

An Inuit Based Policy Development Process

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This paper explores the use of Inuit Quajimajatuqangit (IQ) and the policy formation process of the rational decision-making model. This paper examines how an Indigenous way of knowing can be infused with a traditional, non-Indigenous method of policy development. Past policies written about the Inuit as well as educational policies written on behalf of the Inuit demonstrate the paternalistic viewpoints of Canadian, provincial, and territorial governments toward the Inuit. This detailed background shows why future educational policy development for Inuit in Nunavut must be based in Inuit ways of knowing and being rather than those of non-Inuit.

Cet article explore l'emploi de l'Inuit Quajimajatuqangit et le processus d'élaboration des politiques du modèle de prise de décision rationnelle. Plus précisément, il examine la mesure dans laquelle un mode autochtone de connaissance peut être empreint d'une méthode traditionnelle, non autochtone d'élaboration des politiques. Les anciennes politiques relatives aux Inuits Canadiens et les politiques en matière d'éducation rédigées au nom des Inuits font preuve des perspectives paternalistes des gouvernements fédéral, provinciaux et territoriaux envers cette population. Cette mise en contexte détaillée démontre pourquoi le développement de politiques en matière d'éducation pour les Inuits du Nunavut doit, à l'avenir, reposer sur les modes de savoir et d'être des Inuits, et non ceux des non Inuits.

The educational system of Nunavut is unlike that of any of the other provinces or territories because of its unique history. Nunavut became a territory on April 1st, 1999; this was a result of four prior political processes. First, in 1976 the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (presently Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami [ITK]) asked the federal government to map out the eastern section of the Northwest Territories due to Inuit land claims in the area (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010). At the time, the Northwest Territories (NWT) was the larger of the two territories by a substantial margin. Second, in 1992, a political agreement was signed by the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut and the federal government that explained how the Government of Nunavut would function and outlined 1999 as the year the Nunavut territory would be born (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010). Third was the settlement of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement in 1993 (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010). Fourth and finally, legislation passed by the Government of Canada in 1993 ratified the land claim settlement and the formation of the territory of Nunavut following a political agreement signed by the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut and the governments of the Northwest Territories and Canada (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010). Thus, part of the history of educational policy in Nunavut includes the history of educational policy in the Northwest Territories. As a territory, education in the Northwest Territories was a federal

responsibility until 1975; in spite of this the policy document *Learning: Tradition and Change in the Northwest Territories* solidified education as a responsibility of the territory (King, 1998). In what was to become Nunavut, three Inuit school boards had been in operation since the 1980s: they were independent from each other in addition to the Department of Education in NWT (Auditor General of Canada, 2013). Before Nunavut was legislated into existence the boards amalgamated, but were dissolved by the Nunavut Department of Education, which was still using education legislation from the Northwest Territories (Auditor General of Canada, 2013). In 2002 the *Education Act* failed to pass in the Nunavut legislature; however, a reorganized version of the *Act* was passed in 2008, came into effect in July of 2009 (Auditor General of Canada, 2013). It took more than ten years into the territory's existence before an educational policy written by Nunavut politicians and policy makers: yet, even though the population of Nunavut is, by majority, Inuit, this does not mean that those who wrote the policy were Inuit, or that Inuit were consulted at all.

The bleak historical ramifications of educational policy within Canada's Arctic remain a reminder that Canadian systems of governance are continually reluctant to assume educational responsibility for Northern Indigenous Canadians, specifically the Inuit. The remnants of failed formal educational strategies in Nunavut are empirically demonstrated by the 2011 National Household survey, showing that 48.5% of Inuit aged 25-64 have not completed high school (Statistics Canada, 2015). This in turn demonstrates the systemic and historic lack of educational options available in the North. As acknowledged by Pal (2014), Canada's North consists of "A small population that is geographically dispersed" over a large landmass and has significantly lower levels of educational completion compared to the southern provinces; this combination implies that "persistent infrastructure challenges will continue to affect socio-economic well-being for Northern Canadians" (p. 113) for some time. This phenomena can otherwise be identified as "First Canadians, Canadians First"—the title for Inuit Tapariit Kanatami's 2011 *National Strategy on Inuit Education*—meaning that Inuit are more likely not to complete high school or pursue a post-secondary education than a) non-Aboriginal peoples that live in the North, b) other Aboriginal peoples more generally, and c) Canadians as a whole.

