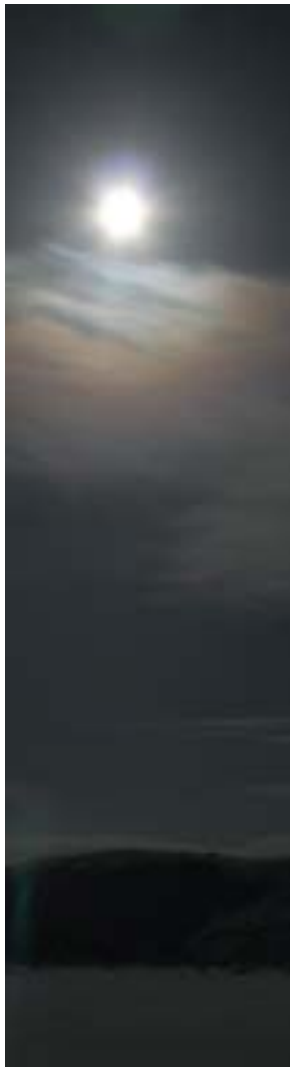


1st Inuit Circumpolar Youth Symposium on the Inuit Language



Summary Report

Iqaluit, Nunavut
August 15 – 19, 2005



day beats in full force
Inuit youth uqaaqtut

of Language

aspirations fuel
a flame once thought
dead
crumbled cracked ila
moaning groaning bones
in the ground
stir in unrest
until little rays of moonlight
starlight
sunlight
ignite
stemming microscopic chasms
of clarity
through the womb
of our minds:



our Spirits

fully bright
in flight
preparing only
for increased
height
that brings us
closer to the bones
once mourning
forgotten

now celebrating
in the earth
in our selves
individually
communally
transforming
morphing
cultivating

full fluid complete Ilagich

Poem by Elizabeth Saagulik Hensley 16 August 2005 Iqaluit, Nunavut



A Message from the Chair

Dear Readers,

In August 2005, the Inuit Circumpolar Youth Council hosted the 1st Inuit Circumpolar Youth Symposium on the Inuit Language in Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada. The Symposium brought together 20 diverse Inuit youth delegates - hunters, artists, students, leaders, and teachers – to discuss the language issues concerning youth today. Delegates' hometowns include: Anchorage, Barrow, Bethel, Buckland, and Kotzebue, Alaska; Nuuk, Greenland; and Kuujuaq, Cambridge Bay, and Iqaluit, Canada.

Increasing participants' understandings of language issues across the Inuit homeland, identifying challenges to Inuit language preservation, and developing policy recommendations for individuals, communities and governments to facilitate continued use of the Inuit language comprised the heart of the symposium's objectives. Delegates vigorously pursued these objectives by delivering researched presentations, consulting with elders, listening to speeches by guest language policy and planning specialists, and, above all, facilitated, focused dialogue between youth representatives.

By the end of the five days, the objectives had been achieved. Participants had acquired new understandings, not just of the language concerns faced by youth across the circumpolar North, but of the inter-related social, economic, cultural, historical and political landscapes within which we all reside. Such matters were discussed in light of their roles in favouring or hindering perpetuation of the Inuit language. Youth challenged each other to focus on present and future possibilities, and to work together to achieve shared goals.

When discussing the importance of the Inuit language and its future, it is vital to remember it is the youth of today and tomorrow who are the bearers of the language of today and yesterday. This report signifies the start of a vigorous and progressive understanding of the importance of the Inuit language amongst the youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Miali-Elise Coley'.

Miali-Elise Coley
Chair, Inuit Circumpolar Youth Council



Minister's Address

The Honourable Louis Tapardjuk
Iqaluit, August 15 2005

The following address was delivered in Inuktitut, with English and Russian translation, to the Inuit youth and elders gathered at the welcoming dinner hosted by the Minister of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth as part of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference Elders' Committee meeting and the Inuit Circumpolar Youth Symposium on the Inuit Language.

It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to you this evening.

As I look around this room, I realize that I am looking at the generation that the rest of us are depending on to carry the Inuit language into the future. When I think about our language, I don't worry too much about the Elders. Almost all of them live their language every day in their homes and communities. You, our young people, face some new challenges as well as some fantastic and gratifying opportunities. Not only do you have to make sure that our language grows and develops in our homes and communities. You also have to take it to places it hasn't been before: To the internet, to chat rooms, to the CD's people play on their stereos.

Today it is possible to see the Inuit language flash across computer screens, to hear it while sitting in a movie theatre and to listen to young musicians taking our language to audiences around the world. Clearly, ours is a language that we can speak anywhere, in any situation, provided that we take on the task with creativity and determination.

This is not to diminish the challenges. Some of our young people are growing up without hearing their language spoken at home. I know that many are eager to learn their language but don't have enough opportunities to do so. It is crucial that groups, like this one here tonight, find new and innovative ways for young people to get together, to speak their language. As you build partnerships here this week, keep in mind that the Government of Nunavut provides over \$1 million each year to Nunavummiut to promote, protect and develop the Inuit language.

Governments, of course, have other important roles to play. Inuit have been busy over the past 25 years setting up new governments, from the first one in Kalaallit Nunaat, to the latest one in Nunatsiavut. As we use our new political muscle, one of our first priorities must be to ensure that young people have real opportunities to learn the Inuit language, at all stages of their schooling. Education is just one of the areas that will be included in the *Inuit Language Protection Act* that the Government of Nunavut is developing. The government is proposing that this new law include the right of Nunavummiut to education in the Inuit language. We are also proposing new measures that will encourage the use of Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun not only in government but by companies doing business in Nunavut. The new institutions that Inuit are building across the circumpolar world will only be meaningful if they are able to reflect and support our uniquely Inuit way of life.

