

How Do You Double the Number of High School Graduates? A Snapshot of Schooling in Tuktoyaktuk, NWT

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***Abstract:** Mangilaluk School in Tuktoyaktuk has seen large increases in the number of graduates over the last 10 years. This article describes the factors that are thought to be behind this achievement, according to Tuktoyaktuk residents themselves in May 2019. In this community, on the edge of the Beaufort Sea, school competes with traditional activities throughout the year and the legacy of residential schools is still strong. Despite these challenges, a range of efforts are drawing youth to school and causing them to thrive in school. This article will describe such efforts and the areas where such efforts can be complemented by increased resources.*

Introduction

The June 2019 graduation ceremony at Tuktoyaktuk’s Mangilaluk School was the largest ever, with a total of 21 students graduating from Grade 10 to 12, and 15 graduating from Grade 12 (Hemens, 2019). This represents more than a doubling of the number of graduates compared to Grade 12 graduation numbers from just the year before (six graduates). Figure 1 below reveals that an increase in high school graduation is occurring for Indigenous youth across the Northwest Territories (NWT).

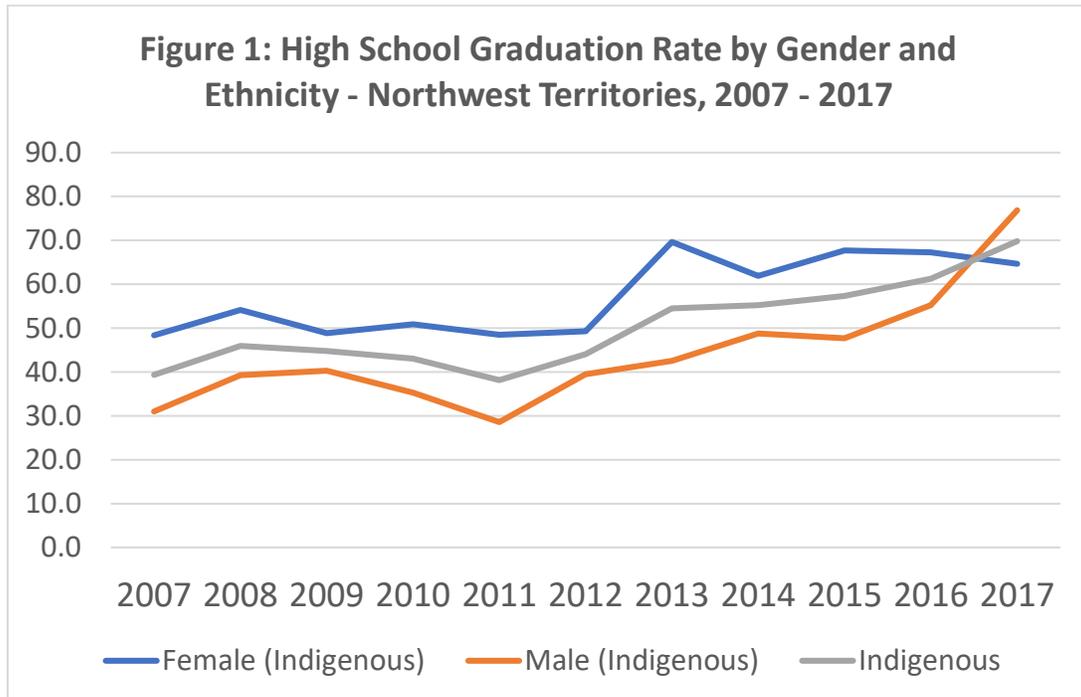
When asked why this large increase has occurred, community members said that this group is very motivated, “they’re a very close cohort... they love hanging out every day.” To reach Grade 12 graduation requires a range of supports from parents, other family members, educational assistants, Elders, teachers, school administrators, the school board, the District Education Authority, etc. Education in the Northwest Territories as a whole is viewed in this way:

Education in the NWT can be compared to an ecosystem... Every action within the living system impacts more than just the school or its students; it impacts parents, educators, communities, and the wider territory. An ecosystem succeeds only when it is sustainable, with all parts respected and taken care of. (Government of the Northwest Territories, 2013, p. 5)

This article describes the policies, programming and initiatives in Tuktoyaktuk that are thought to be behind recent successes in attendance and graduation. Specifically, we address the research question: what factors do Tuktoyaktuk residents view as integral to youth persistence in school in Tuktoyaktuk? In order to address this question, we conducted focus groups and interviews with educators, students, parents, Elders, and students in Tuktoyaktuk in May 2019. We learned that school incentives, the breakfast program, Inuvialuktun programming, and on-the-land programming are key to keeping youth in school at Mangilaluk School. Barriers to student persistence remain, largely related to the resources that the school has to offer the range of supports student need in any K–12 school.

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In the next section, we describe the context for schooling in Tuktoyaktuk, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) and the NWT. We then detail our methodology. Section 4 presents key factors cited by Tuktoyaktuk residents regarding the determinants of high school success. Section 5 discusses challenges potentially blocking further success in Tuktoyaktuk’s education system. Section 6 concludes.



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics (2020)

Context for education in Tuktoyaktuk

A Brief History of Schooling in Tuktoyaktuk

Tuktoyaktuk (originally Tuktuyaaqtuuq—“resembling a caribou” in Inuvialuktun) is a small Inuvialuit community of approximately 950 people, located just east of the Mackenzie River delta on Kugmallit Bay. Inuvialuit people traditionally inhabited the land from Herschel Island to Cape Bathurst, but it was not until 1905 that Tuktoyaktuk was permanently settled by Chief Mangilaluk for whom the Kindergarten to Grade 12 school in Tuktoyaktuk is named. In 1934, the Hudson’s Bay Company set up a trading post in Tuktoyaktuk and it became an important harbour in the Western Arctic (Alunik et al., 2003). In 1955, a Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line was built nearby which drew increased settlement in Tuktoyaktuk. In the 1970s and 1980s the community was a hub for oil and natural gas exploration. Today the community is attracting tourism due to a new, 137-kilometre highway that starts in Inuvik and ends in Tuktoyaktuk. The road has been a boon to tourism as visitors flock to travel the “first road to the Arctic Ocean” (Murray, 2019).

Education in Tuktoyaktuk has evolved dramatically since the turn of the 20th century. Prior to the 1950s, the government did not concern itself with education in the Inuvialuit Settlement region, leaving what formal schooling existed to religious institutions. In 1896, Anglican missionaries opened the first day school in the Inuvialuit region, on Herschel Island in the Yukon (Alunik et al., 2003). Some children in the ISR attended formal schooling there to

acquire basic literacy; those not sent to school learned life skills while living a semi-nomadic lifestyle with their parents (Salokangas, 2009). This lifestyle is described by the Inuvialuit as being largely experiential (watching and doing), but is also drawn from oral traditions passed on from generation to generation through legends, stories, and songs (Salokangas & Parlee, 2009).

In 1925, a Catholic Indian Residential School opened in Aklavik, an Inuvialuit community southwest of Tuktoyaktuk. At that time, Aklavik was increasingly becoming the new transportation, commercial, and administrative center of the Western Arctic (Alunik et al., (2007). In 1947, a federal day school was established in Tuktoyaktuk. However, before 1955, fewer than 15% of school-aged Inuit enrolled in residential schools as most children still lived on the land with their families, learning traditional skills and knowledge. “Rather than teaching students how to hunt, skin game, and build igloos and kayaks, residential schools taught a curriculum used for white children in Alberta.” (Roberts, 2017, para. 28 below highway photo).

Another residential school, Sir Alexandra Mackenzie School, opened in Inuvik in 1959. By that point Inuvik has become the administrative capital for the ISR. Over the years, hundreds of children from the ISR attended this school and stayed in Catholic and Anglican-run hostels. By 1964, more than 75% of school-aged Inuit children attended this residential school. As Salokangas (2009) notes, by the 1960s, the economy of Tuktoyaktuk had transitioned from one focused on hunting, fishing, and trapping to a wage economy. The Tuktoyaktuk School and the residential schools in the region were thus charged with preparing youth for the labour market and youth were taught the Alberta curriculum.

