





## Nunavut Literacy Council Research Project

The Nunavut Literacy Council received funding to learn about the link between a strong first language and strong literacy skills in Nunavut.

### Planning the Community-based Research

- The staff and board members met together to plan the research.
- We decided to interview “Language Role Models”.
- The board helped define a “Language Role Model”.
- The board helped us choose four communities to interview people and do phone-in radio shows.
- Together the board, staff and Shelley Tulloch, our research consultant, planned the interview questions.
- The board members helped us choose the “Language Role Models” in their communities and to set up the local radio shows.

### Definition of “Language Role Model”

A “Language Role Model” is a parent of any age who works to strengthen their own Inuit language skills and also encourages and assists other people in their community to do the same. A Language Role Model might be someone who works to strengthen language informally and doesn’t necessarily get formal recognition for this work.

### Interviews and Radio Shows

Quluaq Pilakapsi and Monica Shouldice travelled to the communities to do the interviews and host the local radio shows. They also interviewed the board members about the language and literacy situation in their own communities.

Community	How Many?	Radio Show
Whale Cove	5	✓
Taloyoak	5	✓
Cambridge Bay	5	✓
Rankin Inlet	5	✓
Board members	3	
CBC Nunavut-wide radio show		✓

## Reading the Research

Shelley Tulloch helped us find the latest research about language learning and bilingualism. We also found information about how other places in the world (with similar situations to Nunavut) have worked to strengthen language and literacy. Cayla Chenier and Janet Onalik read books and articles to find information that applies to our situation in Nunavut.





















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## QUESTIONS FOR THE ROLE MODELS

**1. “I want to find out about the language knowledge of you and your family.”**

**a) Which language do you speak at home and how well do you speak it?**

**Inuktitut** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, I don't speak Inuktitut

**English** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, I don't speak English

**b) Do you have a spouse? Which languages does he or she speak? How well?**

**Inuktitut** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, doesn't speak it

**English** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, doesn't speak it

**c) How many children do you have? Which languages do they speak? How well?**

**Child 1's Inuktitut** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, does not speak it

**Child 1's English** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, does not speak it

**Child 2's Inuktitut** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, does not speak it

**Child 2's English** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, does not speak it

**Child 3's Inuktitut** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, does not speak it

**Child 3's English** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, does not speak it

**Child 4's Inuktitut** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, does not speak it

**Child 4's English** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, does not speak it

**Child 5’s Inuktitut** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, does not speak it

**Child 5’s English** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, does not speak it

**Child 6’s Inuktitut** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, does not speak it

**Child 6’s English** knowledge: Excellent, good, elementary, does not speak it

**d) Which languages did your parents know how to speak? Inuktitut English**

**e) Which languages do you use at home to your kids? To your spouse? To your friends? Inuktitut English**

**f) Why?** (Example: Because of your own comfort? Kids understanding? Pride? Advice from others? Example of other people? Desire to teach kids?)

**g) Which languages do your kids speak when they talk to you? To your spouse? To their siblings? Or to their friends?**

**h) Do you ever think that when you talk to your children that they don’t clearly understand what you’re saying?**

**i) When you speak to your child, how do you get the message across clearly?**

**2. “I want to find out about how your children learn language.”**

**1) the Inuktitut language.**

**2) the English language?**

**a. Which languages do they learn at home?**

**b. What skills do they learn at home in Inuktitut or English?**

- ◆ understanding the language**
- ◆ speaking the language**
- ◆ reading the language**
- ◆ writing the language**





- f. How important is it for you that he or she knows how to speak that language? Understand it? Read it? Write it?**
- g. Is being able to use Inuktitut without mixing it with English important?**
- h. Which languages do you want your grandchildren to use?**
- i. Are there any specialized uses of the languages that you want your child to have?**
  - i. Inuktitut** (Example: be able to tell good stories)
  - ii. English** (Example: go to university)

**4) “Can you tell me about how YOU learned language?”**

- i. Inuktitut**
- ii. English**

- a. How is this the same or different from the way your children are learning?**

**5) “What are you still doing to learn language?”**

- a. What things are you still learning about the language? (Example: keyboarding, new vocabulary, new dialects)**
- b. How are you learning?**
- c. What resources do you use?**
- d. What motivates you or encourages you to learn?**
- e. Why do you want to learn these other things?**



- 6) “Describe your ideal home environment in terms of language use?”**
- a. **What do you like about the way language is used in your home? What don’t you like about it?**
  - b. **Which parts of this ideal environment do you have right now?**
  - c. **Which parts of this ideal environment don’t you have?**
  - d. **Where did you get this image about your ideal home language environment?**
  - e. **What helps you to work toward your ideal home language environment? (Example: books? TV? Radio? Visiting Friends? Family?) Can you give examples?**
  - f. **What books or reading material do you have in your home? (Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun/English)**
  - g. **Why do you have these reading materials at your home? (Example: knowing that Inuktitut will be useful for a job?)**
  - h. **What are the challenges in creating your ideal home environment in terms of language use?**
  - i. **What would you be interested in doing to achieve it?**





## Interview Quotes

### Moses Aliyaq Rankin Inlet

(Interviewed March 2, 2006)

Moses: ...I envy those people who are able to read, write and speak their own language, using their very own tradition and culture (ways). If we did this more with our youth, I would be happy.

[...]

