

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in Educator Leadership Training in Nunavut

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Abstract

The history of formal K-12 education in Nunavut has been characterized by a gradual shift from "southern" assimilationist models to those more reflective of the language, culture, and aspirations of Nunavummiut (Arnaquq, 2008; Lees et al., 2010). Post-secondary education has been slower to change. Since its launch in 2010 through a partnership between the Government of Nunavut (GN) Department of Education and the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), the Certificate in Educational Leadership in Nunavut (CELN) has developed and delivered programming founded in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) for Inuit and non-Inuit educators and administrators. This paper will illustrate what UPEI has learned in decolonizing program design from working with the GN, its teachers and leaders. At the heart of the program is an enactment of IQ principles therefore our analysis will examine how these are (or not) successful within program content and design. Finally, we will close with our lessons learned, and what this "Southern" institution has had to change to be able to serve Nunavummiut.

Introduction

It is commonly known that physical structures designed for living in southern Canada frequently fail when transported to Nunavut without modifications that consider the context and environment where they will be erected (Therrien, 2015). We posit the same is true for more ephemeral organizational and educational structures. History has shown that attempting to directly transfer a “southern” education to Nunavut without consideration of the rich cultural differences and approaches to learning is ineffective (Abele & Graham, 2010). Re-orientation has been an ongoing target of K-12 education within Nunavut, predating the formation of the territory, however, one of the major limiting factors is the small number of Inuit in educational leadership positions (Tulloch et al., 2017). At the school level, rapid staff turnover and frequent changes in principals remains a regular occurrence in Nunavut and has been reported as a significant detrimental factor to school development (Lewthwaite & Renaud, 2009; O’Donoghue, 1998). Contributing to this issue, the needed Southern¹ educational leaders who arrive to fill employment gaps report feelings of isolation and culture shock, and a need for greater orientation, ongoing support and contextualized resources upon arrival, the absence of which leads to early departure (Aylward, 2009, Berger & Epp, 2007).

The development of Inuit leadership capacity in schools through co-principal models and professional learning in higher education are two strategies the Government of Nunavut has adopted to try to counterbalance the shortage of Inuit educational leadership in schools (Tompkins, 1998). However, in the past, short community-based programs have been criticized for their lack of rigour which can lead to stigmatization of leadership training taken at home as being “not as good as” courses from the south while travel to educational providers outside of the territory may not be possible for many reasons leaving potential Inuit leaders in a catch 22 situation (Arnaquq, 2008; O’Donoghue, 1998; Thompson, 2008; Tompkins et al., 2009). Changing perceptions of community-based programming might be one solution, alternatively making post-secondary education more accessible/culturally responsive, or changing the requirements for professional progression within the territory, the potential solutions are many. However, we observed a concerted effort between all of these factors are needed to support future educational leaders in Nunavut in obtaining recognized post-secondary education, professional growth, and support in schools.

As an example, we want to share the story of the formation of the Certificate in Educational Leadership in Nunavut (CELN). CELN is a result of UPEI’s Faculty of Education and the Government of Nunavut’s (GN) Department of Education worked collaboratively to build upon the GN model of professional development to design and offer a post-secondary certificate in educational leadership. Now in its tenth year of operation, the CELN program has

¹ Southern will be the term to denote all non-Inuit teachers, based on the assumption that all non-Inuit teachers have originally come from regions south of Nunavut.

radically shifted the way the UPEI Faculty of Education designs and offers post-secondary education for this cohort. Within this article we will discuss the context of leadership in schools, Inuit models of education and leadership which guide CELN, a brief history of the program's evolution and how it now functions. We will share the lessons we have learned from CELN's ten years of operation and conclude with our thoughts on what is working well and what still needs to be improved. We have written this article with a shared voice, however as each of the authors is uniquely positioned in CELN, sometimes we will speak individually, using quotes that are attributed to the author because they offer unique vantage points on the operation of CELN.

Current context of school leadership in Nunavut

Currently non-Inuit educators hold the majority of principal and vice principal positions in Nunavut schools. This has been cited as problematic by many scholars, who evidence Inuit leadership in schools as the most significant impact factor for school transformation (Berger, 2009, 2014; ITK, 2011; Tompkins, 2006). However, the shortage of Inuit leadership in schools is a complex issue involving factors such as salary/remuneration, certification requirements, the history of education in Nunavut, as well as the geography of the region.

The Nunavut Education Act (2008) requires that all principals hold a territorial "Principals Certification" and/or graduate level degree; the end result is that the majority of leadership positions in schools are held by non-Inuit principals with Master's degrees from institutions in southern Canada (Berger, 2006; Government of Nunavut, 2008; Walton et al., 2008). Though in the past it may have been lucrative to become a teacher in Nunavut, base salaries, northern allowance (i.e., top-up payments to account for high cost of living), and housing benefits have not entirely kept pace with inflation. Therefore, the vacant positions frequently attract newly certified teachers from outside the territory while Inuit with post-secondary degrees are understandably drawn to higher paid positions within the GN outside of schools.

