used.

Each of the 15 consonants has a precise sound, as do each of the three vowels, with some transformations as explained above. These require precise training, practice, input and feedback. Because Inuktitut is a strongly oral language, proper pronunciation is highly

<sup>16</sup> Source : Alexina Kublu and Mick Mallon, “Our Language Ourselves”, Nunavut 99, 04.01.99. Accessed 02.02.19. <http://www.nunavut.com/nunavut99/english/our.html>

<sup>17</sup> Library and Archives Canada, “Aboriginal Syllabics Scripts”, 06.11.15. Accessed 02.03.19. <https://thediscoverblog.com/2015/06/11/aboriginal-syllabic-scripts/>

<sup>18</sup> See: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, “Unification of the Inuit Language Writing System” 2012. Accessed 02.05.19. <https://www.itk.ca/amaujaq/unification-writing-system/>

valued by users and reinforced by elders. The writing systems are helpful in supporting accurate oral speech when the language is being taught as a second language. As a first language, the writing systems offer the speaker accurate ways of recording vocabulary and phrases and building their capacity. Learners require high quality materials for literacy practice, and teachers often need to make their own materials due to the lack of resources in Inuktitut.

### 2.3 The Importance of Inuktitut to Inuit

According to Statistics Canada's Aboriginal Children's Survey (2006), about three-quarters (74%) of Inuit children in Canada had a parent who said it was very important that their child speak and understand the Inuit language.<sup>19</sup>

At an international symposium on Arctic languages, the former president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami expressed what is heard across Canada's North and South:

*Our language is who and what we are and the health of our language lies at the core of our well-being.*

– Mary Simon, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Arctic Indigenous Language Symposium, Tromso, Norway, 2008<sup>20</sup>

The importance of the Inuktitut language to Inuit is also described as being the driving force for land claims:

*[T]he whole reason why the land claims took place, [is] because we were losing our language. Once you have the language the culture is strong.*

– Paul Quassa, Minister of Education, Nunavut, 2003<sup>21</sup>

*Language and culture is very important to us. That is the reason that Nunavut was created. Sometimes we forget why Nunavut was created.*

– Eva Aariak, former Premier, Nunavut, 2008<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Heather Tait, et al, "Inuit Language Indicators for Children Under the Age of Six in Canada" Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006. Accessed 01-23.19. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-643-x/2010001/article/11278-eng.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Mary Simon, "Good Intentions are Not Enough" President's Speech, Arctic Indigenous Languages Symposium, 10.19.08. Accessed: 02.20.19. <http://s3.amazonaws.com/isuma.attachments/MSimonITKtromso.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> A. M. Timpson, "Reconciling Indigenous and Settler Language Interests: Language Policy Initiatives in Nunavut," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43:2, 2010, p.161.

<sup>22</sup> Jim Bell, "In Iqaluit, It's Seven against One on Oct. 27," *Nunatsiaq News*, Iqaluit, NU, 10.24.08.

One survey reveals that 57% of Inuit respondents in Ontario listed Inuit-specific education, Inuit culture/language in curriculum, and Inuktitut usage in all programs and services as a priority for them.<sup>23</sup> As well, during TI's engagement sessions concerning Inuktitut in Ontario, community members made it clear that Inuktitut use and learning is highly valued by Inuit in Ontario.

In addition, some of the Inuktitut innovations based in Ontario have received public attention in the Eastern Arctic, such as Inuktitut board games, an Inuktitut immersion course based in a university, Inuit elder mentorships for Inuit college students, as well as cultural days and outreach activities.<sup>24</sup> The dedication, innovativeness and creativity of language proponents, community elders and youth in Ontario is disproportionate to their small numbers and overall language proficiency levels. The reason for this has often been cited by Inuktitut language proponents as being that language loss is starkly noticed in urban spaces: strong speakers experience the need to strive to keep their language alive and to not take the survival of Inuktitut for granted.

## 2.4 Constitutional Rights

Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* confirms the existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of Inuit, First Nations, and Metis in Canada. Indigenous languages pre-existed the creation of Canada and speaking Indigenous languages is arguably an existing Aboriginal right under section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. Upcoming national Indigenous language legislation confirms that Indigenous languages are covered by s. 35 of Canada's Constitution.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.4 Provincial Investment

When provincial governments support Inuit populations outside of Inuit traditional territories in having access to language and cultural programs, they not only uphold Inuit constitutional rights – they also strengthen community health indicators. For example, suicide rates are consistently shown to be lower among native language speakers or those with access to their language.<sup>26</sup> Cultural and linguistic connection is also clearly shown to have positive impacts on education and employment outcomes, and early childhood Indigenous language access is shown to support access to English and French for stronger

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<sup>23</sup> Interim Report – Community-Based Mapping, Tungasuvvingat Inuit (2017)