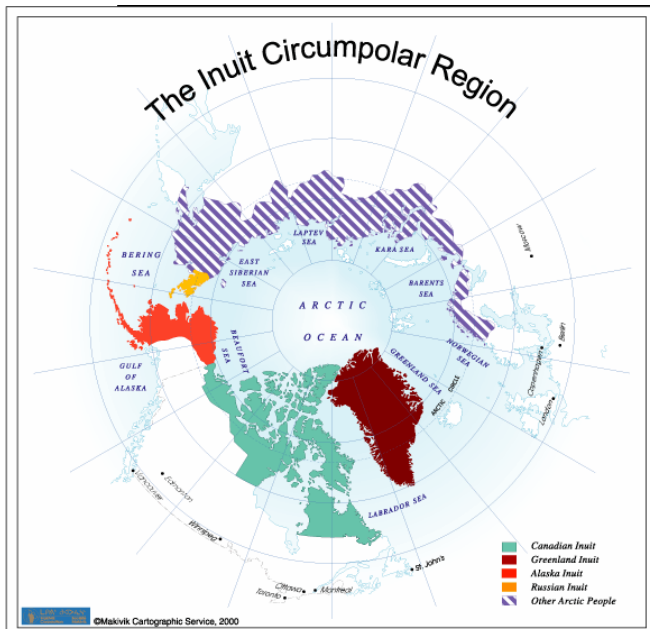
The world has become quite a small place. More and more, the clothes we wear, the houses we live in, and even the way we talk, look and sound the same. As global culture becomes more uniform, blander, then surely the value of our language is increasing. The world is reacting to globalization by seeking out unique voices, and different ways of experiencing life. We need to seize these opportunities to create a strong presence for our culture on the global stage. And our language is the most powerful expression of our distinct identity.

It is my hope that you will learn as much as you can from your Elders and their deep understanding of where we all came from. Remember, though, that Kalaallisut, Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun, Yupik, or whatever form of the Inuit language you speak, belongs to you just as much as it belongs to your Elders. It is your language to shape and to change so that you are able to talk to each other about what matters most to young people today.

Thank you.

Overview of Language Issues

Delegates from each country presented as a team their perceptions of pressing language-related issues in their home countries, regions and communities. **From all countries came an expression of unity among Inuit, the recognition of a common language and a shared commitment to maintain it.**



Youth from Alaska, Canada and Greenland came to the symposium as a concrete expression of their desire to step forward as young Inuit to address language concerns. Many points of commonality emerged, including recognition of past oppression; the current need for two languages; desire to advance the Inuit language; commitment to enhance the overall well being of Inuit youth; and a focus on education.

Alongside these similarities, differences in historical and current contact between the Inuit language and the dominant language (that is to say, between Inuit and non-Inuit) have also shaped unique contexts of each country (and regions within the countries).

The team approach taken by presenters was helpful in highlighting the complexities of language issues within each country, and the variety of experiences among Inuit, even from a single country or community. The following points highlight the prevalent concerns in each country's presentation, and set the scene for the identification of priorities and action plans in subsequent sections.

Alaska

In Alaska, the major issues identified were:

1. Inuit youth who never acquired the Inuit language, or do not feel competent in it;

"I feel bad because I never learned Inupiaq, and I want to pass it on to my children."

- Lorena Nay, Kotzebue, Alaska

2. Pressure on schools and teachers as the agents of revival;

3. Enhancing remaining time with elders and learning their language, stories, and ways;

4. Embracing the language as the youths' own;

"I always considered the language to be the old people's. Then, at age 15, I came upon the conclusion that the language is mine, too and I started asking my dad to speak Inupiaq to me because he never really did. Maybe he was afraid to. [...] Youth are mobilizing now, taking back the language along with other people."

- Elizabeth Saagulik Hensley, Anchorage, Alaska

5. Letting go of the fear to speak their languages;

"People are starting to motivate. Fear to speak is being pushed into past. For many years responsibility had been placed on teachers saying, "they're doing it in school, we don't need to do it at home." [Now, communities have] re-embraced the responsibility for transmitting language. It's a changing of the tide. We have kickstarted the reversing of the trend."

- Jana Harcharek, Barrow, Alaska

6. Making the Inuit language visible and heard once again.

Canada

In Canada, the major issues identified were:

1. Maintaining Inuit language where it is strong, revitalizing it in places where shift has taken place;

"Language is a big issue in Kitikmeot. [...] Less than ten percent of young people under 25 speak their language. [...] Inuinnaqtun language classes only go up to grade two [...] Communication with elders is problematic because language loss is so extensive that even an attempt to communicate is embarrassing and awkward."

– Jason Tologanak, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut

2. Development of curriculum; enhancement of learning opportunities (in school and on the land);

3. Disconnect between generations (differences in experiences, cultural knowledge, and language competence are hindering sharing between youth and elders);

"Growing up, listening to my parents talking about the day, I would ask, "What does that mean?" because I didn't understand, I wasn't brought up in the way they were. That's one of the challenges I face."

– Jonathon Epoo, Kuujjuaq, Nunavik

4. The allure of English language media.

Greenland

The Greenlandic representatives brought forward the following goals to address the language issues they face:

1. Establish a language policy;

"There was a problem with the home rule: they said that Greenlandic language is important, but the administration didn't follow through, and higher education wasn't accessible to the Greenlandic speakers."

– Upaluk Poppel, Nuuk, Greenland

2. Encourage more creative production in the Inuit language;

3. Achieve balanced bilingualism for all Greenlanders;

"Only one from my class went to college because the other students couldn't speak Danish or English well enough. This is a major problem. There are so many gifted Greenlandic people, but language is a big problem. First language in Greenland is Greenlandic, and if we want an education, the first language is Danish"

– Ivaag C. Poulsen, Nuuk, Greenland

4. Pursue equality and justice for all Greenlanders, as reflected in/created by language practices.

"The need for the population to learn Danish hasn't diminished actually but has become more important."

