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Reconciliation, resilience and resistance in Inuit teacher's professional development and practices

Kathy Snow, kathy_snow@cbu.ca
Corresponding author, Cape Breton University

Shelly Tulloch, s.tulloch@uwinnipeg.ca
University of Winnipeg

Heather Ochalski, ochalski@itk.ca
Inuit Tapariit Kannitami

Melanie O'Gorman, m.ogorman@uwinnipeg.ca
University of Winnipeg

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26203/zm8m-wa24>

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To cite this article: SNOW, K., TULLOCH, S., OCHALSKI, H., and O'GORMAN, M., (2018). Reconciliation, resilience and resistance in Inuit teacher's professional development and practices. *Education in the North*, **25**(1-2), pp. 108-134.



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Reconciliation, resilience and resistance in Inuit teacher's professional development and practices

Kathy Snow, kathy_snow@cbu.ca
Corresponding author, Cape Breton University

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Melanie O'Gorman, m.ogorman@uwinnipeg.ca
University of Winnipeg

Abstract

In February 2017, 26 Inuit educators gathered in Nain, Nunatsiavut for the Inuit Education Forum. Teachers from each of the four Inuit regions in Canada were invited to share their experiences on education in Inuit Nunangat with the goal of identifying barriers and promising practices occurring within their communities. One of the key themes arising from these conversations was the ongoing need for Inuit teacher support and development in schools. Training and retaining Inuit teachers is problematic in Canada, while research tells us that both of these factors are key to student success. Some key challenges impacting resilience for teachers identified by the Inuit Education Forum participants were: organization of learning and leadership, prioritization of Inuit language and culture in schools, and negotiations of teachers' isolation and autonomy. These challenges and the solutions offered by participants are discussed in the Canadian historical context implications for teacher training and professional development in Inuit Nunangat are highlighted.

Key Words: Teacher Education, Decolonising, Critical Pedagogy, Curriculum Change

Introduction

Following the dissolution of the failed residential and federal day school system in the Canadian North (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015), educational policies have aimed at returning Inuit education to communities in order to foster student success (e.g., Grand Council et al., 1975; Northwest Territories, 1982). Just as Inuit communities had worked together for centuries to provide children with opportunities to develop into capable human beings (Kuniliusie, 2015), post-residential school era policies have recognized the importance of Inuit education being anchored in Inuit communities, culture, and language. The centrality of Inuit teachers in delivering community-anchored, culturally-relevant education was recognized at the outset (Mangiuk, Maheux, Pellerin, & Paul, 2014; Patrick & Shearwood, 1999; Taylor, 2001); Inuit-specific teacher education programs have been offered since 1967 (Patrick & Shearwood, 1999). Many of the graduates have taught for decades in Inuit schools, contributing to innovative curriculum and materials development, and becoming leaders in the educational system and beyond (Arnaquq, 2008; McComber & Partridge, 2011; Thompson, 2008; Walton & O'Leary, 2015). However, Inuit teachers remain a small minority within Inuit schools, outnumbered by short-term teachers from southern Canada (Berger, Inootik, Jones, & Kadjuk, 2017; Fyn, 2014). The number of Inuit teachers being recruited into teacher education programs is not enough to meet the demand, and many who complete teaching degrees do not stay in the teaching profession (Berger et al., 2017). In this paper, we explore some of the factors contributing to Inuit teacher resilience and persistence, with recommendations for support through ongoing professional development.

Our discussion of Inuit teacher resilience is part of a broader project into Inuit student persistence and success. Although teachers across Inuit Nunangat¹ are working to support student success through innovative approaches, development of curricular materials, innovative assessment, and classroom interventions (Aylward, 2010), Inuit children's academic achievement is still far below the national average (National Committee on Inuit Education [NCIE], 2011). Following the release of the National Strategy on Inuit Education (NCIE, 2011), the national Inuit organization, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) partnered with a team of academic researchers to investigate foundations for student persistence and success in Inuit schools. Grounded in the belief that Indigenous teachers have deep understandings about what is happening in their community schools, and have the impetus to drive change (Kitchen, Hodson, & Cherubini, 2011), one aspect of the methodology was a pan-Inuit Nunangat Inuit Education Forum, which brought together 29 Inuit educators and long-term Northerners. The forum used a participatory action methodology that aimed to engage participants in discussions about the successes, challenges, and possible solutions to improving educational achievement in Inuit Nunangat. The educators' stories revealed challenges they face maintaining their own motivation and efficacy as teachers and as agents of change in school systems that are still in transition from colonial models to Inuit-controlled, community-centred systems. The broader project also included case studies of Inuit schools

recognized as supporting successful students; participant observation in the case studies informs our contextualization of the issues, as well as our interpretation of dialogue in the Forum.

The results shown in subsequent sections, drawn from participants' comments and contextualized in prior research, show that teachers feel that Inuit leadership is undermined, that curricula insufficiently incorporate Inuit language and culture, and that school systems are under-resourced in ways that limit implementation of evidence-based practices for improvement. These challenges undermine their resilience in the profession. Their recommendations include implications for teacher professional development and are shared in the hope of enhancing Inuit teacher retention so that ultimately, in the words of Johannes Lampe, President of Nunatsiavut, "the outcomes [of the Forum] will help to advance strategies for increased student success rates in Nunatsiavut and, indeed, throughout Inuit Nunangat."

Framing the issues

The historical and geographic challenges faced by Inuit living in some of the most remote areas of Canada provide an important context to our analysis of factors contributing to teacher resilience. This section explains the history of place, people and educational programs found in Inuit Nunangat, which are the context within which Inuit teachers are working.