In the early 1980s, the school in Tuktoyaktuk—now called Mangilaluk School— started offering an Inuvialuktun language program for Kindergarten to Grade 4 children (Salokangas, 2009). At that time, education policy in the NWT separated itself from federal policy by emphasizing community control over education (King, 1998). This march towards local control continues today: the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) is working towards self-government with the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Canada, including law-making authority over Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 education.

Climate change is occurring rapidly in Tuktoyaktuk and across the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR), making the need for resilient graduates and community leaders all the more urgent. A recent IRC report indicates that average temperatures increased between 0.7 and 1.2°C per decade from 1981–2010, there are more thunder and windstorms, conditions are drier, there is severe erosion on the ocean shore, unfamiliar animals appearing and animals’ movements changing (for example, caribou migration has changed) (IRC, 2016). All of these impacts have secondary impacts on the lives and livelihoods of Tuktoyaktuk residents. Many homes are now being moved inland due to the shoreline erosion. Hunters are less able to predict weather conditions and report more treacherous conditions due to thinner ice. Flooding threatens both housing and infrastructure. The new cohort of graduates, and those that follow, will navigate this rapidly changing environmental and socio-economic landscape as their ancestors have navigated previous societal changes.

Mangilaluk School

Mangilaluk School in Tuktoyaktuk is a Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 school which served a student population of 225 in 2019–20. There were 18 teachers including the principal in that academic year. The principal during our visit was Krista Cudmore, who had been at Mangilaluk School for six years. She has now left to become principal of East Three School in Inuvik. Ephriam Warren has taken over as principal for Mangilaluk School, and as of the date of

this chapter, Ephraim has been in Tuktoyaktuk for 13 years. Krista noted that although turnover is high at Mangilaluk School— about ½ of teachers stay for less than 2 years—there are a number of long-term staff and Inuvialuit educators from Tuktoyaktuk.

The school offers volleyball, basketball, badminton, soccer, and Arctic and Dene games as extra-curricular activities. There is an active after-school program, staggered by age group, run by the school, and funded by Municipal and Communities Affairs (MACA). The school collects student achievement data in a system called Dossier which allows teachers to access real-time information on student progress. The school has a school bus which not only drives youth from home to school each day but also home for lunch.¹

The school is termed “full-service” in that it has a home-economics room, gymnasium, carpentry shop, and library. Each classroom has a Smartboard. However, a new school building is being constructed for Mangilaluk School, likely within the next two years. The new school will be more welcoming with a focus on Inuvialuit culture. For example, a community library is planned for right near the entrance, with a Northern lights theme.

The Institutional Environment for Schooling in Tuktoyaktuk

The school board serving Mangilaluk School is the Beaufort-Delta Education Council (BDEC). It serves eight communities and nine schools, all north of the Arctic Circle. The total population for the Beaufort Delta Region is 6,684, and 89% of the student population identify as either Gwich'in or Inuvialuit. The BDEC sees it as its mission to “strengthen partnerships to build thriving school communities which embrace and deliver culture-based education by providing tools and resources for student success.” (BDEC, 2018, p.3).

Tuktoyaktuk and Mangilaluk School are located in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) in the Western Arctic. The ISR refers to the area covered under the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA), a land claim signed between the Inuvialuit people and the Government of Canada in 1984. The ISR is one of four Inuit regions collectively referred to as Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland of Canada.

The Inuvialuit communities of the BDEC region are: Aklavik, Inuvik, Paulatuk, Tuktoyaktuk, Sachs Harbour, and Ulukhaktok. The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) was established to manage the affairs of the ISR. The IRC is an integral partner with BDEC in schooling in the IRC. The IRC sits on the Beaufort Delta Divisional Education Council (BDDEC), and it supports language programming in schools, provides post-secondary schooling scholarships, and funds a tutoring program and a school-family liaison program, among other initiatives.

The IFA was signed in Tuktoyaktuk on June 5, 1984. It was the first comprehensive land claim agreement signed north of the 60th parallel and only the second in Canada at that time (IRC (2019)). In the IFA, the Inuvialuit surrendered exclusive use of their ancestral lands in exchange for money, land and wildlife management rights. The Inuvialuit signed the IFA in order to preserve Inuvialuit culture, enable Inuvialuit to be equal participants in the northern and national economy, develop economic self-reliance, establish the Inuvialuit Development Corporation, and protect the environment and wildlife of the ISR (IRC (2019)).

Across the NWT, schools now strive for culture-based education. In 2004, the following principles were established to guide educational reform:

¹ The school bus is funded by the District Education Authority (DEA) and the Beaufort Delta Education Council (BDEC).

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- Parents, grandparents, family and community members are children’s first teachers;
- Indigenous children are more successful when the school affirms their culture;
- The land is a place of learning and is an important part of the successful learning of Indigenous languages and cultures; and
- Communities have much to offer the education system (GNWT, 2004).

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) within the GNWT refers to this as “education renewal.” The GNWT-ECE department website notes that “learning involves relationships with ideas, people, life experiences, languages, spirituality, and culture. All are rooted in the place where we live and learn, thus making it essential to connect to the land and people of that place” (2018, p. 9). At the same time, the Department realizes challenges in implementing these ideals, noting:

Most NWT schools are small schools that deal with different realities than faced in larger centres. These include less access to resources, higher costs, fewer teachers, and single classrooms with students of varying grade levels. It is difficult for small schools to offer the range of high school courses needed to meet the interests, abilities and goals of all their students. In addition, there are challenges related to the fact that many NWT educators are new to teaching and stay in the North for only a short time because they are from elsewhere in Canada or the world. (GNWT-ECE, n.d., para. 2.)

BDEC does not yet have a comprehensive culture-based curriculum. Many courses have been reformed to ensure culturally-relevant content. Curricular reforms over the last few decades have been guided by two documents, *Inuvialuit Pitqusiit: The Culture of the Inuvialuit* (1991) and *Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective* (1996), both published by the GNWT. Teachers share lesson planning including culturally-relevant lesson plans across BDEC using a website called Moodle (<http://moodle.bdec.learnnet.nt.ca>).

Methodology

The case study which informs this paper was conducted May 2–10, 2019. It was part of a research project supported by the Faculty of Education at the Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) and funded by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), with Principal Investigators Kirk Anderson (MUN) and Kathy Snow (University of Prince Edward Island). One of the authors of this chapter, Holly Carpenter, was raised in Tuktoyaktuk and has been teaching as an Inuvialuktun teacher at Mangilaluk School for eight years. The other author, Melanie O’Gorman (University of Winnipeg), visited Tuktoyaktuk as an independent researcher.

The approach taken in this paper is an exploratory, descriptive case study with the objective of understanding and documenting how Tuktoyaktuk residents view the determinants of school success. This may be termed a grounded theory method, where we are inducing from participants’ views insight into our research question (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). In other words, we did not approach this case study with any pre-conceived ideas of what the determinants of educational success in Tuktoyaktuk are. The goal of this article is to pass on what was shared with us in a clear way.

Melanie conducted interviews and focus groups with the assistance of a Community Liaison— Gabrielle Nogasak, a student in her final year at Mangilaluk School. As a youth with many relationships within the community, Gabrielle was instrumental in advertising the study so that those interested in sharing their opinions on schooling in Tuktoyaktuk knew when and where they could do so. Participation was open to anyone—we did not specify an age range,

relationship to the school, etc., because anyone in Tuktoyaktuk may have an opinion on the school's strengths.

Melanie also spent time at Mangilaluk School, speaking to the principal, vice-principal, teachers, and students. She held three focus groups: one with educators (five educational assistants, five teachers), one with students (12 students) and one with Elders/parents (eight individuals). Melanie also had a booth at the Northern Store (one of two grocery stores in the community) where she conducted 20 interviews with community members. Across the focus groups and individual interviews, she spoke to approximately 50 people.

We asked each individual that we spoke to the same questions (whether in an interview or focus group), listened to and audio-recorded all responses, and then reviewed the transcripts from these conversations to uncover themes. This study was approved by the University of Winnipeg Human Research Ethics Board (UHREB) and the Aurora Research Institute (ARI) with Research Licence Application #448. As such, it follows the First Nations Principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2 - 2018). Our questionnaire for individual interviews, focus-group protocol, and the consent forms for research participation are provided in the Appendix. Quotations below represent illustrations of themes rather than outliers in the entire transcript. Confirmation has been obtained from participants who have chosen to be named in this article, to ensure they consent to their name being associated with their views in this article.

