

# IMPROVING ACCESS TO UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN THE CANADIAN ARCTIC:

LEARNING FROM PAST  
EXPERIENCES AND  
LISTENING TO INUIT  
STUDENT EXPERIENCES

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Workshop held at  
Kativik School Board Office  
Kuujuuaq, Nunavik  
November 23, 2011

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NORTHERN  
SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
CHAIR

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## SUMMARY

This report is about the workshop held in Kuujjuaq on November 23, 2011 on improving access to postsecondary education in the Canadian Arctic. Discussion focused on the experiences of Northern stakeholders, college administrators, and instructors involved in Arctic postsecondary education and training. Workshop participants discussed four topics: (i) challenges of postsecondary education, (ii) conditions for success among postsecondary students, (iii) factors in the sustainability of postsecondary programs, and (iv) creation of a Northern university.

Workshop participants identified four challenges of postsecondary education:

- Leaving the North and/or living away from home;
- Adapting to a new environment;
- Adapting to high language standards;
- Overcoming institutional racism.

They also identified four conditions for success among postsecondary students:

- Success should not be understood only in terms of academic success;
- Students need a strong culture and sense of identity;
- Students need a strong social network;
- Students need role models.

They identified six ways to ensure program sustainability:

- “Inuitize” design and delivery of postsecondary education programs;
- Survey the job market;
- Reach regional consensus;
- Convince Inuit students and their parents of the importance of education;
- Secure appropriate funding;
- Carry out regular program and teacher evaluations.

Finally, workshop participants discussed the importance of having a university in the Canadian Arctic. They all agreed that a Northern university would do much to ensure the success of Inuit students and program sustainability. They said it should not be affiliated with a Southern institution, so that its design could embody Inuit values. Some said it ought to be open to non-Inuit students, thus making it a Northern university and not an Inuit university. Some expressed a wish that it be decentralized and located in its own building.

## INTRODUCTION

This workshop and the discussion about improving access to university education in the Canadian North was funded by ArcticNet Centre of Excellence (<http://www.arcticnet.ulaval.ca/>) as part of the research project *Improving access to university education in the Canadian Arctic: Learning from past experiences and listening to the Inuit students experiences*. This project involves researchers from Université Laval (Thierry Rodon and Frédéric Laugrand), Carleton University (Frances Abele), and the University of Prince Edward Island (Fiona Walton), in partnership with Nunavut Arctic College and Nunavut Sivuniksavut. This workshop was the second of its kind.

The first one was held in Ottawa on March 1, 2011 and dealt with the experiences of Inuit students in Southern postsecondary programs.

This second workshop was held in Kuujjuaq on November 23, 2011. It provided an opportunity to present the findings from the Inuit Student Survey and to discuss how to increase postsecondary access for Inuit students, by focusing on the experience of Northern institutions and on possible models for a Northern university. The discussions are summarized herein. We hope this document will help everyone better understand how access might be improved for Inuit students in their respective institutions and communities, as well as in Inuit Nunangat.

For more information about the workshop or the project, please contact:

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## ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document reports the discussions and suggestions that came out of the Kuujuuaq workshop held on November 23, 2011. It is available to all participants and to those who were unable to come to that “all together” working day. It is not a public document but may be given to any individuals, agencies, or institutions that could benefit.

The topics were: (i) challenges of postsecondary education, (ii) conditions for success among postsecondary students, (iii) ways to ensure sustainability of postsecondary programs, and (iv) creation of a Northern university.

This report presents a rethinking of access to postsecondary education. The reader should not take it as the last word but rather as a stepping-stone toward better access to postsecondary education in the Canadian Arctic.



## BACKGROUND AND PARTICIPANTS

Thierry Rodon opened the workshop with a brief discussion about its relevance for the project *Improving access to university education in the Canadian Arctic: Learning from past experiences and listening to the Inuit students experiences* and for Inuit students and Northern institutions from all four Inuit regions.

Thierry Rodon also explained that the workshop was being held in Nunavik because it was deemed important to focus on a region that has no college or postsecondary access.

### Participants



**Thierry Rodon** is a professor in the Political Science Department of Université Laval. He has also taught at Nunavut Sivuniksavut for the Nunavut Public Service Certificate. He is the principal investigator of the ArcticNet project: *Improving access to university education in the Canadian Arctic: Learning from past experiences and listening to the Inuit students experiences*



**Fiona Walton** is a professor in the Faculty of Education of the University of Prince Edward Island, where she has been coordinating the Master of Education program. The program has produced 21 graduates, and 19 students are currently registered. She has also been an academic coach for postsecondary students. She said she felt heartened by the presence at the workshop of people she knew when they were in high school, like Susan Enuaraq.



