

# Makiliqta!



## Making Inuktitut a Reality in Nunavut

Presented by Laakuluk Williamson

# Outline of presentation

- What is Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated?
- What is Nunavut's current education and language situation?
- Why is the current system not working?
- What would we like to achieve?
- What has happened since 2006?\*

\* this paper is that presented at the Conference in 2006. Since several important bills have been passed since we felt necessary to mention these achievements.



# A Complex Language Landscape





Source: Office of the  
Language  
Commissioner of  
Nunavut

# Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated



- **Nunavut is Canada's 13<sup>th</sup> jurisdiction and was created through the implementation of Article 4 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA)**
- **Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) was formed in 1993 to replace the Tunngavik Federation of Nunavut. It is the incorporated organization that represents Inuit under the NLCA**
- **NTI's mission is to foster Inuit economic, social and cultural well-being through the implementation of the NLCA.**

# Department of Social and Cultural Development



- **The Department of Social and Cultural Development (DSCD) is one of NTI's 10 departments**
- **DSCD's mandate is derived from Article 32 of the NLCA**
- **DSCD has ten priority areas:**
  - **Housing, health, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, elders, Inuit sign-off on federal transfers, cultural expression, community wellness (including justice), production of the Annual Report on the State of Inuit Culture and Society as well as education and language**
- **SCD currently has 10 staff (administrators, policy analysts and advisors) working on health, language and education, justice and the production of the Annual Report.**