This is not the first academic study of education in Tuktoyaktuk. It follows Salokangas and Parlee (2009) who investigated how Inuvialuit youth balance traditional learning with learning that has typically been found in Tuktoyaktuk schools, which can be termed Western Science or Eurocentric instruction. They asked: how do individuals negotiate between different ways of learning? And why do learning opportunities differ across family groups? They conducted interviews with Inuvialuit families who had at least three living generations (grandparents, parents, and youth) to gain insight into how different ways of learning have changed over a century. In a study not focused specifically on Tuktoyaktuk, but the ISR, Berger, Johnston and Oskineegish (2016) studied survey responses from students, parents, and high school teachers in the ISR. They found that the vast majority of students and parents desired more Inuvialuit culture in school, and teachers were largely open to integrating culture into their lessons.

Factors driving school success in Tuktoyaktuk

In this section, we describe four initiatives or factors put forward by individuals in Tuktoyaktuk as being important in supporting student attendance and persistence in school. These factors can be broadly characterized as innovative programming in the school, although in highlighting these programs respondents also suggested ways such sources of success could be strengthened.

Inuvialuktun Language Programming – An Essential Feature Which Requires Parental Partners

Inuvialuktun is spoken in Sachs Harbour, Paulatuk; Tuktoyaktuk, Aklavik; and Inuvik with an estimated 600 speakers currently (GNWT, 2017). As most of the fluent Inuvialuktun speakers are elderly, it is unfortunately an endangered language. One participant in the Educators' focus group noted:

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For somebody like me, it's going to be difficult because I really wasn't raised with that language. You know, there's that place where you—I can speak my Inuvialuit language, but I have to have it broken with English. And I can understand my elders when they talk Inuvialuktun but in order for me to respond, I can respond at a certain time, but then goes to English again. (Educator 4, May 7, 2019)

Elders are thus fundamental to the revitalization of Inuvialuktun in Tuktoyaktuk and the ISR. In almost all (19/20) of the individual interviews we conducted, the interviewee emphasized the importance of Inuvialuktun as key to student success.

In 2017, the NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) released the NWT Aboriginal Languages Framework: A Shared Responsibility (Framework). This Framework set out a path for the NWT government to assist in revitalizing Indigenous languages and to improve access to services in Indigenous languages across the territory. An Action plan was then released in 2018 for the Our Languages Curriculum (OLC) which included:

- that Indigenous language instructors from all schools participate in an orientation on the OLC
- that principals participate in a best practices evaluation for the delivery of the OLC
- that principals observe and evaluate each Indigenous language instructor twice per year
- training opportunities for implementation of assessment practices, OLC support, and resource development for Indigenous language instructors
- one class per school to undergo a base-line language assessment
- 100% of base-line assessed students to improve on their language comprehension assessments by June 2019

BDEC schools use a “whole school approach” to Indigenous language use, which entails the integration of Gwich'in and Inuvialuktun throughout the curriculum and school activities rather than being isolated solely in the Indigenous language course. Simple greetings are displayed around schools and all staff are required to learn these greetings. March is Indigenous Language Month. All teachers in the NWT may apply for funding to take Indigenous language training at the University of Alberta.²

Specifically for Mangilaluk School, in the 2018–19 school year, junior kindergarten (JK) students received 30 minutes of Inuvialuktun instruction for five classes in a ten-day cycle, senior kindergarten (SK) received 30 minutes on opposite days, Grades 1–8 received 30 minutes of instruction each day and Grade 9 students received instruction for 42 minutes each day. This is an increase in language instruction relative to the past. Holly Carpenter is the only Inuvialuktun teacher. As noted above, she is from Tuktoyaktuk and returned to teach at Mangilaluk School since 2011

During the focus groups and interviews, individuals indicated that while they support Inuvialuktun instruction the current time spent on it is not enough—it should be present past Grade 9. One person said: “we need a high school Inuvialuktun teacher. It shouldn't stop at Grade 9.” Referring to culture-based schooling in Tuktoyaktuk, during the Elder and Parent's focus group it was noted that:

² The University of Alberta offers I Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute (CILLD) programming each summer for teachers involved in teaching Indigenous Languages. They may learn the language itself or gain expertise in linguistics, endangered language documentation and revitalization, language and literacy learning, second language teaching and curriculum development, and language policy and planning. Funds are provided through the Aboriginal Language Acquisition fund of the GNWT (NWTTA, 2020).

Why have it called Inuit school if we don't teach our kids our language... There's maybe only about 5–10% in our hamlet right now that speak our Inuvialuit language. I mean, they're offering in school right now, but the problem is that there's no follow up when they go home. (Elder 1, May 9, 2019)

This was a recurring theme during the case study. As ITK President Natan Obed has said, it takes a community to produce a fluent speaker (O'Gorman et al., 2017). Another participant reiterated this:

Something is missing in there, in terms of our language. I mean, the territorial government every year funds the school for our local languages, but is all that funding being placed in the right spot? That's the question. I'll tell you right now, it's not working. It has to go both ways. The parents got to talk to their kids when they go home. Otherwise, you can keep funding in Tuktoyaktuk, Inuvialuktun language, but if you don't follow up with it at home with the kids, they're lost. You're wasting money on something that we're not gaining on. That's how I see it. (Elder 4, May 9, 2019).

Quite a few participants emphasized land camps as essential to building fluency in youth, especially to ensure Elders pass on the language to children. For example, one participant at the Elders/parents focus group noted:

“Language is really important, but ... where you can learn your best language is out on the land. And, during July, August, is a good time for Elders teaching the Inuvialuit out on the land. Like, they go camping, they go fishing, they go whaling, and many of those that forget their language they somehow get their language back. You know, what they say, just to be out where it's real. You know, where the Inuvialuit are all together, there, with one or two families, and I think they're busy, but you know, while they're fishing you could teach them language and how to do a sentence. In school I know it's very hard because you just have one teacher, you know, and so many students. And there's one elders, is like, take kids out on the land.” (Parent 3, May 9, 2019).

Another person said:

In the summertime, you can learn language best out on the land. Out where it's real. It should be Elders and children. Strictly Inuvialuktun. It's all about listening – listening to stories. Kids are good listeners – we had to be! Most people are used to camp life, where they're four weeks on, two weeks off, or six weeks on, two weeks off, or that sort of thing. And I would love to have that. You know? It's a full year, but, you know, if we were to change the system to follow the rhythm of the work that exists, which is camp life, in a sense. But also, it'd become seasonal. So, if we're off for two weeks in May, well, great, because they're out anyways, they're on the land anyways. You know? So, if we fit it in a way that fits with the seasonal hunts, then the school year could go on all year.” (Interviewee 13, May 5, 2019)

The goal—as for any language acquisition — is for youth to be immersed in an environment where people are speaking Inuvialuktun so that they have no choice but to absorb it. In Tuktoyaktuk there are houses made of sod where people stayed while fishing in the summer, that pre-date settlement in the hamlet. These sod houses remain, and people gather in them and speak Inuvialuktun:

And we have, what do you call that? Sod house, there. I've been there a couple of times and, you know what, only the elders talking Inuvialuktun, and when I think about it, if we could go there, and listen and listen, it's only because—I'm saying this because, you know father, when he first come, he used to go visit them. He never talked, but he's

always there listening. And you know, by the time you listen, he's really fluently in our language. And that's a place where we could listen to stories, and just listen. 'Cause, kids are good listeners when somebody's telling stories." (Interviewee 2, May 4, 2019)

Culturally-relevant Curricula and Other Programming

As noted earlier, all schools in the NWT are undergoing reform or Education Renewal to ensure schooling is grounded in Inuvialuit culture. This is a fundamental part of self-government in the region. Much academic literature points to evidence that Indigenous youth succeed in school when that school teaches a curriculum that reflects their own context, when teachers are from the community so they understand their circumstances, when one's own history is prioritized, and their school is controlled and operated locally (Berger, 2009; NCIE, 2011). This desire was echoed by Tuktoyaktuk residents as well.