**Darlene O'Leary** is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Prince Edward Island. She is examining the performance of master's students, with a view to identifying gaps that need to be filled. She is also working on the CURA project *Inuit Leadership and Governance in Nunavut and Nunavik*.



**Paul Khatchadourian** is the Director of the Kativik School Board. He administers the sponsorship program for Nunavik. The program provides support services, counselling in high school and beyond when students arrive in Montreal, and academic support to help students make the transition from the North to the South. The program sponsors fifty to sixty students per year. He said that the idea of delivering

postsecondary programs in the region has been a topic of ongoing discussion. It is interesting to see where these discussions will go.



**Pam Gross** has been living in Ottawa for the last six years. She is a former Nunavut Sivuniksavut student. She was admitted to Carleton University through its Aboriginal Enriched Support Program. At Carleton, she is doing a major in anthropology with a minor in Aboriginal Studies.



**Teevi Mackay** is from Iqaluit. She is taking journalism at Carleton. She has been working on a short film titled *Day in the life of an Inuk on campus* and writing a story about this experience.



**Jobie Tukkiapik** was at the time of the workshop Director General of the Kativik Government and is now the President of Makivik Corporation. He is interested in postsecondary education and would like to bring education closer to the people in the communities. He has a daughter in high school. Her aim is to go as far as she can. He said it was important for the Inuit to empower themselves to take Northern jobs and the responsibilities of governing the North.



**Elias Moukanas** is the Director of Education Services and Curriculum Development for elementary and secondary students of the Kativik School Board. He is trying to prepare Inuit students so that they can have better access to postsecondary education. He has worked on teacher training to increase the rate of teacher certification and has taken part in ongoing conversations about the creation of a college in Nunavik.



**Réjean Gascon** works for the Kativik School Board. He mentions that Nunavik has adults who would like to get on to the job market, so there is a need for vocational and technical training in the North.



**Mary Joanne Kauki** sits on the Kuujjuaq municipal council. Education is dear to her heart and she would like to see a university in the North. She has a Bachelor in Education from McGill and is in her final year of the part-time Master of Education (Nunavut) at the University of Prince Edward Island and is looking forward to her graduation in the Spring of 2013.



**Madeleine Redfern** is a graduate of Akitsiraq Law School. She is now the Mayor of Iqaluit. She is interested and involved in education issues. She is also a critic and advocate of education issues.



**Susan Enuaraq** is a graduate of Akitsiraq Law School as well as the Inuit studies program at Nunavut Arctic College. She practised law for five years and is now a senior instructor at Nunavut Arctic College. Being a mother is her priority. Her two kids will soon be of university age and she is worried about the opportunities available to them.



**Margaret Gauvin** is the Director of the Sustainable Employment Department of the Kativik Regional Government. The department has a mandate to employ people and gives priority to youth for two simple reasons. They are a big part of the population, and their educational level is not improving. Few people manage to go to university and most students do not finish high school. The outcome is economic dependence. For her, the key is basic skills training and upgrading. She said the department is having trouble helping people gain access to the kind of careers that they would like to have.



**Janice Grey** is a Nunavut Sivuniksavut graduate. She had previously studied at John Abbott but did not graduate.



**Erin Strachan** is a Carleton Alumni with a Master's Degree in Canadian Studies. Since graduation, she has been developing a course and delivering workshops on the topic of cultural diversity at local community colleges and community organizations and has worked at the Aboriginal Enriched Support Program (AESP) of Carleton University. She was part of the ArcticNet research team for the project Improving Access to University Education in the Canadian Arctic and is now a special project coordinator at Pauktuutit.



**Harriet Keleutak** is the Secretary General of the Kativik School Board. She manages the Education Councils and organizes the Commissioners and Executive Committee meetings for which she writes minutes. She is also responsible of the translation department and reception staff and she serves as Director of the Inuit and Cultural Affairs.



## THEMES OF DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Presentation of Preliminary Results

Before the discussion, Thierry Rodon provided the workshop participants with data collected by the project team and preliminary results.

He also presented the website project, which will aim to offer:

- Practical information to Inuit students (where programs can be found, where funding is available, etc.);
- Advice and testimonials about postsecondary experience, and;
- Networking functions (providing students with an opportunity to learn directly from their peers as they explore viable career options).

The website will also facilitate networking by Inuit with past and present postsecondary students. Students from different regions will be able to connect with each other.