Furthermore, many current Inuit educators are former Residential and Federal Day school survivors. They have felt firsthand the effects of racism and cultural disconnect caused by a school system designed to indoctrinate children into non-Inuit ways of thinking and doing. This paired with new-to-territory teachers/leaders' lack of familiarity of culture and history has led to documented rifts between Inuit and non-Inuit relations in schools (Aylward, 2012). Past experience with schools, and current tensions in schools, can make a career in education unattractive.

Next, though travel to a southern university might seem trivial in southern Canada, it must be recognized that such travel represents not only the financial impact of relocating but a cultural adaptation that, like residential schools, removes potential students from much needed support networks of family, friends, and community (Snow & Obed, in REVIEW; Thompson, 2008; Tompkins et al., 2009). In designing community-based opportunities for education leading to

teacher/principal qualifications, the vast distances between small communities relatively unsupported by broadband telecommunications infrastructure is problematic. Most communities have only one or two potential teachers or graduate students at any given time, and outside of the larger centres such as Iqaluit, internet access can be abysmally slow.

Finally, acknowledgment must be made that for many Inuit women taking on a school leadership role also means breaking from tradition because the job is incongruous for family life (Arnaquq, 2008). According to Arnaquq (2009), to be successful as an Inuit leader she had to be “better than a Southerner or Qallunaaq because you were going to be unsupported or criticized just because you were an Inuk by all people alike, other Inuit as well as the Qallunaat.” (p. 150). Recognizing professional development for Inuit educators as an extension of the cultural dissonance already so prevalent in schools, we want to ground our discussion of culturally relevant program design in Inuit conceptions of leadership and *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, which formed the base of CELN design.

Inuit Models of Education, Leadership and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

The first documented framework for Inuit educational leadership arose from the 1996 *Tuqqatarviuunirmnt Katimajit* (generally translated as that through which things pass) project (NEC, 2000). The project was facilitated by Joanne Tompkins, a long term northern educational leader, and tasked with identifying how a leader might support relationship building and professional development from an Inuit perspective (Tompkins, 2006). Expanding on the concepts of education as defined in the newly published *Inuuqatigiit* curriculum, the project members also examined what successful leadership should look like with these holistic youth development goals in mind. According to *Tuqqatarviuunirmnt Katimajit: The Nunavut Educational Leadership Project Report* (2000), the dimensions of educational leadership in Nunavut can be described using an Inuksuk as a model which includes: instructional leadership; organizational management; staff growth and development; strategic planning and visioning; community advocacy; relationship building; promotion of language and culture; communication skills; facilitation skills; self and family care. While the *Tuqqatarviuunirmnt Katimajit* provided a concrete skill set for leadership, it must be paired with *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* for a deeper understanding of the values and goals impacting educational leadership.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit frequently translated as Inuit traditional knowledge, as described by the Government of Nunavut (GN) outlines eight core societal values: *Inuuqatiguutsuarniq* (respecting others, relationships and caring for people); *Tunnganarniq* (fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming, and inclusive); *Pijitsirniq* (serving and providing for family or community, or both); *Ajiiqatigiinni* (decision making through discussion and consensus); *Pilimmaksarniq* (development of skills through practice, effort, and action); *Piliriqatigiinni* (working together for a common cause); *Qanuqtuurniq* (being innovative and resourceful); and *Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq* (respect and care for the land, animals, and the environment). Together the *Tuqqatarviuunirmnt Katimajit* Leadership model and *Inuit*

Qaujimaqatunqangit guide the content, structure, and function of the Educational Leadership programming that has and continues to be offered in Nunavut.

GN-University Partnership as a response to teacher needs

In developing CELN, the UPEI Faculty of Education did not start alone and did not bring a “southern solution” to Nunavut. Instead, CELN arose from a series of conversations with the GN, and built upon the more than thirty years of professional development previously offered by the GN. During its first three years of operation, CELN was relatively indistinguishable from the GN professional development programming, except CELN offered an external university credentialing opportunity for participants. The GN professional development program for principals was known as the Educational Leadership Program (ELP) and operated successfully for more than thirty years. Until 2008, ELP enrollment was limited to principals, and provided the GNWT/NU training needed for Principal Certification under the GNWT Education act. Concurrently, with the development of the Nunavut Education Act in 2008, enrollment in ELP was opened to vice-principals. Though the format of ELP changed over its many years of operation it was generally completed by participating in two face-to-face training workshops during the summer and a school-based project. The workshops were facilitated by peers (i.e., experienced teachers) and members of the GNWT education department. Leadership based on *Tuqqatarvuuirmnt Katimajit* was conceptualized in the program to reflect an expansive definition of leadership that went beyond “administrator” and classic definitions of “principal” to demonstrating responsibility for program, instruction, and school-community support (Tompkins 1998). Building on this base, CELN was conceptualized to meet the academic certification needs for graduate study recognition beyond the territorial Principal Certification.