<sup>24</sup> See: Patricia D'souza, "Inuktitut 101", *Nunatsiaq News*, 07.12.02. Accessed 01.20.19. [https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/inuktitut\\_101/](https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/inuktitut_101/) and Jane George, "Inuit Language Word Games Make Learning Fun", *Nunatsiaq News*, 02.09.11. Accessed 01.20.19. [https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/7788\\_inuit\\_language\\_word\\_games\\_make\\_learning\\_fun/](https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/7788_inuit_language_word_games_make_learning_fun/)

<sup>25</sup> House of Commons of Canada, Bill C-91, 02.05.19. Accessed 02.06.19. <http://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/bill/C-91/first-reading>

<sup>26</sup> Courtney Parker and John Ahni Schertow, "Preserving Native Language a Key to Overcoming Native Suicide Epidemic", 04.14.16. Accessed 01.20.19. <https://intercontinentalcry.org/preserving-native-language-key-overcoming-native-suicide-epidemic/> Also see: *The Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs Report*, June 2017. Accessed 01.20.19. <http://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/INAN/Reports/RP8977643/inanrp09/inanrp09-e.pdf>

educational outcomes.<sup>27</sup> Research clearly supports that provincial investment through programs for Indigenous language training provides multiple returns: healthier families, better education outcomes and stronger economic participation.<sup>28</sup>

### 3. Current Challenges Facing Inuktitut

Inuktitut as an Indigenous Canadian language is considered strong, but this varies within different regions and across generations, and can even vary within a single family. With each census there is a decline in the number of speakers.<sup>29</sup>

Factors contributing to the decline of Inuktitut include: the impact of residential schools and past government policies, and English dominance in schools and media.<sup>30</sup> Dialectical differences and the lack of a standardized version of Inuktitut have also contributed to the rise of English as a lingua franca among Inuit.<sup>31</sup>

#### 3.1 The Health of Inuktitut in Different Regions in Canada

Inuktitut is strongest in Nunavik (Arctic Quebec) and Nunavut (territory), and is most challenged (and in some cases endangered) in Nunatsiavut (Labrador), Inuvialuit region (Western Arctic), and in urban settings (listed as “outside Inuit Nunangat” in the chart below). In urban settings, the number of speakers is likely under-reported because Inuit populations are highly mobile due to school, medical and job-related factors.<sup>32</sup>

According to the 2016 Census, the percent of Inuit reporting use of Inuktitut at home and Inuktitut as their mother tongue, is as follows:<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Jessica Ball, “Supporting Young Indigenous Children's Language Development in Canada: A Review of Research on Needs and Promising Practices” *The Canadian Modern Languages Review*, 66:1, 09.01.09. Accessed 01.16.19.

<https://www.utpjournals.press/doi/abs/10.3138/cmlr.66.1.019>

<sup>28</sup> “Benefits of Indigenous Language Learning” 07.12. Accessed 01.16.19. [https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.uoregon.edu/dist/8/15685/files/2012/07/forwebpageBenefitsL2\\_ECE10\\_17\\_14.pdf](https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.uoregon.edu/dist/8/15685/files/2012/07/forwebpageBenefitsL2_ECE10_17_14.pdf) See global studies: Canadian Heritage, “The Economic Advantages of Bilingualism: Literature Review, May 2016”. Accessed 01-17.19. <https://www.caslt.org/files/learn-languages/pch-bilingualism-lit-review-final-en.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> A good overview of the subject is provided by Ian Martin, “Inuit Language Loss in Nunavut: Analysis, Forecast and Recommendations”, March 7, 2017. Accessed 02.02.19.

[https://assembly.nu.ca/sites/default/files/TD-307-4\(3\)-EN-Inuit-Language-Loss-in-Nunavut-Analysis-Forecast-and-Recommendations.pdf](https://assembly.nu.ca/sites/default/files/TD-307-4(3)-EN-Inuit-Language-Loss-in-Nunavut-Analysis-Forecast-and-Recommendations.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Government of Nunavut, “Uqausivut: The Proposed Comprehensive Plan Pursuant to the Languages Acts, 2011-2014”, p. 16. Accessed 02.03.19. <http://www.cley.gov.nu.ca/pdf/UqausivutCIF-eng.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Quinns, Eilis. “Speaking the Same Language”. 10.27.10. Accessed 02.21.19. *Eye on the Arctic* <http://www.rcinet.ca/eye-on-the-arctic/2010/10/27/speaking-the-same-language/>

<sup>32</sup> Joanne Laucius, “Uncounted: Census Far Underestimated Ottawa’s Inuit Population, Study Says”, *Ottawa Citizen*, 12.03.17. Accessed 01.27.19. <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/uncounted-census-far-underestimated-ottawas-inuit-population-study-says>