– Janus Chemnitz Kleist, Nuuk, Greenland



Guest Speakers

Guest speakers were invited to present on initiatives already underway for the Inuit language planning. Speakers, and the discussion following their presentations, informed delegates of structures of support that are in place to protect, preserve and enhance the Inuit language. Johnny Kusugak, Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, presented with Shauna Wright on the mandate and activities of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut's Office (www.langcom.nu.ca). Alexina Kublu, task force member, explained the recently completed process of the Aboriginal Languages Task Force and its report, which made recommendations to the Canadian Government regarding its stance on all Aboriginal languages in Canada (www.aboriginallanguagetaaskforce.ca). Shelley Tulloch (assistant professor, Saint Mary's University) discussed how academic studies of language planning for the Inuit language can support grassroots initiatives such as those proposed by ICYC.

Delegates used guest speeches as a launch pad for each day's activities and discussions, as a means of conceptualizing and articulating some of the possibilities and potential for language policy development in the North. However, the youth used the symposium, the coming together of like minds from across the Arctic, to identify priorities, set goals, and establish means of achieving these goals that were distinctly from them: born of the youth, to be implemented by the youth. The knowledge, wisdom and experience of the elders were sought after and held in highest regard as the youth re-evaluated their perceptions of the current linguistic situation and their vision for its future under the guidance of respected elders. The youth priorities and elders' responses are summarized in the next two sections.



Youth Priorities

Following the presentations of language issues in each country, delegates participated in discussions, brainstorming and break-out sessions, facilitated by Lori Idlout (Executive Director, Isaksimagit Inuusirmi Katujjiqatigiit, Embrace Life Council), which helped to identify shared priorities. Their comments are arranged here thematically.

Human and linguistic rights

Youth delegates emphasized that attempts to address the Inuit language's current situation need to occur in a broader context of empowering Inuit, recognizing, claiming, and protecting Inuit human and linguistic rights. They talked about knowing where they come from; letting go of pain; refusing to be victims; taking action; and using a sense of pride in being Inuk as the impetus to move forward.

"I don't like victimizing myself and it bothers me when people do, but I think it's just because it's part of the history, and a lot of what we're saying about being oppressed hasn't been validated yet."

– Qajaaq Ellsworth, Iqaluit, Nunavut

Knowledge of Inuit history, as told by Inuit to Inuit and to the outside world, was identified as a priority. Inuit youth also expressed a desire to take control of the messages Inuit are receiving and of the influential media.

"We have to change the system we use today. The people that run the system, are they running us too much or can we not run on our? ...Radio or television, are they affecting us or running us?"

– Jonathon Epoo, Kuujjuaq, Quebec

Beginning with individual responsibility was discussed at length and with great passion. **By learning from elders, which was usually challenging for various reasons, youth committed themselves to ensuring the survival of their language.** They took responsibility for shaping its future. Inuit youth stepped forward to assume ownership of the Inuit language, a language that some had considered as belonging only to the elders. They took hold of their right to learn, know and use Inuit language. At the same time, they acknowledged that the obligation or expectation to know the Inuit language can be discriminatory or exclusionary and that *only* knowing the Inuit language restricts economic mobility.

"I don't think Greenlanders know their rights because none of the generations have had their rights protected or even learned their rights to speak their mother languages in school or at the work. It is important to teach the people their human rights and the rights to speak their mother languages in school and work in their home countries."

– Upaluk Poppel, Nuuk, Greenland

Education

Education was identified as a priority for the Inuit youth. The education system was seen as a vehicle for promoting knowledge of Inuit language and culture, as well as fostering positive attitudes about both. Inuit youth value Western education as well as traditional ways of learning from their elders. The education system has the potential to be empowering, and a place of Inuit

language revival. Participants shared best practices and success stories, as well as ongoing challenges they and children face in acquiring an education which reflects who they are as Inuit. Two challenges (indirectly related to language) that were identified are overcoming the perception that children educated in the Inuit language are behind “mainstream” peers and transforming the education system to truly reflect Inuit knowledge, learning and teaching styles.

“It is also important to educate the western world about our history and our culture because they really don’t understand our culture and history.”

– Upaluk Poppel, Nuuk, Greenland

“We have to alleviate gap; we must know our own history and get away from the western way of teaching and learning.”

– Jonathon Epoo, Kuuujuaq, Quebec

“We have to ask ourselves, what do we want our children to be able to do when they are done going through system? Simply function in the Western world? Or do we want to make them comfortable in both the Western world and our world?”

– Jana Harcharek, Barrow, Alaska

While schools were seen as a place of language acquisition and revival, participants were unanimous that the language must be incorporated into all aspects of life. Individuals must assume responsibility, and work with and alongside schools in the goal of enhancing knowledge and use of the Inuit language.-

Identity



Discussions linked promotion of the Inuit language to broader issues of Inuit youth identity, self esteem, belonging, pride and spirituality.

“Language is so important; I don’t know how I would live without it.”

– Randi Broberg, Nuuk, Greenland

Inuit youth affirmed their right to their language, but also their right to define and shape their own identities. Furthermore, they stated their right to pursue fulfilling lives, and described the role of knowing and using the Inuit language in assuring the overall well being of Inuit youth. The Inuit language expresses deeper meanings, profound understandings, and values that Inuit cannot express in English. Its use is key to maintaining certain valued relationships, for example with the elders. Other cultural practices, such as **subsistence activities, dancing and singing, were identified as contributing to a sense of well being, as well as providing an occasion to learn and use the Inuit language.**

“It’s important that we do the things that make us feel good as Inuit, like dancing or singing. These are ways of learning some of the Inuit language, too; there are children who don’t speak it but can sing in our language.”

– John Chase, Bethel, Alaska



Some Inuit youth said that they had felt afraid, or ashamed, but following the conference feel stronger to move forward, knowing they are doing so together.

"I don't feel afraid anymore."

– Randi Broberg, Nuuk, Greenland

Bilingualism

As important as the Inuit language is for Inuit youths' identities and well being, the youth also brought forth that bilingualism is also a part of this. Knowing both the Inuit language and the country's "dominant" language (e.g. English, Danish) was identified as a challenge, a necessity and a goal, for Inuit and non-Inuit alike.

"Monolingual Greenlanders can be left behind."