The move in 2010 to a university accredited graduate program which met the requirements of the territorial Principal Certification arose from a long-indicated need for educational parity (Nunavut Education Council, 2000; O’Donoghue, 1998; Poelzer, 2009; Richards, 2008; Walton et al., 2008). The Assistant Deputy Minister at that time, Kathy Okpik, stated the importance of this educational opportunity in fulfilling the requirements of Article 23 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (1993), which is to provide training for Inuit to move into government employment in greater numbers. Within CELN, participation was opened to all teachers in Nunavut, through VPs and Principals requiring certification under the Nunavut Education Act received priority enrollment. In reflecting on the significance of this shift Nunia stated: “The common perception we had at the time was that ELP was just for principals and vice principals, not for classroom teachers. When the program shifted to CELN, I felt it opened up and created opportunity for classroom teachers to move forward because there was a broader understanding CELN was for anyone.”

At its very basic level, the university credited program provided an opportunity for teachers to increase steps in the GN teacher salary scale. This is likely more

significant for Inuit participants as a financial leveling opportunity, as many non-Inuit educators arrive with a Master's degree and enter school employment at higher rates of pay on the salary scale than Inuit colleagues, because the scale rewards educational credentialing. Many long-term Inuit educators have entered into the classroom without a completed Bachelor of Education; therefore, despite years of experience, they may remain on lower salary bands. Financial recognition for effort was not the only aspect of legitimizing ELP that university credentialing within CELN provided. Participants of ELP had long requested greater recognition of the work involved in completing the ELP certification, which the external accreditation and university credits could offer.

Moving the Principal Certification away from GN employee supervision also added an arms-length neutrality to the certification process, which under ELP was managed by GN supervisors/peers as evaluators of participants. Feedback from past ELP participants indicated some fear around the fairness of peer evaluation, as well as concerns that performance in ELP would be unofficially relayed back to direct supervisors. Adding UPEI as an external partner alleviated some of these fears and added an external body that substantiated participant's work.

Finally, CELN created a space for Inuit voice in Inuit educational research. Current published research in Nunavut education is dominated by outside researchers, usually non-Inuit, many of whom have lived in the territory briefly if at all. Providing a space for Inuit educators to share research they designed and led in their classrooms offered the benefit of sharing within Nunavut and beyond, the important work in transforming classrooms and schools being conducted across the territory. The ability to ladder two CELN courses into a Master's Program provided participants both confidence building opportunities and a shorter time to graduate degree completion should they wish to continue their education. Retaining these core features, annual offerings, school-based research, peer mentoring/teaching, leadership models seated in Inuit values while adding a more flexible enrollment opportunity and university accreditation we began what has become a ten year revision process for CELN program design.

The Current Design of CELN

CELN has not operated the same way in any year. This could be observed as a criticism, but we view it rather as a responsive program design. However, this flexibility means shifts and accommodations in the normal university processes for scheduling, hiring, and course planning must be conducted every year. The program structure maintains a standard set of discrete course requirements and electives normally found in graduate certificates, however its delivery and supports, revisioning and feedback processes, as well as instructors/instructional development make it unique within the boundaries of a university program.

Changes to delivery and student supports

The changes to the delivery and supports offered to students and instructors are characterized by flexibility and ingenuity. As we have learned, offerings from year to year rarely go as planned, and can be severely impacted by weather and a

range of other external factors outside of anyone's control. Therefore, flexibility in structure and employing a Project Manager for broad based supports comprise two critical features of CELN.

The program structure

Similar to a graduate certificate offered to mainstream students on campus, CELN consists of five course requirements at the graduate level. As designed, the program can be completed in two years, typically through face-to-face summer and winter institutes, and a fall online course. However, offerings change annually and are determined by the GN needs in any given year. For example, prior to the release of a new Literacy Framework, courses shifted to support Literacy Leadership development in anticipation of the Framework. Another year might evidence a need for a large number of principals to complete the Nunavut mandated Principal Certification and enrollment in courses and the number of offerings shifts to support those needs.

However, the fundamental content and concepts of the courses does not change. Built from the needs and goals established within ELP, the courses have been aligned with the five professional standards of school leaders as published by the GN (2018) and include Professional Knowledge (how to lead the management of a school), Professional Practice (leading teaching and learning, developing self and staff learning, leading improvement and innovation), and Professional Engagement (leading and working with community). Though assessment varies and changes within the courses annually, tasks and course activities take into consideration the requirements of the GN mandated Professional Development Toolkit (a professional development reflection tool for teachers), allowing teachers/leaders to document and record work relevant to their professional development goals.

The aim through hiring a combination of experienced school leaders and academic faculty in a co-teaching model is to present a balance of Inuit centric leadership content, practical school knowledge and skills, alongside academic critical thinking, inquiry, and leadership development to produce graduates who move beyond managing schools to leading innovation in schools and community. In describing the structure and its importance for her own progression Nunia states:

I started out thinking about just being a teacher, that I was just a teacher. But CELN gives you a broader idea of the things you can do. It gives you a broader view of the school, instead of a telescope aimed only at your own classroom, you can see the school and understanding the functioning of schools at all levels in Nunavut.

This flexibility in structure, and rapid shifting in response to professional development needs in the territory requires coordination and support in order to be successful within a university context, where rapid and responsive changes may feel at odds with the operation of the institution. Therefore, three critical shifts in personal have been made in personnel roles, feedback mechanisms and instructor development.