### 4.2 Personal Challenges and Successes

Participants were asked to share their views on the challenges faced by Inuit postsecondary students and the conditions for postsecondary success.

#### *4.2.1 Challenges Facing Inuit Students*

Participants identified several challenges of postsecondary education:

##### **Leaving the North / Living Away from Home**

There is no Arctic university in Canada, only a few postsecondary programs available in the North, and no coordination of ad hoc postsecondary initiatives. As a result, many students must leave Nunavut and Nunavik to pursue postsecondary education. Others may wish to attend a program at Nunavut Arctic College and consequently be compelled to leave their communities for larger centres like Iqaluit, Cambridge Bay, and Rankin Inlet. Thus, most workshop participants saw the main challenges of postsecondary education as having to leave home, relatives, and support networks.

Margaret Gauvin stressed that for many individuals, even those with high school degrees, leaving home to pursue postsecondary education is extremely difficult because it means leaving family members behind. Potential postsecondary students often have children of their own, take care of relatives or, as Madeleine Redfern highlighted, benefit from the support of their families while at home. Pursuing postsecondary education means abandoning the people who currently depend on you for support or, conversely, abandoning the support that you currently receive from other people. Therefore, many choose not to pursue postsecondary education.



Participants pointed to another challenge faced by many Inuit postsecondary students: the high costs of living away from home. This is especially true when a student quits a job in order to take a program. Some participants noted that financial assistance is not always available or sufficient to make ends meet.

### Adapting to a New Environment



Participants noted that once students decide to move out of their own home communities in Nunavik or Nunavut to a city down south like Ottawa or Montreal, or to a larger centre like Iqaluit or Kuujuuaq, they face a number of challenges. Among them is learning to live a new way of life in an unfamiliar environment. This challenge is combined with that of meeting the requirements of their academic program. Deprived of their support network, unable to speak their mother tongue, and no longer living according to their own cultural values, many Inuit students find it challenging to overcome loneliness and succeed in their postsecondary programs.

### Adapting to High Language Standards



Interestingly, very few workshop participants felt it challenging to adapt to southern curricula. This challenge had nonetheless been identified as an important one by the students who responded to the surveys of the project *Improving Access to University Education in the Canadian Arctic*. But during the workshop—and apart from one participant who said that the high language standards of postsecondary programs can be challenging to many students—participants mostly talked about the challenges of moving away from home instead of course curricula problems.

### Overcoming Institutional Racism

Some participants mentioned that one of the main challenges facing Inuit students was the implicit institutional racism they face every day. Susan Enuaraq said that as soon as she started going to school she was taught to look at her parents with

disdain and was made to feel dumb by teachers. Although things have improved, she claims there is still a lot of implicit racism in the system. For example, Inuit are made to believe they are incapable of learning or conform, which is not true. She says that a big part of her job is to help students overcome this belief by telling them they are able to learn in the education system although many have been made to believe otherwise. Mary Joanne Kauki said that racism in the education system was *“invisible but so visible it hurts.”* Racism is not something Inuit have to face only in the education system. When Inuit go down South for postsecondary education, they also have to face racism in the city, according to Teevi Mackay.

#### 4.2.2 Conditions for Success of Inuit Students

There was much discussion about postsecondary success and the conditions for success. The topics covered a broad area, ranging from the definition of success itself to the importance of developing a strong culture and identity and having positive examples to draw on. Here is a summary of the discussion with key points and comments.

##### Defining Success

Workshop participants stated that the level of success enjoyed by postsecondary students depends on how success itself is defined. If the definition is restricted to the graduation rate, the number of successful Inuit becomes extremely limited. If the definition is broadened to include Inuit who have never finished their postsecondary programs but nevertheless enjoy a great amount of personal or professional success, the number of successful Inuit increases.

Harriet Keleutak pointed out that the system considers some Inuit to be failures even when they are not. She gives the example of Nunavik Inuit students who study French but have trouble speaking, reading, or writing it. Although many of them are fluent in Inuktitut and English and have a working understanding of French, the system labels them as failures because they do not master all three languages.

Madeleine Redfern also wondered why success requires getting work in one's field of study. She said people look very narrowly at the issue and should take a broader view. Success should be seen as a progression. She illustrated her argument by giving her own example. At 21, she was a store clerk. Later, she became a lawyer and was elected mayor of Iqaluit. Although she started postsecondary studies late and is not working in her field of study, she has attained a certain level of professional success.

Pam Gross added that the kind of education one gets should not matter in the end. What is really important about postsecondary education is that it opens doors and gives limitless options to choose from.