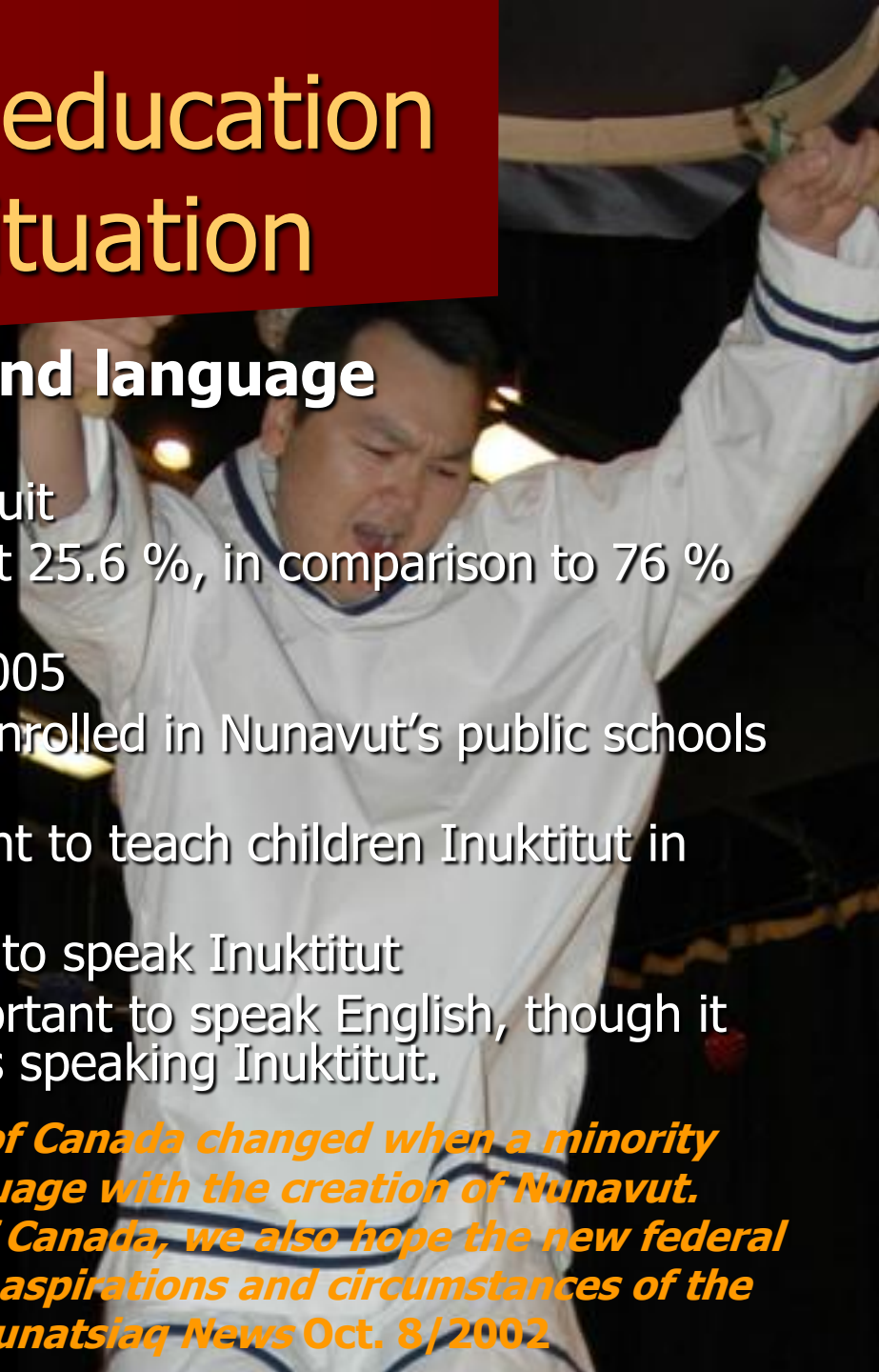


# Nunavut's current education and language situation

## Inuit, school and language

- Nunavut's population is 29 300
- 85% of Nunavut's population is Inuit
- Graduation rates in Nunavut are at 25.6 %, in comparison to 76 % in the rest of Canada
- 113 Inuit students graduated in 2005
- In 2004/2005, 96% of students enrolled in Nunavut's public schools were Inuit
- 97 % of Inuit believe it is important to teach children Inuktitut in school
- 96 % of Inuit think it is important to speak Inuktitut
- 91 % of Inuit believed it was important to speak English, though it was not considered as essential as speaking Inuktitut.

***"On April 1, 1999, the linguistic landscape of Canada changed when a minority language suddenly became a majority language with the creation of Nunavut. While we appreciate the bilingual nature of Canada, we also hope the new federal action plan ... will consider and respect the aspirations and circumstances of the Inuit." Jack Anawak, former GN Minister, Nunatsiag News Oct. 8/2002***

