

ISBN 978-0-9865721-1-1

This clear language summary report is also available in Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun (electronic version only) and French. The full length research report is available in English hard copy. All reports are available on-line at:

<http://www.ilitaqsiniq.ca>

The Miqqut Project

Joining Literacy, Culture and Well-Being
through Non-formal Learning in Nunavut

Summary of the Research Report



ILITAQSINIQ

ΔCᑭᑭᑭᑭ

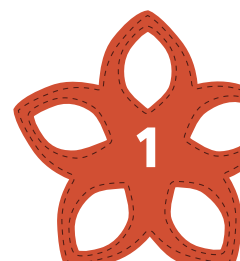
Nunavut Literacy Council

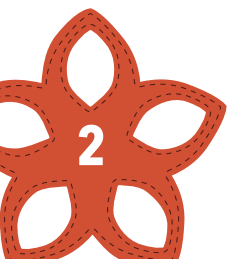
Conseil des littératies du Nunavut



What's in this report?

The Story of the Miqqut Project: <i>Kasuutittiaqatigiingniq</i>	3
A Special Thank you to the Miqqut Elders:	5
Acknowledgements	6
About the research project	
Introduction	8
How does Ilitaqsiniq do research?	8
A Snapshot of the Kasuutittiaqatigiingniq Research Project	9
What was the focus of the programs in the research study?	10
Who took part in the research study?	10
Why is this research important?.....	11
Results	
What did we find?.....	12
Results for cultural skills.....	13
Results for literacy and essential skills.....	17
Results for well-being	21
What did we learn about teaching and learning methods?.....	25
What can we conclude from these results?	26
Recommendations	
Recommendations to the Canadian Government.....	27
Recommendations to the Government of Nunavut and Inuit Organizations	28
Recommendations to Northern Literacy Coalitions	28
Recommendations to Literacy, Wellness, and Traditional Skills Programmers	29
Definitions and important terms	
Important terms in Inuktitut	30
Important terms in English.....	30





The Story of the Miqqut Project: Kasuutittiaqatigiingniq

Dear Reader:

Welcome to the Miqqut Project.

When Iliqaqiniq began this community-based research project, we already believed in the value and potential of culture-based embedded literacy programs for adult participants. We had witnessed the success of Reclaiming Our Sinew, Somebody's Daughter and the Traditional Arts Workshop – all highly successful programs created by our research partners in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut.

The Elders believed in these programs too. We wanted to bring their collective wisdom, based on many lifetimes of experience, to broader audiences of policy makers, educators, and programmers within and outside of Nunavut.

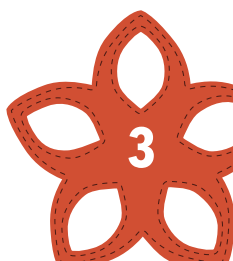
We collected evidence of the positive impact of these programs through research that was carried out in a way that respects and is inclusive of local knowledge and people and at the same time meets rigorous academic standards.

We didn't have a word for these kinds of programs. So, we created a word in Inuktitut to describe the essence of these learning programs: *Kasuutittiaqatigiingniq*. Imagine the coming together of many different groups from great distances to one designated place. The formation of this group into a unified whole - the strength, the mutual feelings of connection, the shared and open communication it brings – is viewed as an accomplishment which is celebrated by all at this meeting place.

In much the same way, all of the elements of the Miqqut program - community-based, non-formal, intergenerational, safe, healthy, culturally relevant, learner-driven, embedded with language, literacy, numeracy – come together to create a holistic and unified place of learning with the same kind of strength and harmony.

We need to continue to celebrate and create more Miqqut programs and others like it. But we can't do it alone.

'Miqqut' means 'needle' and you will notice that the design and images within this summary research report are all related to the Inuit art of sewing. But sewing is just one cultural skill that may be the vehicle for building language and literacy skills – and so much more. The Inuit arts and crafts, land-based skills, tool making and skin and food preparation are all cultural skills in which language and literacy skill development could be embedded with the positive outcomes participants experienced in Miqqut, Reclaiming Our Sinew, Somebody's Daughter and The Traditional Arts Workshop.



We invite you to help us.

Support from community organizations, colleagues, all levels of government, Nunavummiut and other Northerners is needed to shine the brightest possible light on the value and potential of Kasuutittiaqatigiingniq programs.

We welcome the support of:

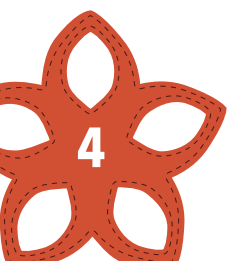
- Our fellow community members and adult learners in Nunavut. Miqqut was created for you. Request more of these kinds of community-based programs.
- Indigenous educators everywhere, who work so that their mother tongues and cultures thrive - lend your voices, experience and knowledge to the greater practice of these programs. We welcome the opportunity for knowledge exchange with you.
- Our colleagues in the South. We invite you to 'Look North'. There is so much to learn here.
- Academics and others who engage in research. We invite you to read the full-length research report. Peer reviews are most welcome.
- All levels of government. Consider investing in a different path to the outcomes of employment, higher education and training. Consider the Miqqut path.