Across the NWT, "culture-based education (CBE) is foundational to learning in the Beaufort Delta region. The BDDEC will prioritize CBE and ensure students have a strong sense of identity and that learning is contextual and meaningful." (GNWT, 2018, p. 16). Each school is required to establish an Indigenizing Education Committee that will plan activities and ways of implementing Indigenized teaching within the school, and for including Elders into programming. Regarding this, Principal Krista Cudmore said:

We have new territory-wide goals and we're trying to bring it down to the school level. So we've started that this February in the hopes of getting it up and running for next year. Our art class is now an Indigenous art class. We have traditional fashions and sewing. Last year we had a traditional shop class where we built the sleds, we're building the drums—so we're trying to use whatever grants and funding that we can to support that. (May 6, 2019)

Mangilaluk School, along with all others in the NWT, respects the role of Elders in schooling. The GNWT-ECE website states this explicitly, noting that "one of the first duties of any community was to help children become capable people. Elders were central to teaching, as they helped children learn knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that they, and their community, would need in order to survive" (2018, p.13). The goals for Elder involvement in Mangilaluk School include having Elders in the classroom at least monthly for each class. They are involved with sewing, cooking, storytelling, on-the-land activities, dancing and drumming, preparation of Indigenous foods, and preparation of animals. Focus group participants indicated that Elders change the tone in a classroom, adding legitimacy to whatever activity they are involved in. For example, during the Educators' focus group one participant noted:

I think kids would actually sit down and listen if they had somebody from the community actually see how the act in school. And then they'd actually be like, Oh no, she's watching, she knows my mom or my dad, I'm going to sit here and do my work ... I've had an elder coming to my art class as well as exchange and stuff like that. There's a whole other level—or different level—of respect, right? Just in general, which is... good. My mom would spank me if I was rude to an elder, and I would let her. You know what I mean? The community actually has like a big respect for the elders—even the young kids. There are some kids that don't have respect, and, go to them, "Respect your elders". They'll tell each other off, you know what I mean? If somebody's not showing the respect that somebody—like I wouldn't even have to say anything, they start telling each other off. You know what I mean?(Educator 2, May 7, 2019)

Mangilaluk School also had students involved with a Canada Goose Parka Project where students were taught by a local Elder how to sew traditionally-inspired parkas (Pruys, 2019).

The Northern Studies, Science and Social Studies course content has been modified to ensure Inuvialuit content. For example, science courses are largely experiential with the Grade 10 course focusing on the land and the Grade 11 course focusing on oceanography. Regarding these culturally-relevant courses, the principal noted “when you look in the book and you see your nannuk [grandmother] in the book, like... When you see your hometown, when you see places that you hunt, where you know than the actual textbook does? It’s nice ().”

Specific goals for Mangilaluk School for 2018–19 were:

- Cranberry Picking for JK–Grade 8 students – 168 students and 4 Elders
- Arctic Sports for JK to Grade 12 Physical Education (PE) Classes – 227 students and 3 Elders
- Jigging for JK to Grade 12 PE Classes – 227 students with 4 elders
- Learning Fair – 168 students + 20 elders
- Skills Competition – 20 students + 5 elders
- Caribou Harvest – 227 students + 4 elders
- Mangilaluk Day – 227 students + 5 elders
- Drum Dancing – 168 students + 2 elders
- Square Dancing – 227 students + 4 elders
- Archery – 227 students + 1 elder
- Mipku Making – 168 students + 1 elder
- Cultural Foods Class – 20 students + 1 elder
- Cultural Art Class – 22 students + 1 elder
- Cultural Sewing – 60 students + 5 elders
- Story Telling – 227 students + 10 elders

In 2018–19 a half-time Cultural Coordinator was hired to help to plan cultural activities for the school. Grade 5 students went to Fort McPherson, a predominantly Gwich’in community, to learn about Gwich’in culture and share Inuvialuit culture. Students from Fort McPherson then visited Tuktoyaktuk and were exposed to drum dancing, ice fishing, and trapping. This trip was paid for by BDEC.

Interviewees and focus group participants said that Elders are coming into classrooms more and more. Often they teach sewing, or tell youth stories in Inuvialuktun. It is helpful if local country foods are part of activities with Elders:

Last year we had a caribou donated, that we were harvesting with the students and then we donated the meat that was harvested—it was actually the Elders committee that had it, and they came in and showed the kids how to harvest. We had all the kids doing it, but whatever meat was harvested went to the Elders, which was fine. If we’re cooking something, we want to give it to people to have. They gave us a little but to make Eskimo ice cream. So, our foods class made that, and then they brought it around to the kids at the school.” (Interviewee 16, May 6, 2019)

Often however there is difficulty finding sufficient country foods given regulations around tags for hunting wildlife. Locally-hunted meat or fish can be donated but not purchased except from a hunter/fisher with a commercial tag, which are in short supply. This can restrict

the extent to which traditional foods can be brought into the school and may also restrict hunting trips if the school cannot acquire a tag.

Another issue with cultural programming is that Tuktoyaktuk does not have a school cabin. Other schools in the ISR have their own cabin but there are restrictions on Mangilaluk School building one. One educator believes this is because Mangilaluk School is not yet an Inuvialuit-controlled school. This would provide more freedom of timing for when school trips could occur and would save the school funds from not having to rent someone else's cabin.

Noting that students could actually build the cabin, one interviewee said:

Our kids can do the work. If we had the teachers that are certified to do it. And it's a skill that, if they can build a cabin here, the Tuktoyaktuk housing association need employees. Kids are actually getting credits and hands on experience and they can be involved in that. And that's something, a skill that they're going to have, when they leave school, whether they go away to schooling or not. If they can build a cabin, they can maintain their own family's cabin on the land. They can do house repairs. (Interviewee 20, May 8, 2019)

Until schooling is based on Inuvialuit culture, Berger et al. (2016) argue that student success and well-being will suffer. In other words, integrating Inuvialuit culture and the Inuvialuktun language into some aspects of the curriculum, customs and practices of the school is insufficient for a system to be termed culture-based.

On-the-land Programming

“On the land is like therapy—then they can focus on academics” (Interviewee, May 8, 2019).

There was a great deal of emphasis on on-the-land programming at the school during my conversations in Tuktoyaktuk. The principal first described the equipment costs for such programming:

There's days funding will come through—“Hey you've got \$10,000 to spend on key cultural experiences.” So, like, well I can't have a key cultural experience if I can't bring the kids out 'cause I don't have the helmet to put them in skidoos. So, I'm like, ok, so today I spent \$10,000 to buy helmets. So like the funding is coming, it's just in little pockets that are getting thrown at us for different things right now and we're trying to build our inventory so that we're able to provide these experiences. (Krista Cudmore, May 6, 2019)

When oil prices were higher, oil companies used to support many of the OTL initiatives. However, since the price of oil has dropped in recent years, Mangilaluk School applies for many grants and raises funds throughout the year. One source of funds is the On The Land Collaborative (<http://www.nwtontheland.ca/>) and another is the Take A Kid Trapping program (<https://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/en/services/apply-take-kid-trapping-funding>). The Secretary for the school, Audrey Walker, assists with these fundraising efforts:

If there's anything that comes up, like hey there's \$1,000 for Drop the Pop she's like, “I'm on it.” Like, and she does it, and she's just a natural with it. She looks out for different stuff. Like we had a fundraiser last week for our excursions, and we had a movie night and bake sale with it. So we raised about \$2,500 in three hours. Like, all of it's the baking, like she bakes everything. And there's a line-up out the door of people wanting to come in. (Krista Cudmore, May 6, 2019)

A highlight this year in terms of OTL programming was a fishing trip to Husky Lakes, a nearby hunting grounds, for almost the entire school. One hundred sixty-five students from all grades went, and staff and teachers were invited. Respondents noted that this trip is important because the ice is melting more and more each year. The total cost for the four-day trip was \$40,000. Movie nights also help to fund on-the-land programming.