There was thus a consensus that success should not be defined only in terms of academic success. Students can be considered successful even if they fail to complete their postsecondary programs, start such programs later in life, or work in a field that is unrelated to their field of study.

### Strong Culture and Identity: Empowerment and Success

Workshop participants identified having a strong culture and identity as key to the success of Inuit students in postsecondary programs.

Harriet Keleutak aptly said that Inuit children, whether born in Nunavik, in Nunavut, or in the South, will succeed in school only if they have a sense of their own identity and culture:

*Even when Inuit children are educated down South, if they don't have their identity, they still don't do well in school. If they don't know their culture, they will struggle in school and in life as well. Once they find out who they are they can start moving. The most important thing is to know your roots. Without knowing that, not much can be done. In order to be successful, you have to know where you are from. We succeed in many ways in life based on the knowledge of the people from our regions. We have our own language. We value our traditions and culture.*

In other words, with a strong sense of who they are and where they are from, students gain confidence in their ability to succeed. This is particularly important, since, during formal education, “students are expected to conform and not be free thinkers” (Mary Joanne Kauki). To “break away from the idea that education is about conformity,” is how Susan Enuaraq put it. Having a strong culture and identity helps students realize they have the ability to think by themselves, on their own terms.

Susan Enuaraq also highlighted that having a strong sense of culture and identity can help students realize they have been educating themselves on their own terms for many years before their postsecondary education. Many students think of themselves as incapable of studying in the formal education system because many—especially those who have stopped studying for several years—do not think they can learn. When they realize they have been learning their own culture for years, they gain enough confidence to pursue formal education.





Therefore, a strong culture and identity will empower students and increase their likelihood of success.

### Strong Network

Workshop participants agreed that having a strong social network while taking a postsecondary program is key to success. Often, the network is made of Inuit and other Indigenous peoples who are part of the same cohort, i.e., who started their program at the same time and who plan to finish at the same time as well.

Inuit students seem to have more success when studying in programs or institutions that have larger populations of Inuit students (like Nunavut Sivuniksavut and Carleton, for example) and also when they remain in the same cohort of Inuit or other Indigenous people.

Participants identified a number of reasons why a strong network is so important:

- Susan Enuaraq suggested that one reason might be because a different culture is less likely to impact a larger group of Inuit than a lonely individual;
- Mary Joanne Kauki and Pam Gross said that one benefit of being part of a cohort of Inuit students was the possibility of building relationships with people who were having similar experiences. Students need to realize they are not alone in feeling homesick or in having troubles dealing with their new environment. They also need each other's support. Pam Gross pointed out that Inuit could benefit not only from the support of other Inuit but also from the support of other Indigenous people as well, as they are all going through similar experiences;
- Having the possibility of building a strong network also allows students to speak their own language. This is an important source of support for many students who are studying in their second or third language;
- Having the possibility of building a strong network also allows students to live according to their own cultural values. This cultural self-reliance increases their sense of identity and gives them confidence in who they are and what they can do;
- Madeleine Redfern mentioned that having a strong network allows students to have study partners. This factor is extremely important since many students

are parents, do not have access to childcare facilities and, for this reason, have little time to prepare for exams.

Some participants also said that one reason why they chose a program or a specific institution was because their friends were going there or because they knew other Inuit were attending.

### Having Access to and Following Role Models

Workshop participants also agreed that students who had access, in real life or on-line, to role models—that is, people who have succeeded as postsecondary students in their life and in their work—tended to succeed more. Not only do such people set an example and demonstrate that success is achievable, but at the same time they can also provide support, advice, or guidance.

However, Jobie Tukkiapik gave a warning: *“When you’re talking about education and role models, if it doesn’t start at the house or home, it is very limited. If it doesn’t start from there then it is a huge uphill battle.”* Thus, role models should come not only from outside the home, but also from the home environment itself. Relatives should encourage students and themselves to be role models, even if they have never been to school. To promote early exposure to positive role models, Margaret Gauvin proposed that childcare centres be staffed with good educators.

Finding role models is often easier said than done. Many students have no role models to follow, at home, at school, or at work. This is the value of having a website (see above) that presents encouraging quotes from students, videos of interviews with past and current students, and a forum where students can share experiences.



### *4.2.3 Personal Challenges and Successes: Conclusion*

Workshop participants identified three main challenges of postsecondary education:

- Leaving the North and/or living away from home;
- Adapting to a new environment;
- Adapting to high language standards.
- Overcoming institutional racism

They also identified four conditions for success among postsecondary students:

- Success should not be understood only in terms of academic success;
- Students need a strong culture and sense of identity;
- Students need a strong network;
- Students need role models.