Moses: I noticed, about 1975, they even wanted us to learn French and be rid of our Inuktitut altogether, I was upset when I heard this. I wanted to keep our language. We heard that they wanted us to stop using our traditions and culture and learn French instead and I was upset because I wanted to always keep Inuktitut and our ways and traditions. But I am happy that we still have it up to today.

[...]

Moses: So we used to pretend we were those who we admired. For instance, I named my grandchild Kook's nickname after Tatty, this is almost a lost practice now, but we named ourselves after those whom we admired greatly and wanted to be like. I took the name of Puulik Kablalik, Henry Kablalik's father, and my older brother Misheralak, would pretend to be Puulik's older brother, Siqiniq. So before we had any outer influence as kids, before we had any schools, my mentor (Mr. Kablalik) had a good dog team, he was good at catching foxes, he was a good hunter and his dog's were always well kept, so I always pretended to be him out of admiration. When we all moved here, I always went boating with him. So this practice of pretending to be the person you admired is a lost practice, we don't see it today. We strived to be as good as our mentors.

Catherine: What do you think your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will have to know or have learned well, in their future?

Moses: What we mentioned earlier, I feel I have to repeat it (stress it), to be able to coincide with one another in peace, in love and through caring and helping one another, these things I feel are very important that need to be taught and learned by everyone. Also, we all want our kids to go to school well. But still, we see today, those who are not educated-can't write, dropped out of school and now cannot find work or get a job, so we stress the need to be educated today.

Catherine: What do you think is the reason as to why the younger generation are picking up English so fast, especially in some places?

Moses: There is more population these days and more schools. Us elders do not live the life we once lived, like in igloos, and these ways we see today are gaining ground and bombarding our traditional ways and our traditional tongue. So every time there is a meeting, they are speaking Qablunaatut.



Our surroundings have changed where we now live in warm buildings and we have an abundance of material things now. We can't go back to the past but something like our language and our ways must not be forgotten, it is what enabled us to survive in the arctic, this seems to be the single, most important thing we cannot forget and let go of.

[...]

Moses:

It's kind of hard, but these are some thoughts. Kook and Attuat (Monica's son) are good friends aren't they? (asking Monica and she agrees) and they will be all their lives, so we would love to see this kind of bonding between Inuit in our town. Thank you also, hope that helps.

## **Bernadette Saumik Rankin Inlet**

(Interviewed February 7, 2006)

B: There are various different languages here in this house! (giggles) because there are so many of us. Reality is that we use different languages, between some of my children and I – we speak Inuktitut only, and between two young ones, they'll speak-argue – in English or reply in English to one another. But my grandchildren, I find, are only speaking in English but I'm working on them to make them understand Inuktitut as they just moved here.

[...]

C: How do your children (continue) learning Inuktitut and English?

B: Well, my children who I raised, lived my lifestyle of course as an Inuk and always spoke in Inuktitut, even though they started school, they still were taught Inuktitut and all they knew at home was Inuktitut, they just continued learning both.

C: How do you think they learn either Inuktitut or English?

B: I think they learn so much English from the television, from hearing it so much (tv). For Inuktitut, it is because we don't speak it as much as we should (or teach it as much as we should/could) but we have to try to explain it when speaking it because it is the only language we know.

[...]

B: (Inuktitut) is being taught and being learnt very well, except a lot of their peers/friends don't speak Inuktitut. I don't think they forget easily when it is used at home but it's when they spend more time amongst their friends (who don't speak it) that they start not understanding us (parents), it seems.



## Mary Kanajuq Voisey Whale Cove

(Interviewed March 30, 2006)

Mary

[Our children] always understand what we are saying. Their father and I always spoke only in Inuktitut and therefore they always understood what we are saying. Our grandchildren are different, when they do not understand what we are saying we will tell them in English and then explain to them in Inuktitut. They get happy when they finally understand.

Mary

Whenever my grandchildren come for meals, right away they will start talking in English but I will tell them to switch to Inuktitut while they are visiting me in my house. They will quiet down but the ones that are fluent Inuktitut speaker will switch to Inuktitut. The younger ones will speak more English but the older ones are good Inuktitut speakers.

Quluaq

Are there any barriers that make them not speak Inuktitut?

Mary

Not really, although they speak English I always speak to them in Inuktitut. I think that sometimes it is hard for the younger children to respond back in Inuktitut so they answer in English. When someone speaks to me in English, sometimes I will not be able to respond back in English so I respond in Inuktitut. They are probably thinking that we might not be able to understand them. It might be like that but we have to keep encouraging them.

Mary

In the beginning I had wanted my children to learn English first, because of the fear that they will not succeed in their life in Arviat. I was afraid that to learn Inuktitut would take away the precious time of learning the English language. Teachers are very knowledgeable about teaching. I was told that they had to pass the Inuktitut courses first before they could go on to the English stream. My son had graduated from grade 12 with very good Inuktitut language skills. He is able to read and write in Inuktitut. I am very happy about that. They will not get behind in their work if they take Inuktitut. I am very happy that they are able to read in Inuktitut first and then on to the (English) higher grades. Some people think that they will get behind in their grades if they take Inuktitut first but that is not true.

[...]

Mary

Couple of times when I was eating at the restaurant in Rankin Inlet I heard some young people singing Quluqpaa (the song is quite long) and they completed singing the song. I think they learned them while taking sewing lessons. I was very amazed at how much they knew how to sing it. I get very proud of how children learn even through singing.