When Melanie asked students what they thought of OTL programming, one said “basically all the students in Tuktoyaktuk have been on the land.” And when she asked what it was about being on the land that students like they said “No drama. Nature and fresh air. Freedom.” Interviewees noted that only about half of youth in Tuktoyaktuk get the chance to go out on the land with their families. The main barrier is the expense. Among those that went on the Husky Lakes trip, they noted that children with a lot of experience on the land were proud to demonstrate their fishing skills to those who don’t go on the land as much. These positive associations with OTL programming are being perceived by Elders, parents, teachers and administrators too:

The teachers and the school take the kids out on the land program. And when they do that, it seems like they want to go to school. And I think the two things together, I think it’s a good program that, you know, because they want to learn traditional life and at the same time they want to learn school. And a lot of years there was no out on the land program. But the last two years, I’ve seen grades went up a little bit, not too much, but it really helps, so. (Elder 1, May 9, 2019)

“I’m excited about that, because we see a totally different kid when they’re out on the land”(Educator 5, May 7, 2019).

We set it up—everybody, custodians, everything were able to go out. So, going out there with some of the kids that I often have here in the office for not great reasons were on the group, and it was like, “Aw, man, like this group they spend enough time with me.” But getting them out there, they’re totally different kids. Yeah, totally different side of them. (Krista Cudmore, May 6, 2019)

Credit Recovery to Prevent “Senioritis”

School administrators described their work as constantly supporting students, especially at the upper-year levels. They understand that students will have bad days or weeks, and struggle to keep up with coursework, so they continuously track student progress and help them keep up with assignments and lessons. The principal noted:

A lot of staying on top of them. Like, actually, this morning, one of my projects once we’re done here is, I do, their final semester, I do grad updates every two weeks with them. So, all the classroom teachers give me a list of every assignment they’re missing. We print it out, we give it to them, we mail it to their parents. So that senioritis that comes in like, I’ve been there, I did it my last semester, I didn’t make good choices, and I had consequences for it. And that, it’s a real thing and they’re getting stir crazy. It’s just constantly staying on them. And then welcoming them back when they haven’t been here. We have kids in the potential grad class that have missed a month of school, that, life got in the way, and they weren’t making good choices, they call up, “Hey can I come back now?” Yeah, we’ll see you tomorrow.

As a result of this type of attention, they added a credit recovery class this year. The teaching staff noticed that in January (the start of a new semester), attendance started to slip or students would miss exams. The student might at that stage be earning a 35–40% in a class.

Double the number of high school graduates

Traditionally in the past, they'd end up failing the course and re-take the course in the next year. But since they've already done a portion of the work, the principal and vice-principal have found a way to get students "re-charged" in those courses again. Students sit in the school and finish the work they've fallen behind on, with assistance from a teacher. This is extra work for all staff, but:

We were able to free up one teacher to supervise this period, and luckily it's a small school. Like, we're the second biggest in the Delta, but we are a smaller school that the teachers know the kids. And we didn't have any turnover for the core courses last year at the high school. So those teachers taught the kids, kids are coming back, the teachers already have the work, they have the technology that they can look up what assignments are missing. (Krista Cudmore, May 6, 2019)

This has had a large impact for the senior students over the last couple of years and is likely a key reason for the high graduation rate at the end of last year.

Incentives and Stay-in-School Initiatives

In 2018–19 a group of senior students travelled to Paris as part of a school trip. Fifteen students went on the trip that was fundraised largely by the students themselves. With a price tag of \$100,000, it was a large fundraising effort for students in a small community with a high rate of poverty. They applied for external grants and received one from Ocean's North where students performed translations on scientific documents, giving traditional places names, etc. They worked with the tourism department in Tuktoyaktuk, through the Tuktoyaktuk Community Corporation, to create and prepare brochures. They ran bottle drives and bake sales as well. Michelle Tomasino, the teacher who organized the trip, commented that:

With the Europe trip, that was a motivational program. You know? And my goal behind the Europe trip... the trip to Europe was the carrot at the end of the stick. The whole plan of the project was leadership, to build young leaders, and to get them... And it was a stay in school program. Stay in school, do well, don't do drugs and alcohol, become a leader in the community, and you get to go to Europe for your grade 12 year. (Michelle Tomasino, May 7, 2019)

Incentives such as the Paris trip are available for lower-grade students as well. The school organizes a trip for students to go swimming in Inuvik. However, to attend, you must have 85% attendance or higher. Once in Inuvik they not only swim but are treated to catered meals and snacks at the concession stand. The bus ride itself is an adventure. For many students it was their first trip to Inuvik, because their family can't afford the gas to go or they don't have a truck to go.

In the past they've given away bikes and money, but they find that such cash or consumer good-type incentives aren't effective. This is because a bike can only be given to a few children, and those children who are the top attenders would have attended school anyway. A swim trip allows the school to reward a large number of students and it provides a memorable activity at the same time.

Attendance is relatively low in Tuktoyaktuk compared to other ISR communities. Whereas attendance is estimated at roughly 50% in Tuktoyaktuk, other communities average 70% attendance. For many youth, hunting season takes them out of class, especially once the weather starts to warm and families are eager to get out before the ice gets too thin. In April, which is Jamboree season, attendance drops significantly:

Double the number of high school graduates

Traditionally now Husky Lakes is a very important time, and it's been warmer. Then they'll shift up to the coast when the geese start to come. So, we're in that transition of going from the fishing into the geese hunting, so it makes it very hard in the spring, one, to keep kids motivated, and to keep them in the building. And that's where we don't—we say like, “Ok, if you've missed a month, we're not cutting you out.” ‘Cause we know, like, they have to feed families. (Krista Cudmore, May 6, 2019)

The school, along with support from IRC and the DEA, also provides families with all children with high attendance with healthy food baskets. These baskets are valued at \$75 and were given out last year to 14 students. The class with the most improved attendance has also been given a pizza party. The Student Family Support Worker (SFSW) implements most of these incentive programs. In Tuktoyaktuk, the SFSW is Meeka Steen, however the program exists across the ISR and is funded by the IRC. The program aims to have an Inuvialuit in the SFSW position and this individual acts as bridge (go-between) between families and schools. The goal is to increase attendance and student success, and to involve families in the school. SFSWs are located on site at the school, but can make home visits with the consent of parents/family.

Food Programs Draw Students In

Unfortunately, as is the case across Inuit Nunangat, high food prices and low incomes for some creates food insecurity is more common than in southern communities. Food insecurity can refer to a home running out of food, when nutritious meals are no longer affordable, when individuals skip meals or cut the size of a meal due to insufficient food (Arriagada, 2017). According to this definition, the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) indicates that more than one-half of Inuit (52%) aged 25 and over living in Inuit Nunangat was food insecure. This percentage was 33% specifically for the ISR in the 2012 APS. Hence many youth in Tuktoyaktuk likely face food insecurity.

As a result, Mangilaluk School runs a breakfast program, and this was mentioned by a number of individuals in the community as a factor in educational success in Tuktoyaktuk. This program is for all students from Jr. Kindergarten to Grade 12, and students can have food even if they're late for school because each classroom has food. The program is funded through the DEA at \$24,000 per year. A local Elder cooks breakfast each morning. Many noted that initially students came solely for the food, and then stayed and became more engaged with school.

Barriers to student persistence

Naturally factors outside of the education system also influence attendance at school and the extent to which a child succeeds in the education system. Below we discuss a number of non-education factors noted by Tuktoyaktuk community members as influencing schooling in the community.

Traditional Livelihoods Clash with E-learning

BDEC runs a Northern Distance Learning (NDL) program for students in small communities that do not have access to the same range of academic course as larger communities and schools do. This allows students to meet the graduation requirements of high school and increases the likelihood of post-secondary education for BDEC while allowing them to stay in their home community. NDL is run out of East Three Secondary School in Inuvik. The NDL teachers in Inuvik and students from around the NWT see and talk to each other on big screens. All course materials are online. Between 2014 and 2018, 166 students participated in at least one

Double the number of high school graduates

NDL course. Courses offered through distance learning are Science, Math, ELA, Biology, Physics, Art, Social Studies, and Chemistry (NWT, 2019b).