A great deal has been invested in researching the practice and outcomes of formal or institutionalized education. We believe that non-formal, community-based learning programs with outcomes like Miqqut deserve the same kind of attention and investment.

In the spirit of meaningful learning for all, please, read on.

Ilitaqsiniq

P.S. Kasuutittiaqatigiingniq is a very long and difficult word to say for people who are not fluent speakers of the Inuit language. We continue to use the word 'Miqqut' to refer to the program, the research project and to the particular model of teaching and learning of the original Miqqut program with embedded literacy.



A Special Thank you to the Miqqut Elders:

Adele Kumaruaq Angidlik, Epiksaut Dion, Helen Iguptak, Aline Kumak Kabvitok, Quluuq Catherine Pilakapsi¹, Rosemary Angugasak Sandy, Monica Shouldice, Melanie Subgut and Marianne Inuaraq Tattuinee.

We extend a special thank-you to the Elders of the Miqqut programs, who, with skill, patience and great care passed on their ancestors' knowledge of the Inuit art of sewing.

They have knowledge that,

- * language and literacy skills – speaking, reading, writing and numeracy – are naturally enhanced through holistic and meaningful learning
- * although the practice of traditional Inuit skills is ancient, the learning is relevant today
- * Inuit learning environments have the power to build confidence and heal
- * the skill of well-being is embodied in the learning of traditional cultural practices,
- * the sharing and passing on of these skills supports others to be well.

The skills and knowledge of these Elders will live on in the hands and hearts of the young women of the Miqqut programs and in the children and youth they, in turn, guide in learning this art.

It has been our privilege to learn with you.

Qujannamiik – Thank you

Ilitaqsiniq - Nunavut Literacy Council

Quluuq Pilakapsi, Gloria Uluqsi, Adriana Kusugak, Shelley Tulloch, Cayla Chenier and Kim Crockatt.

¹ Quluuq Pilakapsi is thanked as an Elder in the program however she is also an employee of Ilitaqsiniq.

Acknowledgements

Ilitaqsiniq – the Nunavut Literacy Council gratefully thanks the following organizations and individuals for their support:

- Government of Canada, Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, for the funding that supported this research project.
- All of the adult educators, instructors and program coordinators and facilitators who generously agreed to be interviewed for the research associated with this project. They have made a unique and valuable contribution to the practice of adult learning in Nunavut.
- All of the participants of Reclaiming Our Sinew, Somebody's Daughter, Matchbox Gallery and Miqqut 1 & 2 programs who generously shared their experiences of learning inside these non-formal community-based programs. Their contribution supports an inclusive, culturally respectful and meaningful vision of adult learning in Nunavut.
- Shelley Tulloch, our research guide, for her dedication and respect for northern ways of seeing, knowing and doing. We couldn't do this work without her contribution, hard work and support.
- Sue Folinsbee and Mary Ellen Belfiore for capturing and distilling in a fair and meaningful way all of our learning from the beginning to the end of this project.
- Bev Hill, Principal, who understands the value of intergenerational learning, for hosting Miqqut 2 in the library of Simon Alaittuq School in Rankin Inlet. And to the teachers and students at Simon Alaittuq School in Rankin Inlet for sharing space in their school.
- Mike Shouldice, President of Nunavut Arctic College, for generously providing space for the Miqqut 1 program in the kitchen at Kivalliq Hall on very short notice. And to Dorothy Tootoo, Student Counsellor/Residence Manager of Kivalliq Hall, for making it work and always being welcoming.
- Department of Economic Development & Transportation, Government of Nunavut, for seeing the value of the Miqqut programs and funding support for the Amausiutitsiniq program and other Miqqut programs.
- Department of Culture & Heritage, Government of Nunavut for their support of this and other projects by Ilitaqsiniq.
- First Air, for the reduced cargo rate for program supplies. They have contributed to both the warmth and fashion of Rankin Inlet.
- Kativik, Red Top Variety Shop and the Kissarvik Co-op in Rankin Inlet for the reduced rate for sewing supplies and other materials for the Miqqut programs.
- Silu and Richard Connelly for seeing the value of non-formal embedded literacy programs and for their personal donation in support of an additional program in their community of Rankin Inlet.

