

# Unipkausivut

Building Language and Literacy Skills  
Through Oral History



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Nunavut Literacy Council



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Through Oral History

Produced by  
The Nunavut Literacy Council  
2004

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Nunavut Literacy Council  
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Nunavumi Taigualiakhaiyut Katimayiit  
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# Foreword

By Rachel A. Qitsualik

By 1000 A.D., three cultures existed in the eastern Arctic. The oldest was a people archaeologists call “Dorset”, a Mongolic people who had migrated out of Alaska 3,000 years earlier. For millennia, they had survived unimaginable cold with no dog teams, lamps, igloos, or toggling harpoons.

Between 800 and 1200 A.D., however, the world was warming. Soon, the Dorset were faced with strangers from the west, distant cousins whose dog sleds brought them explosively eastward, toggling harpoons and waterproof stitching allowing ample harvest of the marine mammals they ever pursued. These archaeologists would call “Thule”, and they were the earliest Inuit.

Simultaneously, another people was making its way westward, across the Atlantic. This was a people in whose grip Europe was held, adventurers of mixed Scandinavian descent, today derogatorily called “Vikings”. They settled in Greenland, but explored Baffin Island’s eastern coast, calling it Helluland or “The Place of Flat Stones”.

It would all play out oddly, with the Viking colonists being the first to disappear from the Arctic. And by the time Genghis Khan had begun to form his empire, around 1200 A.D., the Dorset, also, had all but disappeared.

One will never meet a Dorset person today. They are extinct. Yet the memory of them lives on in two peculiar places. The first source is a written record of the Vikings, who called them Skraelings or “Weaklings”. The Vikings note them as a shy people, too easily killed.

The other source, the Inuit oral tradition, remembers these people as “Tunit”. They are said to have originally built the inukssuit – man-like rock structures that drive caribou. Tunit were squat, incredibly shy, immensely strong. They were a paradox, for they taught Inuit a number of survival tricks, and yet used very poor tools and no dogs. Being without lamps, they burned heather for warmth, and so were sometimes called the “Sooty Ones”.

Pre-colonial Inuit lived in nomadic camps. Family was their society. Their challenge, then, was to strengthen social ties between each other and other families they occasionally bumped into. Consequently, while their oral tradition became a way of record keeping, it at once served a more immediate purpose: a means of socially connecting a disconnected population. The oral tradition specializes at drawing human beings together on an interpersonal level, where concepts often times penetrate the soul more deeply than via script.

Above, we have an example of the oral tradition being just as strong as the written one. Each tradition, oral or written, is a specific tool to suit a specific need. Each having a different focus.

Writing is most concerned with hard facts and figures. Conveying an emotional, social message through writing requires great art. Yet this is where the oral tradition naturally excels.

We live in an age of unprecedented information exchange, ironically marked by great social isolation. Perhaps the oral tradition is the heart that can balance writing's brain. This interpersonal need, in humans, is the very reason why many prefer live concerts to recorded music. Like our ancestors of old gathering around a campfire, it touches us on a fundamental, primal level.

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*“There are some words that are still spoken  
by real Inuit today, but there are some  
other words which are not used anymore  
and will not likely be spoken in the future.  
These words from long ago  
will remain known only  
if they are written down.”*

*Donald Suluk in Inuktitut, Winter 1987*



# Introduction

Unipkausivut is intended to help communities to incorporate the important field of ‘Oral History’ into their language and literacy programs. Why?

- Nunavummiut agree that Elders’ knowledge is valuable and must not be lost. Through oral history projects language and literacy learners can participate in preserving the important history which is their birthright.
- Learning about one’s culture through oral history builds self-esteem and a sense of personal and cultural identity. These qualities are essential if people are to meet their personal goals.
- Participation in oral history projects can help build literacy and language skills. For many adults, one of their personal goals is raising their literacy levels in order to support their children’s learning, to participate more fully in society or to get a good job.
- Nunavummiut are concerned about the strength of the Inuktitut language. Working on oral history projects means communicating with Elders in Inuktitut in meaningful ways.
- Many Nunavummiut feel that parents, grandparents and Elders should play a stronger role in education. The study of oral history recognizes the expertise of Elders.

Building language and literacy skills through the study of oral histories is a way to address all these concerns. Working on oral history projects can bring communities together and get people engaged and excited about their learning.

Unipkausivut is a collection of resources that you can use in your programming in any way you find useful. It is intended for community groups and adult literacy and language programs. However others may be able to adapt it to their needs. You are welcome to photocopy any section of this manual.

