

Nunavut Research Institute

Brief report in light of research license: 05 016N-M

A Collaborative Research Project with Inuit Youth, Families and their Communities about Informal Educational Practices, Community Driven Science Research and Life-Long Learning with Important Implications for Inuit Education and Perseverance

Lead Researcher : Jrène Rahm, University of Montreal, Faculty of Education

Co-Researchers

Vincent L'Hérault, ARCTIConnexion

Marie-Hélène Truchon, ARCTIConnexion

Shirley Tagalik, Arviat Wellness/ Aqqiummavik Society

Tatiana Garakani, Ed.D., ENAP The University of Public Administration, Montréal

Pierre Desrosiers, Park Canada

Project Partners :

ARCTIConnexion

Arctic Eider Society

Arviat Wellness Center /Aqqiummavik Society

Project location: Arviat, Pond Inlet & Sanikiluaq, Nunavut; Inukjuak & Umiujaq, Nunavik

Timeframe: October 2016 – Summer 2021

Report, November 13, 2017

Jrène Rahm, from Université de Montréal, with Marie-Hélène Truchon and Vincent L'Hérault, from ARCTIConnexion, spent two weeks in Arviat in October 2016 collecting follow-up interviews and engaging with participants (youth participants & young coordinators and adult mentors) of the following three programs : 1) Arviat Film Society; 2) Young Hunters Program (Arviat Wellness Center); and 3) the greenhouse project and environmental monitoring program (a collaboration between Arviat Wellness Center & ARCTIConnexion). Twenty interviews in total were pursued (filmed & conducted with young Arviarmiut with multimedia skills from the Arviat Film Society).

In light of *objectives 1 & 2* of the project, we began analysis of archival interview data and other documentation from previous years in conjunction with the new interviews conducted in Arviat in fall 2016. Two kinds of analysis were pursued, one grounded in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles with a focus on Inunnguiniq or “the making of capable persons” by Marie-Hélène Truchon from ARCTIConnexion. Through that kind of a deductive analysis, we tried to highlight dimensions of each program that are well aligned with and nurturing IQ. A second analysis was pursued by Jrene Rahm and her students at the University of Montreal, entailing an inductive analysis, leading to the noting of emergent themes that are at the heart of the programs and that make them valuable in the eyes of the participants, coordinators, and mentors. That analysis focused on the programs’ structure, the kinds of learning opportunities they supported for youth and young adults, the program’s contribution to youth, adult and community well being, the building of local capacity, and leadership development.

Objective 3 was addressed through the development of some preliminary case studies of young adults, documenting the programs’ roles and contributions to school perseverance

and lifelong learning. In light of these analyses, we are currently reframing ways to explore school perseverance, educational success and lifelong learning in ways meaningful to Nunavut and grounded in Inuit ways or IQ.

Given our commitment to indigenous methodology, we are currently in the validation process of these analyses and results through data analysis workshops in the South.

Preliminary analysis suggests that the three programs in Arviat are well grounded in IQ and clearly emerged from community needs and over time, contributed in important ways to local capacity building and leadership. As Inuit governed programs, they offered youth and young adults with opportunities to engage in storytelling through video (Arviat Film Society), reconnect with culture and histories of places and by being on the land and through the making of materials/equipment (sled) used for hunting (Young Hunters Program), while the monitoring and gardening projects helped them become environmental stewards of the land and thereby protect the land, the people and learn from the land as it changes in ways. All programs were deeply grounded in IQ with modern and Western ways woven into it in ways empowering and meaningful to Inuit and aligned with IQ. Learning happened by doing, observing, practicing, sharing observations and knowledge, and being mentored by young adults and peers from the community. The programs offered opportunities to interact with and learn from elders with Inuktitut being central in those exchanges but also in program activities in general. Each program offered unique opportunities for growth that led to the development of the kind of self-confidence needed to develop a strong identity as an Inuk and new social aspirations for the future. Globally, these programs recreated the kind of informal, intergenerational and situated learning characteristic of traditional knowledge transmission embedded in Inunnguiniq. In doing so, the programs fill an important void given that in the past and for some still today, formal education is experienced as an alienating and colonizing experience. By being grounded in Inuit Ways and then weaving Western ways into the programs, the emergent learning experiences are meaningful and empowering for youth but also mentors with all of them learning from each other for the common good, resulting in healthy community building.

Some of the challenges that were noted across the programs are on-going access to adequate spaces for the programs as well as funding. As Shirley Tagalik noted, maybe once these programs are “entrenched in the school system”, the funding and housing issues of the programs could be solved. Maybe such an integration would also make such programs more widely accessible to all youth and young adults who need opportunities to reconnect with their past and know who they are which will then facilitate their lifelong learning journey.

In conclusion, these programs play a key role in the revitalization of cultural practices, bringing key pieces back that are critically important to cultural and physical sustainability in terms of food security for instance. At a more general level, the programs contribute to community building, the knowledge continuum and cycle of learning. Our collaborative study suggests that these programs are models for contemporary education, given their grounding in IQ, given their emergence from local needs, and given Inuit governance.