



Healing Through Connection: Tunnganarniq's Role in Inuit Health and Well-Being

POLS-3103: Human Rights Northern Canada



Welcome!
Tungasugit!
Toong-a-su-git



Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge that Acadia University is situated in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq, within the traditional region of Sipekne'katik. This land is protected by the Peace and Friendship Treaties, which affirm the rights of Indigenous peoples without involving the surrender of land or resources. As Treaty People, we all share the responsibility to honor these agreements.

"Tunnganarniq"

Toon-gah-nar-nik

An Inuktitut term that embodies the spirit of openness, friendliness, and inclusivity, reflecting a welcoming and collaborative attitude.



Dedication to Murray Sinclair

- This presentation is dedicated to **Justice Murray Sinclair**, whose work has played a crucial role in shaping the journey of reconciliation in Canada.
- As Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Justice Sinclair's leadership has helped uncover the truth about the residential school system and its long-lasting impacts on Indigenous communities.
- His commitment to justice, healing, and advocating for Indigenous rights has been an inspiration to many, and his influence continues to drive change.
- His words, "**We are all Treaty People**," reminds us of the need for unity, respect, and the protection of Indigenous rights, cultures, and dignity.
- Today, we honor his legacy by striving for a more inclusive future that uplifts and supports all Indigenous Individuals.



Figure 1: Monkman, Kent. (2024). *The Hon. Sen. Emeritus Murray Sinclair*. Winnipeg Free Press.
<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/2024/11/08/another-side-of-the-multi-faceted-murray-sinclair>

Our Collective Journey

- Over the course of 12 weeks in our **POLS-3103: Human Rights in Northern Canada course**, as a class we have developed a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by Inuit communities, especially in relation to the social determinants of health.
- We aim to **share our knowledge** and to **elevate Inuit voices** on critical issues such as housing, education, food insecurity, and cultural preservation, and to advocate for meaningful changes that foster resilience and well-being.
- Our policy briefs highlight key issues Inuit communities face and offer actionable insights for positive change.
- We hope to engage others in recognizing these challenges and to inspire support for justice, reconciliation, and the strengthening of Inuit communities resilience.

POLS-3103 Human Rights of North Canada class with Rosemary Cooper, Executive Director of Pauktuutit



"Look at the landscape around you and imagine having people not only survive but thrive here for 4,000 years.

We're extremely resilient, and even with all that recent history, we've negotiated four different land claims agreements, which is a huge accomplishment.

HEIDI METCALFE-LANGILLE, A YOUNG INUIT CULTURALIST (2020)

Map of Inuit Nunangat

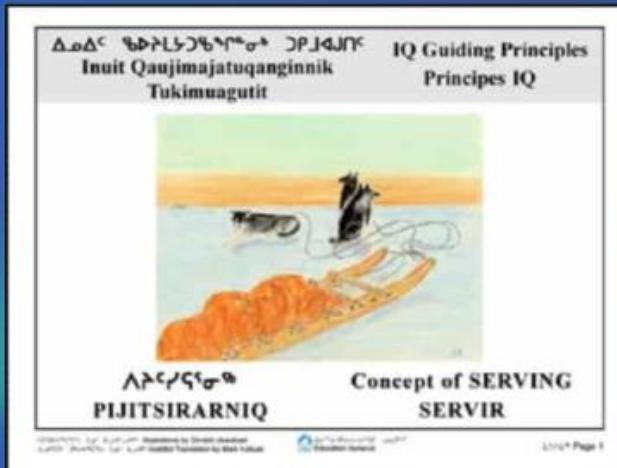


“Inuit ancestors have paved the way with resiliency; setting their mind and soul right in order to overcome uncertain days, weeks and sometimes months.

They learned to ground themselves with their values and traditions to survive the harshest of circumstances, and it's imperative to relate to them in order to find strength and cope during difficult and stressful times”

PAUL ROBERTSON, ISUARSIVIK'S PROGRAM MANAGER (2020)

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ)



Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) embodies the fundamental principles that guide all aspects of Inuit life.

Residential Schools

TRC Findings:

- The **Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada** described residential schools as a "systematic, government-sponsored attempt to destroy Aboriginal cultures" and labeled them as "cultural genocide" (2015).

Piita Irniq's Story:

- At 11 years old, Piita Irniq was kidnapped to the residential school at Chesterfield Inlet in August 1958.
- He recalls being **physically punished for speaking Inuktitut**.
- While Piita was able to retain his native language, many other children lost the ability to speak their Indigenous languages.
- Children were isolated from their families and communities, resulting in a deep disconnection from their culture and traditional ways of life.



Figure 1: *Inuit residential school students sit in a classroom at Joseph Bernier Federal Day School in 1963. Piita Irniq sits on the right, in the third row from the front, with his hand on his face.* <https://www.nunavutnews.com/nunavut-news/residential-school-survivors-advocate-for-historic-site-in-chesterfield-inlet-7279573>

“I prefer to say kidnapped.
*Residential school was not a home, it was a
horror, a house of horrors.*”

PIITA IRNIQ, TOLD INSIDE EDITION DIGITAL (2021).

Piita Irniq: Resilience, Advocacy, and Reconciliation



Figure 1: Piita Irniq sits next to a childhood photo of himself taken at Turquetal Hall Residential School. 2922. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/piita-irniq-residential-school-papal-visit-1.6528887>



Figure 2: Piita Irniq at Turquetal Hall/Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School in 1959. <https://www.nunavutnews.com/nunavut-news/residential-school-survivors-advocate-for-historic-site-in-chesterfield-inlet-7279573>



Figure 3: Elders Piita Irniq, centre, holds up an image of Fr. Johannes Rivoire, who is wanted in Canada for abusing children in Nunavut but now resides in France. <https://globalnews.ca/news/9024099/pope-francis-iqualuit-visit/>

Seeking Justice and Accountability

- Piita Irniq, like many Indigenous students, endured abuse at residential school.
- Father Johannes Rivoire, a former Catholic priest in Canada's Arctic (1960s–1990s), faced allegations of sexually abusing Inuit children.
- Six decades later, Irniq urged Pope Francis to help bring Rivoire to Canada to face justice, stating, "**This monster cannot be allowed to get away with what he did to Inuit children**" (2022).
- That year, Pope Francis visited the Arctic to apologize for the "evil" of Canada's residential schools.



Figure 1: Pope Francis in Iqaluit, Nunavut. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2022-07/pope-francis-canada-iqaluit-meeting-inuit.html>



Figure 2: Pope Francis presented with a traditional drum as a gift by Piita Irniq during a public event in Iqaluit, Nunavut, on July 29, 2022. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/pope-francis-iqaluit-nunavut-visit-1.6535224>

*"I can still hear my language in my mind,
but if I try to speak it, my throat seizes up, just
waiting for that hit across the back of the head."*

QUOTE FROM MARIE WILSON'S BOOK "NORTH OF NOWHERE" PAGE 206

Forced Relocations

The Ahiarmiut:

- Lived around Ennadai Lake, located in the Kivalliq Region of Nunavut, Canada.
- Between 1950 and 1960, the Canadian government relocated the Ahiarmiut five times to unfamiliar lands.
 - This was due to the reported dependence on trade with federal employees at a nearby radio tower.
- They were moved to an isolated island with no food, shelter, or tools.
 - At the North Henik/Oftedal Lakes, many suffered starvation, exposure, and murder.
- In 2008, the Ahiarmiut filed a lawsuit against Canada.
 - A settlement was reached in September 2018.