Unipkausivut is divided into nine sections:

1. *Storytelling and Culture* offers a number of written texts by different authors about the importance of storytelling in defining culture and passing along history.
2. *Language and Literacy in Nunavut* includes writing by different authors about language and literacy issues.
3. *Building Language and Literacy Skills* discusses various principles and approaches to teaching and learning.
4. *Planning Your Project* takes you through the steps in planning your oral history project and offers guidelines on recording equipment and writing funding proposals.
5. *Sample Documents* includes sample proposals, consent forms and reports which you can adapt for your project.
6. *The Process of Collecting Oral Histories* offers guidelines for the different steps in carrying out a project.
7. *Project Ideas* gives suggestions of creative ways you could present the knowledge you collect to the community.
8. *Stories* includes written versions of 15 oral stories from Nunavut.
9. *Useful Resources* includes the names of organizations, books, web sites and other resources you might need to help you understand oral history, language or literacy issues.

# What is Oral History?

An oral tradition is the passing on of knowledge from one generation to the next orally (by speaking). All the important beliefs, values and social or religious customs that make each culture different from another were passed along to younger people from their Elders through the spoken word. Survival skills such as hunting, building houses and making clothes, tools or medicine were taught through telling, showing and doing.

For centuries the communication of information was entirely oral. After the creation of writing, however, people began to count on written documents for information about the past. A lot of the knowledge that was communicated orally was lost. Much later sound recording technology was invented. Then people who were interested in the past were able to collect and use information that was communicated by speaking.

Oral history refers to recorded interviews with people about events of the past or their memories of their life experiences. The recorded human voice is the main form of an oral history. This can be used directly as a sound recording or the speaker's exact words can be transcribed (copied) into written form.

Oral history is often done by talking to several people about one topic. Just as no book can tell you everything, each person has different memories and experiences of the past. Oral history uses the actual words of people who lived and witnessed history. The spoken words of everyday women and men give us a more powerful understanding of the past than books alone can offer.

*Oral history brings alive a past that the written word fails to capture.*

*Studs Terkel, Oral Historian*



# Storytelling and Culture



*I didn't go to my grandfather's funeral.  
The shaman told me I should not go.  
If I went, he said,  
I would never see my grandfather again.  
If I did not go,  
my grandfather would visit me in my dreams.  
The shaman spoke the truth.  
My grandfather has come often into my dreams,  
keeping alive the stories he had told me when I slept  
with him in our tent, many years ago.*

*Norman Ekoomiak in An Arctic Childhood*



# The Art of Inuit Storytelling

By Zacharias Kunuk<sup>1</sup>

I was born in 1957 in a sod house at Kapuivik, my family's winter campsite in our life on the land. We were living happily like my ancestors waking up with frozen kamiks for a pillow. In 1965 my parents were told by Government workers, "You should send your kids to school or you could lose your family allowance." I was nine years old getting ready to be like my father. The next summer I was on the boat to Igloodik with my brother. While my parents lived on the land I stayed in town and learned the English language. Most weeks they showed movies at the Community Hall. They cost a quarter to get in. That's when I started carving soapstone to get money for the movies. I remember John Wayne in the West. He spearheads the US cavalry and kills some Indians at the fort. One time the scouts didn't return. We go out where there's arrows sticking out of dead soldiers and horses and one soldier says, "What kind of Indians did this!" I was shocked too. That's what I learned in my education, to think like one of the soldiers.



When I began to see myself as an aboriginal person and a filmmaker I learned there are different ways to tell the same story. People in Igloodik learned through storytelling who we were and where we came from for 4,000 years without a written language. Then foreign missionaries preached Paul's Epistles to my parents in Inuktitut saying, "Turn away from your old way of life." These days Igloodik young people are suiciding at a terrible rate.

4,000 years of oral history silenced by fifty years of priests, schools and cable TV? This death of history is happening in my lifetime. How were shamans tied? Where do suicides go? What will I answer when I'm an Elder and don't know anything about it? Will I have anything to say? Lately I want to write to the Bishop and say, "Let my people go!"

<sup>1</sup> From the Igloodik Isuma web site [www.isuma.ca](http://www.isuma.ca)

In the 1970s Igloolik voted twice against TV from the south since there was nothing in Inuktitut, nothing in it for us. But I noticed when my father and his friends came back from hunting they would always sit down with tea and tell the story of their hunt. And I thought it would be great to film hunting trips so you wouldn't have to tell it, just show it. In 1981 I sold some carvings and bought a video camera. When I watched my videos I noticed kids gathered outside my window looking in to see the TV. That was how special it was at the beginning.