Mary Simon, former Inuit leader of Canada and chairperson on the National Committee on Inuit Education states,

One of the things that became really evident to us when we were developing the National Strategy was the lack of research on Inuit Education. Research on First Nations education dominates the literature ... and there's no research on what's happening in Inuit Education today. Clearly there was a major research gap. (cited in Inuit Tapariit Kanatami, 2016, p. 16)

What Simon is giving voice to is a common theme found throughout Aboriginal educational policy in Canada, which is the paucity of educational policy that is Inuit-specific and based on an Inuit epistemological understanding of learning. Unfortunately, this has been a common theme for Inuit Canadians who remain, out of the three recognized Aboriginal groups, at the lowest level of academic success.

Inuit-developed educational policies rooted in Inuit knowledges are more likely to be successful. As Tully (2000) describes,

Over the centuries, indigenous peoples have developed a vast repertoire of infra-political resistance to survive and revitalise their cultures, ... to keep indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world

alive and well for the next generations, to adapt these ways and stories to the present strategic situation, to comply with and participate in the dominant institutions while refusing to surrender ... and to transform internal colonisation obliquely from within. (p. 42)

Tully's words demonstrate the reality of the situation: in order for Inuit to succeed in Canadian systems of education—ones that are inherently colonial and contradictory to Inuit ways—Inuit must be involved in planning and writing the curricula and policies that will be educating Inuit children in the Inuit homeland. The historic lack of Inuit involvement in these practices is quite clearly linked to the educational attainment concerns of Inuit in the present. Henceforth, this writing is based on one key thought: The Inuk student did not fail the institution; instead, it was the institution that failed the Inuk student. Without Inuit participation within educational policy development in the North, there is no possibility of Inuit academic success.

Through the epistemological lens of this Inuk scholar, this article explores an Indigenous understanding of Pal's (2014) rational decision-making model of educational policy. I hypothesize that the rational decision-making model blends with the Indigenous practicality of IQ, or Inuit Quajimjatuqangit, which is Inuit knowledge and the societal values through which Inuit function. In turn, this identifies an Inuk understanding of an ongoing educational issue: low high school education completion rates of Inuit. In order to accomplish this, I first outline the ways in which colonial and paternal governmental policies about Inuit were the impetus for the initial educational policies for Inuit. Second, I demonstrate the ways in which top-down educational policy development in Nunavut has failed Inuit children. Finally, I propose one possible way that the rational decision-making model can be blended with IQ in order to develop Nunavut education policy in a way that reflects the needs and wants of Inuit.

My Location

Firstly¹ I would like to state that I believe I am not the Other as articulated by scholars like Stuart Hall (1997); rather, I am not treated as an Other until I walk onto the University of Alberta campus. It is only in this academic space that I am truly subjected to power differentials. In my everyday existence, the non-Inuit who move around me and with whom I interact are the Other. I see them from my own understandings of power—based on Inuit ethics and ways of and being—how I was taught that non-Inuit minds and peoples act.

Once inside a Western classroom where life is based on meritocracy, I have had to change my ways of thinking and behaving. I have had to conform for survival. Basically, my ability to exercise power now has several limits placed on it that are not present outside of this campus. In terms of a Western definition of success, I am the person most likely to fail: I am an Inuk woman. From all standpoints, theoretically I should not graduate with a Ph.D. especially when taking into consideration the most-recent data on Aboriginal post-secondary degree completion indicated 40 Inuk had finished their PhDs (Statistics Canada, 2011b). Even within the scale of the three recognized Aboriginal groups pursuing a Western-based education, as an Indigenous Canadian, I and my peoples, the Inuit, have the lowest likelihood of possible success. This is why my goal of putting forward Inuit innate understandings of IQ principles within an educational institution is so imperative: adding our knowledge to the academy increases the likelihood that Inuit scholars that come after me will succeed.