Figure 1: A family of Ahiarmiut, including David Serkoak pictured behind his mother Mary Qahug Miki (center) at Ennadai Lake in the mid-1950s before the Canadian government forcefully relocated them.
<https://www.arctictoday.com/canadas-genocide-case-ahiarmiut/>

"There is no money that could ever compensate for what we suffered due to past government decisions. However, after a 20-year battle, I appreciate that this government was finally willing to talk.

It uplifts my spirits to see this day, though I regret that many Ahiarmiut won't be here to see it. We forgive, but we will not forget. We will use the commemoration and education funds to ensure others don't forget, and the country learns from its past mistakes."

DAVID SERKOAK, PRESIDENT, AHIAKMIUT RELOCATION SOCIETY (2019)

Impacts of Colonialism

Sled Dogs

- In the 1920s, an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 Canadian Inuit dogs lived in Northern Canada.
- From the 1950s to the 1970s, tens of thousands of Inuit sled dogs in the Eastern Arctic were killed, mainly by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.
- By 1963, the "Canadian Eskimo dog" was declared extinct.
- Inuit saw these killings as a deliberate effort by the Canadian government to force them into year-round settlements.
- In 2019, the Canadian government apologized to Inuit in the Eastern Arctic for the dog slaughter and pledged funding for a sled dog revitalization program.



Figure 1: An Inuk child and dog at Fort Ross in 1945.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Ross,_Nunavut



Figure 2: Sled dogs relax in front of an igloo in 1950 near the present-day community of Inukjuak.
https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/65674former_sled_dog_owners_in_nunavik_receive_compensation_for_loss_of_the/

Intergenerational Trauma

- Intergenerational trauma in Inuit communities stems from the impacts of colonialism, particularly the residential school system, which aimed to erase Indigenous cultures.
- Children were forcibly removed from their families, abused, and stripped of their language and traditions, leading to mental health challenges, substance abuse, and family dysfunction.
- Inuit are reclaiming cultural practices and using traditional healing methods to break the cycle and restore their well-being.



Figure 1: https://isuarsivik.ca/guidance-inspiration-from-inuit-ancestors/?doing_wp_cron=1732027691.0443210601806640625000

"If you subject one generation to that kind of parenting and they become adults and have children; those children become subjected to that treatment and then you subject a third generation to a residential school system the same as the first two generations.

You have a whole society affected by isolation, loneliness, sadness, anger, hopelessness and pain."

DR. MAGGIE HODGSON

Land: A Northern Home

- Inuit Nunangat spans 40% of Canada's landmass and 72% of its coastline, encompassing 51 Arctic communities (ITK, 2021).
- Forced relocations disrupted Inuit traditions and ways of life.
 - Elders struggle to access long-term care
 - Pregnant women are often relocated due to limited local healthcare.
- Climate change impacts Inuit livelihoods
 - Thinning ice and shifting animal migration patterns.
- Protecting Pingualuit National Park is essential for cultural and environmental preservation.
 - Traditional hunting and fishing grounds are vital for sustaining Inuit culture and economy.

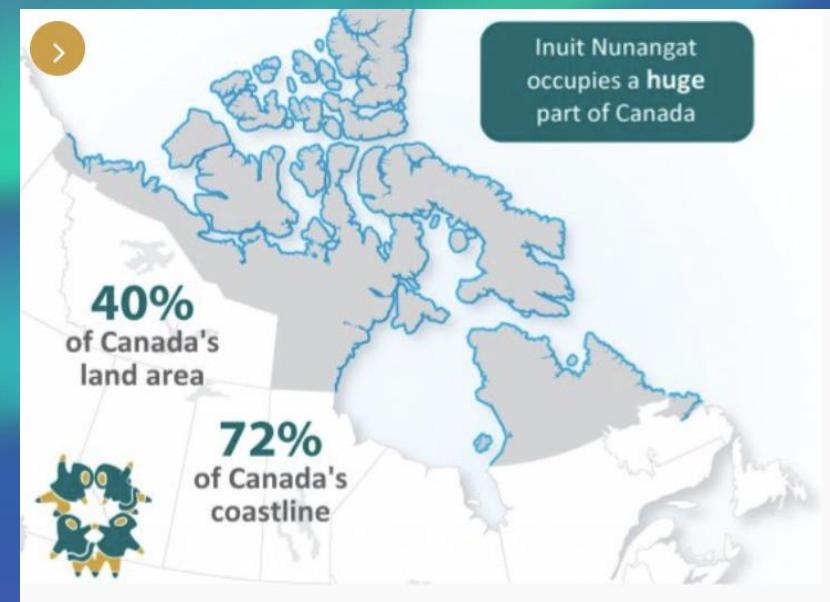


Figure 1: <https://www.itk.ca/inuit-land-area-and-coastline/>

Language: The Embodiment of Cultural Connection

- 99% of Inuit in Nunavik and 20% in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region know the Inuit language.
- Inuktut has seven distinct dialects.
- 61% of Inuit aged 65 and older can speak Inuktut.
- 64% of Inuit aged 15–24 can speak Inuktut
- Inuit language use increased by 10% between 2016 and 2021 (Robertson, 2023).
- Only 44 long-term care beds exist, highlighting a loss of elders (Government of Canada, n.d.).

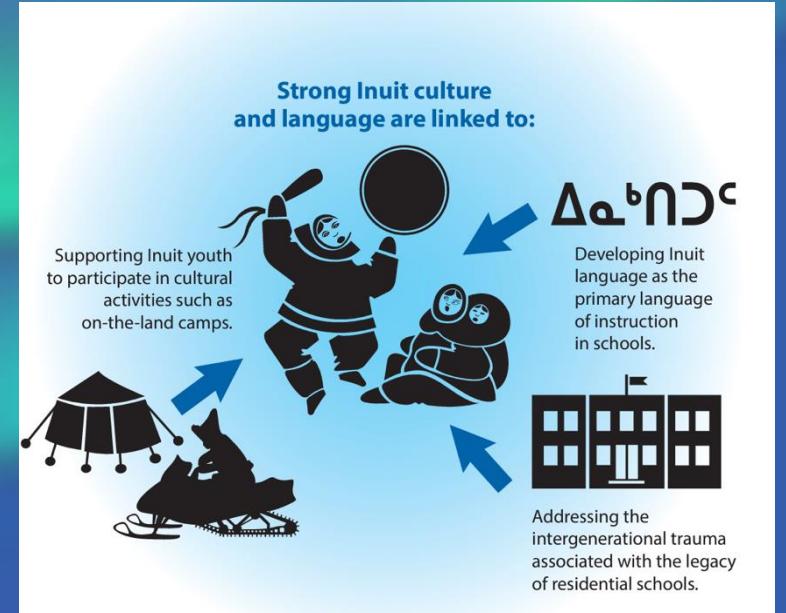


Figure 1: www.itk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Culture_FactSheet.pdf

Culture: The Heartbeat of a Community

Art:

- 26% of Inuit Canadians are artists (Hill Strategies Research Inc., 2017)
- Aaju Peter's is an Inuk sealskin designer and activist
 - Creator of the documentary "Twice Colonized"
- Inuit find pride in showing off their culture through various forms of Fashion (Richardson & Pimentel, 2021).

Hunting:

- One seal provides \$200 worth of meat (Culture & Livelihood, 2021).
 - 25% of Inuit households participate in the seal hunt (Culture & Livelihood, 2021).



Figure 1: Aaju Peter dressed in her Inuk sealskin clothing.
<https://proudlyindigenouscrafts.com/2021/04/21/tattoos-seals-an-inuit-womans-tradition-2/>

"So the next journey is about how I go back to my values, beliefs,
and way of being in the world."