– Upaluk Poppel, Nuuk, Greenland

English and Danish are identified as "power" languages, necessary for securing a higher education and jobs. Inuit start to speak these languages when the people around them do not know the Inuit language. In the capital of Greenland, some Inuit use Danish when they want to look cool. In Canada, there is still a certain pride associated with knowing English, and shame in not being able to speak it. The current system contributes to that attitude, by maintaining Danish, English, etc. in "power" positions.

The strength and importance of these languages, especially of English, seems to make it difficult for Inuit to balance knowledge and use of both. Bilingualism is seen as a challenge, but should be seen as a strength.



Inuit youth also identified as a priority increasing the levels of bilingualism (Greenlandic-Danish; Inuktitut-English, etc.) among the non-Inuit living in the North.

Inuit language resources

Best practice:
Inuit language workshops in Nunavik with elders, educators, translators and students.

Developing the language itself (e.g. modern terminology, potentially standardizing), as well as resources in the language were also identified as priorities. In areas with few remaining speakers, documenting the language, and the stories, is a most pressing concern.

"Elders are dying every day and so is the language because there is not enough emphasis on documentation."

– Jason Tologanak, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut

In many cases, elders have been recorded, and these materials need to be made accessible. Creative productions in the Inuit language (e.g. books, children's literature, music, documentary films, television shows etc.), especially materials produced by Inuit, telling their own stories, was also identified as a priority. Public funding is needed to support these endeavors.

Government responses

The Inuit youth spoke about the difficulty in getting governments to respond to local interests. In Greenland, there is no language policy and the policy in Alaska is seen as having no teeth. It is difficult to develop a policy to address the wide range of concerns of Inuit. In Greenland, despite the strength of Greenlandic, participants talked about the difficulty of getting government services in the Inuit language. **There is a need for government funding to pursue local programs.**

Best practice:
Office of the Languages Commissioner in Nunavut: the Commissioner is an ombudsman, who oversees language issues in the territory and ensures rights are protected.



Working together

Throughout the conference, youth emphasized the importance of working together. This diverse group of artists, hunters, students, activists, youth leaders, and others came together from different regions, from cities and villages, to listen to each other, share their experiences, learn together and become inspired by each other.

"I'm just stoked that all this around. Before this, it seemed like it was just me and my family and we were working at the family, individual level. I had no idea that there were people like me out there."

– Qaiyaan Harcharek, Barrow, Alaska

"I want to hear about other groups facing same issues and how they're dealing with it."

– Kelsi Ivanoff, Unalakleet, Alaska

Inuit youth discussed various ways of pursuing partnerships at multiple levels in order to achieve their language goals. They identified the need to overcome various barriers, including international prejudices; the cultural/linguistic disconnect between generations and between regions. Partnerships that were identified to develop include:

- parents/community members with schools
- speakers with non-speakers
- Inuit with other indigenous groups
- regions with other regions; countries with other countries
- youth organizations with other organizations
- youth with elders.



"We need to invite elders as regular visitors in the schools. We need them; they are our teachers. Parents are needed. We can host community potlucks, etc. Parents become learners too when children bring home words and phrases."

– Jana Harcharek, Barrow, Alaska

"Inupiaq and non-Inupiaq even taaniq, people from New Zealand, are coming in to talk about their struggles. We got together with elders in the community to raise awareness and talk about what they're doing in New Zealand."

– Jana Harcharek, Barrow, Alaska

Respect for elders

Above all, participants spoke firmly about their respect for Inuit elders, and their desire to work with them in order to address language and other issues in their communities. They identified the breakdown of interaction between elders and youth and encouraged each other to understand how elders might feel intimidated by today's youth, who seem to be living in a different world that the elders don't understand. They committed together to express to elders the value that Inuit youth place on their knowledge of things that haven't been passed on.

The youth revalidated the elders as wisdom keepers of the Inuit way of life. They reinforced their importance and importance that youth place on them.

"Maybe we don't tell them that often enough."

– Miali-Elise Coley, Iqaluit, Nunavut

The youth expressed their responsibility to perpetuate the Inuit language as a mark of respect to one's parents and grandparents who carried the language into the 21st century.

"As a youth, we have to instill the language, we have to push it, because this is what our parents have done for us, this is what our elders have done."

– Jonathon Epoo, Kuujjuaq, Quebec

Children's future

Children were identified as a priority, driving the activities of the youth. Youth were motivated by a desire to protect the language for their children's future.



"I'm here because I want Mr. Lee [my son] to have a cool future."

– Qajaaq Ellsworth, Iqaluit, Nunavut

"I want to get ideas about how to help children start at early age so that my little brothers will have a chance."

– Lucy Gavin, Buckland, Alaska

"I'm excited about this sharing of knowledge and bringing it home so that we can start revitalizing our language and bringing up smart beautiful Inupiaq speaking babies."

– Elizabeth Saagulik Hensley, Anchorage, Alaska

Action Plans

Against this backdrop of identified issues and priorities, Inuit youth came up with an action plan for revitalizing the Inuit language. They include guiding principles for a language policy, concrete actions to achieve such a policy, as well individual commitments to work on language preservation at a personal level. Participants' commitment to carrying through was seen throughout the symposium, where they used the Inuit language as much as they were able, learned from, taught and encouraged each other, and established concrete, workable plans to implement when they got home.

Language policy and planning

Youth are turning to language policy to support them in addressing the priorities identified in the previous sections. **While the youth, in many cases, see themselves as primary resources in preserving the Inuit language – they take responsibility for speaking and transmitting the Inuit language – they are looking for support in key areas.** The protection of linguistic and human rights in Inuit lands, the enhancement of Inuit language education, and the development of Inuit language resources take a commitment from the government to develop and implement favourable policy. Policy must have funding implications to support grassroots initiatives such as those highlighted in this report.

Guiding principles

The Inuit youth identified that a language policy must be driven by the following guiding principles:

1. Action oriented

Youth challenged each other to move from talk about general priorities to concrete actions, to take responsibility for specific items and be accountable for results.