- Bernadette Dean, with inspiration from an Elder's advisory committee at the Kivalliq Inuit Association in Rankin Inlet, first had the idea for the Reclaiming Our Sinew and Somebody's Daughter programs. These successful programs inspired Ilitaqsiniq to conduct research into the outcomes of non-formal cultural programs with embedded literacy.
- Jim and Sue Shirley, with artistic talent, skill in education, and commitment to the community of Rankin Inlet, created both a home for Inuit artists and sculpture and a place for holistic learning at the Matchbox Gallery.
- The community of Rankin Inlet and the families of the Miqqut program participants for wholeheartedly embracing and supporting the two Miqqut pilot programs.
- Social Justice Fund, Public Service Alliance of Canada.
- Ilitaqsiniq's board members, who encourage and guide us to think holistically.
- Ruth Baldwin, for writing the clear language summary of The Miqqut Project research report.
- Sue Folinsbee for taking beautiful photographs of the Miqqut program and participants.
- Nellie Kusugak for her work in transcribing and translating the richness of the data into the English translations.
- Sima Sharifi and Arnold Witzig, founders of the S. and A. Inspiration Foundation and the Arctic Inspiration Prize for recognizing the potential impact of the Miqqut Project work and providing funding to ensure further mobilization of research results.



About the research project

Introduction

This report summarizes the results of a research project that Iilitaqsinig – Nunavut Literacy Council carried out in Nunavut over three years (2009-13). The research looked at how participants in five non-formal learning programs were affected by the programs, the skills they developed, and the changes they saw in their lives. The research also reviewed the teaching methods used in the programs to find out what worked well. Iilitaqsinig staff carried out two of the programs. The other three were offered by different community organizations in the Kivalliq region of Nunavut.

The complete report, "*The Miqqut Project – Joining Literacy, Culture and Well-Being through*

Non-Formal Programming in Nunavut", is available on Iilitaqsinig's website: www.ilitaqsinig.ca.

How does Iilitaqsinig do research?

Iilitaqsinig's research is *community-based*. That means that the research is conducted by community members, for community members. Inuit and Nunavummiut² are the lead researchers and decision makers. The broad community is involved in the research and has a voice in how the results are used. Iilitaqsinig's research information is used to promote programs and services that will benefit community members.

² *Nunavummiut* means people who live in Nunavut.



A Snapshot of the Kasuutittiaqatigiingniq Research Project

Hypothesis or what we were trying to prove through this research:

Non-formal, cultural skills programs with embedded literacy work to increase the language, literacy and other basic skills of adult participants. These kinds of programs help participants to build the confidence and other essential skills necessary to get a job or take the risk and challenge of enrolling in higher-level education. These programs also help to support participants to live in more healthy ways within their families and communities.

How we carried out the research:

We looked at the outcomes of 5 non-formal cultural programs.

First, we researched the outcomes of 3 non-formal culture-based programs that took place in Rankin Inlet.³ They were:

- Reclaiming Our Sinew
- Somebody's Daughter
- The Traditional Arts Workshop

Each of these programs included language and literacy skill development.

We conducted interviews with former participants, instructors and program developers and coordinators.

We then developed and delivered 2 non-formal traditional and contemporary sewing programs in Rankin Inlet. They were:

- **Miqqut 1** – language and literacy skills *not* intentionally embedded into program
- **Miqqut 2** – language and literacy skills intentionally embedded into program

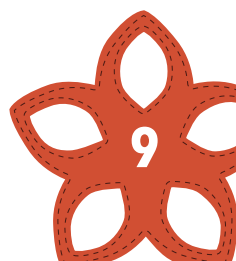
We conducted entrance, end of program and 6 months post-program interviews with program participants. We administered a closed questionnaire at entrance, end of program and 6 months post-program with program participants. We also conducted interviews with program instructors at the end of both programs.

In total, 66 people participated in the research by completing questionnaires and giving interviews.

We transcribed all of the interviews. We then analyzed the data - both from the interviews and closed questionnaires.

We reported the outcomes in a full-length research report. The full length research report is available on Iilitaqsinig's website: <http://www.ilitaqsinig.ca>.

³ The Kivalliq Inuit Association and Nunavut Arctic College were founding partners in the development and delivery of the Reclaiming Our Sinew program. The Kivalliq Inuit Association developed and delivered the Somebody's Daughter Program. The Traditional Arts Workshop was developed and delivered by the Kangirliniq Centre for Arts and Learning.



What was the focus of the programs in the research study?

The five programs in the research study were non-formal, adult cultural programs. They focused on developing traditional culture-related skills (such as preparing skins, sewing Inuit clothing, making pottery and art). Two of the programs included activities to promote personal well-being (such as keeping a journal and sharing circles). Four of the five programs also included activities to improve:

- literacy and language skills (in English and Inuktitut), such as reading, writing, speaking and listening
- other skills needed for everyday life or employment, such as planning a task, organizing information, following directions, keeping records, working in a group, and taking responsibility.

We refer to these skills as *Literacy and Essential Skills* in this report.