AAJU PETER, INUK LAWYER, ACTIVIST AND SEALSKIN CLOTHES DESIGNER (2023)

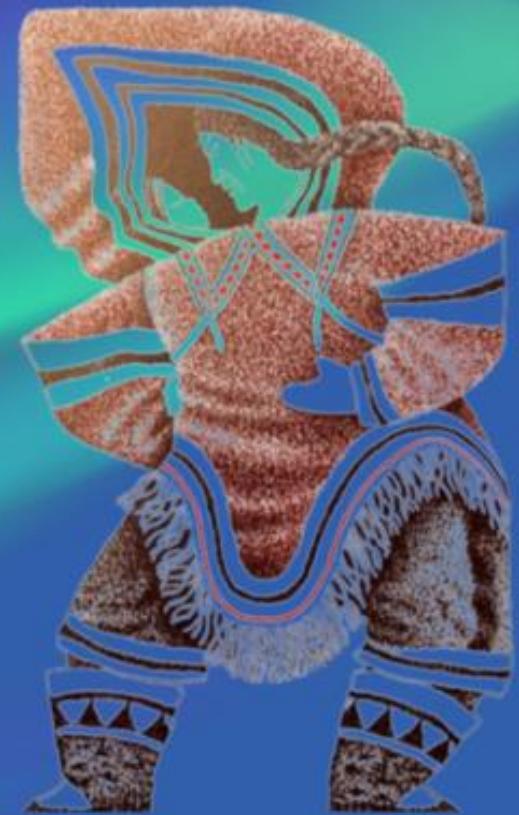


Figure 1: "Proud New Mother."
Germaine Arnaktauyok.

Home is Health: Overcoming Inuit Housing Inequities Through the Power of Piliriqatigiingniq

Issue:

- How does housing insecurity and poor living conditions within Inuit communities pose significant barriers to the health and well-being of Inuit individuals?

Background:

- Safe, adequate housing is a basic human right.
 - Many Inuit communities face overcrowding and substandard conditions.
 - Colonialism and systemic neglect have contributed to these issues.
- Poor housing conditions affect physical and mental health, overall affecting quality of life.
- Piliriqatigiingniq, a collaborative approach, is crucial for raising awareness and amplifying community voices on housing needs.



Overcrowded Inuit Housing in 2021

2 in 5 Inuit live in crowded housing, often with multiple generations (Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021).

- 20.7% face a one-bedroom shortfall
- 10% a two-bedroom shortfall
- 9.4% had a shortfall of three or more bedrooms

52% of Nunavut residents lived in overcrowded conditions contributing to health issues such as high tuberculosis rates (Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021).

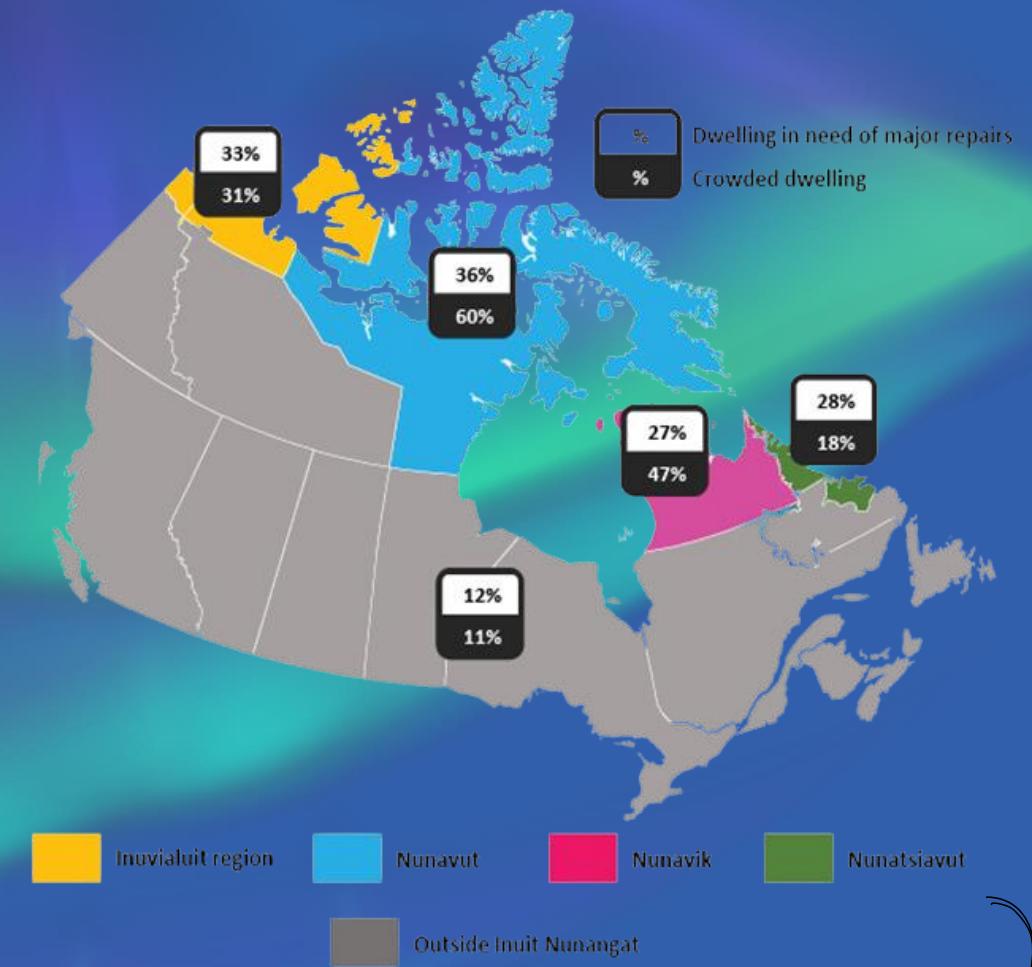


Figure 1: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021007/98-200-X2021007-eng.cfm>

Current Urban Inuit Housing Statistics

Pauktuutit's National Urban Inuit Homelessness and Housing Needs Assessment Survey/ Final Report (2022) states:

Housing Insecurity:

- 53% of Inuit women are homeless or housing insecure.

Shelter Use:

- 64% of Inuit women used shelters
 - 43% were turned away 2-5 times due to capacity
 - 38% turned away more than five times

These issues highlight the urgent need for culturally appropriate support services in urban centers.



Current Initiatives

Tungasuvvingat Inuit Services (TIS)

- The only Inuit-specific service provider in urban Canada
- Offers over 20 integrated services, including housing support
- Helps Inuit transition to urban life and prevent homelessness in Ottawa's Inuit community (Tungasuvvingat Inuit, n.d.).

"The community-oriented space will be a space to break the cycle of abuse with women supporting women and the community supporting women and children" (The Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition, 2023).



Tungasuvvingat Inuit

Current Updates

TB Task Force:

- Established in **October 2017**
 - Focuses on **creating an Inuit TB Elimination Action Framework**, to address health issues linked to inadequate housing conditions.



Inuit Nunangat Housing Strategy (INHS):

- Launched in April 2019
 - Focuses on improving housing outcomes throughout Inuit Nunangat.

The Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) Investment:

- Announced October 2023
 - \$152 million investment to support affordable housing projects throughout Nunavut.



**“To evolve in society,
you must evolve your principles.”**

ROSEMARY COOPER – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PAUKTUUTIT (2024)

Early Childhood Development & Education

Issue:

- How does the lack of culturally appropriate, accessible early childhood education in Inuit communities negatively affect their physical and mental health?

Background:

- Many Inuit communities face barriers to culturally appropriate early childhood education.
- Colonial policies and systemic inequities have disrupted traditional knowledge and resources.
 - This disruption results in a lack of culturally relevant education, hindering the development of Inuit children.
- Integrating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and community-driven initiatives can enhance health outcomes and protect cultural identity.