Place: Colonial control

Inuit Nunangat is made up of 53 communities, ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand inhabitants, and spread over three million square kilometres. Inuit Nunangat is unique in the Canadian context of colonialism because Inuit have consistently lived as the majority population on their lands, and in relative isolation from Qallunaat, especially in what is now Nunavut and Nunavik (Statistics Canada, 2006). Inuit also faced a different form of residential schooling than Indigenous people of the more southern areas of Canada because the North did not become economically or politically strategic until the cold war of the late 1940s and early 1950s (McGregor, 2013; Vick-Westgate, 2002). Prior to this, schooling was left to independent missionaries, whose primary objective was to teach Inuit to read and write (Vick-Westgate, 2002; Wachowich, 2004).

The late arrival of federal schooling and religiously affiliated residential schools as seen in other parts of the country did not prevent the Inuit from also experiencing loss and social and psychological upheaval (McGregor, 2013, p. 23). Several generations of students, many of whom are today's teachers and leaders, withstood federal jurisdiction over Inuit education which lasted until 1969 when the federal government issued a misguided statement on

Indian³ Policy (also known as the White Paper) which was promptly withdrawn after rejection and rebuke from the Indigenous population of Canada (The White Paper, 1969) Although the White Paper addressed First Nations Treaty rights, rather than Inuit rights, it marked a period of distrust and disappointment by all Indigenous people in Canada and marks the beginning of peaceful protest for control of lands and educational reform.

In the establishment of Canadian provincial and territorial boundaries, the Inuit homeland was divided into three colonially-imposed political jurisdictions: Northwest Territories (NWT; now divided into Nunavut in the east, and NWT in the west), Quebec, and Newfoundland/Labrador. Because education in Canada is provincially controlled, each province or territory is independently responsible for determining the budget, the allocation of resources, curriculum content and certification standards. Inuit in all four regions have now signed land claims and/or self-government agreements which give them varying degrees of control over their respective educational systems. The James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement (Grand Council et al., 1975) created an Inuit-controlled school board in 1975. Nunavut acted on its right to control education through its Education Act passed in 2008 (Nunavut, 2008). Nunatsiavut Inuit gained the right to govern schools through the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement in 2005, and are working toward that goal. Therefore, some regions have an established record and plan for Inuit-controlled education dating back to the 1970s while others are still developing such a plan. Although national Inuit organizations are collaborating to advocate for improved Inuit education (National Committee on Inuit Education, 2011), there are no mechanisms for cross-jurisdictional sharing, and no common Inuit curriculum or materials.

Education systems in Inuit Nunangat are in transition, given the relative regency of formal education and of land claims signed across the regions. Sharing of materials and ideas across regions would facilitate the transition to Inuit-controlled education, which is expected to impact student success. However, in light of the huge geographic distances and the prohibitive costs of travel, and with four different jurisdictions governing Inuit education, opportunities for sharing are limited, especially for Inuit educators to gather in-person to share insights. Creating a venue for such sharing was one objective of the Forum described in this paper.

People: Teachers and Schools

As educational policy reforms emerged in the 1970s, Inuit continued to have little control of the schools. Schools were viewed as belonging to the government, because they were designed, built and staffed from the south (Cram, 1985; Government of the Northwest Territories, 1981). The federal government subsequently proposed that Inuit students should be taught in Inuktitut for the first two years of schooling, and therefore Inuit should be trained as teachers. This led to the establishment of the first locally-based Northern teacher

education program in the late 1970s in Fort Smith, but due to its location only a handful of Inuit students participated. It was not until 1979 that political pressure established a full-time Inuit teacher training college in Iqaluit, NWT (now Nunavut), with students coming from across the Territory (Cram, 1985). Many of these initial teachers have become leaders in education at all levels while some remain in the classroom (Arnaquq, 2008; McComber & Partridge, 2011; Walton & O'Leary, 2015). They are the pioneers of Inuit education and have faced their own personal and professional challenges to be in these positions.

The current working conditions of teachers are greatly impacted by geography. Due to the small size of communities, most communities have one school offering education from Kindergarten to grade 12, and occasionally two with a flexible boundary between elementary and secondary schools based on the size of the buildings and the number of students in each grade. Schools tend to be the largest building in a community, and therefore hosts to community gatherings and evening entertainment.

Observations during our case studies showed how schools act as meeting places and community connectors, and thus teachers are called upon to play multiple roles. These teachers advocate for youth, provide role models and negotiate the worlds of families and academics. Teachers assist students to establish a sense of self and place that is critical to their success, though they themselves may be facing their own challenges in this area (Illasiak, 2015). Inuit who have successfully negotiated the challenges of education to become teachers became important bridges between parents and the school because of their relationship to both (Kauki, 2015, McGregor, 2013).

Though demographics are changing, Inuit teachers are still a minority and can feel alienated in schools (Fyn, 2014). As an example, most students in Nunavut can start their education in Inuktitut with largely Inuit teachers, but around upper elementary school there is a shift to education predominantly in English with Qallunaat teachers (Berger, 2009; Berger et al., 2017; Taylor & Wright, 2003). Long-serving Inuit teachers and educational leaders tell stories of racism both during their initial teacher training and afterwards in schools (Arnaquq, 2008; Palluq-Cloutier, 2015), although there are also positive examples of bi-directional learning and sharing between Inuit and Qallunaat teachers and faculty (Aylward, 2009; Sullivan, 2013; Tompkins, 1998). Tensions based on different worldviews and cultures can leave some Inuit teachers feeling dissatisfied with their job choice and in their ability to impact the educational system (Fyn, 2014). Combined with some teachers' own experiences in earlier schooling, which range from positive to negative to ambivalent, but always include enculturation into Eurocentric systems (McComber & Partridge, 2011; Walton & O'Leary, 2015), as well as community expectations and demands (Arnaquq, 2008), teachers need great resilience to persevere and to grow as effective educators in a transforming educational system.