The discussion showed that postsecondary education is an all-encompassing experience for many. By deciding to pursue postsecondary education, Inuit students have to leave home, learn to live in new environments, new languages, and new cultures, establish a support network, find new role models, and be confident in themselves not only as persons but also as Inuit. These challenges are not the only ones they face. They also have to deal with the implicit racism of the school system, and high program standards. This is not an easy task when one's life is going through so much change.

## **4.3 Program Design and Delivery: Challenges, Successes, and Sustainability**

### *4.3.1 Ensuring Program Sustainability*

It is a complex task at best to ensure the sustainability of programs available to Inuit in the North and in the South. Although success stories exist (i.e., Nunavut Sivuniksavut, Teacher Education Program, etc.), it is complicated for Inuit to develop, design, and deliver their own sustainable programs. Workshop participants were questioned about ways to ensure sustainability of postsecondary programs for Inuit students in the North and in the South. They identified six ways, which are summarized here. We should first mention that these ways are not independent of each other. They are all somehow interrelated.

## “Inuitization” of Design and Delivery of Postsecondary Education Programs

Participants agreed that the Inuit themselves should design and deliver programs for their people in the North and in the South, and not national, provincial, or territorial bureaucrats or academics based in Southern universities.

The main reason why this is important, according to Margaret Gauvin, is that *“public government policy does not recognize barriers like language. Our way of being is not recognized. Policies are made to fit the mainstream of Canada.”* Susan Enuaraq pointed out, *“When mainstream ways of doing things are imposed it generally doesn’t work out well.”* In short, mainstream education does not work well with Inuit because it is designed to fit the broader Canadian society.

This situation calls for “Inuitization” of education policies. This term—used during the workshop by Madeleine Redfern (who also used “Nunavutized”)—means that public educational policies, program design, and program delivery must reflect Inuit needs, desires, cultures, and language. But how can education be Inuitized?

First, Susan Enuaraq pointed out that the Inuit must believe in their capacity to build strong programs and then convince *“the ones who have the strings”* that it is a good idea to let them, the Inuit, design and deliver programs. *“People tend to look at educating First Peoples as a top-down thing,”* she says. *“Instead, let’s look at Inuit as equal.”* The Inuit could thus design and deliver strong Inuitized programs and become self-sufficient. Second, participants noted throughout the workshop that programs should reflect Inuit needs and desires. In other words, they must be culturally relevant, taught in the language chosen by the students, and flexible. Mary Joanne Kauki mentioned that flexibility and informality rather than rigidity should be favoured in design of postsecondary programs for Inuit students. She suggested that a good way would be to build on existing strengths by designing and delivering programs in areas where Inuit already have leadership and expertise. Margaret Gauvin agreed and proposed that programs be designed around the competency of Inuit students rather than the other way around. She said that Inuit should be working with CEGEPs to design the kind of courses they, the Inuit, want.

Madeleine Redfern illustrated the importance of Inuitizing program design and delivery by giving the example of Akitsiraq Law School. She said that the fact *“it was in Iqaluit was a success. Plus, professors Nunavutized, Inuitized the material. One professor spent all of her own time learning about our culture, knowledge, land claims, legislation. We got a sense of Western property law and our own. The co-op program made it more successful. We got work experience. It also made a big difference having an elder with us.”*



## Job Market Survey

There is another way to favour the sustainability of programs designed for and delivered to Inuit in the North and in the South: better knowledge of job market needs in the North. Participants, including Mary Joanne Kauki and Margaret Gauvin, felt that education programs were not always on a par with community needs. Mary Joanne Kauki mentioned that one way of surveying the job market could be to compare the needs of beneficiaries with those of non-beneficiaries.



Once the needs of the job market have been identified, programs could be designed to meet those needs. This way, students would have more opportunities to work in the field they have studied in. They would benefit from proper training for a rewarding job, and society as a whole would likewise benefit from their experience and expertise. For example, Madeleine Redfern mentioned that only four of the Inuit who had graduated from Akitsiraq Law School were now lawyers. This record does not mean the program has been a failure. Madeleine Redfern is a graduate of that school and has never practised law, yet she has enjoyed a highly successful public career in Nunavut. It may simply be that needs have not been correctly assessed. Margaret Gauvin and Mary Joanne Kauki also proposed that postsecondary education should be made mandatory for new positions in the public administrations of Nunavik and Nunavut.