Inuit Quajimajatuqangit

In terms of how Inuit educational policy would be understood, by me, I position myself as not only an Indigenous researcher, but also as an Inuk who would see through Inuk eyes and with an Inuk understanding. Inuit Quajimajatuqangit (IQ), as indicated earlier, can be explained as being situated between “the self” and broader areas of outside of oneself; this requires me to always be mindful of others. Put into a Western-based terminological definition, IQ is “all aspects of traditional Inuit culture including values, world-view, language, social organization, knowledge, life skills, perceptions, and expectations” (Wenzel, 2004, p. 240, as cited in Tester & Peter, 2008, p. 48). In addition, IQ is recognized as a “holistic” concept that includes spiritual as well as factual knowledges (Huntington, 2005; Simpson, 2001; Wenzel, 1999, 2004, cited in Tester & Peter, 2008, p. 48). As Tester and Peter (2008) outline,

Seamless’ may be more appropriate than holistic in describing IQ [since] something that is seamless has no discernable parts. In other words, everything is related to everything else in such a way that—*counter to the logic of Western science—nothing can stand alone, even in the interest of gaining an appreciation of the whole*[emphasis added] (pp. 48-49).

This can be understood through a more detailed explanation of the IQ concept of consensus. IQ is translated into English means “that which Inuit have known to be true” (Tagalik, n.d., p. 1); it is a form of Indigenous Knowledge that is handed down from generation to generation, and forms the basis for how Inuit understand the world. Comprised of many principles, IQ is both related to understanding the land as well as relationships between people. One of the components, as Shirley Tagalik (n.d.) explains is Aajiiqatigiingniq, which is “the concept of consensus-decision making” (p. 1). In practice, Aajiiqatigiingniq involves people working together as a group in order to make a decision that will benefit all (McMillan, 2015). Consensus, for Inuit, is therefore not the same as it is for non-Inuit: it is part of the philosophy that is intertwined with Inuit ways of knowing and being.

When I think of consensus, it’s only ever about what is good for the whole group: it is not about what is good for me as an individual. I wasn’t raised with this understanding, but came to recognize it as I got older. Aajiiqatigiingniq is much different than Western articulations of consensus.

A common misconception of IQ is that it stagnant and unchanging, when the reality is that Indigenous knowledges are constantly moving and shifting. Thus, because these understandings are constantly evolving and changing, they are important to consider in matters of policy that affect Inuit. As Terry Audla, (2014), former National Inuit leader of Canada states, “IQ has been asking the question ‘what knowledge is needed for better decision-making?’ We have found that Inuit have much insight to provide—and that this is often the missing element in sound policy development” (para. 80). Though IQ is pivotal to consider within the sciences—and especially when studying climate change—Audla’s words are important when considering other kinds of policy development as well. Truly, Inuit Canadians have much to add to educational policy, and should be consulted with in regard to how to make education viable for Inuit in the North.

Historical Analysis of Policies about Inuit

Inuit Canadians have generally not been considered a key policy focus by the Canadian federal

and territorial/provincial governments. It is as though the North and its peoples are simply an object that is out of view; “out of sight, out of mind,” as the saying goes. Despite the overall lack of policy development that focuses on the Inuit, there are two historical examples I will investigate in order to develop an illustrative correlation to educational policy. First, I will discuss the *RE: Eskimos* (1939) Supreme Court of Canada ruling; second, I will briefly review the federal government’s Eskimo disc identification system.

RE: Eskimos (1939)

The acceptance of Canadian governments in relation to their responsibilities regarding the Inuit can be described as reluctant. The reluctance on behalf of Canadian governments may be related to the fact that, with the exception of the central and south Labrador Inuit and the *British-Inuit Treaty* of 1765 (Bonesteel, 2006; NunatuKavut, 2013), Inuit Canadians were never negotiated with nor invited into a treaty relationship. Many First Nations, in contrast, had established treaty relationships with the Crown that outlined the ways in which the federal government was supposed to remain accountable. Ironically, the way Inuit were classified by non-Aboriginal peoples was by the terms “Esquimaux Indians” or “Esquimaux Savages²” (Diubaldo, 1981), which denotes a certain level of commonality. Despite being classified as Indians, the *Constitution Act* (1867)³ had no direct provisions about the Inuit. As Diubaldo explains, “Eskimos were ordinary Canadian citizens, hence ordinary citizens of the province and not wards of the Crown” (1981, p. 36). As a result, who was considered “responsible” for the Inuit was not a consideration for governments prior to and following Confederation. In 1937—some 70 years later—the province of Quebec initiated a Supreme Court of Canada case that forced the issue of who would assume liability for the Inuit: was it the federal government or was it provincial/territorial governments?