“Say to yourselves, ‘If it’s going to be, it’s up to me.’”
– Bernadette Dean, Rankin Inlet, Nunavut

“If you say it, do it.”
– Miali-Elise Coley, Iqaluit, Nunavut

“Look at the commitment that people have put into bringing people together. We’re strong people. When we go home, there’s not a doubt that we’re just going to just sit there. All of the Alaskan delegation is solid and motivated to act.”
– Elizabeth Saagulik Hensley,
Anchorage, Alaska

2. Community driven

Youth expressed their commitment to designing and implementing community-based language restoration programs and establishing partnerships with existing programs. An Inuit language policy needs to come from within Inuit communities and these communities need to retain ownership of the policy. Community-based groups, organizations, personal networks, and individuals are existing resources, within Inuit control. Inuit need to motivate from the inside out.

“We need to make the link between international, national, regional and community efforts. What we do at higher levels must reflect needs of lower levels. Nunavut Inuit Youth Council [for example] takes all advice from local groups and flows to higher up.”
– Jason Tologanak, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut

“Institutions are a place to make things mandatory, but something needs to be done to bring something out from the inside rather than to project it from the outside.”
– Elizabeth Saagulik Hensley, Anchorage, Alaska

3. Based on Inuit values

An Inuit language policy must clearly reflect Inuit values. These values are already written out for Alaskan Inupiat and Nunavummiut (IQ) and include ideals such as teamwork, partnerships, cooperation, and persistence. Pan-Inuit values should be identified as the foundation for Inuit language policy at homes, work and in every day situations as well.

4. Looking to the future and focusing on the solution

While Inuit youth acknowledge the past and want to learn about it and from it, they are fixing their eyes on what youth can do *now*, to secure the desired future. Inuit youth acknowledge the challenges that their language faces, while focusing and building on the positive in order to work toward solutions.

5. Fun and cool

Using the Inuit language, and activities that promote it, must be fun and cool.

6. Cultivate pride

Pride in the Inuit language, culture and identity should be promoted within an Inuit language policy.

7. Inclusive, holistic approach

Language revitalization should target integration of the Inuit language in all aspects of life, including school structures, government, home, spirituality, and others.

8. Implementation timeline

An Inuit language policy should possess multi-year and long-term and short-term goals, with sub-objectives and stages of implementation.

9. Measurable outcomes

An Inuit language policy should have clear, precise, measurable goals and include mechanisms for regular assessments, reporting, monitoring and contact among those working on policy.

10. High expectations

An Inuit language policy should be ambitious with high standards.

"It bothers me when people say, "Be realistic." [...] We need to reset what the expectations of population are. We need to change attitudes."

– Qajaaq Ellsworth, Iqaluit, Nunavut

Language rights

Inuit youth proposed the following action points to lobby governments and international organizations in pursuit of their language goals:

- Recognize and learn about human rights, indigenous rights, rights to land, etc.
- Use human, linguistic, and indigenous rights as a tool for claiming language protection; identify rights that are not being respected and use this as a basis for national and international claims
- Work together nationally and internationally to formulate a strong statement and lobby governments and international organizations to secure language rights and protection; including funding to address language issues
- Explore and use international conventions such as the United Nations convention on biodiversity to gain goals and objectives.
- Increase awareness of Inuit and Inuit language in international organizations such as UNESCO.

"The Inuit language is still isolated and is not known at the international level; therefore we need to promote the Inuit language and the government."

– Upaluk Poppel, Nuuk, Greenland

Securing funding

Funding is an issue for all initiatives. Governments were identified as the main target for future lobbying, along with not-for-profit organizations, such as those which supported the symposium.

“Change starts with passionate people pushing the government. We as individuals and as Inuit need to put pressure on the government and on institutions.”

– Jason Tologanak, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut

Research and dissemination

In order to effectively lobby governments, Inuit identified the need to:

- locate research that has already been released;
- develop community-based research projects;
- partner with people doing relevant research.

Inuit also identified the need for community-driven language projects to identify baseline data, including:

- objective data about how many people speak each dialect and how well (i.e. the starting point of any strategic intervention).

They emphasized that all research findings need to be available and accessible to anybody (including all nations and governments), and that Inuit in particular need to be able to publish findings/accomplishments so that people can read about what they are doing.

Education

Education is a priority. Delegates agreed that governments should implement policy requiring teaching the Inuit language in schools, teaching a variety of subjects in the Inuit language, training teachers and other workers to use the Inuit language (“grow your own”), and developing curriculum that reflects Inuit realities.

General principles and recommendations: Teaching Inuit language and culture

- Children should learn the Inuit language before they learn Danish or English. Their early schooling should be in their mother tongue.
- Have public expectation that all people living/staying in the North, Inuit or non-Inuit, should learn the Inuit language.
- All Inuit should have access and opportunities to learn the Inuit language, whether they are living in the North or in the South.
- Support head start, and other educational programs, for urban Inuit.
- Make the Inuit language a mandatory high school subject for all living in Inuit lands.
- Provide opportunities for Inuit and non-Inuit to learn about Inuit language, culture, and history.
- Develop exchange programs for Inuit to go and stay in a home/community where the Inuit language is spoken in order to learn the language (or a new dialect).
- Lobby governments to make it mandatory to teach in the Inuit language from kindergarten to grade 12, with strong second language instruction in English, French or Danish.-

Best practice:

University-level instruction in Inuit-as-a-second-language, coupled with Inuit-language teacher training, at University of Alaska Fairbanks' Alaska Native Language Centre.

“I’ll be paying to learn Inupiaq in university starting in the fall. It’s kind of a strange way to do it, but...”

– Elizabeth Saquulik Henslev. Anchorage. Alaska

- Foster positive attitudes in the population that subjects such as math and science can also be taught in the Inuit language.
- Develop a circumpolar institute for higher learning. Take advantage of existing circumpolar learning opportunities.
- Strengthening schools is not enough. Find ways to incorporate the Inuit language into whole life.