Critical shift in personnel roles

Within UPEI, there is a dedicated faculty member who acts as “Academic Lead” for the program, and a second staff member who acts as “Project Manager.” Both positions were created and modified over the past ten years to better support CELN. The UPEI Academic Lead position provides consistency but also flexible response for the program structure and design from an academic perspective. The role aids in hiring and determining teaching partnerships, evaluating feedback gathered from all sources, and communicating academic perspectives on the program with the GN. Ideally, the Academic Lead holds the university accountable for upholding the vision and mission of the program through service to instructors and students, paired with accountability in gathering information, acting on it, and reporting.

The UPEI Project Manager provides managerial, administrative, and financial service support for operations of the CELN program, ensuring the functioning of the entire system between participants, instructors, GN, and UPEI. Originally a part-time position that also supported research activities of the Academic Lead, the position was revised to a full-time administrative coordination role in 2017 to meet the high administrative demands of the program. To keep pace with these demands, stronger organization and streamlining of UPEI processes and procedures were needed, supports required centralization, and the higher accountability standard of the governmental partnership required enhanced oversight. Together these positions, working with the feedback gathered, can make informed decisions about CELN improvement and future offerings.

Critical Shifts in Revisioning and Feedback Mechanisms

A program under constant revision requires extensive feedback to ensure changes made are responsive to participant needs. The revisioning process is cyclical and collaborative and includes two critical processes: an annual visioning meeting, and the collection and application of multiple forms of feedback.

Annual visioning of goals: Typically, at the end of each annual teaching cycle, members of UPEI Faculty, the Dean, and Project Manager meet with GN Educator Development staff. It is highly desirable that this meeting also includes Inuit educational advisors who have completed the program or worked in school leadership positions for extended periods. The collaborative discussions are normally held in face-to-face meetings over two to three days, focusing on what worked well in the previous year and where things need to change to ensure the program still meets current needs. The meeting also allows all members to re-prioritize goals and ensure the group works to best serve the teacher to leader needs of educators. In preparation for the meeting, all participants gather feedback from a variety of sources both formally and informally.

Extensive feedback from course participants and instructors: One of the most critical feedback points informing the program design, development, and delivery comes from the course participants. Upon completion of a course, teacher participants are asked not only to complete the university mandated Student

Opinion of Teaching Survey (SOTS), but an additional CELN survey specific to the course they have just completed. Therefore, information is gathered from each course about teaching and the appropriateness of instructors hired for the teaching, which is reviewed privately by the Dean, as well as student experience, content, pedagogy, and overarching design in relation to other courses within the program. The course participants, trained educators themselves, are in an excellent position to provide insightful feedback on the degree to which the courses and the program meets their respective needs.

Feedback from instructors is formally gathered at the end of each course offering through a debriefing conference call, which occurs approximately two weeks after the conclusion of the course. Within this call, instructors are asked to respond to three questions: what has worked well, what could be improved, and what would they like to see changed for future offerings. Not limited by the questions, instructors are asked to openly discuss any concerns or compliments they have arising from their teaching. Instructors, course participants, GN Educator Development staff, and UPEI faculty and staff work together with a focus on solutions and continual improvement by learning from previous offerings what has worked well and should be retained.

Critical Shifts in Employment Criteria and Instructional Development

Experienced Inuit Educators, long-term northerners, and GN employees in educational positions outside of schools, such as Superintendents, provide the critical supports for practical, relevant, and authentic learning within CELN. The instructors are CELN's greatest assets; therefore, within the boundaries of the UPEI Collective Agreement for contract teaching, we aim to support them as well as work to offer instructors meaningful participation within the program. There are two operational shifts in relation to employment and support not commonly found in other UPEI Education programs that are fundamental to the smoother operation of CELN: Co-teaching and the development of a Community of Practice.

The Co-teaching model

All courses within CELN are co-taught, with the ideal combination being an Inuit CELN participant/graduate and a long-term experienced Nunavut educational leader or UPEI education faculty member versed in leadership theory. The combination, which varies with each course, aims to offer balance of expertise between theory, practice, and Inuit leadership. The combination of co-instructors is determined by the nature of the course and its participant enrollment, as well as the potential for the instructors to learn from and mentor one another and their course participants. From instructor and participant feedback, it is clear that when this combination is well aligned it offers one of the most powerful learning opportunities for all, as the instructors model shared responsibility and respectful relationships. Instructors frequently name and share both the strengths and personal growth moments from these collaborative teaching partnerships, which increases personal accountability for teaching the goals of the program.

A Community of Practice (CoP) for instructors: As instructors are hired they participate in pre-course meetings with the academic lead and project manager to orient them in UPEI process and develop relationships. Within these meetings, the past course outline is shared and revised on instructor direction, participant feedback, and programmatic needs at the time of offering. During the face-to-face courses, all instructors are invited to meet at least once during the one-week period for an informal meal and discussion of course progress and program concerns. At the conclusion of the course, instructors are brought together via telephone to debrief on their specific course and concerns about the program. While not officially contracted by UPEI but still on the active roster, instructors are invited to take part in professional development activities, such as conference presentations, book reviews, and collaborative discussions of program directions and goals. It is a testament to the dedication of the instructors who all participate on a voluntary basis.

Together these shifts in processes related to delivery, accountability and employment have led to the current design of CELN courses. We have yet to design a comprehensive program evaluation that would measure the true impact of the program; however, personal reflections from the authors begins to illustrate critical themes contributing to the effectiveness of the program.