The case, known as *RE: Eskimos* (1939), was an investigation into whether or not the Inuit were to subject to the *Indian Act*.⁴ The question was whether or not Eskimos could be considered Indians, and thus if they were under the jurisdiction of section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act* (1867). Inuit skulls, photographs, and clothing were compared to those of First Nations people to determine if there were significant physiological and cultural differences between these groups. After an examination of these objects, non-Aboriginal lawyer August Desilets “was prepared to concede that ‘Eskimos’ differed from ‘aborigines’ in their clothing, food, fuel, winter dwellings, and hunting practices. However, if one scrutinized the ‘main characters of their life,’ Desilets insisted, it was clear that ‘Eskimos’ were exactly like Indians” (Backhouse, 2007, p. 41). Backhouse (2007) continues, indicating that Desilets said both peoples had “the same dependence upon fish and game for subsistence, the same lack of any organization for agriculture and industrial production, the same absence for exchange of wealth by way of money, the same poverty, the same ignorance, the same unhygienic mode of existence” (p. 41).

The six Supreme Court judges presiding over the case ruled that under section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act*, the Inuit were deemed to be a federal concern of the federal government. This verdict was given for “administrative purposes” (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2011, para. 17); however, Inuit were not considered status Indians as a result of this judgement (Vowel, 2016). As part of this ruling, Inuit became under the legislative control of the *Indian Act* from 1939-1951. However, by

1951, to avoid the same level of responsibility for Inuit that they had for First Nations, the Indian Act was amended to specifically exclude Inuit, by including the statement that ‘a reference in this Act to an Indian does not include any person of the race of aborigines commonly referred to as Eskimos (Anderson & Bonesteel, 2013, p. 160).

This legislative decision-making process did not consult the Inuit: a long-standing pattern when it comes to policy matters, and also exemplified through the Inuit disc system.

E-Disk and Identification System

I have written previously on the Inuit Identification Canada system and its impact on Inuit, including myself (Dunning, 2012, 2014). Of the three legally-defined Aboriginal groups in Canada, the majority were identified by the federal government through a combination of their legal name and a government-issued number; however, “the Inuit were the only ones to be ‘tagged’ in this way” (Dunning, 2012, p. 210). Beginning in the 1930s, governmental officials, RCMP, and medical professionals decided that a standardized way of recording Inuit identities was required, since many of these settler individuals could not wrap their tongues around Inuktitut (Bonesteel, 2006; Dunning, 2014). On advice from a medical officer stationed in Pangnirtung in 1935—who suggested Inuit be given numbers and tags similar to the dog tags given to men serving in the Canadian army—the Eskimo Disk and Identification System was born in 1941 (Bonesteel, 2006; Dunning 2014). Unlike dog tags, which are temporary and have no correlation to identity in civilian life, the E-Disk was an ongoing part of Inuit day-to-day life (Dunning, 2014). About the size of a quarter, with an identification number typed in black, and with a hole at the top for wearing on a necklace or bracelet, Inuit were required to wear their disks or have them on their person until the program ended in 1971 (Bonesteel, 2006; Dunning, 2012, 2014).

The spelling, pronunciation, and record-keeping of Inuit became an easier process, but what was not considered was the long-term effect of a number identifier—a name replacement—upon the Inuit themselves. In the three decades the E-Disk program ran, the Inuit were never asked for any form of input into the system. A numbered necklace became a fact of living an everyday Inuk existence. To the administrators, this number represented who, where, and what an Inuk Canadian was and most importantly, the social “benefits” apportioned to them. It was a universal way of processing Inuit paperwork and streamlining procedure. It was simple. It was silencing.

The E-disk program was replaced by Project Surname, touted by Inuk politician Abe Okpik, who headed the project (Dunning, 2012). Instead of being identified solely by a number, Inuit were identified by given and family names, which was a colonial practice and not one traditional to the Inuit (Dunning, 2012). As I pointed out in my Master’s thesis, Okpik (2005) spoke of flying “from community to community collecting the chosen first and last names of each community member on behalf of the government of Canada” (cited in Dunning, 2014, p. 56). This method of naming did not give Inuit agency in decision-making in something that would impact their lives into the future. Though this program was not as dehumanizing as being reduced to a number—and in some cases only being identified as that number in written documentation and at school—it was nonetheless extremely problematic (Dunning, 2012). Simply:

... again, the Government of Canada was imposing a naming system that was not conducive to traditional Inuit naming practices. Again, the Inuit were being forced to absorb a governmental practice that did not recognise or respect their cultural norms. Again, the Inuit had to submit to a change imposed by the Canadian government (Dunning, 2012, p. 222).