In 1985 I received my first Canada Council grant to produce an independent video, *From Inuk Point of View*, on my summer holiday. I was the director, Paul Apak the editor, Pauloosie Qulitalik the cultural narrator, and Norman Cohn, the cameraman. This became our Isuma team.

Can Inuit bring storytelling into the new millennium? Can we listen to our Elders before they all pass away? Can we save our youth from killing themselves at ten times the national rate? Can producing community TV in Igloolik make our community, region and country stronger? Is there room in Canadian filmmaking for our way of seeing ourselves?

To try to answer these questions we want to show how our ancestors survived by the strength of their community and their wits, and how new ways of storytelling today can help our community survive another thousand years.

Our name Isuma means 'to think', as in Thinking Productions. Our building in the centre of Igloolik has a big sign on the front that says Isuma. Think. Young and old work together to keep our ancestors' knowledge alive. We create traditional artifacts, digital multimedia and desperately needed jobs in the same activity. Our productions give an artist's view for all to see where we came from: what Inuit were able to do then and what we are able to do now.

# Why is Oral Tradition Important?

From *Inuuqatigiit, The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective*<sup>1</sup>

Traditionally, Inuit did not have a written language. All of Inuit history, knowledge, values and beliefs were passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth. The information was contained in both songs and stories, repeated to children by their parents and grandparents as they grew.

Knowledge, traditions, stories, legends, myths, songs, beliefs and history were passed on. Often, a family camp would have an Elder who was the historian and storyteller. There were also others within the camp who told stories. Stories and songs were shared at special celebrations or during storms, but were also told every day as a way to get children to sleep or behave, or to give instruction in hunting or sewing skills. The storyteller often started by saying, “I will tell it as it was told to me, I will not alter it...” There would often be chants and songs in the story which the listeners got involved with through facial expressions, body language, murmurs of wonder and a great deal of enjoyment.

Some family groups state that one must never change the words of a story, that one must always tell it in the traditional way. But, if a legend with adult content was not appropriate for children, then a simpler version would be told.

Hunting stories were often told in the evenings after a hunt as the men related what happened during the day. Young boys would listen, learning the ways of their fathers and given advice on how to do something better during a hunt. This was important as it helped them see that the observation of a hunt continued in the evenings as it was recalled. The men would also bring up previous hunts or stories of hunts that they had heard. Techniques and strategies were honed not just at the time of the kill.

In families where storytelling was common, the children were more likely to be storytellers. As the lifestyle of the Inuit changed, this chain was broken in some families. There was a period after Inuit moved into larger communities and children started to go to school that the stories were almost forgotten. By telling stories yourself and by having storytellers invited to your classroom, Inuuqatigiit is an excellent way to reintroduce the oral traditions of the Inuit.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inuuqatigiit Curriculum Document, Kindergarten - 12*, GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment, 1996

*Before the writing system was introduced in the Canadian Arctic, story telling was one way in which a small portion of our history was preserved. The Elder women were especially noted for their ability to recite Inuit legends in a way that made a person feel as though he were part of that story. Inuit legends, like any other stories, carry with them a lesson or principle to remember, and I believe that this is why they were quite important to our people.*

*Mark Kalluak, Uqaqta, December 1985<sup>2</sup>*

*The limits of my language  
are the limits of my world.*

*Wittgenstein Ludwig*

<sup>2</sup> Also from *Inuuqatigiit*

# What it Means to Be an Inuk

By Abraham Okpik, Written in August 1960<sup>1</sup>

We the Inuit, where do we come from and how did we get here? This is a big question to all of us, even in the qallunaaq's way of thinking or learning. We are still a mystery to them, but our ancestors are the ones we give praise to for all that they have achieved – to live, to feel, to survive for centuries before the white people came. Some of the qallunaat came with good intentions to teach us a better way to live; some came to destroy our livelihood and culture. But there is one thing we must not forget, and that is how our ancestors brought us this far, in spite of severe cold, and constantly searching for food. Or are we forgetting?

Let us think back fifty years and compare our people's living conditions then with our present living environment. We have added very little to what our forefathers have left us.