Reflections on lessons learned in CELN design and delivery

Upon reflection of the learning by program instructors, six critical themes impacting respectful Inuit community-based professional development emerge from the processes, content, and structure of the program design. These themes are examined by adopting Inuit *Qaujimaqatuqangit* as the evaluative frame for our activities as we asked ourselves: How well is CELN responding to the professional development needs of educational leaders in Nunavut?

Reciprocity in Program Design and act of *Pijitsirniq*

Pijitsirniq, the principle of service to family and community, is the primary activity of CELN. Both the design of learning within the courses and program itself were planned to be responsive to community and individual needs and create momentum for change outside of the program. Beyond the service inherent in the program offerings, is the reciprocal benefits of professional development and employment for instructors in community. Though more work needs to be done with regard to UPEI salary scales for contract instructors based in Nunavut, the opportunity for active or retired leaders to supplement their income through CELN teaching and increase on the GN salary scale is important. As Darlene noted: Now that I am a semi-retired Nunavut educator— even owning my own house, and receiving a full pension at the highest educator salary grid; it is difficult to live on that pension without supplementing it with other part-time employment with two dependents ...many Inuit educators live in GN housing, when they retire, they lose their housing and there is a long waiting list for public housing and private rentals are steep so this move to academically certify the ELP program by creating CELN and offering two cohorts of the Inuktut M.Ed. program was

huge...only now am I fully recognizing...the monumental shift this was to level the financial power field... however much more still needs to be done.

Beyond financial, an informal review of where CELN and Master's graduates are in their career reveals that many have moved into positions within the GN, outside of schools, and some in leadership outside of education. Though this can be critiqued as a drain of highly qualified educators from schools, it also indicates the upward mobility and contribution to Inuit self-governance. Beyond the obvious financial returns UPEI has gained from partnership with the GN, we have also gained flexibility and insight into institutional processes. Student supports from application and registration, participation and graduation, have all been modified based on GN and teacher participant feedback. These processes offer benefits to mainstream campus students as well. Wilson (2008) profoundly states that if research doesn't change who you are, then it is not being done well and, in this case, offering CELN has changed the way UPEI's Faculty of Education operates by shifting many internal processes from an objective and institutional to humanistic and relational. As Erin describes: After UPEI moved to a fully online student system (myUPEI), there was a general sense that this provided more accessibility to students, which, although true for many at the university, was not so for CELN participants. As part-time students who are working professionals, we cannot expect them to have their student account information memorized, spend time familiarizing themselves with our systems, or always have the necessary Internet access that allows them to quickly and easily submit applications and register for courses. For those reasons, I felt it was important that we find alternative supports. For example, I now act as an agent on their behalf, submitting applications, working with our operational divisions on registrations and fee sponsorships, and ensuring I have the access needed to allow me to help participants navigate their accounts and our systems. This work was only accomplished in collaboration with numerous areas at the university who understood the need to better serve this group, particularly as their supports often fall outside of regular business hours and are time sensitive given the short 6-day courses.

Supporting language parity through Inuuqatuguutsuarniq

Inuuqatigiitsiarniq, or the principle of respecting others building relationships and caring for one another, is something UPEI continues to strive for in balancing the power dynamics between institution and individual needs. One of the key development areas of Nunavut education has and continues to be Inuktitut language education and usage in schools. This has been a difficult balance to establish within CELN as well. The *Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami* (ITK) language standardization project which outlined a universal writing standard for Inuktitut, as well as the adoption of an "educational dialect" for schools, offered opportunity for CELN written materials to be developed in both Inuktitut and English for all course participants and to strategize the translation of English and Inuktitut resources for course adoption. Prior to this, much of the work fell to Inuit instructors, which was both an extra burden and an unfair request, putting them in the position of translators

and instructors. Translation services, though often offered or spontaneously completed in the classroom, is not the intention of co-teaching, nor does it fully reflect the experiences brought by Inuktitut speaking educators. One of the difficulties of CELN has been dysfunctional teaching partnerships, where instructors and participants alike viewed the Inuktitut speaking instructor as an assistant or translator. Changing the expectations of language and developing supports to move translation away from an instructor task deliberately has helped to reposition Inuit Instructors, but more work still needs to be done. Language parity is most prominently displayed in speaking within the courses. Though each co-teaching pair adopts a different approach to language usage, the most common approach is language fluidity, supporting any participant to speak in either English or Inuktitut (the two official languages of the program) in any context, while other participants and instructors respond as they are most comfortable and able without judgement. Therefore, not all participants or instructors understand what is being said 100% of the time; however, lack of language fluency offers an opportunity to listen and learn. As Darlene reflects on this experience: Working with an Inuktitut instructor within an Inuktitut course offering was a humbling honour. The course was truly delivered in Inuktitut and deep discussions were held in Inuktitut. I helped plan the course, but at the course I was a silent participant who facilitated when needed.