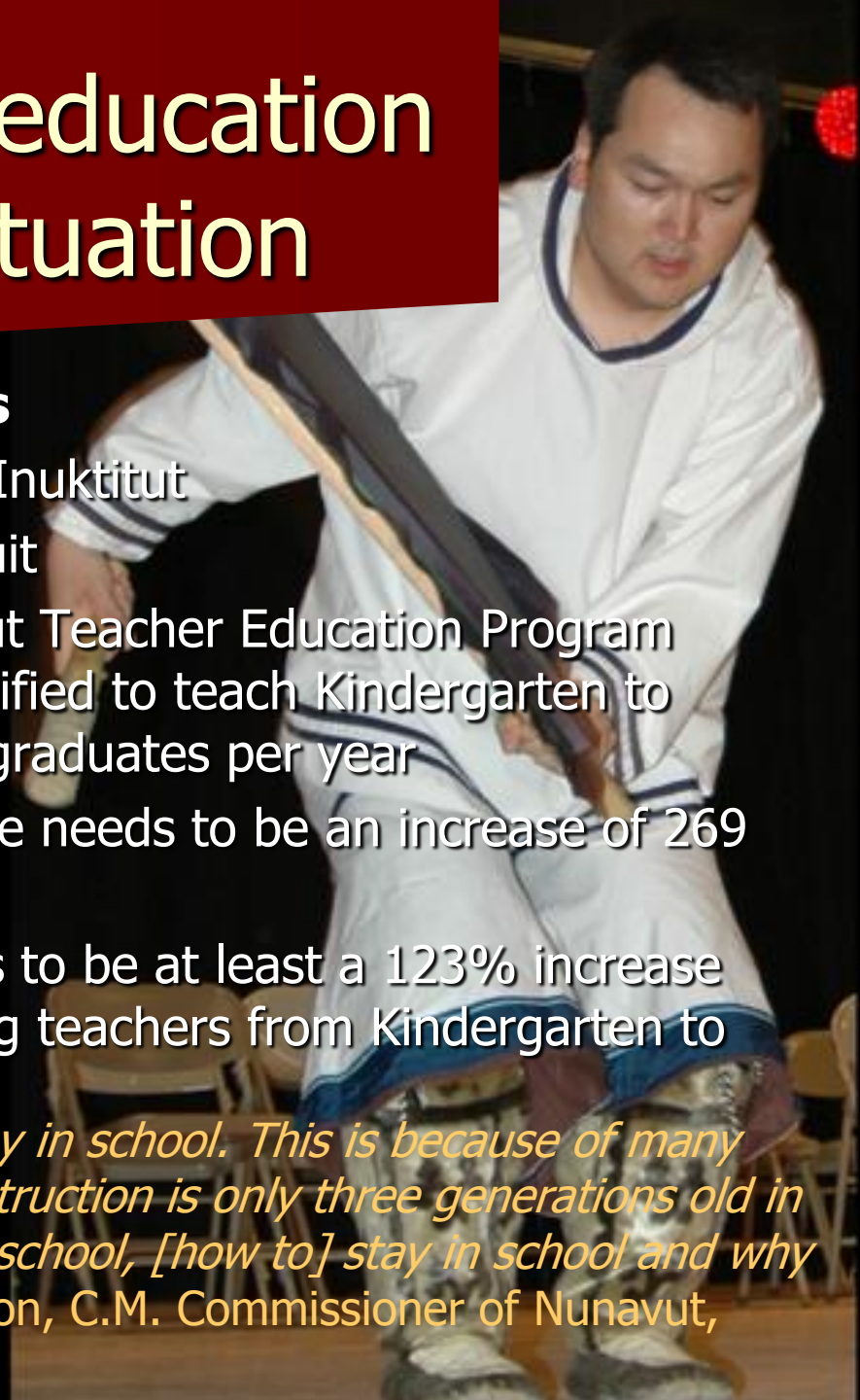


# Nunavut's current education and language situation

## Nunavut's teachers

- 35% of Nunavut's teachers speak Inuktitut
- 38% of Nunavut's teachers are Inuit
- Over the last 30 years, the Nunavut Teacher Education Program graduated 300 Inuit teachers, qualified to teach Kindergarten to Grade 3. This is an average of 10 graduates per year
- There are 218 Inuit teachers. There needs to be an increase of 269 more teachers to meet the needs
- The above means that there needs to be at least a 123% increase in the number of Inuktitut-speaking teachers from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

*"Yes, we do have many people who do not stay in school. This is because of many reasons, one of them being that classroom instruction is only three generations old in this region. We are just learning how to go to school, [how to] stay in school and why we need to be educated."* Ann Meekitjuk Hanson, C.M. Commissioner of Nunavut, *Nunatsiaq News*, Oct.13/2006