The Supreme Court of Canada case, *RE: Eskimos (1939)* and the E-Disk and Project Surname programs the Inuit had to endure are only two examples of the ways in which Inuit have not been consulted in areas of policy that affect their lives and livelihood. Nonetheless, they are evidence of the many layers of assimilative policies that Canadian governments have forced on Inuit Canadians. Furthermore, these policies resonate into present-day circumstances for Inuit. Had these policies employed the use of the rational decision-making model suggested by Pal (2014), perhaps the current realities of K-12 and post-secondary education completion would be different.

Policy Implementation and Inuit Education

The rational decision-making model is the building of a policy through the clear thinking of not only the objective of a policy but the analysis of policy implications, alternatives, scenarios, ultimate options, and post-policy implementation results (Pal, 2014). An Inuit-constructed decision-making policy using IQ can address the low levels of education completion for Inuit in Nunavut as well as the continued effects of Canadian southern-based education on the lack of Inuit academic attainment. Pal (2014) provides a linear, six-step system that can be redefined using IQ:

1. Choose objectives: define the situation and the desired outcome.
2. Consider alternatives: research and identify options.
3. Outline impacts: compare and contrast each alternative and its consequences.
4. Determine criteria: make a decision, and choose an alternative if necessary.
5. Apply models/scenarios: design and implement an action plan.
6. Evaluate consequences: evaluate results, and if needed, go back to step one.

In contrast, past educational processes for the Inuit have been instituted through “acting directly” (Pal, 2014, p. 147). This has meant that instead of following a multi-step process that evaluates objectives, alternatives, impacts, and criteria, policy makers leap into creating a policy that a) does not have a sound background in research, and b) lack any kind of consultation with Inuit. In turn, multiple educational policies developed by the federal and territorial governments are Southern-based and thus not Inuit language- or value-based. This has led to an Inuit non-completion rate for high school of 58% (Statistics Canada, 2016), and post-secondary education is rarely attempted. Previous educational policies have demonstrated that the “top-down” approach to educational policy design and implementation in Nunavut has not and is not creating positive outcomes.

Top-Down Educational Policy Model in Practice

In order to show the extent to which current educational policy concerns in Nunavut have failed, a historical example of the top-down model is required. The Inuit were not seen as in need of

formal Western education by governmental authorities. For example, as W. C. Methune from the Department of the Interior noted in 1935, “Why give Inuit children a white-oriented education when, for the foreseeable future, they would just be fur-trappers? Besides bureaucrats believed that the Inuit ‘mental capacity to assimilate academic training is limited’” (cited in Diubaldo, 1992, p. 30). This discourse was common among non-Aboriginal peoples—those working in government and elsewhere—at the time. The federal government began to take a more positive stance on educating the Inuit after World War II, as a result of American troops stationed in the Arctic complaining the Inuit had no access to education (Marcus, 1995). Formal policies and procedures took several more years: the federal government took educational control from the missionary organizations that historically had been responsible for the education of Inuit (Bonesteel, 2006).

Rather than develop curricula and materials that were reflective of Inuit experiences, the government used existing policies and teaching resources developed in the provinces, and imported them into the North. The rationale for this was that because it worked elsewhere it would work here, too. Non-Aboriginal teachers that could not speak Inuktitut instructed Inuit children in a way that was not reflective of their value system and comprised of ideas and objects that were not part of a Northern existence; for example, lessons would include things like “traffic lights and cornfields,” which were of no relevance to Inuit (Anderson & Bonesteel, 2013, p. 157). At the time, the population of what was to become Nunavut was so small and had so few cars that traffic lights did not exist. Moreover, corn is a crop that cannot grow in the Arctic due to the temperature extremes and lack of sunlight in the winter months. In addition to the relevance of content being an issue, lessons were provided only in English: a language many Inuit could not speak nor understand. Inuit students were completely unfamiliar with functioning in an English-based, individual-success-oriented system based on meritocracy instead of one that was delivered in Inuktitut, and interconnected with the values of a group that remain family- and community-focused. It is no wonder why these children were not able to succeed under these conditions.