This role of learning to be quiet, to listen and observe supports not only language parity, but cultural communication patterns that are often at odds in staffrooms. Though discussed in the context of an Inuktitut course, the comments are as equally valid in designated English offerings. Continuing, Darlene stated:

My teaching partner led by example. When participants from the three regions said they could not understand each other's dialects, she asked in Inuktitut, "What do you do when you don't understand a term in English?" Ask for clarification, was the reply. I forget which English term she used, maybe 'cooperation'. She asked participants to write down their dialect's word for 'cooperation'. We had 15 different ways of saying that term in Inuktitut because there were 16 Inuit participants, from 15 different communities. She exclaimed, "See how rich our language is!"

From this illustration instructors reflected on the importance of these conversations within courses for validating diversity of language, and celebrating the diversity, rather than discussions of dialect as challenges to Inuktitut usage in schools. In another personal story, Kathy recalls:

I was sitting with some participants, and they switched to Inuktitut, which I couldn't fully understand. Out of respect and wanting to be inclusive they switched back to English for me. I told them not to, it was my deficit in language. They laughed and one of the group members said, "look, our teacher is fighting for our language and she's doesn't really speak it, we need to too".

Within CELN courses, Inuktitut speakers have frequently shared concerns related to language development in school, and one of the functions of the courses

has become giving space for discussing all issues safely and supporting one another. Though not a language specific action, the leadership and mentorship provided by participants for participants in these conversations offers a recharge for teachers who may be feeling burnout from the work of language development in schools. Teachers and instructors offer a caring ear to listen and discuss and debate potential solutions.

Respecting the historical and cultural context of Nunavut

Another example of *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* is illustrated through the hiring and community development with and among instructors. It is rare that an Instructor within CELN could teach within the program without any experience in Nunavut, regardless of expertise in the field. On the rare occasion that UPEI has tried this, participant feedback clearly illustrated the instructors were lacking critical Nunavut contextual knowledge. Inuit history, pedagogy, and epistemologies, alongside GN produced curriculum frameworks and guides building on Inuit culture and history, are deeply imbedded in CELN courses. The co-teaching model, offers opportunities for academic expertise to be re-evaluated and contextualized for Nunavut. Furthermore, there is an almost direct correlation between length of time working in Nunavut and positive feedback from course participants. Course participants demand practical contextual experience from their instructors. When instructors are imbedded in the communities they teach in, they also have a wide support network of community resources to share with their course participants. This includes the ability to bring in local Elders and understanding of the seasonality and events occurring in the community, which offers a richer experience for both Inuit and non-Inuit course participants. It is not always possible to hire an instructor who lives in the community where a course is offered; however, hiring long term northern educators allows the instructor to incorporate Inuit created resources, such as articles or films, that might be unknown to less northern experienced instructors.

One of the challenges faced by CELN, and Inuit education resourcing in general, is the lack of a central cohesive sharing mechanism for resources. This is sometimes attributed to dialect differences, as previously mentioned, but also related to the UPEI instructor turnover and the relatively small number of Inuit authored educational leadership materials and research. In the past, course participants have noted the same resource might be used multiple times across different courses in the program. Through the Community of Practice and increasing communication between the instructors we have observed an increase in instructors returning, but also the same to discuss courses as a group to reduce repetition of resource use. One of the key activities UPEI's Faculty of Education has done is employ a consistent project manager who helps oversee resource collection. As a team, we are in the process of cataloguing and sharing materials both for instructors to have a central repository of Inuit based resources and for public availability for all.

Embedding *pilimmaksarniq* through mentorship and deconstruction of the student-teacher relationship

Pilimmaksarniq, (development of skills through observation, mentoring practice and effort) is arguably at the heart of every interaction within CELN, however it becomes most visible in the pathway from participant to instructor within the program. Frequently, new instructors are paired with experienced instructors. We have hired current CELN participants as instructors for subsequent course offerings they previously completed, and are moving to formalize a participant-to-instructor mentorship program. However, it is important to note that the mentorship is a co-learning experience. For example, a new Inuit instructor frequently teaches an experienced instructor about the context of their home community and shares their perspectives on education and leadership, bringing current relevant practice while an experienced or long term superintendent or principal might offer the partnering instructor insights into school operations. It is possible that a recognized Elder or community leader is participating in a course, or the participants may be older and more experienced than the instructors. Participants and instructors might be aunts-nieces, mother-daughter, cousins, sisters-in-law, and adopted relatives. There, instructors and participants are all interconnected and the relationship within the courses becomes one of mentorship and sharing, rather than formal teacher to student instruction. For each offering, instructors build on the knowledge shared within the previous offering and pull that knowledge into the subsequent offering. Many of the CELN instructors are former CELN/ELP graduates, and this is a critical criterion in hiring. We endeavour to build capacity through strategic mentorship from course participant, to leadership in schools, to teaching in CELN. Nunia, reflected back on how important this structure was to her own development:

If I hadn't taken CELN courses and been an instructor I would be struggling now [as she jumped into a VP role due to a gap created by an unscheduled medical leave in her school]. But because I have this experience, because I have taken courses and taught them, I feel confident.