<sup>33</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, “Inuit Statistical Profile, 2018”. Accessed 01.30.19. <https://www.itk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Inuit-Statistical-Profile.pdf>

**Percent of Inuit reporting being able to converse in Inuktitut, using Inuktitut at home and with Inuktitut as their mother tongue, 2016**

	Able to converse in Inuktitut [%]	Inuktitut used most at home [%]	Inuktitut mother tongue [%]
<b>Language by age group</b>			
Inuit of all ages in Canada	64%	45%	57%
0-14 years	65%	48%	56%
15-24 years	64%	46%	57%
25-64 years	64%	42%	58%
65 years and over	61%	46%	61%
<b>Language by Inuit region</b>			
Nunatsiavut	21%	5%	17%
Nunavik	99%	95%	98%
Nunavut	89%	58%	77%
Inuvialuit region	22%	1%	16%
Outside Inuit Nunangat	11%	2%	10%

**Nunavut:** 32, 500 Inuit,<sup>34</sup> 20% of Canada’s landmass (808,200 sq. miles), 60% of its coastline.<sup>35</sup> Nunavut is comprised of three regions: Qikiqtaaluk (north and south), Kivalliq (north and south), and Kitikmeot (east and west). Inuktitut is strongest in the largest region of Qikiqtaaluk, followed by Kivalliq and Kitikmeot. Inuinnaqtun is considered endangered in western Kitikmeot (Cambridge Bay and Kugluktuk), and is protected under special legislation in Nunavut. The overall territorial number of Inuit able to converse in Inuktitut is 89%.

**Nunavik:** 11,000 Inuit,<sup>36</sup> 5% of Canada’s landmass (171,307 sq. miles). Inuktitut is considered especially vital in this region, with 99% of Inuit reporting the ability to converse in the language. The strength of Inuktitut in Nunavik is partly attributable to the efforts of Kativik Regional Government, school board and cultural institutes in providing strong language programs.<sup>37</sup>

**Nunatsiavut (Labrador):** 2,400 Inuit, 28,000 sq. miles of land, and 17,000 miles sea rights.<sup>38</sup> Like the west Kitikmeot in Nunavut, Labrador Inuttut has been facing endangerment for some decades. More recent efforts include radio shows, apprenticeship

<sup>34</sup> Nunavut Bureau of Statistics. Accessed 02.10.19. [www.stats.gov.nu.ca](http://www.stats.gov.nu.ca)

<sup>35</sup> “Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada” 1992. Accessed 02.12.19.

[https://www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/Nunavut\\_Land\\_Claims\\_Agreement.pdf](https://www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/Nunavut_Land_Claims_Agreement.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Kativik Regional Government, “2016 Annual Report”, at p. 4. Accessed 02.21.2019.

[http://www.krg.ca/images/stories/annualreports/A8346\\_ARK\\_RAG\\_2016\\_EP7\\_RSZ.pdf](http://www.krg.ca/images/stories/annualreports/A8346_ARK_RAG_2016_EP7_RSZ.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> “Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Between the Inuit of Labrador and Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Newfoundland and Labrador and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada”, December 2004. Accessed 02.02.19. <http://www.nunatsiavut.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Labrador-Inuit-Land-Claims-Agreement.pdf>

programs, and a high quality Rosetta Stone CD study package, with the aim of revitalizing the use of their dialect.<sup>39</sup> The rate of conversancy is at 21%.

**Inuvialuit Settlement Region:** 3,000 Inuit, 30,000 sq. mile land area with sea and water rights. The Mackenzie Delta area traditionally hosted Arctic trade and commerce among Inuit (Inuvialuit and other Inuit groups) as well as First Nations groups such as the Gwitchin. Inuvialuit dialects are considered endangered. The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation has supported language preservation initiatives and research, and considers the Inuit language an essential and unique component of cultural heritage and history.<sup>40</sup> The rate of conversancy is reported at 22%.

**Inuit Outside Inuit Nunangat** (also known as “Urban Inuit”): The highest population of Inuit outside of Inuit homelands is based in Ontario (estimated at up to 15,000 by service providers based on their client lists and surveys). Inuit also live in Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Vancouver, St. John’s, Halifax, Yellowknife, and a variety of smaller cities and rural areas surrounding urban spaces. Inuit outside of Inuit homelands have faced the most challenges in language acquisition and retention, with 11% being able to converse in Inuktitut.

### 3.2 Challenges for Inuktitut in Nunavut

In Nunavut (which is where most Ontario Inuit come from), statistics clearly show that Inuit language use and transmission is on a continuing decline. Most troubling is that Inuit language use in the home dropped by 12% between 1996 and 2006.<sup>41</sup> From 1996 to 2011, the number of Inuktitut mother tongue speakers in Nunavut dropped from 88% to 80%. Over the same period, the use of Inuktitut in Inuit homes in Nunavut dropped from 76% in 1996 to a mere 61% in 2011.<sup>42</sup> Without strategic intervention Inuktitut in Nunavut could go from “vulnerable/unsafe” to “endangered” within the span of 20 years.