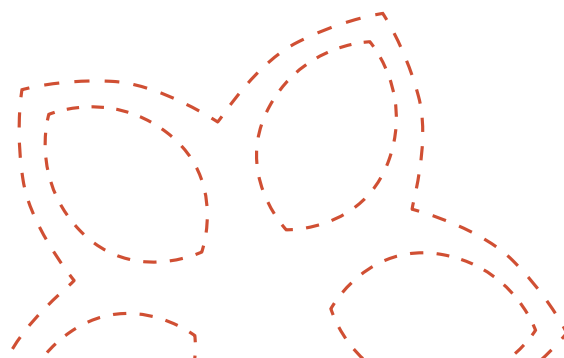
When a program teaches literacy and essential skills along with the specific skills needed to do sewing, pottery, art, or other kinds of work, we say that literacy is *embedded* in the program.



Who took part in the research study?

Participation in the research study was voluntary. Participants, instructors, and coordinators of the five programs were asked to take part. Most participants were Inuit, but a few were non-Inuit people who had lived in Nunavut for a long time. Participants lived in Rankin Inlet or communities in the Kivalliq region. Participants included women and a few men, from young to middle-age. Elders, who acted as instructors, also took part.

Ilitiaqsiq conducted more than 100 interviews over two years. The researchers used a *self-assessment method*. That means they asked individuals to measure their skills at the end of the program compared to when they started. They also asked each research participant to describe what they had learned and how taking part in the program had affected their life. To provide a good balance of information, the researchers also interviewed instructors, other group members, and members of the community.



Why is this research important?

Non-formal, cultural programs are very common throughout Nunavut. Inuit and other organizations use non-formal programs to teach traditional skills, language, art, and well-being, among other goals. These programs are very popular. They reach a wide range of learners, including youth and adults. They are especially good at bringing in people who are not ready or willing to take part in a formal, school program. Instructors and program participants agree that these programs work well.

Before this research study, no one in Nunavut had looked at the results of non-formal, cultural programs that combine traditional learning with literacy and essential skills. This research will help Ilitaqsiniq show how these programs work and how participants benefit. Information from this research will help community groups make their programs more effective for youth and adult learners. The research will identify ways to improve literacy and essential skills in Nunavut.



The full length research report includes detailed information on the research design, methods, outcomes and participants.





Results

What did we find?

The non-formal, cultural programs that included literacy and essential skills produced results in three main areas—cultural skills, literacy and essential skills, and well-being. These results overlapped and worked together, increasing the overall impact of the programs.

The importance of results in each area depended on the learner's goals, the program's focus, and the methods used for teaching and learning. However, all participants and all programs reported results in these three areas. Comments from participants and instructors show how culture, literacy, and well-being overlap and have a strong impact in participants' lives.

The following sections show results for each area. You will also find examples and comments from participants and instructors.





Results for cultural skills

Participants learned new skills or improved their skills in traditional cultural activities – creating art and making traditional Inuit clothing.

- Participants' self-confidence increased. They were proud of the things they made and happy when other people appreciated the skills they had learned.
- Participants were more willing and able to learn from Elders and other skilled people. They were more confident in their ability to share their skills with others (such as group members and members of their family). Traditional learning methods were most important for participants who had missed this experience because they went to residential schools or had lost a parent.

New or improved skills

Making prints, pottery and other art

Examples

- Working with new materials (paper, clay)
- Choosing the right tools – taking care of tools
- Learning the steps to make different kinds of art



New or improved skills

Making traditional Inuit clothing (and modern clothing)



Examples

- Working with new materials (different fabric, furs)
- Using patterns – changing the size – making new patterns
- Preparing skins and furs (scraping, softening, stretching)
- Learning the correct steps to make a piece of clothing
- Learning traditional stitches
- Learning how to add pockets, zippers, cuffs, embroidery
- Creating new designs



Comments from participants and instructors

"Before the program I could not sew. But now I can and I also enjoy sewing now."

"[I learned] so many things. I learned how to do new designs, to properly stitch, cut out my own patterns [...] With my sealskin parka I was able to cut out my design and then stitch another piece of sealskin in. I found that really interesting and fun to do."

"It taught me that I could do anything with clay as long as we're careful with it and learn how to work with it."

"My sewing has improved and that makes me very happy."

"It got me to feel how it is to work with clay which is something I've never worked with before."



New or improved skills

Creating art or clothing for the family

Examples

- Prints, drawings, pottery (vases, jugs, plates, cups, masks)
- Art work displayed in the crafts store and airport
- Parkas, *amautiit* (baby-carrying coat), wind pants, hunting outfits, *kamiit* (traditional boots), *kamikpait* (duffle socks to line traditional boots), *pualuit* (mitts), hats, hand bags, pillows and hair clips



Comments from participants and instructors

"I became a better artist and my work is more in demand."

"I made kamiks and then made mitts for a child and then for myself that fit. I learned the proper way and how to make it look good."

"My husband now appreciates that I know how to sew. He said he's very happy that he is able to have proper hunting clothing now that I know how to sew. We also provide extra hunting gear in case someone is in need of it, especially at times when my husband is out on the land looking for a person."

"They made so many things for all their families, their kids. They definitely benefitted from all the material that they got and learned how to sew for their family."