With the principles of scientific racism being firmly embedded in Canadian society at the time, much of the failure of Inuit children to learn in these Western-oriented schools was assumed to be related to their biology rather than the curriculum and delivery: thus, in the 1960s, government officials set out to determine if Inuit children had the intellectual capacity to learn within a formal school setting. Documented in the award-winning documentary *Experimental Eskimos* (2010), the film outlines the journeys of twelve-year-old boys Peter Ittinaur, Zebedee Nungak, and Eric Tagoona. Taken to Ottawa and billeted out to non-Inuit host families, all three of the boys thrived at school, much to the surprise of the federal government. As adults, the three became voices of Inuit concerns and land claim issues through Inuit-based political activism. It was not until decades after these events that what had been presented to them and their families as an “opportunity” was actually revealed to be a government-run experiment on the Inuit intelligence.⁵ The results of the experiment showed the government that in fact, yes, Inuit children were capable of learning similarly to their non-Inuit Indigenous as well as non-Aboriginal peers. What this experiment did not show—at least in the eyes of the government—is why Inuit were not succeeding in the educational system that was implemented without their consent.

The Failure of Top-Down Implementation

As indicated prior, this paper weaves IQ together with the rational decision-making policy model as articulated by Pal (2014). One of the components of this model is the inclusion of empirical evidence in order to develop a policy that is reflective of the population it is for (Pal, 2014). Thus, in order to re-evaluate educational policy in Nunavut, so it is more applicable to and useful for Inuit children, an examination of current educational completion rates must be considered.

Statistics Canada (2016), citing the *Aboriginal Peoples Survey* (2012), indicates that 42% of surveyed Inuit aged 18 to 44 had completed a high school diploma or equivalent degree. With only 58% of the Inuit population—which includes Inuit in Nunavut and living elsewhere—having completed high school, it is clear that there is something about existing educational policies in the North that are not working.

As Table 1 demonstrates, Inuit have the lowest level of educational attainment within Canada.

Without question, this data shows the lower levels of educational attainment of Inuit compared to a) other Indigenous peoples, and b) non-Aboriginal Canadians. More current demographic data lists a population of 65,025 for Inuit Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2016); however, education data that coincides with this population has not yet been published. As a result, reporting Inuit education completion rates must be done with the most recently-reported data. The National Household Survey (NHS) provided a total Canadian population of 27,259,525 (Statistics Canada, 2011b) which is substantially different than that of the census data, which was 33,476,688 (Statistics Canada, 2011a): the reason for this discrepancy was a Global Non-Response rate of 26.1% for the NHS (Statistics Canada, 2011b). When calculating Inuit education completion rates with the data from the NHS data, the discrepancies are clearly

Table 1

Aboriginal Post-Secondary Attainment in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011b)

Highest Level of Certification	Total Canadian Population	Total Non-Aboriginal Population	Total Aboriginal Population	Total First Nations Population*	Total Métis Population**	Total Inuit Population***
Total—Highest certificate, diploma or degree	27,259,525	26,250,945	1,008,580	592,765	347,375	39,280
High School Diploma or Equivalent	6,968,935	6,727,675	241,260	135,630	91,535	6,670
Bachelor's Degree	3,634,425	3,580,850	53,580	26,885	23,190	1,075
University Certificate or Diploma Greater than the Bachelor Level	602,910	594,965	7,945	4,330	3,065	75
Degree in Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine, or Optometry	154,705	153,675	1,030	320	625	20
Master's Degree	1,083,840	1,072,940	10,900	5,365	4,660	215
Doctoral Degree	208,480	206,855	1,625	865	600	40

Note. * This category represents respondents that only identified as First Nation, and not a combination of other Aboriginal groups. ** This category represents respondents that only identified as Métis, and not a combination of other Aboriginal groups. *** This category represents respondents that only identified as Inuit, and not a combination of other Aboriginal groups.

evident between Inuit and other Indigenous peoples and non-Aboriginal Canadians. Using the data from Table 1, 0.096% of Inuit ages 18-44 completed a high school diploma, compared to 3.461% of Aboriginal people and 96.538% of non-Aboriginal Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2011b). This low level of high school completion demonstrates that education policies in existence in Nunavut today are not adequate since the majority of Inuit students are leaving school early (e.g., O’Gorman & Pandey, 2014). The same trends are also evident for Inuit completion of bachelor’s degrees, university certificates at or above the bachelor’s level, medical degrees, and Master’s degrees. As an Inuk woman pursuing a doctoral degree, as I stated previously, the likelihood that I do not succeed is high: of all of the Canadians who have attained a doctoral degree, 0.019% are Inuit, and of all the Aboriginal people with a PhD, 2.462% are Inuit (Statistics Canada, 2011b). Past trends show that it is not the Inuk child that is failing the institution. It is the institution that is failing the Inuk child: I want to change that, not only as an Inuk woman with a PhD, but also through using IQ to rework the rational decision-making model of policy implementation.