### 3.3 Challenges for Inuktitut in Ontario

The dominant dialect spoken in Ontario is called “Inuktitut”. Data is not currently available on which Inuktitut dialects are spoken most in Ottawa and Ontario. However, given that 68% of Inuit parents in Ottawa come from Nunavut, it seems likely that Nunavut dialects are spoken most often (see pp. 6-7 for a list of Nunavut dialects).

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<sup>39</sup> See: Cultural Division, Nunatsiavut Government summary of accomplishments, accessed 02.11.19: <http://www.nunatsiavut.com/department/culturalcentre/>

<sup>40</sup> The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation lists three dialects as “languages”, but all are related to Inuktitut across the circumpolar regions. Accessed 01.29.19. <https://www.irc.inuvialuit.com/language-0>

<sup>41</sup> Sandra Inutiq, Nunavut Languages Commissioner, Address to the United Nations International Expert Group. New York, January 2016.

<sup>42</sup> 2011 National Household Survey "Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: Focus on Inuit in Nunavut" (Released by Statistics Canada - May 8, 2013); and 2011 Census of Population "Mother Tongue and Language Spoken Most Often at Home" (Released by Statistics Canada - October 24, 2012). (Cited in Martin, 2017)

In addition to the challenges faced by Inuktitut across Canada, an additional hurdle presents itself in Ontario – a high rate of dialectal diversity, due to the fact that Ontario Inuit come from different dialect regions of Canada. While fluent speakers of any of the Inuit dialects spoken in Ontario can work to negotiate meaning when speaking with other Inuit from different dialects, there is also a significant challenge when facing English or French dominance. When people feel shy about their dialect, or fear miscommunication, there can be the tendency to default to another common language, typically English. This phenomenon is particularly frequent for Inuit because Inuit culture is very non-confrontational.

Also, people speaking Inuktitut (particularly if they have different dialects) may insert an English word to make their meaning clearer, a phenomenon known as “code-switching”. For example: “Walmart-muaqqaugaluqtunga” (I did go to Walmart recently but...). Or: “Bus ticket-qanngittiammarikkama!” (I am completely out of bus tickets!). These English references can have Inuktitut equivalences (*Ualimaamuaqqaugaluqtunga* and *usikaqtautisiutiqanngittiammarikkama*, but (a) one has to work harder, and (b) if code-mixing is accepted, there is no incentive to avoid it. However, research shows that code-mixing can have a negative impact on the overall health and relevancy of a language for speakers beyond the beginner phase.<sup>43</sup> Code-mixing may be helpful in communicating when first learning, but using phrases or terms from a dominant language can give that language system more influence than it already has in everyday life, media, commerce, etc.

#### **4. Best Practices for Inuktitut in Different Regions of Ontario**

This section will review best practices for language teaching and learning which were gathered through research, TI consultations, and two interviews that the researcher conducted with Inuit in Toronto and Arthur, Ontario. Between August 2018 and February 2019, Tungasuvvingat Inuit staff conducted five public consultations with Inuit communities in different parts of Ontario (Ottawa, Toronto, Guelph, Cornwall and North Bay), three staff and front-line service provider engagement sessions, and two youth-specific engagement sessions. In addition, TI’s previous general needs assessment and community-based mapping project concluded with strong recommendations that are consistent with the outcomes of the language engagement sessions.<sup>44</sup>

According to the community feedback from the TI community engagement sessions, the following are best practices which are similar across the province:

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<sup>43</sup> See Aimee K. Spice, “The Effects of Code-Mixing on Second Language Development” Cedarville University, 04.24.18. Accessed 02.01.19.  
[https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1012&context=linguistics\\_senior\\_projects](https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1012&context=linguistics_senior_projects)

<sup>44</sup> Community-Based Mapping, June 2017, supra. During the community-based mapping project, engagements were held with Inuit in Ottawa, Cornwall, Peterborough, Toronto, Mississauga, Niagara Falls, London, Waterloo, North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Perry Sound, Barrie, St. Catherine’s, Kitchener, Rockland and Renfrew. The methodology of the Community Mapping project holds strong statistical validation at 10% of the population.

- Use a trauma-informed approach to learning and teaching Inuktitut;
- Use craft and arts-based methodologies – engaging Inuit artists, seamstresses and crafts people;
- Provide support for regular gatherings (e.g. venue, transportation and programming);
- Engage traveling experts and elders and maximize on documentation opportunities by using video recordings for curriculum development;
- Train and support teachers, and provide certification and remuneration;
- Include Inuit foods;
- Use multi-media;
- Provide/develop curriculum and materials;
- Provide ample stimulation for learners to hear the language in action on a regular basis, with both in-person stimuli and multimedia support; and
- Provide specialized learner-preparation for new students, offering them orientation and immersion into the sounds and communication style of Inuktitut to support full engagement and long-term success.