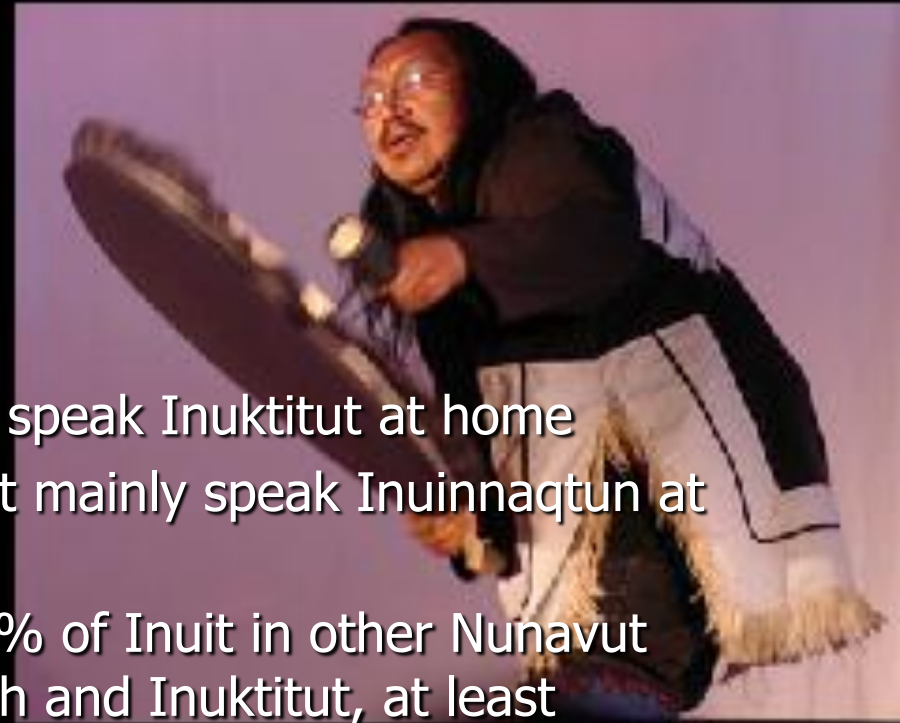




# Nunavut's current education and language situation

## Spoken Language

- For 72.4 % of the Inuit population, Inuktitut was the first language learned and still understood
- As low as 46.5 % of Inuit in Iqaluit speak Inuktitut at home
- Most alarmingly, only 0.9 % of Inuit mainly speak Inuinnaqtun at home
- 81.7 % of Inuit in Iqaluit and 77.2 % of Inuit in other Nunavut communities stated they mix English and Inuktitut, at least occasionally.

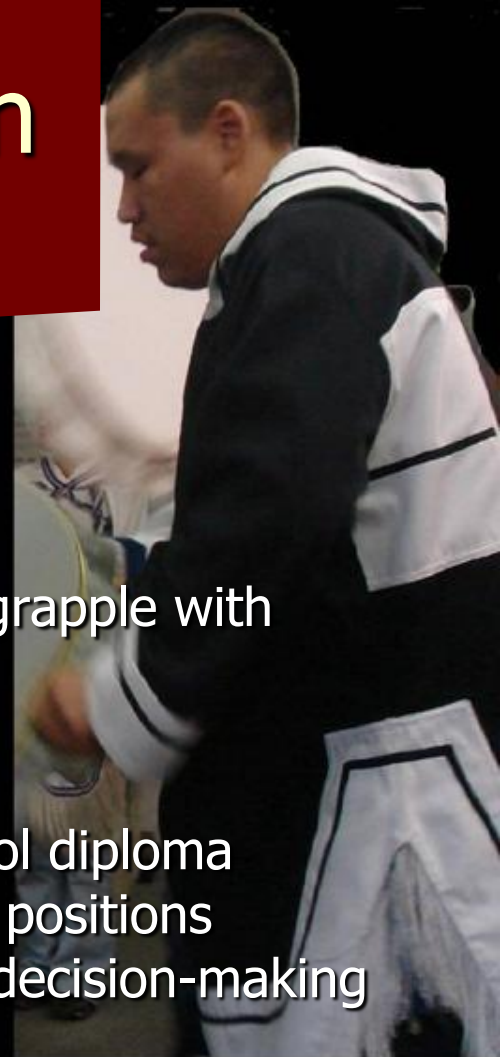


*"People were proud of their heritage and they delighted in their language; yet they had been persuaded, by both intangible historical forces and the activities of southerners, of the need for Christianity, Canadian law, compulsory schooling, southern-style political organization and even Canadian cooking – all of which were tied to the power of English." Hugh Brody, The Other Side of Eden (p.29).*

# Nunavut's current education and language situation

## Inuit in the workplace

- Over half of the working age population in Nunavut grapple with significant literacy challenges in English
- There are 3200 jobs in the Government of Nunavut
- 45% of those jobs are occupied by Inuit
- 45% of Inuit GN employees do not have a high school diploma
- Most Inuit GN employees are found at lower ranking positions
- This means that Nunavut's discussion, planning and decision-making is mostly done in English.