New or improved skills

Learning from Elders and sharing knowledge

Examples

- Learning traditional skills from Elders
- Learning about Inuit culture
- Working with experienced artists
- Working with other women and girls
- Sharing learning in the group and with the family

Comments from participants and instructors

"...With my mom ... I am finally communicating with her about sewing and learn more from her too..."

"I can work with other people at my own pace and learn from other artists and teach the younger ones as well."

"I'm not scared to teach my girls or my granddaughters or anyone that needs help in stitching. Because I could say this is what I was taught when I took the program."

"I'm having fun taking part in this course and it brought me and my granny closer and my mom is proud of me because I'm learning how to sew."

Results for literacy and essential skills



Traditional, cultural skills involve many different types of literacy besides reading and writing. Examples include—the ability to work with different materials, to imagine the finished product and make a design or pattern, to adjust the size and fit of a garment, and to fit pieces together perfectly.

Iliitaqsiq chose four of the five programs in this research study because they included literacy skills such as reading, writing, and math along with traditional, cultural skills. Only one program did not include any planned literacy activities. Literacy was taught as needed to help participants learn the cultural skills (example, vocabulary lists for important terms).

The research showed that participants in all programs improved their literacy skills. But the improvement was greater for people who took part in programs where literacy was stated as a goal, and literacy activities were planned and built into the program.

Results identified by the research

- Participants increased their language skills in Inuktitut and English.
- They became more comfortable with reading and began to read for pleasure as well as for the program.
- They used writing skills in many different ways.
- Participants became more confident in their ability to speak in the group and to express their ideas. Some participants became confident enough to speak in public, hosting a fashion show and doing radio interviews.
- They were more interested in getting new information and sharing it with others.
- They developed new work habits that are important for success at work or in school.
- Some participants went back to school or got jobs following the program.





New or improved skills

Improved language skills in Inuktitut and English

Examples

- Working with syllabics⁴
- Developing vocabulary lists with explanations
- Talking with Elders
- Following spoken instructions
- Asking questions
- Reading silently or aloud

Reading, writing, and math linked to the traditional skills

- Observing and following steps
- Reading and writing instructions
- Finding colours from reference numbers
- Measuring
- Figuring out costs
- Keeping records
- Looking up information from books, magazines, or the internet
- Making a portfolio of work completed using words, diagrams and photos

General speaking, reading and writing skills

- Interviewing participants and introducing them to the group
- Developing questions to interview Elders, making notes on the answers, writing a document to share information with the public
- Sharing information from their written journals with the group
- Writing the script and acting as announcers for a fashion show
- Giving radio interviews

⁴ One of two writing systems used for the Inuit language. The other is Roman orthography.

Comments from participants and instructors

"I learned all the different Inuktitut words for different patterns or pieces of a pattern. I definitely learned how to read and write Inuktitut faster than I did before."

"I began with all the ideas stuck in my head and couldn't express them, but by the end I could get them out."

"Every morning when we would all talk together and do the literacy part, sometimes we wouldn't just be doing literacy but we'd be talking and letting things out and being able to be in a comfortable atmosphere where you know you can trust them and be able to talk to them. That was what I needed."

"I remember everything that was taught to me by the Elders and I still have all my journals and the binder. I wrote most everything down even when they were just talking."

"We would do verbal problems...based on experience here like, three students each made two drawings and they were going to sell them each for \$5.00 and then how much would they have all together? So you would get a lot of practical use and reading."

"I go on the internet a lot and art magazines, read a little bit about Inuit history so I can get some ideas about our history from a long time ago and somehow try to put some of those stories into my art."

"It was fun to be part of it and because they spoke Inuktitut since I have absolutely no understanding of English."
(an Elder instructor)

New work habits

- Being on time – getting work done
- Planning and organizing work and records
- Taking responsibility for the room, materials and projects
- Taking turns speaking and listening
- Working cooperatively
- Taking correction in a positive way

Follow-up courses and work

- Applying for higher education courses (example, Nunavut Teachers' Education Program)
- Taking follow-up programs (example, Fashion and Design Program in Winnipeg)
- Teaching in similar programs
- Selling their creations
- Getting paid work (example secretary, janitor, substitute teacher)

"I decided to apply to this fashion program and if it wasn't for the Miqqut Project as my reference I probably wouldn't have made it in. [...] And because of all my sewing projects that I finished at the Miqqut Program"

"Learning new stuff, I really, really liked that and I just want to keep on learning. [...] so that's one of the reasons why I decided to go back to school. [...] And it opened the door for me to get back into school."

"With printmaking, I can make a drawing first and then sell it. I wasn't doing this before. [...] If I were to lose my job, I now know that I can pick this up and I wouldn't just be helpless but I can try to make money out of what I learned."



Comments from participants and instructors

"I am definitely more well organized. [...] I learned to finish what I started because that was another main thing in the program. [...] so now [...] if I start something I have to finish it. Not only like in a project but with my life. [...] I have that drive to improve myself all the time and to just do the best that I can."