Based on community feedback from the community-mapping project, the following recommendations were identified:

- Provide opportunities for Inuit to gather and connect;
- Work with program gaps and work using partnerships;
- Develop transportation programs in conjunction with activities;
- Identify more venues to share space for Inuit-specific programming;
- Support Inuit in schools and postsecondary institutions by inviting local community members to provide Inuit content and role modeling; and
- Utilize social media effectively for connecting and educating.

#### **4.1 Inuktitut in Ottawa**

Ottawa is unique in Ontario for Inuit because the largest population of Inuit in Ontario live in Ottawa; there are significant Inuit service organizations and national Inuit organizations that are based in Ottawa; and there is also a long history of North-South relations. Opportunities in Ottawa are quite different from other regions of Ontario and so challenges and best practices differ as well.

Inuktitut is the most common Indigenous mother tongue in Ottawa, according to the 2016 Census.<sup>45</sup>

Figure 1.4 description



There are several different kinds of structured learning opportunities in Ottawa which set it apart from the other regions.

### Structured Inuktitut Learning Activities

Founded in the late 1980s, the Nunavut Sivuniksavut program in Ottawa offers both first and second language training with sensitivity to dialect issues.<sup>46</sup> This Inuktitut training is geared to students attending their college-accredited program from various Arctic regions in Canada. As well, Carleton University has offered Inuktitut for university credit, but not on a consistent basis (there were about five full-year courses taught since 2001, and nothing at present). The Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre has, in addition to providing programs for children, provided beginner classes for Inuit adult learners as well as learners from the general community. In the years they could not offer classes they offered online podcasts made in previous years.<sup>47</sup> As well, private Inuktitut lessons have been offered in the Ottawa region, for example in Kemptville to the south.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Statistics Canada, "Population by Aboriginal Identity, Ottawa and Gatineau", Census 2016. Accessed 01.20.19. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-cma-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CMA&GC=505&TOPIC=9>

<sup>46</sup> Nunavut Sivuniksavut, Courses. Accessed 01.30.19. <https://www.nunavutsivuniksavut.ca/courses>

<sup>47</sup> See Tusaalanga website resource: <https://tusaalanga.ca/welcome-bienvenue>. Accessed 01.20.19. Also see podcast links for an Ontario-based initiative, (Accessed 02.05.19): <http://www.ottawainuitchildrens.com/uqausivut-culture-language-program/>

<sup>48</sup> Beverly Illauq, "Inuktitut Classes to Be Offered in Kemptville", 10.30.15. Accessed 02.10.19. <https://www.insideottawavalley.com/news-story/6142058-inuktitut-classes-to-be-offered-in-kemptville/>

## Other Inuktitut Learning Activities

Aside from the above structured language courses and activities in Ottawa, there have been youth drop-ins, writing courses, March break immersion day camp, and arts and crafts-based language activities for learners of all ages and abilities. Consistency has varied widely, depending on funding and availability of trained teachers, but interest levels among participants have been consistently very high and demand exceeds availability.

## Looking to the Future

Based on my research and experiences as an Inuktitut professional in Ontario for over 25 years, I believe that the creation of an Inuktitut Immersion Centre in Ottawa would be the most effective way to promote and preserve Inuktitut in Ontario. The Centre could be modeled on the Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitíóhkwa Language and Cultural Center, a Mohawk Centre in Kahnawà:ke which is dedicated to promoting the Mohawk language and which includes a 2-year immersion program.<sup>49</sup> For preliminary ideas for an Inuktitut Immersion Centre in Ottawa, see Appendix C.

### 4.2 Inuktitut in Toronto

In comparison with Ottawa, Toronto has fewer Inuktitut speakers and fewer learning opportunities. In 2017, Inuktitut was offered as a course at the University of Toronto,<sup>50</sup> and in 2018 an Inuktitut weekend language camp was held through the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto.<sup>51</sup>

During engagement sessions, Inuit in the Toronto region noted that Inuktitut learners raised in the South need access to background training in order to learn better, such as:

- A broad overview of dialects;
- Introduction to the sounds of the language; and
- Basic cultural orientation.

Inuit in Toronto also noted that there was a need to create spaces where learners could connect with Inuktitut speakers and where Inuktitut could be role-modeled.