One approach to balancing relationships between Inuit communities and schools that are dominated by Qallunaat teachers is through community-based parents' councils and elder advisory boards. Such boards can bring a stronger Inuit presence into the schools, and lend support to substantiate Inuit values towards communication, organizing, learning and approaches to relationships (Illasiak, 2015). Their role is important to support Inuit teaching staff who will be there in the long term, as well as short-term Qallunaat staff who tend to cycle through, moving on to other locations and opportunities (Illasiak, 2015). Taylor (2007) describes efforts to date to involve communities, and makes recommendations for further community involvement.

Living in Inuit Nunangat, current teachers have experienced a complex relationship with authoritarian government and institutional supports that has meant just achieving the status of teacher means they have already negotiated an obstacle course with a few role models championing the way forward. They are role models of resilience, but need ongoing professional development and support to continue to navigate a system that sometimes feels hostile, while continuing to push for innovations that will improve student success.

Programs: Curriculum and Pedagogy

Beyond historical and current relationships and organization of schools is the decision of what to teach, and what is valued in learning. Recognition of the importance of Inuktitut language in learning was officially made first in 1964 when the Quebec provincial and Canadian federal government acknowledged Inuit children's right to mother tongue instruction. In 1971, the Northwest Territories (NWT) government mandated Inuktitut mother tongue schooling from Kindergarten to grade 3 (Patrick & Shearwood, 1998).

The mandate for language was followed by community consultations and the development of culturally-relevant curricula (e.g. Arnaquq, 2008; Northwest Territories [NWT], 1982; NWT 1996). A major shift in Inuit education was the creation of an educational model known as *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ) which could be used as the backbone for curriculum design and understanding Inuit principles of education. IQ is often referred to as Inuit epistemology but is defined by elders as "knowledge that has been passed on to us by our ancestors, things that we have always known, things crucial to our survival (Bennet & Rowley, 2004, p. xxi). IQ was officially adopted as the educational framework for the Nunavut Curriculum (Nunavut Department of Education, 2007). However, its implementation has been problematic for curriculum design when curricular objectives defined from southern perspectives drive learning. Recent revisions to Nunavut's Education Act go so far as recommending its removal as an integrated principal and suggest switching to IQ as a stand-alone subject (Special Committee, 2015).

Howard (2003) states teachers must be able to construct pedagogical practices that have relevance and meaning to students' social and cultural realities. Few would argue against the need for culturally-relevant practice because the negative impacts on student success and self-esteem when colonial values supersede cultural values has been well-documented (Douglas, 1999; Lipka, Mohatt & Ciulistet, 1998; Ryan, 1989). Few would also disagree with demands that culturally-relevant pedagogy responds to the needs of culturally diverse students (Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994). However, we still observe Inuit students and their teachers struggling to meet the demands of western educational norms and traditional pedagogies simultaneously (McGregor, 2013; Sullivan, 2013).

Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski (2004) state "the only way to address the healing needs of Aboriginal people is to open culturally-appropriate avenues for producing change in existing memory structures and belief systems that will allow Aboriginal people to regain collective strength" (p. 80). Centering curriculum in Inuit values is a critical aspect of mobilizing teachers because without a curriculum that validates their beliefs about education they risk burn out (Arnaquq, 2008; Aylward, 2009; Kauki, 2015). We see these calls reiterated on an international scale with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (that the Canadian Government recently signed) as well as the national calls to action from the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report (2015). Such calls include supporting and developing meaningful culturally relevant, Indigenous- and community-controlled education for Indigenous communities. Hence while much has been written on teaching practice in Indigenous communities generally and its relationship with student success (see for example Bishop et al., 2012; Bishop and Berryman, 2006; Gay, 2000; Wotherspoon 2006) our study highlights such issues specifically in the northern Canadian context.

Background of the Study

Partners in Community

Our work is grounded in a broader project aimed at understanding the determinants of Inuit student success, conducted in partnership with the national Inuit organization, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and with funding from ArcticNet Centre for Research Excellence. We were interested to know what teachers anchored in the schools were observing, and to facilitate co-creation of knowledge through dialogue between these knowledgeable individuals. Thus, over three days in February 2017, ITK and the Nunatsiavut Government sponsored and hosted an Inuit Education Forum in which Inuit teachers and long-term educators gathered to discuss the issues impacting education in the North. The Forum took place in Nain, at the northern tip of Labrador. Teachers and educational assistants were released from classroom duties and flown in to participate from across Inuit Nunangat. Participants from outside of Nunatsiavut

were nominated by ITK, based on their reputation in the field as educational leaders and their availability to travel. Nunatsiavut participants received an open invitation due to proximity.

Forum Planning Team

Our academic team consisted of three university-based researchers, as well as government and Inuit partners. The Forum was facilitated by two Inuit leaders: the Project Coordinator of ITK (now Director of the National Committee on Inuit Education) and the Education Manager for the Department of Education and Economic Development for the Nunatsiavut Government.