## Regional Consensus

Workshop participants mentioned that one of the main conditions for program sustainability in the North was regional consensus on education policies and programs. Mary Joanne Kauki and Susan Enuaraq mentioned that Inuit organizations, governments (regional, territorial, provincial, and federal), professions, and local Inuit populations must work together to lay the foundations of a consensus that would make it possible to establish goals and guidelines to design, deliver, and fund postsecondary programs.

## Convincing Students and Parents of the Importance of Education

Several participants noted that convincing the local Inuit populations of Nunavut and Nunavik of the importance of postsecondary education might be one of the biggest challenges in reaching the aforementioned consensus. As Harriet Keleutak mentioned, *“I think we have a lot of lobbying to do to promote higher learning education among the parents.”*

Many Inuit are sceptical about postsecondary education. First, as Harriet Keleutak highlighted again, many parents have never left their communities. She said that it is challenging *“for them to want to open their doors to elsewhere. How do I let those people want to go beyond? A lot of our children have been fortunate to leave to train. We have a vocational centre on Hudson coast but not a lot of people from Ungava go to it. It’s complicated. We have to think of the children whose parents never leave the communities.”*

Young Inuit themselves are sceptical about education. Mary Joanne Kauki mentioned that younger Inuit do not believe they have the capacity for success in postsecondary programs. She claimed that the idea of being less capable, lower-class citizens was entrenched in many young Inuit. To be part of the consensus, they have to be encouraged and made to believe they can also succeed.

Both younger and older Inuit also have to stop thinking the current system is similar to the residential school system, according to Jobie Tukkiapik. He said that an effort needs to be made to *“differentiate between residential school and education”* because Inuit think *“all education is bad.”* Once they are convinced postsecondary education is beneficial, they will register in these programs, and program sustainability will benefit from a larger numbers of students. Funding will likewise be facilitated.

### Funding

Proper funding is needed to ensure sustainability of postsecondary programs designed for and by Inuit in the North and in the South. Such funding, however, is extremely problematic, according to the participants.

First, many postsecondary programs do not receive recurrent and sustained funding. The people in charge (teachers, academics, etc.) thus need to find funds every year. As a result, program sustainability suffers because teachers have less time for actual delivery of the program and because students are unsure whether they will be able to finish the program.

Second, the amount of funding is inadequate. Often, as Susan Enuaraq claimed, there are not enough funds to design and deliver programs that will ensure the success of the Inuit students. Yet, as she and Pam Gross noted, funding should not be a factor in Northern education. As Susan Enuaraq said: *“the successful models haven’t been seen as being very expensive.”* She also wondered: *“it always rattles me when people value monetary factors rather than success factors. What is the value of educating Inuit students? We have a territorial government funding primary and*

*secondary schools. The federal government is supposedly funding postsecondary education. Yet there is a big gap in those two standards.”*

One solution would be to give Northern Institutions the control of postsecondary education funding. Currently, the federal government funds postsecondary education for Nunavut Inuit, and the Quebec government does the same for Quebec Inuit. The Inuit themselves do not control allocation of funding. The programs are thus extremely vulnerable.

### Evaluation of Teachers and Programs

Another important way to ensure program sustainability is to evaluate programs and teachers on a regular basis. The teachers' values should correspond to those of the Inuit, and their teaching skills should enable their Inuit students to succeed professionally and personally. Margaret Gauvin mentioned that the teachers, who are mostly Qallunaat, should have the right attitude, be positive about their jobs, and be evaluated regularly. Susan Enuaraq and Madeleine Redfern then provided the example of the teachers they had at Akitsiraq Law School, who were dedicated, supportive, and happy to be there.

#### *4.3.2 Program Design and Delivery: Conclusions*

As we have seen, it is a challenge to ensure the sustainability of programs available to Inuit in the North and in the South. Although there have been, over the years, examples of successful and sustainable programs, the challenges are numerous. Workshop participants identified six ways to ensure program sustainability:

- Inuitize design and delivery of postsecondary education programs;
- Survey the job market;
- Reach regional consensus;
- Convince Inuit students and their parents of the importance of education;
- Secure appropriate funding;
- Carry out regular program and teacher evaluations.

The discussion showed that program sustainability is possible, yet extremely challenging because it involves giving the Inuit most of the decision-making power over program design and delivery. This is easier said than done. Even if Northern regions reach a consensus on postsecondary education, the postsecondary programs will be delivered to Inuit by non-Inuit authorities (mainly the federal and Quebec govern-

ments). They will have the ultimate power to adhere or not to the principles of the consensus. First and foremost, authorities need to be convinced of the importance of having strong postsecondary programs and institutions that reflect the needs and values of Inuit and Northerners and deliver relevant programs that will ensure the professional and personal success of Inuit students. One way might be the creation of a Northern university that would centralize the efforts of designing and delivering programs to the Inuit.