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<sup>49</sup> Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitíóhkwa Language and Cultural Center website for further information: <http://www.korkahnawake.org/>

<sup>50</sup> Sarah Rogers, "Nunavut Grad Student Pushes Higher Learning, Inuit Culture in the Big City" *Nunatsiaq News*, 03.22.17. Accessed 02.03.19. [https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/65674nunavut\\_grad\\_student\\_pushes\\_higher\\_learning\\_inuit\\_culture\\_in\\_the\\_big\\_c/](https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/65674nunavut_grad_student_pushes_higher_learning_inuit_culture_in_the_big_c/)

<sup>51</sup> CBC News, "Language Camp in Toronto Gives Inuit the Chance to Practice Inuktitut" 07.28.18. Accessed 02.11.19. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/inuktitut-camp-toronto-practice-language-1.4764438>

### 4.3 Inuktitut in Other Regions in Ontario

Inuit in other regions of Ontario (notably North Bay, Guelph, and Arthur) noted that:

- A meeting place for Inuit should be identified (such as using Guelph as a meeting place for Inuit spread out in Arthur, Orangeville, and Kitchener);
- Inuit need Inuit-specific spaces, and cannot be lumped in with First Nations and Metis spaces and processes;
- Transportation should be provided to increase access to Inuktitut programming;
- There are large numbers of Sixties Scoop children interested in reclaiming their language;
- A multi-dialect approach should be adopted while maintaining high standards for communication; and
- Basic cultural orientation is needed for some learners.

### 5. Lessons from Other Jurisdictions

A summary of worldwide best practices for Indigenous language revival is provided by the First Peoples Council of Canada.<sup>52</sup> The overview contains the following best practices for Indigenous languages:

- **Mentor-Apprentice Programs:** One-on-one language immersion in which the speaker and learner interact in a mutual relationship for 300 hours per year;
- **Immersion Programming:** Immersion programming for 15 hours a week minimum for children from daycare to middle school. Other immersion models include recreation-based and summer intensive programs that are reinforced through the rest of the year;
- **Traditional and Cultural Programs:** This can include crafts, activities, harvesting, drumming, and sharing orally in public;
- **Community Resource Training:** Supporting speakers to become stronger, and teaching fluent speakers about language-teaching methods. Ideally, language teaching workshops or courses will give credit towards an eventual degree, and speakers will be able to obtain professional accreditation.<sup>53</sup> Linguistics, grammar, reading and writing in the target language can also be taught to speakers and the general population through workshops;
- **Community Collaboration:** Sharing information, resources, and programming among Indigenous language groups. This includes collaborative committees and workshops;
- **Community Research and Planning:** Community research and planning consists in establishing realistic goals for the future of the language. It can involve conducting surveys, questionnaires or community assessments, and preparing short- or long-term plans or strategies;

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<sup>52</sup> The First Peoples Council, "Language Revitalization Strategies". Accessed 02.07.19. [http://www.fpcc.ca/language/toolkit/Language\\_Revitalization\\_Strategies.aspx](http://www.fpcc.ca/language/toolkit/Language_Revitalization_Strategies.aspx)

<sup>53</sup> In BC, the University of Victoria has partnered with the En'okin Center in Penticton to grant a Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization.

- **Documentation of the Language:** Documentation may take the form of audio and/or visual recordings, or written transcription;
- **Curriculum Development:** A curriculum is a set of tools used to facilitate language instruction, and may include language exercises, games, drills, flash cards, CD-ROMs, audio cassettes, videos, teaching manuals, books, etc;
- **Orthography Development:** Orthography development includes the design, development, expansion or enhancement of a writing system that will be accepted and used by an Aboriginal language community;
- **Dictionary Development:** Dictionary Development includes the creation, expansion or enhancement of a language dictionary in either print or digital format; and
- **Online Language Tools:** Web-based tools and services can be offered to support Aboriginal people engaged in language archiving, learning and teaching.

Elements of all of the above have been used at one time or another in the Ontario programs, or informally by community members. All of these practices have shown to be valuable practices for Inuktitut in Ontario. A major issue arises, however, when Inuit and Inuktitut programs are grouped under an umbrella with First Nations and Metis. Shared space and collaboration need to be carefully designed by Inuit for comfortable and productive processes. Inuit-specific programming and approaches are essential for Inuit nationally,<sup>54</sup> and are a major issue for urban Inuit due to close proximity with other Indigenous groups.<sup>55</sup>

In general, a lack of consistent funding for Inuktitut language programming in Ontario has made it difficult to build on each area of success effectively. A major challenge for language training providers stems from the loss of momentum that occurs when a valued program is discontinued. While demand is always high for language programs, the overall level of achievement is less for the language learner if they need to regain what they learned months previously.