Participant Profile

The final complement of participants consisted of 13 teachers, 1 teacher trainer, 9 school staff members (including teachers, school administrators and educational assistants), and 4 representatives from the Nunatsiavut Government, 2 representatives from ITK and 2 researchers. Three quarters of the participants were based in Nunatsiavut with the remaining coming from the other Inuit regions. The educators ranged in experience from one teacher with 3 years experience to another who has now retired. Teachers had obtained their education degrees either through Nunangat-based programming or Bachelor of Education programs in southern Canadian universities. Community members came from a variety of different backgrounds including past educational assistants or support workers, education students currently enrolled in a Nunatsiavut community-based Bachelor of Education program, faculty members from this program, members of the ITK Language standardization committee (which was meeting concurrently in Nain), parents of school-aged children, and a representative from Nunatsiavut's research office. Three upper level decision makers also participated, at their own initiative: the president of ITK (Natan Obed), the Nunatsiavut Government's President (Johannes Lampe) and Deputy Minister of Education (Tim McNeill). Although we had some concern that the presence of officials may impact conversations, these individuals have long-standing and warm relationships among their constituents and are known advocates for Inuit educators. They were asked to participate as listeners only, and we believed that their affirming witness validated participants' conversation, without limiting it.

Participatory Forum

The Forum began with a traditional community feast, in order to make community members aware of our presence and also to invite them to participate. As is tradition in Nain, the feast was a bi-directional welcoming, as we the guests were also made to feel welcome. Traditional food, both brought by our team and the community, was prepared and shared.

The discussion questions examined at the Forum were: what barriers impact educational goals in your community? And what policies or programs would remove those barriers and

foster greater student success in your community? The three days of the Forum built upon one another as participants became more comfortable and familiar with each other. The first day was dedicated to setting the context and telling our own stories; grounding ourselves through discussions of current issues facing educators in their respective classrooms. The second day asked educators to identify critical challenges to education arising from both personal and professional experience in schools. On the third and final day educators were asked to think about and share solutions to the challenges identified on the previous day.

Two Inuit facilitators introduced the major themes daily and summarized the dialogue at the end of day. On the second and third day, the introduction also consisted of member checking (Berg, 2004), as the facilitators shared themes arising from the previous day and asked participants to confirm, remove or make additions to the synopsis. At multiple periods throughout the three days participants were invited to form special interest groups to allow for more intimate discussion on areas of particular interest. The Forum also included short research and policy presentations. The ITK Program Manager shared the ITK National Inuit Education Strategy and a Nunatsiavut graduate student shared results of her research on land-based education. In addition, one educator from each of the Inuit Nunangat regions was invited to present on their own educational experience in order to invigorate conversations throughout the Forum. Three of these presenters (all from outside Nunatsiavut) presented on themes arising from their graduate study completed in the context of an Inuit Masters of Education in leadership program (Tompkins, McAuley & Walton, 2009; Wheatley, 2015).

Data Collection and Analysis

The methodological approach for data collection was based in Participatory Action Research from an emancipating position (Berg, 2004; Grundy, 1987; Holter & Schwartz-Barcott, 1993). Our adoption of the PAR methodology sought to promote self-awareness among the participants regarding their daily practice of teaching, the challenges and solutions they negotiate. Through collective consciousness—a sharing and re-sharing of ideas building upon one another—participants were invited to evaluate Inuit education collaboratively in the light of current theory.

Capturing these conversations for analysis was done through the recording and analysis of three different approaches to discussion or 'data sets' which we refer to as records. The first and most comprehensive record was derived from video recordings of all full group discussions, transcribed verbatim. The second record was derived from one-on-one interviews with seven educators who shared their views and experiences on topics arising from whole group discussions, also videorecorded and transcribed verbatim. The third record was notes taken during break out groups, which were not captured by audio recording.

The development of a coding structure began at the Forum using inductive and deductive processes described by Bradley, Curry & Devers (2007). Initially the small group notes (taken on large sheets of paper) were cut into strips by statement or topic and these were arranged into themes by the two researchers present at the Forum. These emerging themes were recorded, discussed and refined with the two Inuit facilitators and contributed to the consensus building process as the sub groups were derived from themes of the previous day and the subsequent emerging themes were checked by participants the following day. Following the Forum, the full transcripts from all records were analyzed based on themes identified at the Forum, using the constant comparative method of Glaser and Strauss (1967). The dialogue of the Forum was captured in a report entitled *(re)Visioning Inuit Education* (ITK, 2017). Before the report was finalized, the interpretation was shared with forum participants for feedback.

Ethical Considerations

Every effort was made to involve Inuit participants in all aspects of the project, from the inception/development stage to the review and approval of information released in the final report. The project was reviewed at the researchers' two home universities which applied national Tri-Council social research standards. The research was also licensed by each of the Inuit regions (four licenses), which include detailed expectations about the ownership of data, community engagement, honouring Indigenous knowledge and approaches to knowledge sharing.

Finally, as the work was being conducted with teachers, a local school board ethical review and evaluation of procedures was also obtained. At the event itself, all participants regardless of whether or not they were funded to participate at the event, were given the opportunity to opt in or out of the forum. Participants could choose to participate in the forum, but opt out of being cited in reports, or withhold specific stories from the report.

Limitations of the Study

There were three major limitations on the study: financial, weather, and time. Participation in the Forum was dominated by Nunatsiavut educators. In this regard, the insights below may not uniformly describe educational challenges and solutions across Inuit Nunangat. Funding constraints, largely due to the high cost of travel in the North, prevented us from bringing in more than one educator per region outside of Nunatsiavut. Though these representatives offered insights from the other parts of their territory, and some deliberately met with other Inuit teachers prior to the Forum in order to incorporate their voices, they spoke based on first-hand knowledge and did not purport to speak for their whole region. A snow storm prevented some Nunatsiavut educators from travelling to the Forum; so conversations were somewhat dominated by the experiences from Nain as this was the majority participant group. As it takes time for a group of strangers to become comfortable with one another, extending the event to four or five days would have allowed for richer conversations. This was not

possible as the teachers needed to return to their classrooms. For one teacher arriving from Postville, the smallest community in Nunatsiavut, this was the first time in more than ten years that he was able to be released for non-teaching activities.