"Art is one of the best ways to make money and to help the family."

"I learned that if I just leave my sewing it will not finish itself I have to take it and finish it, that's for sure."

"[...] the program's like a job too, right. [...] If they come, there's a whole sense of responsibility. You've got to be here and do your bit."

Results for well-being

Results in this area were greater than expected. Many participants said that taking part in the program changed their lives. Even years after taking part in a program, people said the same thing—their lives were transformed.

Results for well-being include:

- Participants improved their confidence and pride in themselves and their abilities.
- They felt empowered to act out cultural values such as generosity, respect, patience, and forgiveness.
- They reported greater happiness and healing in their lives.
- They adopted healthier ways of living.
- Participants had more positive experiences with their family and the broader community.



Pride and confidence from developing new skills

- Learning they could make beautiful art or clothes
- Getting recognition for their work (example, positive comments, prizes, having work on display)
- Seeing their family members wear the clothes they made
- Being able to meet the challenges of the program
- Developing more complex designs
- Setting goals for themselves

Comments from participants and instructors

"It teaches you to stand up and do something about your life and realize you're quite capable".

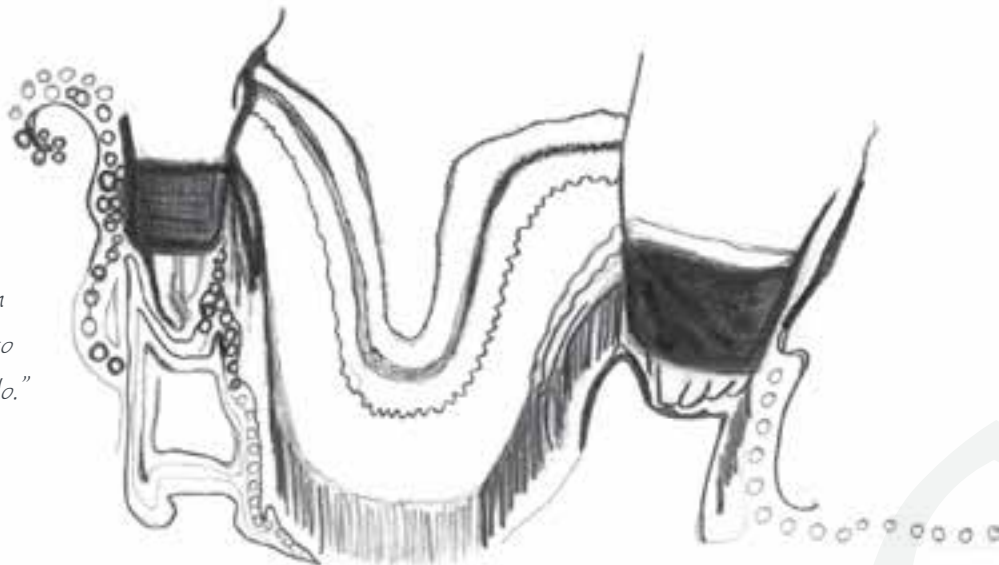
"It has given me so much more confidence because beautiful creations were made. No wonder. We should be able to say that we can create or make wonderful things because the world is paying attention to us and want our creations. It has given me huge confidence."

"I am already feeling more confident in my sewing skills and in myself"

"I feel a lot more confident in myself in trying new things like not to be afraid to fail. I just feel more confident in what I do."



"When other people notice the clothing that I make, and when they say nice comments about them, I feel much prouder. It allows me to boost my confidence level and I push myself even harder to make something better the next time."



New or improved skills

Examples

Following traditional values

Connecting with others in a positive way

- Being more patient, kind, and respectful
- Working together with others
- Providing for their families – supporting them
- Developing new friendships
- Forming lasting relationships with others
- Taking part in the community

Comments from participants and instructors

"I think everyone learned more about... communicating with Elders and also understanding more about respect."

"I'm more patient with everyone. I'm more forgiving."

"The Miqut Project helped me to learn to be nicer to people and kinder. "

"Now that my children have parkas, it's a lot better and I feel so much better about myself and for my children."

"During the program one of the things...was always to be supportive...so when I see someone that's feeling down I'll ask them, 'Are you OK?'" and just try to encourage them."

"I know that if I didn't learn I wouldn't be doing anything right now and I wouldn't know what to do with the caribou skins my father and partner catch. My brother does more hunting now too since he knows I will save it whether it is caribou or seal skin."



New or improved skills

Happiness, healing, healthier ways of living

Examples

- Understanding and being part of Inuit culture and heritage
- Identifying and sharing past hurts so they could move on
- Using art for self-expression
- Taking more pride in their appearance
- Giving up swearing, drinking, or drugs

Comments from participants and instructors



"I think learning part of your culture and learning traditional Inuit skills is good for our mental and spiritual well-being. It's about connecting with your identity; it's about having an identity about who you are and where you come from. So I think it should always be incorporated in any kind of program because your self-esteem improves."