Modality matters because it impacts *piliriqatigiinniq*

Piliriqatigiinniq, or the principle of working together for a common cause, has been focused on ensuring participants and instructors can be brought together in some form of relationship that can build on shared goals. Clark (1994), using the analogy of a food delivery truck, claimed media like a delivery truck can impact the cost and speed of delivery, but not learning. However, we have found that distance learning, regardless of technology and teaching methods used, greatly impacts the efficacy of instruction and student experience because it impacts the way the group is able to form and interact with one another. Participants and instructors have repeatedly stated that the courses function best face-to-face. The open dialogue and sharing that occurs both within formal course hours and outside of instructional time, as teachers gather from many communities to learn and live

together during the intensive offerings, cannot adequately be captured in an online format. Face-to-face delivery, however, is expensive, as travel and hotel accommodations within Nunavut are exponentially higher than in other parts of Canada. Additionally, there are logistical challenges of finding host communities with the capacity to concurrently host 50-100 people both in terms of accommodation and instructional space. Participants indicate a high preference for courses to be offered at the same location, in schools with shared break times, and for accommodations at the same hotel. For large concurrent institutes, this is only possible in the larger centres in Nunavut, and that is balanced with participants' indicated preference for courses moving across regions and communities for varied experiences and opportunities to learn. Offering one week intensive courses in summer and winter creates space away from home and responsibilities for participants to dedicate time to learning, but not all participants have the freedom to travel because of school, family, or community responsibilities. The dedicated Professional Development week created by the GN Department of Education, with most regions opting for concurrent scheduling in February, gives more opportunities for Inuit educators to participate. In discussions of modality Nunia stated:

Being together is important. I have observed the Inuit educators help each other. Not just within a particular course, but across the courses. Someone who is participating in another course might help someone else if they have already taken the course. Or more experienced leaders will help the young ones or the younger ones will help the older ones with technology. The participants collaborate a lot beyond the boundaries of a course.

Therefore, we have offered distance learning courses, usually during the late fall term. These courses have been limited by technology access for participants, who must frequently go to school to both use a computer and have access to Internet. Synchronous events must frequently be coordinated across a span four time zones, and the scheduling of courses during the school year means that participants are teaching. UPEI's adopted learning management system does allow for low bandwidth access; however, participants and instructors, some of whom are Elders, can find learning a new tool intimidating. Additionally, access to technology from an institutional perspective requires the creation and activation of a UPEI user account, which involves multiple steps between the Registrar's Office (participants), Human Resources (instructors), IT services, and independently through a self-service portal. Again, the Project Manager position is critical in reducing the entry barrier for technology access, acting as the face and central contact to bring all of these departments together for CELN, whose students might otherwise abandon efforts to navigate the processes while often working with a large time zone difference. What has proven most effective regarding technology is GN support and collaboration with schools. Schools have made technology accessible for participants by providing laptops, internet, and space.

Though the following story from Darlene is derived from a face-to-face offering, it illustrates the role that principal and school support plays in student success. In describing technology use she says:

The course was offered in my co-instructor's school, her home community, with resource people she knew, and resources which she could easily access i.e. the school's laptops with Inuktitut font and the syllabic labels already on the keyboards, with easy access to printers—so that typing and producing 'quality' academic work in Inuktitut, looked comparable to academic work produced in English.

As courses pivoted due to COVID restrictions, CELN too made an abrupt shift. It is too early to speak adequately to student responses; however, the shift has only been possible through GN accommodations supporting teachers' technology use in schools and enabling courses and instructors to use GN based software, already familiar to participants and instructors, to support course communication.

Qanuqtuurniq and Tunnganarniq: Being open to change and changing

The structure of CELN has changed a great deal over the ten years of delivery, and it has gone through many iterations in response to current needs. One of the key considerations is balancing practical applications and proactive leadership development, particularly across a series of courses offered by contract instructors, who, without the Community of Practice activities, may have little contact with one another or knowledge of the activities of CELN courses they do not teach. Reflecting on program development over time, Darlene states:

It is good to have the support of UPEI Academic Lead to build in academic rigour into the CELN courses but the threads of practical opportunities to learn and practice leadership skills have been lost. I know there has been some discussion on designating certain resources for specific courses so that there is not 'repeats' for participants i.e. videos; however, has there been discussion on strategies to build leadership experience for our aspiring leaders?

The Academic Lead endeavours to support *tunnganarniq* or work from the principle of being open, welcoming and supporting good spirits by creating an open space so constructive criticism such as this can be brought forward and addressed. When areas for improvement such as the one noted above are recognized, the Academic Lead brings them to current and past instructors for insight and solutions. CELN has not operated in the same way in any year of its functioning, because each year offers different set of conditions based upon the unique location of offering, GN priority focus, instructors, and participants involved. Each year we change, adapt, and learn in an effort to model the innovative leadership skills the program aims to instill in participants. Significant work and communication between the Academic Lead and instructors occurs prior to, during and after course offerings. For

example, one of the significant changes within the program has been the changing demographics of Nunavut. As Darlene describes her experience teaching:

Previously the face of the participants in Nunavut leadership courses was predominantly ‘white’ older males (some older females) with some Inuit participants; however now, Nunavut is becoming increasingly multi-cultural and the diversity of the group is increasing – care needs to be taken to balance Inuit & non-Inuit perspectives. In my last course, there were only two Inuit and one was the instructor. Most of the participants in the room were not ‘white’ so the activity to facilitate discussion on ‘white’ privilege needed to be changed and resulted in discussion on some experiences of poverty and racism.