Early Childhood Development & Education

- Inuktut speaking teachers receive \$186, compared to \$8,189 for French speaking teachers (Nunatsiaq News, 2018).
- In 2006, off-reserve Métis and First Nations guardians rated education programs for children under 6 as good/fair/excellent.
 - Only 45% of Inuit guardians gave similar ratings (Statistics Canada, 2024).
- In 2022, Only 36% of Inuit children aged 1-5 received regular childcare.
 - While 64% of non-Indigenous children did (Statistics Canada, 2024).
- In 2022, 67% of Inuit children had a parent who taught them about their culture and history (Statistics Canada, 2024).
 - Culturally appropriate education is needed for the 33% without this support (Statistics Canada, 2024).

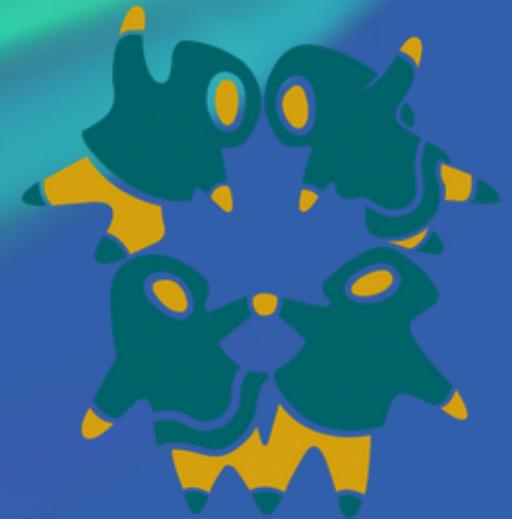


Figure 1: <https://www.qia.ca/what-we-do/cultural-and-community-based-programs/>

Current Updates

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)'s 2024 National Strategy on Inuit Education

- ITK's 2024 strategy focuses on culturally relevant education for Inuit students.
- Key Actions:
 - Expand Inuktut language learning
 - Provide teacher training in Inuit-specific methods
 - Build community-based learning environments
 - Collaborate with governments to prioritize Inuit educational needs
- This strategy promotes Inuit self-determination, ensuring future generations thrive with culturally supportive education.



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INUIT TAPIRIIT KANATAMI

Current Initiatives

The Kakivak Association:

- Signed a 50-year lease for a \$14-million facility in Arctic Bay.
- The "Kakivak Association Facility" is set to open its doors in 2026.
- The facility will have space for 40-50 children, including classrooms for 32 preschoolers and an infant activity area.
 - Will feature a central hub with kitchen, laundry, storage, and staff offices.
- The Nunavut Government aims for 238 \$10-a-day daycare spots by 2026, starting with this facility to support Inuit families.



The Nunavut Education Crisis

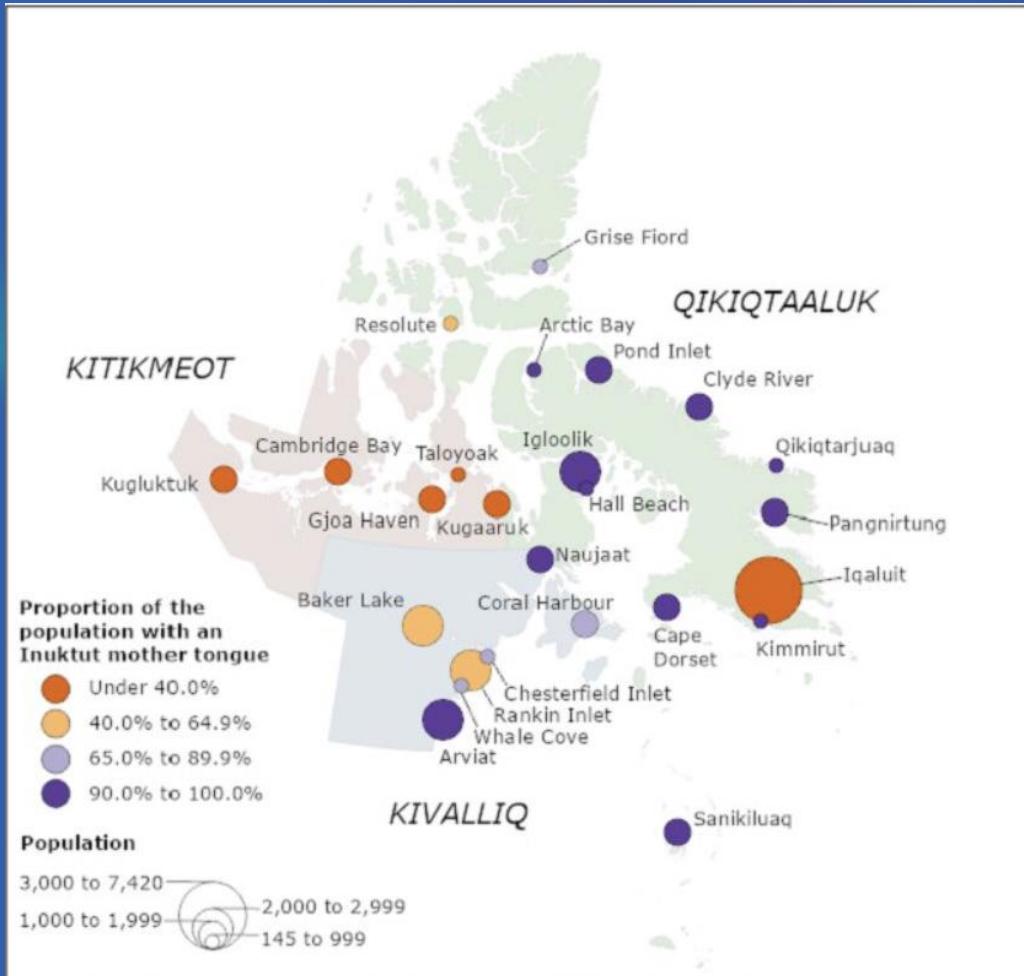
Issue:

- Why is access to culturally relevant curriculum and post-secondary education opportunities scarce in the Nunavut education system?

Background:

- As of 2019, 70% of Nunavut students did not graduate with a grade 12 diploma (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2024)
- 75% of educators do not speak Inuit languages, and this issue is worsening (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2024)
- The lack of education from primary to grade 12 in Inuktut violates Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- Linguicide and cultural genocide in Nunavut's education system threaten Inuit traditions, highlighting the need for Inuit self-governance to safeguard their cultural values in education.





This infographic shows the percentage of individuals that speak Inuktut as their mother language in the various regions of Nunavut.

Orange = Under 40%

Yellow = 40% to 64.9%

Light purple = 65% to 89.9%

Dark purple = 90% to 100%

Figure 1: "Inuktut mother tongue by community, Nunavut" 2021.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/241107/g-b001-eng.htm>

Current Updates

- In 2021, NTI (Nunavut Tunngavik Inc) sued the Nunavut government for failing to provide education in Inuktut (Nunatsiaq News, 2024).
 - Inuktut education was only available up to Grade 4.
- The lawsuit argues that the lack of Inuktut education discriminates against Inuit, violating Section 15 of the Charter.
- NTI approved a new post-secondary program starting in fall 2024 to boost Inuit student's post-secondary rates.



Figure 1: Inuktut symbols in a Nunavut classroom. Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. wants to see Inuit-language education offered to all grades in the territory. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/inuktut-education-lawsuit-supreme-court-1.7371400>

“We will not stand by and watch our
young people be pushed out of school
and denied their rights by a failing system.”