Research Findings and Discussion

The results of the three days of discussion are shared below in the light of their relevance to teacher resilience in schools. While the final report from the Forum (ITK, 2017) interprets results in light of the need for systemic change, this paper focuses on the relevance of emerging themes to teacher resilience. Three themes emerged as conflicts around: formal communication structures, support for language and cultural integration, and the pressures of isolation and autonomy on Inuit educators in schools. The persistence of colonization in Canada is an underlying conflict that permeates all of the teachers' experience in schools and their willingness to persist and engage in education. Participants laughed and cried together; their faces and their words revealed a wide range of emotions as they shared fears, hopes, pride, and frustration what formal education has done to them and their communities, and where they see it advancing in Inuit Nunangat.

Communication and Decision-Making Structures in Schools

A conflict raised by teachers in a variety of forms was centred in expectations around communication and community dynamics for decision making. Teachers identified the replication of a colonial hierarchical organizational structure in schools with a principal and vice principal as not suited to traditional Inuit approaches to collaboration and communication. As exemplified by one participant, a long-term teacher in the North, family or team structures would be a solution to making leadership more congruent with Inuit values:

Creation of school teams is another way of ensuring that everyone's voice is being heard. The concept of shared leadership has sustained Inuit for thousands of years. If we use this in our schools, then the staff will feel empowered, and when the staff feel that way, we have success in our students. It trickles down to the student and ripples out to the community, to the parents. ...To be an effective leader in our schools...you need to be a good listener and a good communicator. ...Whatever our role is in the community, be it the school, the community, or the office, we must work together. ...We must be inclusive in our ways... Because not only will the staff members feel good about being a part of the whole, but then they take ownership of the program that they learn to deliver. Because the program begins to take shape, the teacher will take pride in it, and then, we will begin to see the success in our communities. – Nunavut teacher A

Illasiak (2015) identifies the Inuit approach to the decision-making process as one in which all members of the community are equal and each plays an integral role. Our research illustrated

the need for more explicit efforts toward respectful collaborative decision-making among the teaching and administrative staff, particularly regarding Inuit and Qallunaat relationships in schools where cultural approaches to collaboration may be viewed differently. Understanding communication expectations was particularly important with regard to the principal-teacher relationship in schools. Though the trend is slowly changing, frequently positions of authority in schools are held by Qallunaat who may not fully appreciate or understand the differences in expectations around leadership and collaborative communication (Tulloch, Metuq, Hainnu, Pitsiulak, Flaherty, Lee, & Walton, 2016). This can leave Inuit teachers feeling disconnected or unsupported.

In continuing the discussion on leadership, the same long-term Inuit teacher shared:

The way that Inuit practice leadership is different from the way southern society practices leadership. Does that mean our way is [better]? Does it mean that the southern way is better? Well I don't think so, but because Inuit have practiced this style for so long, it works. It provided harmony. It also provided peace...

Our schools, our education systems, must be based on the culture in which the majority of students live and breathe. ...Now in order to ensure that this happens in my community, we all need to connect, we all need to collaborate, and we also need to ensure that the culture teacher and the academics are balanced. Our goal in Nunavut is to create and enable human being... Inuit have always had their ways of dealing with situations, values, such as sharing, generosity, family, love, respect, listening, equality, significance, and trust, just to name a few. These values were the connection values. –Nunavut teacher A

As this educator highlights, Indigenous communication and leadership styles are frequently relational, humble, and community and service-oriented (Arnaquq, 2008; Fitzgerald, 2003; Kenny & Fraser, 2012). Research has shown that the presence of Inuit administrators in schools enhances teacher and student resiliency, as well as community participation and school impact (Walton, Tompkins, Hainnu, & Toney, 2015; Tulloch et al., 2016). Forum comments echoed this idea, as a long-term language teacher from Nunatsiavut stated:

If you had principals, vice principals from their community then they would understand that it's important to put culture and traditions into your curriculum, because right now, because they don't know - Nunatsiavut Teacher -N

The obvious solution is then to hire more Inuit into leadership positions. However, Inuit educational leaders in schools are often precluded from applying for the principal and vice-principal leadership positions because school board level policies honour western systems of accreditation requiring documented evidence of leadership capacity in the form of certificates

in administration/leadership or a Masters degree. The challenges around obtaining such degrees was an issue raised by the educators in the Forum, but has been a known problem for decades (O'Donoghue, 1998). Teachers at the Forum identified this certification requirement as a barrier to their ability to progress professionally and to the recruitment of local school leadership. They also pointed out the lack of attention to or appreciation of culturally-specific 'credentials' of local teachers, including language and cultural proficiency. Teachers internalized the lack of recognition of their cultural strengths, and external credential requirements, which instilled self-doubt about their own abilities to move forward even when the requirement for a degree was waived:

I didn't have masters; I was just asked if could take the Inuktitut principal position...but where I didn't have masters I didn't want to. I could have, but I just didn't have the education on it. –Nunatsiavut Teacher B

Although the number of Inuit teachers and principals is increasing, they are in the minority in many schools across Nunangat, which compounds communication and decision-making conflicts. The value that Qallunaat teachers and administrators in schools place on Inuit specific programming can be misconstrued. Teachers discussed the Inuktitut culture and language classes as being the ones students were most often pulled out of for other activities such as re-setting of tests, tutorials or other school activities which appeared to be more highly valued by administration (see also Sullivan, 2013). One Nunatsiavut teacher, in discussing her Inuktitut class, stated, "It's not valued. It's not considered as important as language arts. Oh then we were told, Oh then there won't be enough time for all the other stuff."