"I feel more whole as a person, as an Inuk just knowing how to sew for myself and others makes me feel really good."

"What did I get out of the program? There was lots. I seem to become a better person than before, opening up to others. [...] it made me a different person."

"Art is one of the best medications for ilukkut, inside. It's one of the best healers when you're going through a hard time."

"Since I learned how to sew I have told my friends that drinking didn't have any use for us or getting stoned was a waste of time when you can learn to sew and teach other people how to sew instead of going out and drinking."

What did we learn about teaching and learning methods?

The research shows that a positive learning environment is important. Participants need to feel safe and respected before they are willing to take the risks associated with learning new skills. Features that promote a positive learning environment include:

- Making literacy a goal of the program and clearly identifying literacy activities.
- Focusing on skills that are important to the learners.
- Recognizing the skills that participants bring to the program.
- Getting participants' input on how the program will run.
- Making learning activities fun, enjoyable, and relevant to the learners' needs.
- Using both Inuktitut and English for learning activities.
- Involving Elders as instructors and mentors.
- Including lots of hands-on activity – learning by doing.
- Combining literacy with learning important cultural skills.
- Using a variety of methods for teaching and learning, such as—oral and written work, watching and doing, one-to-one comments, group activities, cooperative projects, activities in the community, activities to build personal connections (example, sharing circles).
- Having skilled literacy instructors work alongside cultural instructors (or using instructors skilled in both literacy and cultural instruction). Literacy instructors were able to recognize opportunities for literacy teaching as they came up. Learning in these moments was most relevant to the learners and complemented other literacy activities.
- Creating opportunities to recognize skills (example, prizes, fashion show, public display of art).
- Encouraging participants to assess what they learned, according to their own goals.



What can we conclude from these results?

Ilitaqsiniq's research confirms that non-formal, cultural programs with embedded literacy are effective in helping people develop literacy and essential skills. Participants develop a positive view of their skills and potential. The programs help many participants gain the skills and confidence they need to enter the workforce or go on to higher education.

Non-formal, cultural and literacy programs also help participants to understand and value their heritage. They help to improve well-being and happiness. Participants describe significant positive changes in their lives, in their family relations, and in their desire to take part in the community. With their new skills, participants know they have something to offer. Their healing gives the freedom to offer it. Their increased confidence makes them want to share their learning with others.

Programs that combine literacy with traditional skills and well-being are successful because they engage participants in activities that are relevant and important to their daily lives. The research demonstrates that high-quality, non-formal programs with embedded literacy produce the best results for Inuit learners.



Recommendations

These recommendations are taken from the full length research report. They have not been edited except to take out references to pages in the full report.

Recommendations to the Canadian Government

1. Invest in high quality non-formal programs to ensure the best outcomes.
2. Support non-formal learning opportunities as an alternative and effective route for re-engagement in formal learning and employment.
3. Recognize non-formal learning as complementary to formal learning.
4. Acknowledge the special values of non-formal learning spaces and the necessary elements that contribute to their success.
5. Encourage delivery of literacy programming through programs which are relevant to participants' own goals.
6. Support dynamic, student-driven programs in which goals and activities develop as the program progresses.
7. Develop funding criteria which focus on processes as much as content.
8. Support non-formal learning opportunities which address the whole person.
9. Privilege programs that offer learning support and development of a learning community.
10. Recognize that healing must accompany learning in Inuit communities.
11. Recognize that reducing the social and intergenerational isolation that results from complex personal divisions in Inuit communities is part of supporting the transition to work.
12. Acknowledge Inuit holistic conceptualizations of literacy and essential skills.
13. Recognize traditional subsistence skills as part of essential skills in the Arctic.
14. Support training of educators specializing in non-formal programming and embedding literacy.
15. Prioritize embedding literacy and essential skills in all community programs funded by the federal government.



Recommendations to the Government of Nunavut and Inuit Organizations

1. Invest in high quality non-formal programs that embed literacy and essential skills to ensure the best outcomes.
2. Support, develop and offer non-formal learning opportunities which are relevant to students' non-academic goals.
3. Recognize non-formal programs as a means to reinvigorate intergenerational learning.
4. Support sustained intergenerational learning through facilitating relationships between younger learners and older knowledge-holders through non-formal programs.
5. Support, develop and offer non-formal learning opportunities which address the whole person.
6. Prioritize creating and maintaining learning environments that are physically, culturally, emotionally and intellectually safe.
7. Train educators and program deliverers in non-formal learning and embedding literacy.
8. Fund low student-teacher ratios in non-formal programs.
9. Support hands-on learning with a concrete final product.
10. Recognize the importance of Inuit literacies to the practice and acquisition of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and traditional skills.
11. Develop materials to support non-formal programming and embedding literacy.
12. Build or adapt spaces in communities for traditional skills programming.

Recommendations to Northern Literacy Coalitions

1. Document literacies of indigenous traditional skills.
2. Disseminate knowledge about promising practices in embedding literacy.
3. Spread understanding of Inuit holistic conceptualization of literacy and essential skills.