JAMES EETOOLOOK VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE NUNAVUT TUNNGAVIK (2016)

Ongoing Inuit Resistance to Colonialism: Advancing Inuit-led, Culturally Rich Education

The Issue:

- Why are Inuit children unable to access education like most children across Canada?

Background:

- For over 150 years, Inuit children were forcefully taken to residential schools (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, n.d.)
- The shift from community-based learning to Western-style education disconnected Inuit children from their culture and values.
- The legacy of residential schools has caused intergenerational trauma and distrust in the education system.
- A community-led, culturally relevant education system is essential for fostering Inuit self-determination, promoting healing, and rebuilding trust within Inuit communities.

Inuit Education: Historical Challenges

- Geographic isolation separated Inuit children from their families for extended periods.
- Many children were sent to distant schools, including residential schools like Grollier Hall and Stringer Hall, which opened in Inuvik, NWT, in August 1959.
- Colonial policies imposed irrelevant curriculums and punished children for speaking Inuktut, contributing to cultural disconnection (Fraser, 2020).
- These schools disrupted the transfer of traditional knowledge, impacting Inuit cultural heritage and identity.



Figure 1: A group of Inuit women and children stand outside the school at the Pangnirtung Federal Hostel in 1927.
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/inuit-truth-reconciliation-final-report-1.3366487>

Current Updates

Language Shift:

- The use of Inuktut as a primary language is declining in Nunavut, though it remains in use as a secondary language at home (North, 2019).

Education Gap:

- 38.1 % of Inuit children in Inuit Nunangat are less likely to complete high school (Statistics Canada, 2023).
 - Compared to 66.5% living outside the region (Statistics Canada, 2023).

ITK Initiative:

- In 2012, ITK launched the Amaujaq National Centre for Inuit Education to implement the National Strategy on Inuit Education.
 - Aims to graduate bilingual Inuit youth with the skills to thrive in the 21st century.



Figure 1: Innait Inuksiutilirijiit transmit a wide board of traditional knowledge that are still relevant and useful for the young generation. <https://polarjournal.ch/en/2023/10/12/elders-pass-on-inuit-traditions-to-the-next-generation-in-nunavut-schools/>

“When Inuit get together, it's all about connections and how we're connected in some way.

We're very family focused, we have great respect for the land, and we tend to see the good in people.”

HEIDI METCALFE-LANGILLE, A YOUNG INUIT CULTURALIST (2020)

Qanuqtuurunnarniq: Inuit Food Insecurity

Issue:

- How can Inuit food insecurity be addressed to improve health outcomes and promote sustainable solutions?

Background:

- Food in Nunavut costs nearly 3% more than in other parts of Canada due to shipping expenses (**Government of Nunavut, 2017**).
- In 2019, Nunavut residents paid \$5.07 for 1L of milk, compared to \$2.45 elsewhere in Canada (Government of Nunavut, 2017).
- Limited access to traditional food increases reliance on hunting and fishing.
- Qanuqtuurunnarniq, an Inuktitut term, emphasizes resourcefulness, creativity, and adaptability in overcoming food insecurity and the impacts of climate change on traditional practices.

**Food Insecurity
in Nunavut**

46.8% **70%**
2014 2018

Inuit Children Food Insecurity

2008: 26%

of children in Nunavut were severely food insecure.

2013: 60%

of children in Inuit Nunangat region experienced food insecurity.

2022: 77%

of Inuit children (aged 6 to 14) in Inuit Nunangat experienced food insecurity.

In 2022, 68% of Nunavut households experienced food insecurity.



Figure 1: A child holds a sign at a protest against high food prices in Nunavut in June 2012.
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/inuit-go-hungry-more-than-any-other-indigenous-group-report-1.2588107>

'Too many Inuit face food insecurity, a result of colonialism, systemic racism, and structural inequity. This daily crisis causes long-term physical and psychological trauma.

Many Inuit grow up familiar with these impacts. Canada has the resources to address this issue and reduce food insecurity in Inuit communities."

NATAN OBED – ITK PRESIDENT (2021)

Food Insecurity in Inuit Nunangat

Traditional Practices:

- 85% of Inuit aged 15+ in Inuit Nunangat engage in hunting, fishing, or trapping (Statistics Canada, 2019).

Nutritional Value of Country Foods:

- Provides 23–52% of dietary protein.
- Contributes 18–82% of essential micronutrients (Government of Nunavut, 2017).

Rising Costs of Food:

- Nationwide food prices increased by 22.5% since 2020.
- Average cost per person: \$19.70/day, \$7,217/year (2021).
 - In 2024, a mother of two spent \$500 weekly on groceries.



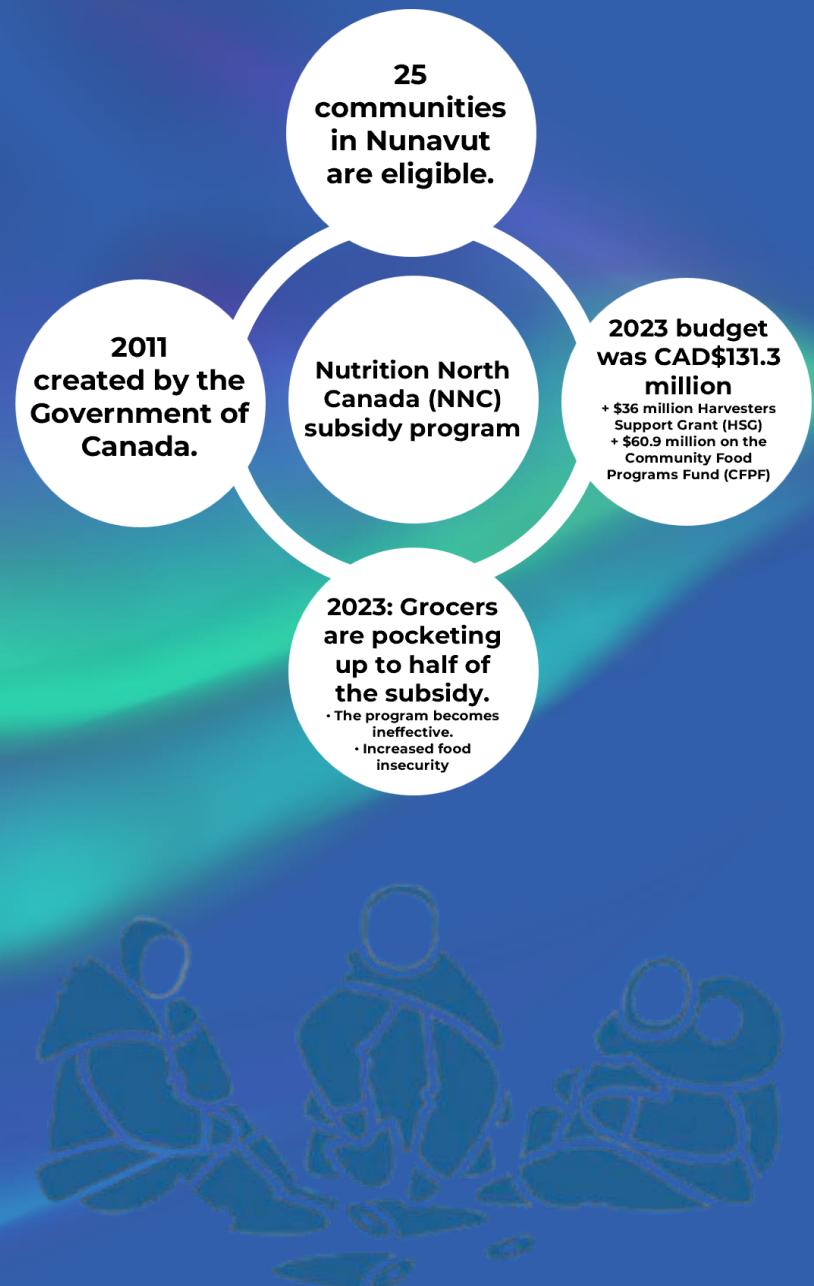
Food Security Initiatives in Inuit Communities

Nutrition North Canada Program:

- Launched in **2011** to reduce food costs in remote Northern communities.
 - Aims to lower grocery costs in remote regions like Inuit Nunangat, where prices are inflated by transportation costs.
 - Subsidizes nutritious food for retailers to reduce prices in remote communities.
 - Requires improvements, particularly through increased collaboration with Inuit leaders.