*"A country's education system is expected to equip its people with the skills, particularly the language skills, necessary to take up gainful employment. You can't speak of employment without speaking of education." Thomas Berger Conciliator's Final Report March 1, 2006: The Nunavut Project (p.20)*

# Why is the current system not working?

## Education Act

- Nunavut's first Education Act failed in the Legislature in 2003
- GN will endeavor to pass another Education Act in the Spring of 2007\*

*"There is no longer a risk of Inuit culture being taken away from us. The danger lies in us letting it go"* Nunavut Teacher Education Program Student, May 2006

\* See last slide of the presentation for an update



# Why is the current system not working?

## Local Control of Education

- District Education Authorities (DEAs) are elected bodies that represent community concerns about education
- DEAs have no direct communication with the Department of Education (DoE)
- DoE and Federation of Nunavut Teachers reticent about local control

*"It is ... up to us to preserve and use our language. If we feel strongly enough about our culture then we will do our part to protect the culture, the language and pride in our people."* Eva Aariak, Oct. 11, 2002

# Why is the current system not working?

## Nunavut Teacher Education Program

- Because of lack of funding and lack of access, NTEP is producing very few graduates per year
- NTEP graduates are more inclined to teach at the lower grades

*"Education is expensive, but ignorance is going to cost us a lot."* Noel McDermott, NTEP instructor, Feb.15/2002



What would we  
like to achieve?



**NTI is advocating for Inuktitut  
language preservation and  
advancement**

- Creating Nunavut as an Inuktitut environment



# Examples of this goal are:



- Inuit language recognition that is at least equal to English and French embedded in the Education Act, Official Languages Act and the Inuit Language Protection Act
- Inuit language of instruction from Kindergarten to grade 12
- Inuit languages as the working languages in workplaces
- Business services and media services available in Inuit languages
- The establishment of an Inuit language authority to develop terminology representative of all regions of Nunavut

# What would we like to achieve?



## **Pinasuaqtavut, Government of Nunavut's 2020 commitment**

- **Positive developments in reaching this goal include:**
  - **All GN DMs and ADMs getting intensive Inuktitut training and personal tutoring in an effort to become fluent in Inuktitut by 2008.**

# What are we trying to achieve?



## The Berger Report and Article 23 of the NLCA

- Berger proposes a **complete replacement** of the current system in favour of one that offers students a bilingual education
- Berger asserts that bilingualism is the key to Article 23 and the success of Nunavut as a territory.





# What has happened since October 2006?

June 2008 : The Official Languages Act (Bill 6) was approved by the Nunavut Legislative Assembly.

September 18th 2008 : The Inuit Language Protection Act (Bill 7) was approved by the Nunavut Legislative Assembly and proclaimed.  
The Education Act (bill 21) was assented by the Nunavut Legislative Assembly.

June 11 2009: The Official Languages Act (Bill 6) was approved by the Senate of Canada (The Act needed concurrence from Parliament as per section 38 of the Nunavut Act).

Inuit language authority: six *Uqausilirijiit* were nominated

Alexina Kublu - Nunavut Languages Commissioner

Hon. Louis Tapardjuk - Minister of Culture, Language, Elders & Youth

Naullaq Arnaquq - Deputy Minister (CLEY)

Stephane Cloutier - Special advisor, Language Acts Implementation

Madeleine d'Argencourt - Director of Official Languages (CLEY)

Tocasie Burke - Manager of Inuktitut Affairs (CLEY)



# Conclusion

- Nunavut's legislation did not start from scratch
- Nunavut's graduation rate is the worst in Canada and in correlation, Inuktitut is slipping and Inuit are not getting hired at representational levels
- It is a tremendously complex task to right the situation, but it is not an impossible task
- All levels of society must have the *political will* to make change

*"So here we stand, on the threshold of the new century, facing a future that holds promise and challenges. Would we have the courage to accept the offer of a glimpse of Nunavut in 2099? Would such a glimpse show us homes where Inuktitut continues to be spoken, offices where it is in common use, a lively cultural scene with literature and music expressing our way of life? In our present situation there is indeed the promise of such a future. Let us hope and work for the strength and commitment to attain it."* Alexina Kublu and Mick Mallon, [www.nunavut.com](http://www.nunavut.com), 1999.

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