The Kitikmeot Inuit Association (Nunavut) offers the following overview of best practices they found from other jurisdictions (not including legislation and schools):<sup>56</sup>

- Nunavik [Arctic Quebec] promoting language use in the homes and communities through increased language awareness, community-based planning and a focus on youth, especially through the performing arts;
- Greenland focus on youth and the performing arts;

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<sup>54</sup> Inuit rejected the proposed National Indigenous Languages Bill because it did not provide Inuit-specific needs, see: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, "Inuit Express Disappointment with National Indigenous Languages Bill", 02.05.19. Accessed 02.06.19. <https://www.itk.ca/inuit-express-disappointment-with-national-indigenous-languages-bill/>

<sup>55</sup> Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre. "Nipiviut – Our Voices: A Community Needs Assessment for Inuit Families in Ottawa", June 2012, p. 41. Accessed 02.05.19 [http://www.ottawainuitchildrens.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/nipivut\\_eng.pdf](http://www.ottawainuitchildrens.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/nipivut_eng.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> RT Associates, "KIA Language Strategy", August, 2011, p.21.



## 7. Further reading

### Language

Dorais, Louis-Jacques, *Language of the Inuit: Syntax, Semantics, and Society in the Arctic*, Toronto: McGill-Queens University Press, 2010

### Methodology

McGrath, Janet Tamalik, *The Qaggiq Model: Towards a Theory of Inuktitut Knowledge Renewal*, Iqaluit, NU: Nunavut Arctic College Media, 2019

### Art Contributions

Inuit Art Foundation, “New Study Finds Value of Inuit Arts Economy” 07.07.17. Accessed 02.15.19. <http://iaq.inuitartfoundation.org/inuit-arts-economy/> (Note \$87.2 million contribution to the Canadian economy in 2015)

Spirit Wrestler Gallery, Artist Index, 2013, “Kenojuak Ashevak.” Accessed 02.15.19. [http://www.spiritwrestler.com/catalog/index.php?artists\\_id=86](http://www.spiritwrestler.com/catalog/index.php?artists_id=86)

Milroy, Sarah, “Remembering the Visionary Work of Kenojuak Ashevak”. *The Globe and Mail*, 01-12-13. Accessed 02.12.19. <https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/arts/art-and-architecture/remembering-the-visionary-work-of-kenojuak-ashevak/article7217235/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&>

### Internationally Acclaimed Films

*Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, Zach Kunnuk: Igloolik, NU, Isuma Productions, 2001 (included in Canada’s list of 150 top films of all time in 2017)

*Before Tomorrow*, Madeline Ivalu and Marie Helene Cousineau, Arnait Video Productions, 2008

### References to Literary Contributions

McGrath, Robin, *Canadian Inuit Literature: The Development of a Tradition*. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1984

Martin, Keavy, *Stories in a New Skin: Approaches to Inuit Literature*, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012

### Theatre Contributions

*Kiviuq Returns*, Qaggiavuut Society, as reviewed in News Deeply, “Canadian Inuit Theatre Troupe Breathes New Life into an Old Legend.” 02.22.17. Accessed 02.14.19.

<https://www.newsdeeply.com/arctic/articles/2017/06/22/canadian-inuit-theater-troupe-breathes-new-life-into-an-old-legend>

*The Breathing Hole*, directed by Arluk, Renelitta, as covered by CBC, “The Breathing Hole, Renelitta Arluk’s Directorial Debut at Stratford, opens tonight.” 08.28.17. Accessed 02.12.19. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/breathing-1.4251985>

Toronto Star, “Gasp at the Emotional Depth of the Breathing Hole at Stratford Festival” Review, 08.21.17. Accessed 02.09.19.  
<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/stage/2017/08/21/gasp-at-emotional-depth-of-breathing-hole-at-stratford-festival-review.html>

## **Appendix A: Researcher Biography**

Janet Tamalik McGrath is a strong Inuktitut language proponent and Inuktitut translator-teacher who lived in Ontario from 1989 to 2014 (25 years). She grew up fluent in Inuktitut as a child in Nunavut, and taught and translated in the North after high school from 1980-89. In her home community of Taloyoak, fluent children had to learn two different Inuktitut dialects in order to converse. Later she learned a third dialect while living in the Kivalliq (Aivilik) region as a teen. She co-taught Inuktitut courses beginning in 1980. In 1989 she moved to Ontario to attend Brock University, and upon completion she moved to the Ottawa valley in 1994. While in the Ottawa valley from the late 1990s to 2014, she provided training and mentorship for Inuktitut speakers to work as teachers, conducted workshops for youth, and ran immersion training courses as well as immersion courses. She also led a team that created a wide range of Inuktitut learning resources (such as board and card games, flash cards, workbooks, bilingual storybooks with CDs), and supported song writing and music video workshops for youth. In 2000/01 she developed and taught Carleton University's first Inuktitut course for credit. Her Master's thesis research was conducted entirely in Inuktitut with an Inuk elder mentor from her home region in Nunavut. Her PhD dissertation was defended in Inuktitut along with English (a first in Canada). Both graduate degrees were acquired while living and working as an Inuktitut professional in the Ottawa valley.