Inuit Nunangat Food Security Strategy:

- Developed by **Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)**
 - Prioritizes Inuit self-determination in food systems and food insecurity.
 - Focuses on sustainable, community-driven food practices.
 - Aims to increase access to traditional food and reduce food insecurity.



"Renowned cultural teacher builds symbol of Inuit survival at Acadia University."

- On October 4, 2024, our class witnessed the unveiling of an Inuksuk built by Dr. Piita Irniq at Acadia University.
- The Inuksuk is located between the Vaughan Memorial Library and the Beveridge Arts Centre.
- Dr. Piita Irniq spoke about the Inuksuk, emphasizing its symbolism of the "lightness of a person" and "survival."

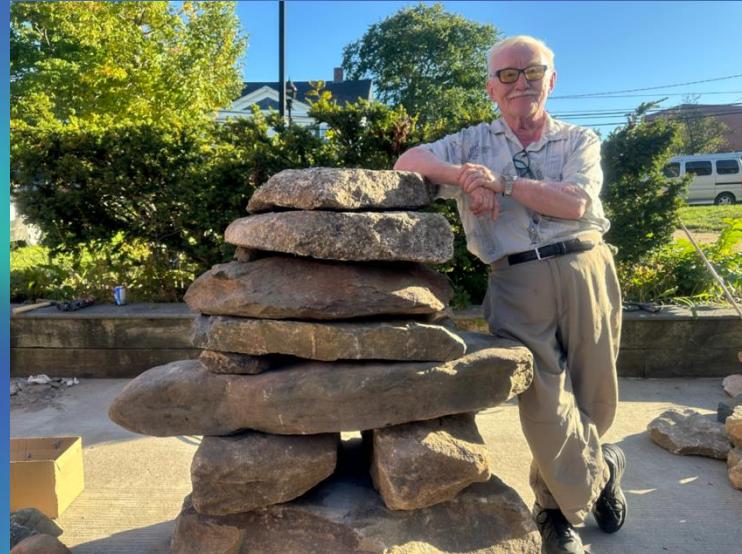


Figure 1: Dr. Piita Irniq standing beside an Inuksuk under construction at Acadia University, located between the Vaughan Memorial Library and the Beveridge Arts Centre.



Figure 2: Dr. Piita Irniq standing proudly next to the newly built Inuksuk at Acadia University, located between the Vaughan Memorial Library and the Beveridge Arts Centre.

“I encourage our young people to learn as
much as possible about Inuit culture,
*but at the same time be able to communicate in
the world of modern technology.*”

PETER IRNIQ (2015)

“As a class, we recognize the importance of supporting Inuit-led solutions to address challenges in education, food security, and cultural preservation.

We are committed to amplifying Inuit voices, advocating for self-determination, and working towards meaningful reconciliation for a brighter future.”

ON BEHALF OF POLS-3103: HUMAN RIGHTS IN NORTHERN CANADA CLASS



Figure 1: Luke Anguhadluq "Drum Dance" (1970) Winnipeg Art Gallery.

Thank You!
Nakurmiik!
Na-koor-meek



Primary to 12 Education Crisis in Nunavut

Issue

Why is access to culturally relevant curriculum and post-secondary education opportunities scarce in the Nunavut education system?

Background

Current societal consensus shows that completion of high school education leads to better job opportunities. As of 2019 **70% of Nunavut students do not obtain a grade 12 Diploma**. Part of this problem stems from the lack of Inuit teachers as 75% of educators don't speak Inuit languages and this seems to be worsening. This shows a lack of competence from the Nunavut Education System as it is currently in an education crisis.

Current Update

- NTI education survey in 2022 shows that **93%** of the respondents said they would like more collaboration with Inuit educators in the school system.
- NTI and two Inuit families filed a lawsuit against the Government of Nunavut due to discrimination Inuit students face in school. NTI and the families believe not having education from grade primary to 12 in available in Inuktut is against **section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms**.
- NTI **approved the multiyear Nunavut Inuit Post Secondary Education program Policy** which begins in fall 2024. This program provides financial support for post-secondary education for eligible students. This plan aims to increase Inuit post-secondary rates to equal the rest of Canada.
- Makigiaqta Inuit Training Corporation announce they will provide **12 million in funding to support Inuit in their post-secondary education**. This funding is important as the number of students applying for post-secondary funding was greater than the funds available until this investment.
- Nera Nunavut Education Reform Act proposes improvements to the education system through local involvement and culturally relevant curriculum. This bill proposes DEA's or district education Authorities involvement to create **support and leadership in the education system**.
- Bill passed by Nunavut legislation in 2019 says that Inuktut will be a language offered in education within the next 20 years in Nunavut schools. Many Inuit say this bill has failed their students as it will take till **2039 to have a bilingual curriculum**.

[“We will not stand by and watch our young people be pushed out of school and denied their rights by a failing system” . NTI VP James Eetoolook, \(October 20, 2016\)“](#)

Summary

This crisis is caused by the fostering of **linguicide and cultural genocide** in the school system. Inuit need to be able to self-govern their education system to ensure culture and tradition are a focal point of student's education. This would create cultural enrichment for students and would help solve the low attendance and graduate rates in the Nunavut educational System.

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Home is Health: Addressing Inuit Housing Inequities Through the Power of Piliriqatigiingniq

Daniela Mastsipaniuk, Kaitlyn Cosman, Anna Jean Ferguson, Simon Daley.

Issue: Within Inuit communities, housing insecurity and poor living conditions have become significant barriers to health and well-being, deeply impacting both physical and mental health.

Background

Access to safe, adequate housing is a fundamental human right, yet many Inuit communities endure overcrowded, substandard conditions deeply rooted in colonialism and systemic marginalization. These living conditions have profoundly affected the physical health and mental well-being of community members, leading to a significant decrease in their overall quality of life. To address these challenges, we must adopt **Piliriqatigiingniq: a collaborative approach focused on working together** to raise awareness of Inuit housing needs and amplifying the voices of communities that have long been overlooked.



Overcrowded Inuit Housing Statistics

In 2021, two in five Inuit, often representing multiple generations, lived in crowded housing.

- According to Statistics Canada:
 - 20.7% faced a one-bedroom shortfall
 - 10% experienced a two-bedroom shortfall
 - 9.4% had a shortfall of three or more bedrooms
- Alarmingly, 52% of residents in Nunavut live in overcrowded conditions, and more than 37% of First Nations people on reserves live in homes that require major repairs.
- Overcrowded and unsafe living conditions significantly contribute to health issues, particularly the high rates of tuberculosis in Inuit communities.

"Nunavut Inuit are dying from tuberculosis, a treatable and preventable disease." NTI President Aluki Kotierk (2024)

Current Urban Inuit Housing Statistics

Pauktuutit's National Urban Inuit Homelessness and Housing Needs Assessment Survey/Final Report (2022) states:

- Housing Insecurity: 53% of participants (Inuit women) reported being homeless or housing insecure.
- Shelter Use: 64% of respondents (Inuit women) utilized shelters within their current city, 43% turned away 2-5 times due to capacity issues, and 38% turned away more than five times.