The program CUSO International (formerly Canadian University Service Overseas [CUSO]) sends international volunteers to Tuktoyaktuk to support the NDL program—to assist students within the school while they take distance courses. Educators in the school noted that these volunteers have been very innovative, not just for the NDL program but in other ways. For example, the CUSO International volunteer last year started a photography club and took one student to the Skills Canada photography competition. The volunteer before that started a guitar club. These volunteers receive funds for housing from the DEA.

Focus group participants and interviewees commented that students are drawn to the “high-tech” nature of these courses. Each student uses a surface pro laptop that connects their screen right to the teachers’. However, because the NDL program is broadcasting to communities with different micro-climates and hunting seasons, in a 90-day semester, half of the classes may not have a teacher present because the communities have different holidays. “Because what’s important is different than what’s important for Tuktoyaktuk, that’s different from Paulatuk” (Krista Cudmore, May 6, 2019). This makes it difficult to learn for students that are already being asked to be fairly independent in their final academic credits.

All schools in the ISR must therefore find a balance between the important fishing, hunting and trapping activities students do with their families and academics – to match the two worlds youth will eventually live in. This is similar to the findings of Berger et al. (2016) who noted that when parents were asked whether there had been “more than three times in any year when your own family’s on-the-land activities have conflicted with school,” half answered “yes.” They note:

This resonates with a longstanding tension in Arctic schooling. School takes such a large chunk of time that it would be very difficult to become an expert in land skills while attending full-time (Henze & Vanett, 1993), and yet the way Western school curriculum is organized, missing chunks of time at school can mean missing key concepts or techniques (Macquire & McAlpine, 1996). Having students complete modules with guidance might help students with many absences continue to make progress (Berger, 2008), but there is no easy solution. If EuroCanadian teachers understand the crucial importance of land activities to the education of Inuvialuit students, they should be able to respond with respect when students miss school because they are on the land with their families. (page 9)

More broadly, during the student focus group, some students said they feel that there are actually too many holidays. They commented that when one considers that much learning is independent (e.g., with substitute teachers who don’t know the material, with teachers pulled away to do other things, e-learning), there isn’t enough instruction. The principal noted this as well:

We had kids that are taking our advanced classes, our dash 1 level classes, the ones that are most likely going on to post-secondary programming, they are sitting there without a teacher. So like, Inuvik had a two-week spring break, and then the day they got back, we started a two-week spring break. They would have a PLC day, or, a teacher planning day, then ours would be a totally different day. So, the onus is on the kid to come in and work independently and try to do physics [30] with no teacher? (Krista Cudmore, May 6, 2019)

Missing Social Services as Missing Educational Supports

During both the individual interviews and focus groups, the issue of income support arose as a factor influencing student success. Unfortunately, income poverty is high in all Inuit regions, the ISR included. Median individual income for Inuit in Inuit Nunangat is \$11,000 less than that for all Canadians, and \$66,000 less than that of non-Indigenous people in Inuit Nunangat. In the ISR, median individual income for Inuit is 28% of median individual income for non-Indigenous individuals (ITK, 2018).

Given these statistics, income support is crucial for families in Tuktoyaktuk. During Melanie's interviews, five different individuals said they feel that income support discourages school attendance, and that some youth are just biding their time until they turn 18 and can receive income support. These individuals suggested that perhaps income support should only be provided to those parents who encourage their child to attend school. This idea is similar to that in the international development practice, whereby government and humanitarian agencies provide cash only to parents whose children meet certain standards of school attendance and health check-ups.³

However, one educator during the focus group noted:

And it's kind of, ok, so you cut off the income support, and the kids already aren't getting the benefit of the income support a lot of the time, so if you cut it off, who's gonna suffer? Is it going to be the adults or is it going to be the kids? And it's going to be the kids. (Educator 2, May 7, 2019)

This debate harks back to one in the area long ago. Salokangas (2009) writes: "As the school attendance in the NWT was not as high as the government would have liked it to be, the government threatened to hold back family allowance if children failed to attend school (Berger, 1977; King, 1999). Gary, one of the interviewees, explains how government policy influenced his mother's decision to send her children to school, even though she wished otherwise: "I was forced to go to school. That's the only way my mother would collect family allowance. My mother didn't want me to go to school. We had no choice in order to survive." (Salokangas, 2009, p. 66).

Income support has also led to controversy more recently. In 2010, the NWT government made the decision to replace cash income assistance with food vouchers in Tuktoyaktuk (and two other ISR communities). These vouchers could be used at the community's two stores — the Northern Store and Stanton. But in 2018, a NWT human rights panel ruled the practice of distributing social assistance through vouchers instead of cash as discriminatory. The adjudication panel stated that those on income assistance "have a right to be consulted about how their money is provided. It concludes that no consultation exists for recipients in Tuktoyaktuk. Instead, the territorial government made a 'unilateral decision' to change the way the money was divvied out." (CBC News, 2017)

As it does for so many socio-economic issues, housing affects student attendance and concentration in school, and so is a challenge to student persistence in Tuktoyaktuk. A parent in the Elders/Parents focus group noted:

A lot of our kids are living in overcrowded houses, waiting for—they're living with family members and family members might have different lifestyles from them, where, you know, kids don't have a bed and parents are up all night partying, or uncle and auntie at the house and—they come here to sleep, some of them... There's a lot of kids that we

³ This is referred to as Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) and they have been in use since the mid-1990s with some effectiveness (Millan et al. (2019).

have, they'll fall asleep in the middle of the day. And, we have high school kids that'll come in and they walk in, they just put their head up, like we find them in the back foyer, or hiding under a cupboard, and we just let them sleep. Wake them up when it's lunchtime, "Hey do you want to go home? Do you want to stay and sleep?" They're not coming here 'cause it's their first option to sleep, it's their only option. (Parent 8, May 9, 2019)

It is hoped that the new school will have more space so that students that need to sleep during the day can do so in peace, because currently they are sleeping in classrooms. As discussed below, recruiting teachers is also difficult in Tuktoyaktuk and the lack of housing exacerbates this. For new teachers with families, sharing a house with other teachers is likely to be unappealing. A few individuals we spoke with were frustrated that other services—such as the RCMP—have dedicated housing while there is no dedicated housing for teachers.

Teen pregnancy is a factor in dropout/lack of attendance for some students. However, the community daycare is short of about 18 spots. This restricts high school attendance for students who do not have family that can assist with childcare. Again, the hope among individuals we spoke to is that the new school will have a daycare that can add capacity to the existing daycare.

Human Resource Challenges

The BDEC Operating Plan for 2018–19 notes:

Staffing schools has become more challenging. With teaching opportunities becoming increasingly available in southern Canada, teachers have accepted contracts in our region, only to notify us late in the summer that they have accepted teaching contracts elsewhere. This pattern adds stress on our administrators and schools causing impacts on student learning. Substitute teachers are becoming more and more difficult to find in all of our communities. It is rare that we have a qualified teacher available to substitute teach in any of our schools. Increasingly we are hiring a younger staff, many of whom are in their first years of teaching. (BDEC, 2018, p. 5)

If basic staffing is a challenge, finding Inuvialuit teachers is even more difficult. One interviewee noted that some teachers "Come up—it's really good salary. Some people, unfortunately, they're here just for the money" (Interviewee 2, May 4, 2019). The transient nature/high turnover of teachers reduces the extent to which students connect with teachers:

And, we notice a difference. If you're here for one year, the kids treat you differently. You're leaving. Why would they put effort into getting to know you when somebody else is just going to come back? But as soon as you come back, they open up. "Ok this person, they want to be here, they want to be here for us." So start to see a different kid when you come back. The kids are extremely welcoming, even my first day here, didn't even know the kids. I had two kids come up to me at school, "Hey you, come here, come here" like, walked me to my house and like would always meet up. Extremely welcoming, but I can see that there's a bit of a guard up, and I don't blame them. Like, if people constantly come in for a few months and then leave? And they have to learn somebody else and, "Oh, I'm going to come in, and I'm going to fix this, or I'm going to do that, I'm going to do this." No, you can't. And those that have been here, you realize it, and you see a different side, the more you that you've been coming back. (Teacher 4, May 7, 2019)