Best practice: "Grow your own"
Alaskan Endowment Scholarship pays all expenses and gives students stipend to pay them to encourage them to stay in school

- Part of shaping the language's future is having Inuit in positions of leadership in the schools, workplace and government. Provide opportunities and encouragement for Inuit to stay in school and train for these positions.

Teachers

- Parents take responsibility as the primary teachers of their own children in all aspects of culture and language.
- There is a need to have more Inuit teachers in schools.
- Have elders as regular visitors in the schools.
- Recognize elders as transmitters of knowledge and skills that are valued by Inuit youth.
- Involve parents in schools.
- Support and encourage local teachers.
- Provide trained Inuit teachers with incentives to stay in teaching profession.
- Train language teachers in dialects.
- Establish programs for preparing local teachers for the classrooms.
- Establish programs to foster an appreciation of Inuit culture and language among teachers coming from the outside (e.g. summer teacher camps).
- Establish methods to evaluate which Inuit-language speakers without training are qualified and valued teachers.
- Educate parents about how prepared the teachers are to teach.

Best practice: Nunavut Arctic College-McGill University Nunavut Teachers Education Program (NTEP). Inuit can take the full four-year Bachelor of Education program in Nunavut and graduate as qualified teachers.

Best practice:
Co-teaching, with Inupiat and classroom teachers trained to work together in North Slope Borough. All materials are bilingual. The regular teacher has to work closely with the Inupiat teacher. In this way, Inupiat is no longer marginalized as a separate program; Inupiat and non-Inupiat teachers work collaboratively.

Curriculum development

- Teach Inuit about Inuit history, traditions, language, etc. in the Inuit way; value indigenous forms of education as well as western education.
- "Indigenize education": incorporate traditional knowledge in curriculum; ways of instruction, as well as content, should be reflective of Inuit

culture (e.g. demonstration rather than explanation).

- Develop appropriate ways of teaching the Inuit language, at all levels (e.g. children's curriculum in Kitikmeot; grammar instruction at higher levels).
- Build on existing resources (financial, human, material [curriculum]).
- Lobby governments to support Inuit-controlled curriculum development and to secure funding for local initiatives.
- Present youth strategy to school board members, advisory council members, etc. (i.e. those that will effect change).

Best practice:
In Barrow, part of curriculum development has included locally-driven production of a history series on DVD. The first DVD tells the story of the Barrow "duck-in", an Inupiat protest of the Migratory Bird Act. These DVDs are a way to share history about Inupiat, written by Inupiat, and shared by Inupiat.


Lobby school boards as one place to implement language strategy.

Promoting the Inuit language

Delegates also considered educating the public about reasons why the Inuit language should be maintained and promoted as part of the strategy for reinvigorating it. Media is seen as a powerful tool to teach and learn the language. The youth came up with ideas for a media campaign and other promotional activities that would encourage positive attitudes, alongside knowledge and use of the Inuit language, as listed below.

Best practice:
To overcome potential dialect controversies in the North Slope Borough education district, teachers respect the dialect in which the materials are produced.

Media Campaign

- Use the media to overcome difficulties of geographic isolation.
 - Develop a media campaign (newspapers, music, theatre, creative productions, radio, posters, short film/public service announcement on television) to get information out there about Inuit, language, and language policy.
 - Produce a documentary about Inuit across the arctic regions to educate other groups.
 - Use radio stations to increase Inuit language awareness, introduce old terms that people have forgotten, and increase exposure to other dialects to improve understanding.
 - Once an Arctic language strategy is developed, “package” the language strategy to make it tangible for schools, tribal councils, and state governments, and use mass communication to promote its existence.
- 
- Engage in a media campaign to: reset the expectations of the population; increase unity among Inuit; and encourage interest in the Inuit language.
 - Use popular media, internet, music, etc. to help others see the Inuit language as “cool”.
 - Produce an Inuit language version of Real People TV, showing exceptional Inuit undertaking exemplary activities.

Best practice:
The National Inuit Youth Council's public service announcements on television promoting life. An Inuit face, speaking in Inuktitut, delivers a short, simple message: “There are people to talk to”. Announcements send the message home and have proved an efficient way to spread information (Available at www.niyc.ca).

Language week and other activities

Other ideas for promotional activities to encourage having fun with the Inuit language include:

- Celebrate international language week across the Arctic, with activities and promotions.
- Develop language prizes for people who are doing something with the language.
- Initiate after school activities in the Inuit language.
- Initiate storytelling in the Inuit language
- Host a social event for youth on same day in communities across the Arctic.
- Take every opportunity to celebrate the Inuit language!

Best practice:
Nunavut's Department of Culture Language Elders and Youth offers language prizes for nominated individuals in Nunavut working to make a difference on language issues. Winners receive a plaque and their name in the paper.



Knowing, learning and using Inuit language

The Inuit youth emphasized personal responsibility for knowing, learning, and using the Inuit language as a key to its continuing strength. They talked about ways to foster acquisition and retention through listening, speaking, and “the art of practicing”. The following sections summarize general principles and recommendations for knowing, learning, and using the Inuit language, followed by specific suggestions for using the Inuit language in the home, community, and workplaces. After this are action points concerning learning and teaching the Inuit language. Youth also recognized the importance of supporting and encouraging others in their use of the language, of increasing its visibility in communities, and producing materials in and about the Inuit language in order to enhance opportunities to learn and use it. These recommendations are listed below.

General principles and recommendations

- Be proactive, even where language is strong (e.g. in Nunavik, most Inuit fluently speak the Inuit language; the Saputiit Youth Association is promoting the Inuit language so that it *stays* strong).



- Do what you can, now, don't say “it's too late”!
- Incorporate Inuit language into whole life.
- Stop taking short cuts; use the Inuit language as much as possible.
- Set a personal standard for the level of Inuit language used and work toward it (for Inuit who know very few words in the Inuit language, this might mean using those words/phrases in an otherwise English conversation; for others, it might mean

attempting not to use any English words in an Inuit language conversation).