## Appendix B: Recommendations Based on the Researcher's Experience

In my experience, wherever Inuktitut is spoken across the Arctic and throughout urban spaces (whether highly fluent areas or areas at the level of endangerment), there is a consistent pattern: every highly fluent area has pockets of greater and lesser use, and every endangered area has pockets of strength. In endangered areas, the strength may be found in one or two speakers, or one or two families: this can be the point of growth. In the areas of strength, where there are pockets of lesser use, this trend can also grow – to the detriment of the health of the language.

A well-founded strategy for language revitalization involves a closer look at the areas of the strength and vitality of Inuktitut and the areas where it is least used, but valued. With an understanding of the statistics for this (and it will vary widely across Ontario, and across Inuit homelands), the areas of strength can be strategically engaged to support areas of less use or skill, and *areas of strength thereby also grow*. This principle is fundamental to all improvements on language health indicators that I have seen over my entire career, forty years of observation. A first step for a strategy, which is often missed or overlooked, is a very clear picture of how Inuktitut is currently used, by whom, where – by dialect, age, gender, education and level of language ability. General statistics such as the Statistics Canada census are not helpful, except for general purposes. Funding a statistics project that obtains enough detail would help the rest of the strategy, both in terms of targeted impacts and accurately measuring outcomes of initiatives.

As well, another key is the understanding of how bridging and connecting can work among all sectors. Generations require bridging, as do high levels of proficiency and low levels, and they require opportunities for networking and forging relationships. Bridges are to be made between oral and written, and among various sectors such as education, commerce, health, government, NGO's, non-profits, elders' groups, youth initiatives, etc. Networking and bridging strategies are key to long-term sustainability in every case I've observed. Without them, initiatives can only have limited impact. A clear strategy for both bridging and networking needs to be a part of the development of any long-term language initiative that aims at having an impact of full fluency. This can begin with an inventory of possible links, followed by reaching out to those departments, organizations, and groups. Ongoing bridging and networking opportunities can be built in to the way forward, for example through newsletters and gatherings.

## Appendix C: Preliminary Ideas for an Inuktitut Immersion Centre in Ottawa

Based on my knowledge as an Inuktitut/Inuktit language professional, I believe an Inuktitut immersion program in a dedicated school is needed. With this, a well-designed Inuktitut teacher certification program is required, and a core support group designed. The language instructor certification program would be designed by Inuit with criteria that meets their standards and reflects their values and pedagogies. The Inuktitut Centre could be similar to the Mohawk immersion school in Kahnawà:ke. If Inuktitut learners could attend a program like that and become fluent, they could then teach Inuktitut courses in schools, build up the Inuktitut use within the community, and travel to regions of Ontario to provide training, gathering and animating.

The Inuktitut Immersion Centre would ideally be under the auspices of TI, which is an administrative and programs and services hub for urban Inuit in Ontario. Although it could form part of TI, the Immersion Centre would be solely devoted to the Inuktitut language in Ontario. It could be linked to similar agencies located in Arctic Canada, Alaska and Greenland. It would represent the needs and voices of urban Inuit in Ontario for strong Inuktitut language, and foster safety and support for learners while reflecting the great love for Inuit language that speakers carry, wherever they live. Local research methodologies would be developed and Inuit youth would be employed and mentored in language research, curriculum design and multimedia platforms. Local universities (Carleton University and the University of Ottawa), as well as Nunavut Sivuniksavut College, could be partnered with but the research would be community-driven.

Because the big picture and ultimate goal is turning beginners into proficient speakers, each aspect of the work would need to be tailored and evaluated against *that* goal. The Inuktitut Immersion Centre would be similar to the Clyde River cultural school in Nunavut (Piqqusilirivvik),<sup>57</sup> but its emphasis would be on language. Inuit language professionals would be on par with any other professional. There would be a land skills and survival component based on the land area around Ottawa. Day and camping trips to Algonquin Park would be part of the land skills component, and conducted entirely in Inuktitut. Students would get to attend a land trip once a certain level of functionality and proficiency is acquired. The land-based program would take into account the seasons (such as the berry season). Students would engage in creative projects after outings to contribute to a growing library of multimedia on each theme.

A Core Group would be fluent in Inuktitut (or with some individuals who are near-fluent and willing to work in immersion with other speakers). Core Group members would include: Elder Mentors, a Curriculum Specialist, a Creative Director, a Men's Language & Crafts Coordinator, a Women's Language & Crafts Coordinator, Youth Animators, Inuit Researchers, Language Proponents, and Drivers and Builders. Associate members of all walks of life, backgrounds and language abilities would be welcome as associates to grow the idea, and would work to learn, promote and support Inuktitut in Ontario.

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<sup>57</sup> See: <https://www.arcticcollege.ca/piqqusilirivvik>