One educator who grew up in Tuktoyaktuk reflected on how this affected them as a student:

I think that comes from a young teacher, too, right? That was just starting, and... I think it depends on the teacher. But, when I was in school in Tuktoyaktuk till I was 12 years old, I always protected myself not to get too close to a teacher, too, 'cause they might leave. What if my favourite teacher leaves? And, I learned to always guard my heart. Like I always knew that this, "Don't get too attached, 'cause come September they might not be there." So I think a lot of kids might still have that, unease ... (Educator 3, May 7, 2019)

The long-term teachers in Tuktoyaktuk are connected to the community and plan to stay teaching in Tuktoyaktuk for the long-term. One such long-term teacher, Michele Tomasino, shared two key points in this regard:

I'm connected to the community, I live on the land, I have people in my life that are very good to me, that take me everywhere. I fit into the community, and that's the key to teaching in the North: is coming in and becoming a part of the community. And I tell that to young, new teachers every September, "Get to know—get adopted. Get to know people in the community that you can connect with and go out on the land with that family. And ask, don't be shy. If you ask they're not going to say, 'Well, no.'" The community is super welcoming. (Michele Tomasino, May 7, 2019)

A long time ago, I learned from an elder that—in a program I was in, in Vancouver—that the most important factor between you and a student is not what you're teaching them, it's the connection you have with them. And I actually believe that. I believe that it's all about who you connect with, and once you connect, the sky's the limit. You know, you can play on their better judgment, you can play on their, "I know you got this, I know you can do this," like, "I know you know how, look, this is you writing an essay." (Michele Tomasino, May 7, 2019)

With a long-term teacher comes an understanding of what students have on their plates: I think a lot of times teachers coming in, they have expectations but they don't realize what the kids are truly dealing with. And if you've only been here a few months, you're not going to know. But the more that you're here, you truly see what everybody's dealing with and the struggles the kids have, and it's... That's something that it took me time to learn. It takes more than a year to understand the community. You can hear it, you can see it, but you don't truly understand it until you've seen a kid year after year. You see kids on the good days and the bad days, you see—you have the conversations, like you know, there's a big party on the weekend, kid's parent's in the drunk tank. And then you see the impact of it afterwards where so-and-so got sent to jail, you could see mom got beat, you see the impact on the kids. You start, "Well, why's that kid acting up? The kid's just being bad." No, the kid's not being bad, the kid's reacting to the police barging into the house at three o'clock in the morning. (Educator 2, May 7, 2019)

Guided by a Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling, NWT students are generally placed with their age peers from kindergarten to Grade 9. The practice itself is more nuanced in that, if agreed upon by their parents, a student can be retained at a lower grade. However, most children move forward with their age peers regardless of their progress so that classrooms are 'multi-level'—they have diverse reading levels, mathematics abilities, writing skills, etc., across students within the same grade. Teachers are then charged with supporting individual learners. A number of interviewees suggested that students who have been "socially passed" do not receive proper, consistent supports.

All interviews/focus group discussions were unresponsive of Inclusive Schooling. One interviewee commented that "social passing involves setting kids up for failure. I don't think that

social passing should occur” (Interviewee 10, May 5, 2019). They felt that passing a child to the next grade without them completing all of the necessary requirements leads to a growing gap in their skills as they move forward in the education system. Another said that students need to “learn that failing is okay— we all do it at some point in our lives.” A parent at the focus group felt that inclusive education has to do with infrastructure: the school is too small to be holding students back multiple years as new students enter. Another parent noted that there was a student recently who completed Grade 12 and wanted to do an engineering degree. They were told they would need to upgrade for four years. She felt this is because the student was pushed ahead throughout their K–12 education. She said “This is hard to talk about, but we need to.”

To assist with this, educators in the Educators Focus Group suggested that teachers need more support from classroom assistants— Educational Assistants (EAs) and Instructional Coaches. Mangilaluk School received a grant for this through Jordan’s Principle last year.⁴ One of the EAs at the Educator’s Focus Group said:

We need more EAs. We need a full time EA in each class. ’Cause in one classroom, I’m there for 15 minutes. I can start something, but I’m not able to finish it or see it through and that teacher has left to take care of. I also work with a little boy in senior kindergarten who has learning disabilities. So I work with him one-on-one, and so I’m with him all day. (Educator 5, May 7, 2019)

Two other educator comments emphasize the importance of Inuvialuit EAs and more EAs in general:

“I’m the EA for, well not really Grade 9s —yeah I’m in Grade 9. I’m EA for Grades 5, 4/5, 9, 10, 11, and 12. But I thought I was making a difference in some of the high school classes, and I told one of the teachers, I said, “When I’m here, everybody’s so quiet...” And she was like, “Oh, believe me, [Educator’s Name], when you’re gone it’s like, these kids—you believe me.” So anyway, I went to the next class, I purposely stayed there for 20 minutes, walking around, just walking around, ’cause that teacher didn’t ask me to EA. And, then I was like, “Holy, man, did extra people walk into that classroom next door?” So, I walked back, and they all looked at me and sat back down. And I was like, “Holy man, what is it about me being there?” And she said, “Just having a local person in there.” That’s what the teachers ask, is, “How come the students are so willing to come to you?” I was like, “Some of these kids I babysat when they were babies. They know me.” (Educator 2, May 7, 2019)

I did EA for high school for 3 years, and then after that, I did one year doing all the other grades, Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Didn’t like it, ’cause it was half an hour, little segments, and you can’t get nothing done. You feel bad, ’cause you start something with the kids and you’re not able to see it through. And you want to see it through, you don’t want to leave the teacher with what you started with them. And then it really, it falls back on the kids, and they get discouraged. They don’t want to finish it. Yeah, they really get discouraged. ’Cause you explain it one way, and the teacher may explain it a different way, and then ... (Educator 4, May 7, 2019)

⁴ Jordan’s Principle is a government policy in Canada which ensures that a First Nations child’s need for government services should come first, regardless of the jurisdiction providing the service. It is named after a boy named Jordan River Anderson from Norway House Cree Nation who was failed by the Canadian healthcare system due to jurisdictional disputes. After research on this issue by the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society, the Canadian government passed a bill affirming Jordan’s Principle in 2007 (<https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/jordans-principle-information-sheet>).

A Dearth of Support Among a Subset of Parents

A lack of parental encouragement for schooling was mentioned by individuals in both the interviews and focus groups. This lack of encouragement for attendance was linked by the respondents to residential schooling, which closed very recently in the ISR. Generations of youth in the NWT were removed from their communities and culture, and their bonds with their parents were severely strained which has affected parenting skills for the current generation of parents. One individual said:

Well, yeah, we know people don't give a whatever about school, and then their kids don't give a whatever about school, and, so on and so on, right? But as long as we continue to blame, no one will heal. (Parent 3, May 7, 2019)

One person at the Educator's focus group noted that their family encouraged school attendance despite the residential school legacy:

And that's it. Parents play a huge role, and on top of that, like, I mean, the relationship between the education system and Indigenous people as well, things, just in general, they're not particularly our fault. We're coming up to intergenerational this n' that. And it's the same thing, like my grandmother's a teacher, my mom was a biologist and now she's a nurse. Seven kids, we all graduated, and we're all off doing our own things, and successful in terms of being happy. And, like, we're a couple of teachers, a computer tech, like, a class one truck driver, the other one's graduating this year, the other one's studying to be a nurse just like my mom is. You know what I mean, that parental, as well as that view on education, that really, really strained relationship between the education system and Indigenous people in general, right? (Educator 5, May 7, 2019)

Educators and administrators at Mangilaluk School noted that a lack of parental supervision for some youth results in intermittent attendance at school:

And we notice that with our kids, especially when it's June —when it's really nice, the basketball court, they really love basketball, and we have the fenced in, it's a concrete slab basketball court on the side of the property, that, I'll come to work in the morning and there's kids that are out there playing and they've just been playing all through the night. And they'll see us, and "Oh, time to go take a quick nap" or go get breakfast and then come in for classes. And then eventually they go home at lunch, fall asleep, and they're not back in the afternoons. So, it's, the sleep cycles and a lot of kids that disappear for a few weeks at a time, it's like "Well, I need to get my sleep, right?" (Educator 2, May 7, 2019)