#### 4.4 A University for the Arctic: Necessity, Models and Actions

Canada being the only country without a university north of 60, workshop participants were asked to discuss the importance of having a university in the Canadian Arctic. All of them agreed that such a university would be a fantastic asset for the population of the area and some even mentioned it was one of their dreams to have one. Participants discussed how they envisioned a Northern university, why it was important for them, and what challenges lay ahead in creating one. Many of the participants' points were consistent with the preceding discussions, and participants clearly viewed a university of the North as a way to help students meet the challenges of pursuing postsecondary education, as well as a means to ensure the success and sustainability of postsecondary programs designed by and delivered to Inuit.



Most participants mentioned that this university should be created by Northerners and serve Northerners. Teevi Mackay said for example that she imagined the university would be *“modelled after the culture of the Inuit, that is, more Inuit-centred. Not designed after Southern models but our own model that we designed.”* Susan Enuaraq added that it would be important for it to be a Northern university, and not an Inuit university because *“we don't want to reproduce assimilation.”* She envisioned a university *“that has no affiliation with Southern universities”* and asked, *“Why do we always have to follow Southern universities? We have to be able to be able.”* For her, having Inuit design and deliver programs is extremely relevant since *“at the end of the day. We're talking about my kids. We have to look at it with an eye to equality. Not with an up-down. I do not want my kids to experience that.”*



Fiona Walton said that a university in the North should reflect Inuit values and focus on teaching courses that integrate content that is relevant to the context. *“When the cultural school was started in Clyde River it refused to have any affiliations with any accredited institutions.”* The challenge, according to her, is that this would require *“people with vision to design something that will carry the Inuit values and institutions.”* This is important however since *“you cannot run an Inuit university with all Qallunaat or you are just going to create another colonizing institution.”*



For Margaret Gauvin, the real advantage is that such a university would be designed in more appropriate ways and would deal with the difficulties of Northern living.

Participants also mentioned that a Northern university might be relevant for Southern students, researchers, and professors. Madeleine Redfern mentioned that having a university in the North would *“bring southerners who are studying the North to actually live in the North.”* She said she saw *“immense value in seeing students that are studying Inuit being educated in a Northern university. It allows our community to see questionable curriculums. But it would also be worthwhile having people learn about the North while they live in the North”* since, she said, *“people who go to university end up making policy decisions.”* So this university would not only offer Northern and Southern students alike *“great intercultural opportunities,”* but also design policies that would *“more likely be relevant for Northerners.”*

Participants were also questioned about the physical location. Margaret Gauvin said she would prefer having different campuses in different communities to a single campus in a larger town. She also mentioned the importance of having a physical building that kids could see and wish to attend in the future. She also said she thought a building would encourage more people to finish their postsecondary education.

Pam Gross also said having a building in the North was something important. She added that as useful as online learning was for many Inuit, it was not sufficient because it does not work for everyone. Being in class with classmates and an instructor is important to achieving success. Mary Joanne Kauki mentioned that it would be nice to see a campus and to have the opportunity to access a library.

Thierry Rodon said that we tend to associate universities with buildings and that we should instead think of them as people working together to achieve similar goals. Although a building would be nice, the actual process of getting one built would be extremely difficult and expensive. He said it was better to start with strong programs than with a building. Once the programs are up and running, we could turn around and ask for funds to build a building. On the same topic, Madeleine Redfern added that it is better to start off small but offer quality programs. After a while, the university would gain prestige and students would want to come for a lifetime opportunity.

Four programs were discussed during the workshop. All four have been successful. Below is a short description of each program followed by a brief explanation of its success over the years.

| <b>NUNAVUT MASTER OF EDUCATION - UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND</b> |  |
|---|--|
| DESCRIPTION   | The Nunavut MEd is offered by UPEI in partnership with the Nunavut Department of Education to Inuit educators who hold BEd degrees. It is a blended program with ten courses completed over a period of three years on a part-time basis. Courses are offered face-to-face in Iqaluit or Rankin Inlet with distance elements and one course in each year is offered entirely by distance. The MEd is collaboratively planned to be a decolonizing, bilingual and bi-cultural program with Inuit co-instructors who are UPEI graduates holding MEd degrees bringing an Inuit perspective and ethos into the courses. Elders are involved in face-to-face courses. |
| WHY IS IT SUCCESSFUL?   | Participants can continue to live and work in their home communities and support their families and communities while they complete the degree. Some of the research projects take place in the community raising local awareness and understanding of the research process. The integration of Inuit knowledge and the presence of Elders and Inuit instructors helps to make the courses relevant and meaningful for the participants.   |