Recommendations to Literacy, Wellness, and Traditional Skills Programmers

1. Facilitate student-directed learning. Support students to set goals and self-select activities to achieve their goals.
2. Balance planning with flexibility and responsiveness to student needs.
3. Facilitate co-operative learning.
4. Support hands-on learning with a concrete final product.
5. Create opportunities for acknowledgement of students' progress and achievements.
6. Embed literacy and language in existing traditional skills and wellness programs for maximum impact.
7. In traditional skills and wellness programs, develop literacy by drawing out the literacies inherent in and relevant to cultural practices and wellness.
8. Enhance oral communication by encouraging communication in participants' language of choice.
9. Encourage multi-modal communication in literacy programs.
10. Build instructional teams which can teach the whole person.
11. Nurture relationships and respect between participants and instructors.
12. Maintain low student-teacher ratios.
13. Create community through positive interactions within the program and through engagement with the broader community.

Definitions and important terms



Important terms in Inuktitut

Inunnguiniq – guiding the potential of the human spirit

Inuit qaujimaqatigiingit – Inuit traditional knowledge

Inuuqatigiitsiarniq – community, relationship, caring and respect - interconnectedness

Kasuutittiaqatigiingniq – energy that comes from different groups coming together, communicating and accomplishing together something they agreed to do

Nunavummiut – people who live in Nunavut

Pijunnautitaaqpaalliqsimaliqtut – confidence from developing new skills



Important terms in English

Community-based research – is conducted by community members, for community members. Inuit and Nunavummiut are the lead researchers and decision makers. The broad community is involved in the research and has a voice in how the results are used.

Literacy – includes reading, writing, speaking, and other language skills (in Inuktitut and English).

Essential skills – skills needed for everyday life or employment, such as planning a task, organizing information, following directions, keeping records, working in a group, and taking responsibility.

Embedded literacy – When a program teaches (either) literacy and essential skills (OR reading, writing, speaking and other language skills) along with the specific skills needed to do sewing, pottery, art or other kinds of work, we say that literacy is *embedded* in the program.



Non-formal learning program – This kind of program is different from a school program (formal learning) because

- People choose to take part.
- Participants have input in how the program will operate.
- Participants identify what they want to learn and how they learn best (for example, watching someone do a task, talking about how to do it, or practicing the task on their own).
- The setting is casual – it could be in a community centre or a house – it could be outside or inside.
- The instructors use a wide variety of learning activities that get participants involved. They make sure that participants are comfortable in the learning environment.
- Participants help each other to learn.
- There are no formal tests or exams. Participants apply the skills they learn and decide how well they are doing. Participants also receive informal feedback and encouragement from instructors.

Self-assessment – Program participants measure what they learned in the program by comparing their skills at the beginning with their skills at the end. They decide if they are satisfied with their progress.







Canada



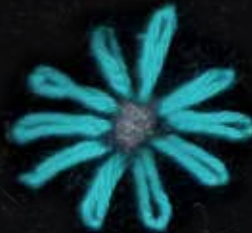
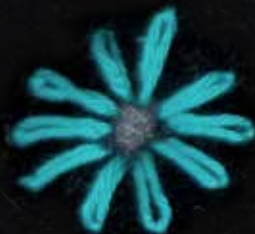
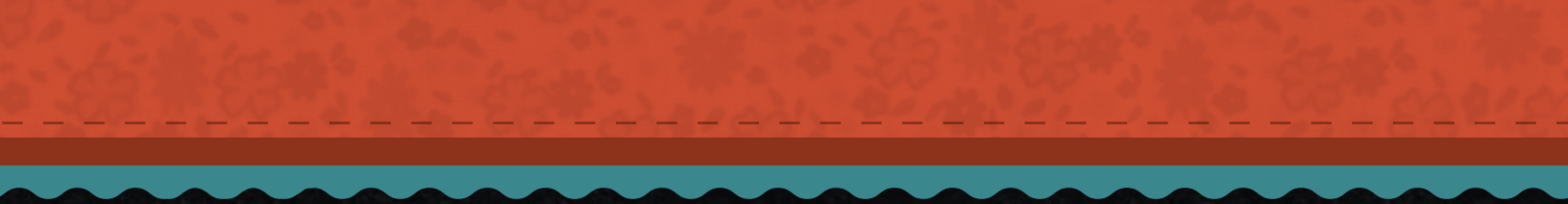
PSAC Social Justice Fund  Fonds de justice sociale de l'AFPC

ARCTIC INSPIRATION PRIZE



PRIX INSPIRATION ARCTIQUE

FIRST AIR
The Airline of the North



ILITAQSINIQ
Δεεεεεεεε
Nunavut Literacy Council
Conseil des littératies du Nunavut

P.O. Box 1049
Cambridge Bay, NU X0B 0C0
Telephone: (867) 983-2678 / Toll-free: (866) 608-2678