Like, I'd say about half of our students are here for the regular—they're here 8:45 in the morning, they leave at four o'clock. The other half of the high school students, they're on their own schedule and... They're missing out on instruction, we let them know that. You're not going to get the lesson that comes with this. But, if you can do the assignment on your own, we're not going to say "No you can't turn it in. Or, no, you're not a student here because you missed a day of school." We'll take what they give us... (Krista Cudmore, May 6, 2019)

There is a large academic literature discussing importance of relationships for school success (e.g., Lipka, 1989; Aylward, 2006; Berger, 2009; Taylor et al., 2010). One Elder concurred with this literature:

Just to go back to that first question you got there, the potential of our students graduating, for me, I think the most important thing in regards to that first question is that

it has to come from the parents. That's where you push it. If your parents don't want you to attend school, and let you get away with it, you know, you're giving them a lack of education that they require. So the most important thing for me, like I said earlier, was my grandkids that I have now, is that once they start kindergarten and stuff, I'm going to make sure that their parents make sure that they attend school. And at the same time, have the appropriate [rest] that's required, 'cause they need to rest for a long time. They need to regain their energy again. Get the sleep that's required, and the food that they need to start the day. You know, that's how you set yourself up to push yourself like that. If you want your kids to actually graduate at southern school. If it don't come from the parent, you know, it won't happen. And that's where you get left behind. (Elder 4, May 9, 2019)

Less than optimal parental support for schooling suggests a need for ways of enhancing parental support. The academic literature suggests that mandatory cultural training for teachers and administrators is helpful in this regard (Berger, 2009), and while such training exists in the BDEC region, it could be increased. The literature also emphasizes that schools that reflect Inuit culture are an indication of Inuit control of education, and that parental involvement will increase in response to this control. As Mangilaluk School moves closer towards Inuit control, parental engagement will likely increase.

The responsibility for encouragement does not fall solely on parents however, and in Tuktoyaktuk a number of individuals commented on strong support for school from community members not necessarily related to youth:

I think, just a lot of encouragement. A lot of positive encouragement. I don't mean from the parents, it's like, a lot of the encouragement from the community members, and lot of family members. A lot of the students are encouraging other students to come in and attend, and... That's one of the things I think of when I think of question number one: What is one factor you think is behind educational quality in Tuktoyaktuk? So, when a kid walks around school, they'll hear from all sorts of people, "Yeah, stay in school". (Interviewee 20, May 8, 2019)

Some suggested grandparents are providing encouragement where parental encouragement is lacking:

Well, I find we get more support from our older grandparents. That they are wanting their kids to be educated. They are the ones that are coming in... And when we have issue with some of our kids, we find often times if we can talk to the grandparents, we get a little bit more of a, "Hey, well I'll talk to their parents" kinda thing. (Educator 4, May 7, 2019)

Barriers to Post-Secondary Schooling

Yeah, it is exciting. What I think students should do these days is, set a goal that will get them outta Tuktoyaktuk, but not take the Tuktoyaktuk outta the kid. Like, they could come back, and do the hunting and fishing and whaling, but just like get a job that will get you successful in life. You know, you can live in both worlds. (Student 1, May 9, 2019)

As demonstrated by Table 1 below, employment prospects are much higher for individuals in the NWT with post-secondary education. Despite these large returns to education, many high school graduates in Tuktoyaktuk cannot enrol in post-secondary schooling immediately after high school as they lack the requisite courses or grades to gain acceptance to the program of their choice. Upon graduation, many still need to take additional courses before

post-secondary schooling due to a lack of academic options compared to southern schools, and due to a lack of support amid Inclusive Schooling. This was noted by all types of education stakeholder we spoke with—educators, parents, Elders and students themselves. One Elder said:

I know for a fact, that when a student passes Grade 12 here, and they want to go down south for further education, their grade level is too low. What happens is they have to upgrade, if they want to continue, or they can choose to quit. Just—there was a guy here who completed Grade 12, and he wanted to go into some kind of training—aw, you know into building or... engineering, he wanted to go into engineering... His grade level is not up to par. It's going to take him at least four years to complete what he wants to do, and then try for his engineering, whatever. That's, when I think about it, it's the school here where they push your kids ahead with the regular kids. It's a really hard thing to think about, it's a hard thing to talk about, because it involves holding a kid back while their friends go ahead. But, he's not keeping up to his schoolwork. I don't know, it's his fault, or I don't know if it's the school's fault. It's no use pointing fingers at anybody right now, but, I don't know if that holding the kids—pushing them ahead—helps. Because, in the real world, that you guys live in, we're not up to your grade level, here in the North. (Elder 1, May 9, 2019)

Less than Grade 9	46.3%
High School, No Diploma	30.2%
High School Diploma	19.4%
Other Certificate or Diploma	12.4%
University Degree	6.7%

Source: 2019 NWT Community Survey (GNWT (2019a))

As discussed above, greater support for Inclusive Schooling is key to reducing the need for upgrading and therefore would very likely lead to greater post-secondary acceptance of Tuktoyaktuk high school graduates. The IRC's Inuvialuit Education Foundation provides financial assistance for Inuvialuit students to attend University and College degree or diploma programs (IRC,2019). Despite this, other individuals we spoke with indicated a fear of leaving Tuktoyaktuk to enrol in a post-secondary program: "They're ready academically, but maybe not in the whole life experience of moving away from the community, especially when not many have gone in the past" (Interviewee 10, May 5, 2019).

To assist with this homesickness or fear of the unknown, Tuktoyaktuk graduates may join the Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS) program. This program provides Inuit youth with "unique cultural and academic learning experiences that will allow them to develop the knowledge, skills and positive attitudes needed to contribute to the building of Nunavut."⁵ Since 2013, the program has been open to Inuit from across Canada. Two individuals from Tuktoyaktuk, Hayden Stuart and Melody Teddy, have completed NS and were featured in Tusaayaksat magazine.⁶ Both

⁵ <https://www.nunavutsivuniksavut.ca/>

⁶ Hayden was featured in the Fall 2016 edition and Melody was featured in the Spring 2019 edition of Tusaayaksat Magazine (<https://issuu.com/tusaayaksatmagazine>).

spoke positively of the NS program, indicating that it taught them about Inuit history and land claims, and gave them greater confidence to pursue post-secondary education.

At the Elder and Parents focus group, two people discussed the need for greater vocational training in Tuktoyaktuk. They said there is a dearth of skilled tradespeople in Tuktoyaktuk—a lack of carpenters, plumbers, electricians, etc. They said the Arctic College should be funded to a greater degree to ensure more instructors could be hired (currently there is only one staff), and a greater range of vocational programs offered at the College.

Conclusions

The recent opening of the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk highway has sparked a search for a name for the highway. Some have suggested that it be named after three youth who grew up in Tuktoyaktuk but attended residential school in Inuvik. In 1972, despite that a road was not yet built, these three boys attempted to walk from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk in order to leave residential school early. Sadly, only one of them arrived in Tuktoyaktuk (Roberts, 2017). The new highway could pay tribute to the sacrifice of these young boys and the many other Inuvialuit who suffered at residential school in the ISR.

In order to move as far away as possible from the horrors of residential schools, Mangilaluk School is on a path towards culture-based schooling. This transition is being supported by all education stakeholders—parents, school administrators, BDEC staff, NWT departments, teachers, Elders and students themselves. This case study reveals, however, that Mangilaluk School is not just an educational institution, but is also a place where youth find comfort and safety.

Whether due to the breakfast program run at the school, on-the-land programming or the capital investment represented by the upcoming new school building, schooling in Tuktoyaktuk is experiencing investments from many sources. However, this case study reveals the need for increased resources for Mangilaluk School. Residents indicated very precisely what they think is needed to enhance Inuvialuit student success: Tuktoyaktuk residents call for more EAs in the school, an additional Inuvialuktun teacher, more instructors for the NDL program so students always have a live classroom, increased housing not only for students' well-being but to attract teachers, an expanded daycare, more Elder involvement in the classroom, and more predictable funding for on-the-land programming.

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