| <b>NUNAVUT TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM</b> |   |
|--|---|
| DESCRIPTION                              | The NTEP is offered to Nunavut Inuit in Iqaluit through Nunavut Arctic College in partnership with the University of Regina. It offers the possibility of working, in Inuktitut, toward a certificate or a degree in education (B.Ed). Following the courses, training is offered at the community level. Students can stay in their communities and do the training in the school where they will be teaching. |
| WHY IS IT SUCCESSFUL?                    | Students study in Inuktitut, do not have to leave the Arctic to study, and can train in their own communities.  |

| <b>AKITSIRAQ LAW SCHOOL</b> |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| DESCRIPTION                 | ALS is a four-year program that leads to a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B) and is based in Iqaluit, Nunavut. Akitsiraq I (2001-2005) was a partnership between the Faculty of Law at the University of Victoria, Nunavut Arctic College, and the Akitsiraq Law School Society. Akitsiraq II (2011) has been announced by the parent society in conjunction with the University of Ottawa Law Faculty, using infrastructure and support from Nunavut Arctic College. Akitsiraq Law School focuses on the practical abilities of potential students, as shown by life experience and work history. |
| WHY IS IT SUCCESSFUL?       | Since the program was offered in Iqaluit, students did not have to leave the Arctic. Akitsiraq also operated on a cohort model, with the result that students could form strong supportive units. Professors showed commitment and adapted the material to Inuit and Nunavut realities.  |

| <b>NUNAVUT SIVUNIKSAVUT TRAINING PROGRAM</b> |   |
|--|---|
| DESCRIPTION                                  | NS is an 8-month accredited college program, affiliated with Algonquin College in Ottawa. It has been designed for Nunavut Inuit students who want to prepare for educational, training, and career opportunities that are being created by the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) and the new Government of Nunavut. Students learn about Inuit history, organizations, land claims, and other issues relevant to their future careers in Nunavut. |
| WHY IS IT SUCCESSFUL?                        | Set in Ottawa, the program operates on a cohort model, so students can support each other. The program curriculum is also meaningful to Inuit students.   |

## CONCLUSION

This workshop had an open discussion about the challenges of postsecondary education, the conditions needed to promote success among postsecondary students, the ways to ensure sustainability of postsecondary programs, and the creation of a Northern university. Participants shared experiences, successes, and challenges and presented their knowledge of the students' needs and the strengths and weaknesses of current programs for Inuit students.

The discussion showed that postsecondary education is an all-encompassing experience for many. By deciding to pursue postsecondary education, Inuit students must leave home, learn to live in new environments, new languages, and cultures, establish a support network, find new role models, and be confident in themselves not only as persons but also as Inuit. They also have to deal with the implicit racism of the school system, and high program standards.

The discussion also showed that program sustainability is possible, yet extremely challenging because it involves putting decision making about program design and delivery in Inuit hands. This is easier said than done. Even if Northern regions reach a consensus on postsecondary education, the authorities in charge of delivering postsecondary programs to Inuit (mainly the federal and Quebec governments) are the ones who have to be convinced of the importance of having strong postsecondary programs and institutions that reflect the needs and values of Inuit and Northerners.

One way might be to create a Northern university that would centralize the efforts of designing programs and delivering them to Inuit and Northerners. Workshop participants all agreed that a Northern university would be important to ensuring student success and program sustainability. They said it should be independent of Southern institutions so that it could be designed to embody Inuit and Northern values.



## APPENDIX: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### Participants:

|                     |                             |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Susan Enuaraq       | Nunavut Arctic College      |
| Réjean Gascon       | Kativik School Board        |
| Margaret Gauvin     | Kativik Regional Government |
| Mary Joanne Kauki   | Vice-Mayor of Kuujuuaq      |
| Harriet Keleutak    | Kativik School Board        |
| Paul Khatchadourian | Kativik School Board        |
| Elias Moukanas      | Kativik School Board        |
| Madeleine Redfern   | Mayor of Iqaluit            |
| Jobie Tukkiapik     | Kativik Regional Government |
| Janice Grey         | Saputiit, Vice-President    |

### Research Team:

|                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Thierry Rodon   | Université Laval |
| Fiona Walton    | UPEI             |
| Darlene O’Leary | UPEI             |
| Pam Gross       | Carleton         |
| Teevi Mackay    | Carleton         |
| Erin Strachan   | Carleton         |

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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