Rational Decision-Making Model based on IQ Approaches

What I am proposing in this section is a form of policy development based on both the rational decision-making model and IQ and is conducted within Nunavut schools. The first step in Pal’s (2014) six-step rational decision-making model is to define the issue and choose an outcome. In this case, the matter of concern is low high school completion rates for Inuit, and the ultimate goal is to ask the people of Nunavut what the Department of Education needs to do to increase the rate at which Inuit complete high school. In order to consider the broader scope of this first step, research must be conducted. More specifically, this proposed research project must be based in the principles of IQ in order for it to accurately assess the issue(s) and outcome(s). This can be used to generate an educational policy for Nunavut that is not only relevant to Inuit, but is developed by Inuit through the Department of Education in the Government of Nunavut.

The first way to approach Inuit high school completion rates in Nunavut is through the IQ element *pijitsirniq*; this translates roughly to the concept of serving. In this instance, serving will be conducted by service to the community; more specifically, this means reaching out to teachers, students, and parents within each Inuit community in Nunavut. As an incentive, each school that applies to participate in the study will be offered an amount of money. Since the project will be conducted through a community gathering place—the school—this demonstrates that the whole community and not the individual, is being served. This financial incentive could be used to have a breakfast/lunch program within a community school, or could go towards a community-wide spring feast. The school is given the leeway to place this money into a program or event that would further serve the community as a whole.

The second way to examine Inuit early school leaving rates in Nunavut is using *aajiqatigiingniq*; translated, this is the concept of consensus and decision-making. *Aajiqatigiingniq* is observed through families, students, and school authorities coming together as a community. The goal here is two-fold. First, the aim is to arrive at a project that will benefit the community as a whole. Second, it will also begin a dialogue on a very hard topic: why aren’t Inuk students attending classes? What this initiative does is stimulate discussion towards why students and parents are not making school a priority.

The third way the rational decision-making model utilizes IQ principles is through the use of *pilirqatigiingniq*. Explained as working together for a common purpose, *pilirqatigiingniq* is

enacted by the venue through which these meetings take place (the community school) and who is involved (students, teachers, and parents). Since this research will be conducted through community meetings everyone is able to work together towards a common goal.

This process may sound very simplistic; perhaps argument could be made that the steps of the rational decision-making model alone are being followed. Nonetheless, IQ has been in practice since time immemorial, and has never been part of policy development in the Arctic. Unlike the Western concepts of individualism and meritocracy, all initiatives and processes within the school project would be based on what the community says and wants, which is where the difference lays. As an Inuk person, I do not place my needs or wants first; I look at the community of people who reside under my roof and who are within my reach and work on what I perceive as being best for all, with their input. By conducting this research project in Nunavut schools that employs pijitsirniq, aajiiqatigiingniq, and pilirqatigiingniq, the first step in Pal's (2014) rational decision-making model can begin to be applied in a way that is more conducive to Inuit.

Conclusion

This paper endeavored to propose a new kind of educational policy development that combined Pal's rational decision-making model and IQ. Conducting research in community schools in Nunavut using the approach I outlined I believe will a) provide insight into why Inuk youth leave school early, and b) how Inuit communities can encourage their youth to complete their high school education. If another top-down method of policy development is implemented in Nunavut, the same consequences will result: Inuit will continue to lag behind not only other Aboriginal peoples but also non-Aboriginal Canadians in educational attainment

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Notes

- 1 Writings in italics represent personal thoughts and explanations of the author.
- 2 The use of Esquimaux, Savages, and Eskimos reflects the Canadian terminology of the time, and is not indicative of how Inuit identify themselves.
- 3 The *British North America Act* (1867), as it was known then, was changed to the *Constitution Act* (1867) following the passing of the *Constitution Act* (1982).
- 4 The *Indian Act* is the principle statute through which the federal government administers Indian status, local First Nations governments, reserve land, and communal monies (Vowel, 2016).
- 5 Ittinaur, Nungak, and Tagoona filed a lawsuit due to the ethical breach committed by the Canadian federal government; however, then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper declared that the suit was covered within the Indian Residential School settlements, and thus no further monies were to be extended towards education-based claims (Greenwald, 2010).

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