- Place value on the “art of practicing”; accept that you will make mistakes, and learn from them.
- Remember that it is okay to use the Inuit language around non-speakers; this will help speakers maintain the language and will give non-speakers an opportunity and motivation to learn.
- Practice using the Inuit language in new ways. For example, if you are comfortable speaking it, work on being comfortable reading it; or if you are fluent in every day conversation, work on story telling skills.

Individual commitments to use Inuit language (home, work, community)

“I recommend that we start at the personal level, with personal initiatives to use and practice our language everywhere. Let's make a personal commitment. We have to start at home, in the schools, in the workplaces.”

– Jonathon Epoo, Kuujjuaq, Quebec

In the home

There was consensus from elders, delegates, and guest speakers that the home is a critical place for shaping the language situation in each country. Recommendations include:

- Implement the Inuit language in the home and daily activities.
- Prioritize Inuit children learning the Inuit language as the mother tongue, and motivating parents to assume this responsibility.

- Set personal goals and guidelines for use of the Inuit language and make a commitment to follow them. For example:
 - make your home an “Inuit language-only” space and encourage anyone who comes in to use the Inuit language;
 - make a commitment to use only the Inuit language to your children;
 - label common items in the home in the Inuit language and call them by these names.

In the community

- Provide/find opportunities to be on the land, to be with elders, to practice subsistence/cultural/traditional activities that make one feel like using the Inuit language and give one the opportunity to use it (i.e. seek out contexts in which it feels particularly natural to use the Inuit language).
 - Use community radio as a tool for communicating with other Inuit in the Inuit language.

Best practice:

Land and culture camps in the Baffin region that enhance language and culture but also pride and identity.

At work

In areas where most Inuit still speak the Inuit language, this should be the expected language of work. The following recommendations will help develop pride in the language, as well as increasing its role in daily affairs:

- Use the Inuit language for work purposes, even if it means translating for non-speakers.
- Hold governmental leaders accountable for using the Inuit language in their public dealings.
- Expect Inuit to use the Inuit language in international gatherings.
- Equip the next generation of youth to be able to meet internationally and conduct business in their own dialects.

Individual commitments to learn Inuit language

Recommendations regarding personal commitments to learn the Inuit language include:

- Make a personal commitment to learn your own dialect fluently.
 - label things in your home so not only you but your family will see it;
 - listen to people speaking the Inuit language;
 - if you don't know an Inuit word, don't be afraid to ask for help;
 - write down words that you don't understand and find someone to ask;
 - don't worry about being wrong or making mistakes;
 - listen to music in the Inuit language;
 - find someone to learn the Inuit language with; learn it alongside your children.
- Learn words from other dialects as a cool way to reinforce your own knowledge, and to increase understanding and unity between Inuit.



Encouraging others to use and teach the Inuit language

Youth committed to help others to use and learn the Inuit language, including:

- Validate and respond to attempts to use the Inuit language.
- Even if you do not understand the Inuit language, let speakers know you don't mind if they use it around you.
- Let people know that you think that it is cool when they use the Inuit language (e.g. in Alaska, using the Inuit language is "cool").
- Be accepting of other dialectal forms; realize it's okay to disagree.
- Give children an opportunity to be exposed to and learn other dialects.
- Provide support for urban Inuit to learn the Inuit language.

Increasing visibility of the Inuit language in communities

In order to increase the visibility of the Inuit language in the communities, Inuit youth recommend:

- Use Inuit words to name businesses, roads, **children**, etc.
- Use the Inuit language on signs, bolded, and above the other language.
- Lobby stores to label in the Inuit language.

Producing materials in and about the Inuit language

Part of encouraging people to learn more of the Inuit language and use it more frequently is providing interesting and creative opportunities to use it. Delegates recommend producing more materials in the Inuit language, for example:

- Develop a library of existing resources (on line) including:
 - materials in the Inuit language and
 - research published about the Inuit language.
- Publish materials in or about the Inuit language.
- Produce your own creative writing.
- Reinvigorate the oral tradition.
- Encourage Inuit poets, authors, thinkers.
- Produce CDs, music in the Inuit language.
- Celebrate creative Inuit across the circumpolar North.

Best practice:
Greenlandic music has published about 500 musical productions in the Inuit language

Best practice:
NANA Regional Corporation has produced a CD that demonstrates the oral language, and how to pronounce Inupiaq words.

Working together

A shared value that emerged as a guiding principle and an action point is working together. Inuit need to come together to inspire each other, share best practices and resources, and to gain strength in unity.

Inspiring each other

- Face-to-face meetings between Inuit from various regions are a powerful way to promote the Inuit language through mutual inspiration.

Best practice: International exchanges
"Artificial boundaries need to be dropped among circumpolar region. When Nunavut Sivuniksavut Inuit came to Barrow and they just spoke Inuktitut, the people in the community saw that and it was like, "Wow! If they could do that, why don't we? Why can't we all be like Inuit in Canada that still speak the language?" Just by seeing what people do naturally in their own countries, we're inspired."
– Qaiyaan Harcharek, Barrow, Alaska

"I'm so inspired by watching people [here, at the symposium] speaking Inuktitut doing business. It's very powerful to speak it and to translate it. Wow, they're doing that effort!"

– John Chase, Bethel, Alaska

Sharing best practices, information and resources

- Document all local initiatives.
- Establish mechanisms to share best practices, information and resources (e.g. about language programs that are working well).
- Develop a communications strategy at regional and national and international levels, using email, websites, list-serves, sharing of newspapers, etc.;
- facilitate face-to-face meetings once a year;
- facilitate exchanges between regions.
- Find funding and hire a paid staff member to orchestrate information sharing (and otherwise focus on implementing decisions for language planning).
- Have this person's office function as a clearing house for the sharing of materials.