Support for Inuit Language and Culturally-Relevant Instruction

Related to the values underpinning communication, teachers identified a need for greater support for the development of Inuktitut and culturally-relevant resources and instruction. The strides that have been made in past decades toward linguistically and culturally relevant education are a source of inspiration and frustration for Inuit teachers. In many ways, teachers and administrators are encouraged by the space that has been created for traditional learning and IQ in schools. Rather than relying on curricular materials and resources from southern Canada, Inuit and Qallunaat teachers alike are increasingly able to use culturally-relevant content and pedagogy to reach curriculum objectives. One Forum participant from ITK described it this way:

...going out and counting seals on the flow edge, and if that's the way you get to numeracy, then how is that any different a result than...counting cows on page? There are different ways to get the same result. And we've been fighting for that right, to allow our systems to evolve into teaching the type of things that we want

to our children, and getting to the same result that all Canadians get to by the time that they're finishing grade 12... –ITK participant

With regard to supports for teachers for culture and language integration, Forum participants shared many community specific practices that were warmly received by other participants. Inspiring youth in education through cultural grounding energized teachers. One Forum participant—an experienced Inuit education leader—described how she is motivated by youth to develop a pilot program for her region:

One of our courses that we're newly developing now, and it actually came from the division, at a youth symposium - ten or eleven years ago, the youth said... "Why aren't we learning about ourselves in school? Why is it now that we're only learning about us?" I remember not knowing much until I went away to university and picking up courses on Aboriginal Studies, or Native studies, it was called, and learning, like, wow, that's pretty important stuff, why didn't I know this coming out of high school? So the youth put it to...the education department... we're in the second year of a pilot program. And it's Labrador Inuit-specific history, social studies course, and it's beautiful. –Nunatsiavut Educator C

Such opportunities open doors for students to be educated in Inuit history and traditional ways that support multiple goals of Inuit education, but they do not come without a cost to the teacher. For example, in Nunatsiavut schools currently fall under the Newfoundland and Labrador School Board authority, which has strict restrictions prohibiting students travel over ice, regarding use of snowmobiles for transporting students and use of firearms with students. While all of these activities would be considered common-place on a Nunatsiavut family outdoor excursion, they require detailed explanation and justification at the schoolboard level before they can occur. Participants believed this is because they are not commonplace for students in Saint John's where the school board office is located. Negotiating the permissions and funding puts extra demands on the teacher to not only design the cultural experience but to navigate the bureaucratic process to allow it to occur.

Add to this the pressure of resource development already facing teachers, and the burden increases. The work imbalance for Inuit teachers has been ongoing for decades. Where Qallunaat teachers have a multitude of easily accessible resources for teaching in English, Inuit teachers have to not only teach, but develop almost all of their own teaching materials (Arnaquq, 2008; Fyn, 2014), essentially adding a second shift to their daily teaching. Even today, as more materials are available, Inuit teachers still carry an additional burden, as shared by a relatively new Nunavut teacher:

The government itself is not producing [teaching materials] ... They've given us so many books, but there's nothing that comes with it - there's no lesson plan, there's no activity sheets, there's nothing that have like, when you get a book in English, usually there's some kind of activity books that come with it, or you can find stuff online very easily. Oh yeah, like the book is great, but...there should be something with that book, even a question and answer sheet, that's one less thing for the teacher to have to do. –Nunavut teacher D

Though many efforts have been made in each region to support resource development these are varied, and not well shared across regions (Arnaquq, 2008; Aylward, 2009a). Even though Inuit educators at the Forum stated that they have developed extensive collections of resources individually, these have rarely been published or shared broadly. Where Inuit did design resources that were published, implementation was the exception rather than the norm (e.g., Aylward, 2009a). Nunavut teachers also cited the loss of years of work, which was not digitally archived destroyed because of contamination concerns during the H1N1 flu outbreak.

Challenging though it may be to create and share resources, teachers at the Forum also cited discontent at the governmental practice of hiring external consultants to design resources. Teachers felt their work should be considered and published before external consultants were hired. As the Nunavut teacher continued:

There's so much more that could be done with those kind of ideas [curriculum development by Inuit teachers], and, it's being done outside of the system, and then those businesses are gonna make a lot of money because they're gonna be the ones developing it anyway, and then our government will end up paying all this money to buy them, and, to pay outsiders to do the work that - well it needs to be done, regardless. –Nunavut teacher D

However, we also observed the opposite sentiment, and feelings of empowerment for teachers who were able to collaborate and share their resource development on regional scales, as described by a teacher from Nunavik:

During the two-day workshop... [Inuit educators were] identifying what are our developmental milestones from birth to young adulthood. And so the group documented these and put it together in there [in a teacher resource] and now it's recognized, and now it's in every classroom. --Nunavik educator E

One of the challenges to making Inuktitut resources more widely available were the different ways of writing Inuktitut. Members of the ITK Language unification taskforce who also

participated in the Forum, reiterated the need for a unified approach to written language, which would not impact community dialects but would allow for a greater sharing of resources across Nunangat. The importance of finding voice and pride through speaking Inuktitut is a theme that educators are still working towards (Tulloch et al., 2016). Although Inuit teachers presumably know more about Inuit language and content than Qallunaat teachers from the South, many who went through residential schools, and particularly younger Inuit, have not always had the opportunity to learn, so one can no longer expect Inuit to be able to teach and/or develop materials in Inuktitut. Nunatsiavut representatives shared that resource coordinator positions have gone unfilled because of the inability to find fluent speakers. The inclusion of Elders in developing and delivering Inuit-specific curriculum is a resiliency factor for Inuit educators as it offers them an invaluable learning process as they work alongside and learned from the Elder, in addition to producing the needed resource for future teachers or delivering the lesson to current students (Arnaquq, 2008; Aylward, 2009a). One of the Nunatsiavut educational support workers stated, in a discussion of language rejuvenation in her region:

But now I find that one of our main priorities ...was reincorporating the language, everywhere. It was one of our top priorities is to make sure that whether it's just the beginning, the beginner language, we utilize people like [fluent speaker] to help us develop some curriculum, some booklets to take, we're doing language and culture out on the land. So we always putting language wherever we could... they [the students] were curious, they were interested, they really loved learning some of their language. And, then we started doing other things in our camps, like, we would - place names, in Inuktitut. You know, we would teach them so that they wouldn't lose that part of history, or knowledge, from our elders, and we would do other cultural activities you know, teach them how to hunt, how to skin a caribou – Nunatsiavut Educational Support Worker F

The expectation placed on Inuit teachers to be the Inuit experts in schools arrives with its own complications; as mentioned above, some Inuit educators may not feel they are knowledgeable enough, and it also creates additional workload.

Isolation, Integration and Autonomy

The final tension between challenge and opportunity we identified from the educator comments related to their feelings of isolation and autonomy within schools. Some educators identified themselves as the only Inuit teacher in their schools. As such, they are disproportionately called on or expected to serve as language experts, or leaders, or cultural resources for the entire school community. This impacts their time for their own resource preparation. It is also emotionally challenging. Teachers identified feelings of tokenism—being brought into meetings as the Inuit voice but not necessarily being heard.

Teachers' expressions of marginalization as they worked alongside a Qallunaat majority echo prior research in various jurisdictions, including Berger's (2009) description of insidious eurocentrism in Nunavut schools (even when Inuit and Qallunaat were *trying* to work toward cultural relevance), and Fyn's (2014) identification of a "a master narrative" in Inuit teachers from across Nunavik's stories of being treated like they were less qualified, and less important in the system (p. 147). Cummins (1986) argues that addressing power imbalances must be part of implementation of bilingual, culturally relevant education if such innovations are to lead to student success. Comments in the Forum point to a need for personal professional development in which Inuit teachers are equipped to name and battle an unjust work environment in Qallunaat-Inuit relations as expressed by an Inuit graduate student:

We value equanimity and sort of agreeability, and ... it kind of goes in opposition to progress sometimes when we kind of listen to what people tell us to do.

And so one of the skills that I really gained over my education...is to name, not to be afraid to name things like racism, to name things like discrimination when we experience it, and marginalization. We—our values, our worldviews—are being marginalized. And so when we experience that, to be able to speak out against it is a skill, its advocacy and that's something I'm developing myself is to be able to advocate for ourselves and I encourage everyone to do the same. - Inuit graduate student

This emerging Inuit educational leader is encouraging her peers to question and name the ways in which Inuit teachers and community members may have internalized the hegemonic dominance of Eurocentrism (Arnaquq 2008; Watt-Cloutier, 1992).

Inuit teachers also indicated challenges in communication and ongoing support in schools with others in the same position based on the geographic remoteness of schools. Teachers were limited in their ability to learn and share from other Inuit teachers because of the physical separation (the next closest school being an expensive flight away) but also jurisdictional separation, where Inuit teachers from the four land claims areas rarely had opportunities for mutual professional development. Opportunities to travel in order to learn from other Inuit and be encouraged in Inuit ways of teaching, affirm each other's wisdom, validate each other's experiences, and share examples of Inuit-created resources, such as provided in the Forum, was described as a contributor to resiliency.

In describing the success of the community based bachelor of education program in Nunatsiavut one of the education coordinators questioned the supports that will be in place for these new teachers when they graduate:

On one hand we have the regular bachelor of education infusing Inuit culture and tradition and learning, and then we have the language alongside of it... when they graduate, there's nothing put in place to continue that learning. Like, there's, they've got the curriculum that they will learn over the prescribed time of the degree program, but we have to look at a maintenance program, I guess, if you will, for lack of a better term. Something that we can continue to provide them, to help them continue to learn and to continue encourage them to use it when they do become teachers—
Nunatsiavut Educator C

While the Inuit teachers sometimes reported feeling out of place in the schools, they are deeply embedded in the community. The connection to the community is a strong motivator; most are teachers and educational leaders because of a deep commitment to families and the community.

The Inuit teachers have more of a long-term opportunity to see their impact. An educator from Nunatsiavut said that being from the community garnered greater respect from students:

Another thing that popped up was kind of personal connection to the teachers, so we felt like, you know, having locally based teacher helps students interact with their teachers, and it seems across the board that they generally have more respect for those that are locally from the community and went off to university and came back, 'cause that shows, you know, their level of education to the students and their [level of initiative]. –Nunatsiavut Teacher R

In this way teachers in small communities were seen as leaders that could gain deeper influence and respect from students. However, as members of the community, Inuit teachers also face challenges that outside teachers don't face. Educating, disciplining, working alongside close family members can be a challenge (Tulloch et al., 2016). Also, teachers from the community do not always have the same access to practical and financial supports (e.g. subsidized staff housing) as teachers coming in from the South (Fyn, 2014). One of the major pushes in Inuit education, as an educator from Nunavik stated, was the engagement of families and communities. Successful engagement of parents and community members in schools as true partners, and not just servants to the school's agenda (Simon, 2012), would help to overcome Inuit teachers' numeric and ideological minoritization in schools as well as building stronger bridges between communities and schools (Aylward, 2009; Taylor, 2007). Cummins (2000) argues that creating space for multi-directional influence between parents and schools is essential to transform education and improve outcomes for minority students, and it could also help address the isolation of Inuit teachers.