Important Initiatives

Tungasuvvingat Inuit:

- The only Inuit-specific service provider in urban Canada, offering over 20 services, including housing support to help Inuit transition to urban life and prevent homelessness (Tungasuvvingat Inuit, n.d.).
- The organization also provides critical support in areas such as health care access, education, and family services, focusing on holistic well-being (Tungasuvvingat Inuit, n.d.).
- This approach helps Inuit individuals build stronger connections within urban spaces and aims to reduce the risks associated with displacement and social isolation.

Current Updates

TB Task Force:

- Established in October 2017, this initiative focuses on creating an Inuit TB Elimination Action Framework, addressing health issues linked to inadequate housing conditions.

Inuit Nunangat Housing Strategy (INHS):

- Launched in April 2019 to help improve housing outcomes in Inuit Nunangat
- Key Actions include: Assessing investments, creating a long-term housing plan, improving research, reducing overcrowding, building capacity, and strengthen intergovernmental collaboration.

Future Updates

QIA Investment:

- In October 2023, a \$152 million investment was announced to support affordable housing projects throughout Nunavut.

Challenges:

- Approximately 30% of Inuit in Canada now live outside Inuit Nunangat, with urbanization on the rise. Many Canadian cities, often focused on First Nations, lack the resources to address the distinct needs of Inuit communities (Canadian Geographic, 2018).

Summary

The Inuit Nunangat Housing Strategy seeks to improve access to affordable, safe, and sustainable housing throughout Inuit Nunangat. As urbanization increases, urban Inuit face unique housing challenges that require targeted, culturally appropriate support. Piliriqatigiingniq, which emphasizes collaboration for the common good, is essential to addressing these issues. By fostering partnerships among government, community organizations, and Inuit leaders, we can develop effective solutions that enhance living conditions and overall well-being for all Inuit.



"We're not being heard loud enough!" Nunavut MP Lori Idlout (2023)

Δ▷σ̄ςbʌΓb Δc̄aσd̄ςσ̄ςb:

Advancing Culturally Appropriate Early Childhood Education for Inuit Children in Nunangat

Δ▷σ̄ςbʌΓb: "Better"

Δc̄aσd̄ςσ̄ςb: "Education"

Addressing **severe quality & supply issues** of culturally appropriate Inuit early childhood education.

Issue: How does the failure to provide culturally appropriate & rich education opportunities continue to undermine the well-being and identity of Inuit, individually and collectively?

Background:

In 1920, the Indian Act made attendance at residential "schools" compulsory for Treaty-status children ages 7 to 15, ripping them from their families. The goal of these schools was to erase Indigenous & Inuit culture, language, teachings, and life, the last one only closed in 1996. The negative affects of this continue today, and are fed by eurocentric education models.

- **Traditional Inuit education (IQ)** was a community-focused way of learning that **passed down cultural values and skills** from adults to children

In 1996 **68%** of Inuit in Inuit Nunangat reported speaking an Inuit language. By 2021, it had decreased to **64.2%**.

Outside of Inuit Nunangat, **Only 12.4%** reporting the ability to speak an Inuit language in 2021, **down from 23%** in 2001.

- In 2022, **36% of Inuit children aged 1 to 5 received regular child care**, which is lower than the 64% of non-Indigenous children in the same age group.
- In 2021, **Rates of postsecondary completion** were 45.3% for First Nations people, Note 56.3% for Métis and **only 33.6% among Inuit**.

Summary:

Culturally appropriate Inuit education is essential in prioritizing the well-being of Inuit children that needs to be addressed by the Federal Government of Canada in a way that prioritizes the **needs & experiences** of Inuit people. Low funding, inappropriate curricula, lack of Inuktitut (speaking) educators, and access issues are damaging the **health and well-being** of Inuit peoples.

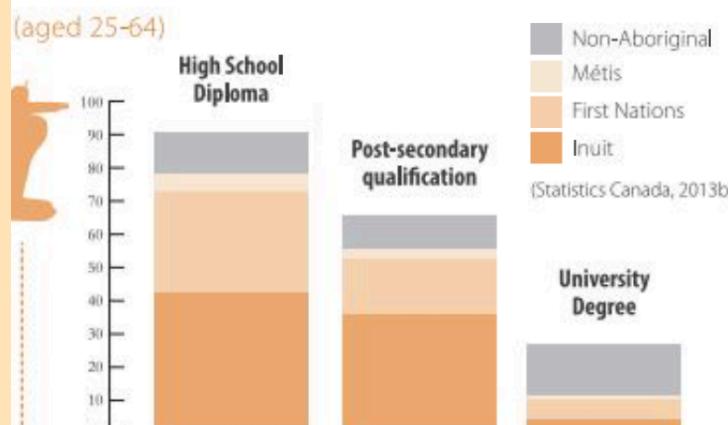
Current Update:

There is an urgent need for funding to develop and implement culturally appropriate early childhood education (ECE) that the Federal government is not meeting.

"Education has gotten us into this mess, and education will get us out."
- Murray Sinclair (2016)

- **Funding Gaps:** Inuit early childhood education programs will receive **\$111 million over 10 years** from the federal government - compared to **1.02 Billion given to other Indigenous groups** despite the higher need in Inuit Nunangat.
- **Culture:** **Less than 20%** of early childhood spaces in Nunavut **offer Inuktitut language instruction**, highlighting a continued gap.
- **Access:** **Over 50%** of small and remote communities in Nunavut have **no licensed child care spaces**.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Please see pg. 7 of the fact sheet for the complete table of educational attainment levels of Indigenous Peoples compared to the general population.

Sophie Walker, Summer Giffin, Ocean Lushman

POLS 3103

Issue: How has Inuit culture been put at risk due to colonialism?

Background: Due to the erasure of Inuit culture by the Canadian government, through residential schools and other means of cultural genocide, connection through land, culture, and language becomes limited. Reconnection of Inuit youth to their language, culture and connection to the land is a priority.

- Parents often taught their children Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun, but residential schools robbed Inuit of their language (Blake, 2022).
- Culture is innately surrounded by language it connects people and being able to teach and learn a language from elders is surrounded by honour and respect.
- Seals have a significant cultural impact. Since they make up a large portion of the Inuit diet, clothing, and livelihood (Richardson & Pimentel, 2021).
- Seal hunting bans are a rising concern and fueling poverty and affecting international perceptions of Inuit culture.
- The first government-regulated school opened in 1951 in Chesterfield Inlet.
- 44% of Inuit residential schools survivors who attended residential schools feel that there are still impacts today with language, culture, and spiritual beliefs. (Pauktuutit, 2024)
- Inuit ages 15-24 able to converse in Inuktut is 64% and Inuit ages 65+ is only 61% (Statistics Canada, 2016)

Current Update:

- Inuit find pride in showing off their culture through various forms of Fashion (Richardson & Pimentel, 2021). (In fur clothing: coats, scarves, dresses, etc. Jewelry: skin earrings, bones, antlers)
- Inuit have political autonomy and self-determination.
- It is important that youth keep the culture alive by knowing how to do traditional practices like hunting, sewing seal and caribou skin, carving and tool making (Porter, 2024).
- Inuit require advocates and representation within the RCMP, council members and ministers, and all forms of government (Porter, 2024)
- Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun added to Microsoft translator in 2021 (Blake, 2022).
- The most spoken Inuktut language is Inuktitut, with 39,620 Inuit reporting they speak Inuktitut well enough to conduct a conversation (Statistics Canada, 2023)
- Sealing facts (Culture & livelihood, 2021)
 - One seal contains over \$200 worth of meat.
 - 25% of households take part in the hunt.
 - Among them, 25-35% use sealing as their annual income
- Pingualuit National Park is a protected park that keeps animals and land safe but still allows access for Inuit to hunt and fish. (Gallant, 2024)

Summary: Keeping Inuit youth active in their communities is an important step in reconciliation. Keeping language and culture alive strengthens Inuit communities. Problems arise when people fail to understand why certain displays of Inuit culture are so important. For example, the seal skin bans and the consequences it had on Inuit communities and their economy. Actions implemented by the Canadian government still fail Inuit, to carry on the promise of reconciliation reparations for a cultural genocide need to be made.