Pursuing partnerships

Organizational partnerships

- Establish partnerships and formal working agreements with existing organizations; tap into existing resources.
- Bring recommendations to language departments of respective governments (e.g. Greenlandic Language Department); to Inuit organizations (e.g. Inuit Circumpolar Conference); and to language researchers. Work with representatives from these groups.

International partnerships

- Increase unity of Inuit through learning about each other and learning Inuit dialects.
- Write a strong letter of support stating the importance of youth participation in international meetings in order to make it easier for Russian delegates to get visas.
- Set as a common goal Inuit being able to work together across any boundary or border, using the Inuit language.

"I came here believing I was part of a community of 50,000 Inuit, now I know I am part of 155,000"

– Janus Chemnitz Kleist, Nuuk, Greenland.

Intergenerational co-operation

- Inuit youth need to extend their desire to reconnect with Inuit elders.
- Initiate interaction with elders; go visit elders.
- Make a list of which elders say that they are willing to talk to any young person so that young people can know which elders they can go to.

"As a young people, on Friday night, we don't have anything to do. Let's go and see the elders instead on Friday night."

– Jonathon Epoo, Kuujjuaq, Nunavik

"Don't be shy, invite them, include them. Invite yourselves into their day to day lives."

– Miali-Elise Coley, Iqaluit, Nunavut

"We have to work together; it's very difficult if not. Our elders should be our first priority. We should start on a personal level. Our lives. Our relationship with our grandparents. If we don't have a good relationship with them we should make a relationship with them and after we can look outward to our neighbours, to our communities."

– Ivaag C. Poulsen, Nuuk, Greenland

Elders' Responses

Through this symposium, elders and youth built bridges to work together. Three Inuit elders attended working sessions, where they responded to youths' questions and recounted their experiences and perceptions. There was a definite difference in approach between the youth delegates and the elders. The youth were willing, patient and unintrusive, yet they focused directly on language issues. It was interesting that the elders tended to use the traditional "lecturing" method of teaching the youth delegates about how they've overcome struggles and without always directly addressing the issue of language retention. To the elders, language was part of their life, not a component.

The elders spoke of growing up in a time when there were only Inuit around them, and when the Inuit language was the only language used. Today, they have so much, but they miss what they were brought up with, especially the peace that they used to have in their hearts. Sometimes, the elders said, they feel afraid in contexts where only English is spoken because it reminds them of the early days when the non-Inuit were coming into their lands.

Elders spoke positively about the youths' efforts to travel to new communities, to listen to each other and to the elders and affirmed the youths' growing wisdom as they pursue these paths.

"This is the time to begin. Hold your head high. Wisdom will come naturally if you listen and by traveling to new communities."

- Elder Lizzie Mary Angnakak

In the past, the elders had gathered information from their elders so that they could pass it on. They encouraged the youth to do the same: to ask them and other elders questions, to spend time with, help, listen to, learn from and respect them.

Elder Nina Enminaku, from Russia, spoke of how easy it seems to destroy the language, and how much harder it is to revitalize it, but they are trying in her communities. The elders want to share what they have with the youth:

"We don't have the whole language, but we can give what we have."

"I am giving the language to you so we don't lose our language."

- Elder Lizzie Mary Angnakak

They encouraged the youth to practice using the Inuit language to develop it.

"Youth should be called the 'Inuit Language Protectors.'"

- Elder Lizzie Mary Angnakak

They encouraged youth to *use* the Inuit language, regardless of which dialect it is and even if they feel that they are not speaking properly. Elder David Angnakak laughed at his own speech due to missing teeth:

"I don't speak properly, but I still have to speak."

Elder Lizzie Mary Angnakak continued:

"Even if you don't think you're speaking properly, just speak. It can be embarrassing, but forget about that. I feel satisfaction when you speak, even if it's not properly. For us, it's a pleasure."

Elder Nina Enminaku shared the feeling:

"Today I've been so joyful hearing youth speak to each other in their mother tongue."

She said that the future of the Inuit language depends on the youth:

"The interest is up to you – whether you like the language or not."

The youth, as evident throughout this report, clearly assume the responsibility to carry their language into the future. They pledged to grasp their elders' hands and undertake a closer, intimate walk with them, toward the rising sun of rejuvenated knowledge and use of the Inuit language, in all its forms.

The elders responded warmly. Their closing words at the symposium are given here in conclusion of the summary report for the Inuit Circumpolar Youth Symposium on the Inuit language.

"This is the first time I've met with youth at this kind of meeting and I know what you want and your statements are in my heart and in my head."

"Anything that's partner, go ahead. Anything that you're doing alone is too heavy but I think we're working together. The lady who was talking, I don't even think about her as a girl, I just think about her knowledge – she's a very knowledgeable person. Please believe in yourself because only when you believe in yourself can you move forward."

"You will overcome it. We can overcome all these things."

"This is my first time having a meeting with a number of young people. It's obvious, I'm looking at the love that you have and what you can do and I know for a fact that we will have a better future because of you and your actions. [...] Think of the future youth. Be Inuk. Don't give up."

- Elders David and Lizzie Mary Angnakak



Inuit Circumpolar Youth Symposium Delegation

Hosted by Inuit Circumpolar Youth Council (ICYC)

Alaska:	Canada:
Elizabeth Hensley (ICYC)	Miali-Elise Coley (Chair of ICYC)
Qaiyaan Harcharek (ICYC)	Jonathan Epoo (ICYC)
Kelsi Ivanoff	Jason Tologanak
John Chase	Jaypeetee Arnakak
Jana Harcharek	Qajaaq Ellsworth
Lucy Gavin	Eric Nutarariaq
Mary Black	Shelley Tulloch
Lorena Nay	Elaine Lloyd
Greenland:	Elders:
Upaluk Poppel (ICYC)	Gela Pitsiulak (ICC)
Janus Chemnitz Kleist (ICYC)	Ms. Nina Enminaku Interpret: Ms. Irina Appa
Randi Broberg	David Angnakak
Ivaag C. Poulsen	Lizzie Mary Angnakak
Miki Jacobsen	Enos Lyberth Interpret: Lene Heidi Holm