Despite all of the challenges to resilience, we observed that the teachers, administrators and community members present were highly engaged in supporting student success and that Inuit educators were one of the major conduits for connection:

We need more people that are passionate, about their children and their education, because if we don't speak out, who will speak out for us? People that are really good at talking to admin or whoever and we need to talk on their behalf – Nunatsiavut Teacher G

Conclusion

The Inuit Education Forum built on prior efforts of school boards, districts and ITK to bring together experienced Inuit educators and leaders. The findings suggest that significant strides have been made to support teacher resilience and capacity-building at the community and teacher levels. However, the challenges that Inuit educators face are multi-faceted, and inter-related.

A persistent challenge is the Eurocentric hegemonies that entrench the status quo of outsider control and English dominance, even as Inuit have worked for five decades to control Inuit education systems and transform them with Inuit language and culture. Mi'kmaq scholar Marie Battiste (2013) writes about the need to displace cognitive imperialism and Settlers' hegemonic authority in order to create mental, emotional, and spiritual spaces for Indigenous-controlled education. Research has addressed the ways in which cultural dissonance between (even well-meaning) Qallunaat educators and Inuit students leads to the students' disengagement (e.g. Fuzessy, 2003). However, the cultural dissonance between Inuit and Qallunaat teachers such as came out in the Forum, has not been deeply addressed in the literature, let alone in teacher professional development. Our findings are consistent with Castagno and Brayboy (2008), who argue that while excellent work has been done to prove the efficacy of culturally-relevant education, such work has not really impacted teachers' practice or changed schools at the systemic level. They argue for a "central and explicit focus on sovereignty and self-determination, racism, and Indigenous epistemologies" in order to Indigenize education. Our research results point to the need for these discussions in teacher professional development as well as in other venues.

Teachers and schools have been repeating the same issues or calls for change for the past 50 years, so although we see strides in many areas, efforts appear to be only partially functioning in schools. Teachers in North, like their counterparts in the South can become fatigued as issues are re-visited in cycles due to institutional forgetting, while opportunities for collective institutional memory building are limited. These enduring tensions are symptomatic of and embedded in ongoing Indigenous-Settler relationships and need to be deliberately addressed in teacher education and professional development for Inuit and Qallunaat

teachers in order to equip educators to rebalance power in the neocolonial context (Battiste, 2013). Given the resistance that Inuit and other Indigenous educators and administrators experience from other teachers and administrators who are used to a certain model of education, opportunities to come together and share perspectives, and be encouraged, are particularly important for maintaining morale and to allow Inuit-generated ideas to grow (Arnaquq, 2008; Carpluk, 1997).

In order to build Inuit teacher resilience in ways described in this paper, professional development must also extend to equipping non-Indigenous teachers and administrators to be true allies of Indigenous-controlled education (St. Denis, 2010). Many Qallunaat teachers are willing to be allies of Inuit-controlled education but are poorly equipped (Berger & Epp, 2007). Most lack background knowledge and materials to incorporate Northern content into their courses, and many have not had opportunities to reflect on the ideological and discursive power that continues to privilege their voices and roles in Inuit education, even as they are an outside minority. Berger & Epp (2007) pointed to the need for the “creation of culturally relevant, ESL-sensitive curriculum and resources, an orientation to Inuit culture and teaching in Nunavut, and increased in-servicing would help Qallunaat teachers teach Inuit students” (p. 44). Non-Indigenous teachers need professional development that helps them question the colonial legacy in the schools in which they’re teaching, speak out against the systemic racism, and behave in ways that help restore balance in power relationships (McGregor, 2014).

The Inuit Education Forum provided an opportunity to harness the lived knowledge of Inuit educators about what is working and what are persistent challenges in Inuit education. In this paper, we have outlined main themes from the Forum that are relevant to teacher resilience, and extrapolated which needs, as identified by the teachers, might be addressed in teacher education and professional development programs. The main implications for teacher education include building resiliency through teaching teachers about positive conflict resolution; building skills and contexts so that teachers are not afraid to speak up even when they are in the minority in schools, and building networks for communication so Inuit teachers have a safe place to share and to learn from each other on an ongoing basis.

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to the Inuit teachers and long-term northern educators from all Inuit regions who were able to participate, and for the community of Nain, Nunatsiavut for hosting the Forum. We want to highlight the support of ArcticNet, the Nunatsiavut Ministry of Education and Economic development, ITK and the SSHRC for their financial and in-kind support in the form of time and resources. We also thank Shanti Subedar (student at the University of Winnipeg) who transcribed Forum recordings.

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Footnotes

1. Inuit Nunangat is the homeland of Inuit of Canada. It includes the communities located in the four Inuit regions: Nunatsiavut (Northern coastal Labrador), Nunavik (Northern Quebec), the territory of Nunavut and the Inuvialuit region of the Northwest Territories.
2. Qallunaat is the Inuktitut term used to refer to non-Inuit people.
3. The term Indian is used as is reflected in the historical document but refers to the legal agreement for Indigenous peoples of Canada.
4. The University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) has offered two Masters Programs in Nunavut - a Master in Education in Leadership and Learning and a Certificate in Educational Leadership - which fostered leadership skills among the current generation of teachers and administrators in Nunavut.