Qanuqtuurniq (the principle of innovation and resourcefulness) is a foundation of CELN: without this primary attitude the program could not function. Responsiveness of programming has been built into the courses and program structure over time. For example, in response to GN priority focus shifts, elective courses were introduced for enhanced flexibility of annual offerings. In another example, noting low completion rate in one extended delivery course (ED5140), which was attributed in part to the long (three semester) time requirement to complete, the course was deconstructed to three one-credit courses (ED5141, 5142, 5143) to facilitate participants building credit over time, rather than losing credit after three terms of engagement.

In another example the Academic Lead acts as a safe intermediary during course offerings. Should a challenge arise between participant and instructor (who are frequently connected professionally due to employment at the GN) the participant or the instructor can bring the concern to the Academic Lead, without engaging the formal grievance mechanisms of the university. Frequently by employing conflict resolution strategies, or simply acting as a listener to ensure both sides of a disagreement feel equally heard, conflicts can be resolved quickly and easily, without formalized complaints. Furthermore, issues are frequently tied to program structure, curriculum or policy rather than interpersonal issues, and the Academic Lead can bring these issues into design considerations for future offerings as well as work to amend the respective UPEI policy that is creating the issue.

Final Reflections

As illustrated in the program design, structure, and decision-making processes, the principals of *Ajiiqatigiinniq* (decision making through discussion and consensus) are fostered by engaging partners, instructors, and participants in authentic opportunities for feedback, via the CELN survey and co-teaching, as well as opportunities for co-construction of the program through the community of practice and conversations in relation to syllabus creation and course debriefings. However, foremost in the program is building relationship through *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* and *tunnganarniq*, without which the program would not function. The security and

safety provided in classrooms and through feedback is critical for respectful, inclusive, and welcoming experiences that allow participants and instructors alike to ask difficult questions and support each other in leadership development and instruction. University processes for application, registration, and certification are not known for being welcoming, and can be cost prohibitive for many. The GN creating space and financially supporting professional development for teachers in a program that offers university accreditation cannot be understated in the importance for eliminating barriers to post-secondary education and professional progression for teachers. In Nunavut in particular, even with financial and professional incentives, the university processes can be barriers for busy teachers, as can English language as the primary modality for university communication. Therefore we have aim to make *pilimmaksarniq* processes visible and accessible. A critical aspect of this is support in the form of a dedicated project manager to act as a consistent university-participant point of contact. The university is not faceless; its face is the project manager. If you don't know, ask Erin, is a fairly common response from instructors and participants alike. With every UPEI process developed for CELN, there are an equal number of modifications to process, as essentially every course offering encounters something new which is addressed collaboratively with instructors, academic lead, GN staff, and project manager, illustrating *qanuqtuurniq*, *aajiiqatigiinniq* and driven by *piliriqtiigiinniq*.

Though ultimately, like all university departments or Faculties, the final decision for activities will be determined by the Faculty council and/or the Dean, the program is somewhat autonomous. Recommendations by instructors, the academic lead, and the GN are generally followed, as the Faculty of Education members both support the program and recognize it frequently needs to operate differently. Instructors return to teach, despite needing to take a leave of absence from their usual GN education related position, and to teach at a frequently lower salary, because of this dedication and shared vision for capacity building in educational leadership. We have observed that instructors, participants, UPEI and GN faculty and staff have become advocates beyond the program for rethinking educational leadership and the way things are done within our respective circles of influence. Like the drum model used to describe program structure with the CELN participant handbook, with reverberating waves of influence from self, to school to community, it is hoped that CELN can reverberate and amplify Inuit models of education and ultimately have long lasting impacts on the ways schools are led and the development of a university in Nunavut. Some of this is already evidenced in the observations of progression of participants to teacher certification, leadership roles in school, and beyond, but more work needs to be done to evaluate the full impact of CELN programming. Through an examination of numbers of participants, CELN is building capacity, but the full extent of where these leaders are going and what they are doing with their knowledge is unknown. From ELP to present day CELN, the program has evolved, but we can still do better. Addressing some of the challenges are things beyond our control; the lack of technological infrastructure in Nunavut remains a systemic problem the GN and schools are

working to improve. The long distances between communities and participants and the weather makes face-to-face delivery expensive, and community based teaching is limited to larger communities with the infrastructure to support upwards of 50 visitors at a time. However, many of the remaining challenges are ours to better address, such as the balance of Inuit/non-Inuit participation in courses and content, as well as negotiation of CELN hiring through a balance that meets the needs of the Faculty Association regulations and our commitments to capacity building. CELN has never concretely addressed *Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq* beyond conversations in courses, and this remains one of our opportunities for growth, be it through a course design that considers the environmental impact of travel, or departs from typical classroom based learning, or working with teachers to better manage policy and procedure in relation to land-based learning, there is more we can do here. Citing a quote frequently attributed to Maya Angelou, “now that I know better I do better,” instructors, participants and institutions involved have endeavoured to respond to this ideal through the co-learning processes described in this article and we hope to be able to continue to learn and build on this work for years to come.

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