“So, the next journey is about how I go back to my values, beliefs, and way of being in this world.”

Aaju Peter 2023, Inuit activist and sealskin designer

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Qanuqtuurunnarniq: Inuit Food Insecurity

Kaitlyn Landry, Daniel Filho, Hawa Momo-She

Qanuqtuurunnarniq – The concept of being resourceful to solve problems.

"We want Nunavut to be food-secure, meaning that all Nunavummiut, at all times, will have physical and economic access to sufficient, nutritious and culturally-relevant foods." - Nunavut Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, The Makimaniq Plan (2011).

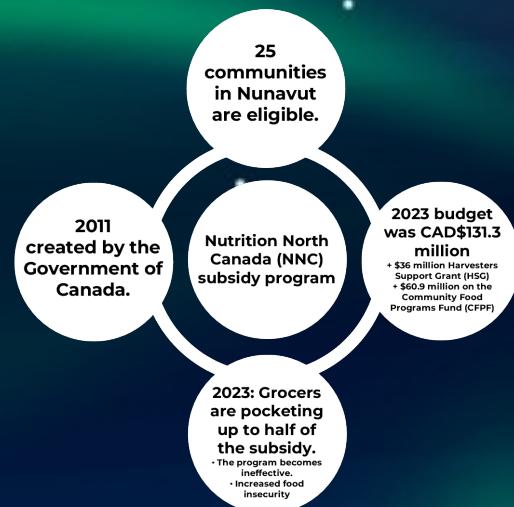
Issue: Inuit communities in Nunavut experience high food insecurity driven by socio-economic, environmental, and cultural factors. Food prices in Nunavut are significantly higher than in the rest of Canada, exacerbating food insecurity and affecting Inuit health.

Background

- Impact of colonial policies: Forced relocations (10k people relocated by RCMP) + starvation in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s
- Food insecurity in Nunavut: **46.8%** of households in 2014 and **70%** in 2018, an increase of **25%** within four years.
- 2019:** Basic food costs impact food insecurity: While most Canadians paid about \$2.45 for 1L milk, residents of Nunavut paid around \$5.07.
- 52%** of Nunavut residents experience overcrowding and food insecurity.
- Double: food prices in Nunavut are double those in southern Canada.
- Food insecurity among Inuit is worsened by limited access to traditional foods.
- Inuit rely on fishing and hunting for sustenance.
- Climate change affects all aspects of Inuit food security and ways of life.
- Statistics Canada:
 - 2008: 26%** of children in Nunavut were severely food insecure.
 - 2013: 60%** of children in Inuit Nunangat region experienced food insecurity.
 - 2022: 77%** of Inuit children (aged 6 to 14) in Inuit Nunangat experienced food insecurity.

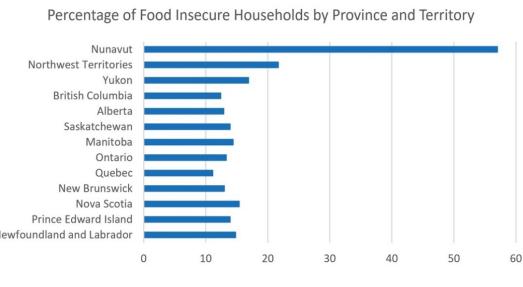


70 % of Nunavut households were food insecure in 2018



Updates

- 2022: 68%** Nunavut households were food insecure, 48 times higher than the rest of Canada.
- 2024: 22.5%** country-wide food price increase since 2020, the beginning of Covid 19.
- 2024:** Inuit spend an estimated \$19.7 CAD daily on food. \$7217 CAD Annually.
- 2024:** Nunavut mother of two spent on average \$500 per week on groceries.
- Low Income Inuit are not making enough income to afford basic food and shelter.
- ITK- High Inuit food prices will only be improved by partnering with Inuit to advance Inuit driven solutions.



Data retrieved from Healthy Debate and Stats Canada (2022)

Summary

The guarantee of basic food access for Inuit communities is failing. Despite subsidy programs, oversight is lacking, preventing price reductions and proper funding distribution. Food insecurity is tied to social and economic disadvantages linked to the Social Determinants of Health, including income distribution and housing issues. It's crucial to listen to Inuit people for potential solutions.

"Too many Inuit struggle to get enough food to eat. The food insecurity and poverty many Inuit experience stem from the combined historical and present-day effects of colonialism, systemic racism, and structural inequity in Canada. Living through food insecurity is to be in daily crisis and trying to manage through food insecurity can lead to long-term physical and psychological trauma. Far too many Inuit grow up intimately familiar with such trauma and its lifelong impacts. We have the ability to address food insecurity in our population, especially considering how much food wealth exists in Canada." **Natan Obed - Itk's President**

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HOUSING AS A SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH

(Top) Community of Grisie Fjord (Google, 2024) (Bottom) Ukpik Peak, NV. (Google, 2024).



INUITS DRIVEN RESEARCH

In order to address Inuit issues, Inuit voices and experts must be prioritized when engaging in research. Inuit methods of teaching and knowledge should be employed to ensure the needs of communities are met.

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Background, ITK, NCCIH, IWGIA Reports

Resettlement and Relocation

Between 1922 and 1956 the Canadian Federal Government, and RCMP performed numerous relocation/resettlement actions targeting Inuit communities. These actions ranged from assimilating Inuit communities, extending colonial authority, and the Epistemicide & Genocide of Inuit, and their culture and heritage to establish colonial rule and exploit local resources.

Resettlement is the forced or coerced movement of Inuit into colonial settlement. Features of **Resettlement** are assimilation as residential schools, Epistemicide, name changes.

Relocation is the forced or coerced movement of Inuit into new territory, which may be absent of both colonial and Inuit settlement. Features of **Relocation** are extractive capitalism, extension of colonial sovereignty, and Genocide. Victims of Relocation or Resettlement suffer higher rates of violence and addiction at higher rates than non-aboriginal.

Housing & Colonialism

Resettlement removed Inuit from their traditional ways of life and contributed to the Inuit housing crisis in numerous ways.

- Inuit living in settlements have higher living expenses (460\$/wkly for basic expenses V. southern cost of only 226\$/wkly)
- Inuit face higher housing expenses, such as heating and plumbing.
- Homelessness among women connected to domestic abuse.
- Poor housing in disrepair (30%) compared to non-aboriginal (7%)

Compounding Issues

Housing intersects with multiple different issues, such as food insecurity, climate change, and health & safety.

- Climate change or poverty related food insecurity is experienced by 35% of Inuit communities compared to 9% non-aboriginal.
- Isolated communities with inadequate services (50% without access to dental care)
- This can increase the cost of housing expenses, food expenses, result in overcrowding and unsustainable living. These factors are also caused by forced Resettlement or Relocation.
- Inuit experience a mean income 10,000\$ < non-aboriginal communities. This compounds issues of expense and cost.
- Violence and substance abuse resulting from overcrowding, poverty and mental illness. 49% of Inuit women report being victims of sexual violence.