So let's realize today that we are living without observing what we are losing, our own Inuit culture, which our grandfathers have passed on to us from generation to generation. Are we keeping our old traditions, or are we going to forget them for good? I am sorry to say that we are forgetting them now, and if we do not do something to preserve our culture it will just disappear. The songs of our fathers, our old stories which we used to hear from older people will be gone and we will never hear them again. All this will be lost, so let us wake up and restore our old methods and culture while there is still time. If we lose it, it will be a tragedy, after all our ancestors have shown us. We must remember this: where no other people could have survived, our ancestors did, with the hope that some day we would be known to the other parts of the world, not as the people of this present new day, but as the people of old who lived well-ordered lives, who had a strong culture, and who helped and cared for each other. And who kept learning what life demanded of them. Today if we can think like our ancestors and put to use what they have achieved for us and adopt the qallunaaq's way of learning, at the same time, keep our own, we will be further ahead. We should learn as much as we can from this new culture, but we must not forget our own culture which is important to us.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inuktitut* #70, 1989

So let us wake up to a new day, with new thoughts, new gifts, and new learning from the new culture. But we must remember our ancestors who had to endure the cold, with the help of their knowledge and ingenuity. We could put our learning with this new modern way of living, and only then will we have a bright future, with the white people's learning and our own culture.

To you older people I want to say this: you are the people who can pass our culture to the younger generation. At the moment we Inuit seem to be of two different minds. First, the older people know the old way of living, know the language because their forefathers taught them well; and second, the young people are not interested in keeping their own language. They are not being taught to keep their own language. It is important to have our language. At least it will be something we have inherited from our fathers if we keep it.

We should be happy to be who we are, living and working together, keeping our culture strong. After all, we are most comfortable with our own language.

When you learn to work and live the qallunaaq's way you lose the Inuit way. This can't be helped. We want progress and comfort and education and security. We can have these things – and still keep our language. We need our language to keep us happy together. An Inuk who has lost his language is completely lost. He doesn't belong anywhere.



# Cultural Change

By David Webster, Editorial from 'Inuktitut' magazine, Winter 1985

Cultural change, and the disappearance of many aspects of people's lives, is something that affects societies the world over. But it is not enough to simply say "the old ways were the best" and blame others for the loss of culture while doing nothing about it. What is really at stake is finding ways to keep those aspects of culture which give a people their identity and their values while adapting to inevitable change – for all change is not bad.

Most people, no matter where they live, obviously do not stubbornly cling to all aspects of their old ways when new ways of doing things appear. Why would someone continue to do something an old way when, for example, a new technology makes doing it easier? Inuit quickly threw away their bows and arrows and lances when firearms became available. They speedily accepted the freighter canoe in preference to the qajaq. Snowmobiles replaced dog teams; wooden houses replaced snowhouses, and so on. Every one of those changes made a difference to Inuit life, or Inuit culture, as we often call it.

Most people are sad about the passing of 'the good old days'. We forget about the bad parts of those days, and tend to remember only the good things. We may remember happy days of strong family ties, for example, and choose not to think so much about times of great hardship. This happened in the Arctic, too. For awhile, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, the older people were too busy coping with the changes that were taking place to worry about what they were giving up. For a time, their children did not want to hear about the old days. They were interested only in the new ways of life and the new material things that their parents never had.

These days many people are beginning to think differently, as the stories in this issue show. Inuit today are working together, in many cases with qablunaat, to try to keep Inuit culture alive. More and more young people are becoming interested in what life was like in the past. Last summer, some young people from Arviat went to the site of an old Ihalmiut camp at Ennadai Lake in the barrens. There they got things ready so that Elders could visit – for two weeks – the area that had been their home 30 years ago.

We hope that, in the years to come, there will be a strengthening of ties between today's generation and their Elders. We hope they can work together to record in books, art and music what is rediscovered about the culture and values of the past. In that ways, no matter how much Inuit culture changes (as all cultures must), the Inuit will know what their roots are and, at the same time, can build for the future.

*This is an excerpt from David Webster's editorial. You can read the rest of his editorial and more about the return to Ennadai Lake in "Inuktitut" #62, Winter 1985.*



# Unikkaaqtuat

Unikkaaqtuat (Old Stories) and Children. Excerpt from an interview with Uqsuralik Ottokie<sup>1</sup>

The unikkaaqtuat are beneficial to children. At one time these stories were true, but because they are so old they just became stories. They are very useful for children. There are all sorts of stories that can be told to children. Most times, children start settling down when you tell a story. Most of the stories that we heard were true and they have a definite benefit for children.

*At last I was able to get a man  
called Apagkaq to tell me stories.  
This was at Liverpool Bay.  
I agreed to pay him \$50 to tell me stories  
for five days. He thought I was crazy  
to be doing this work (collecting stories)  
but he proved to be very good at it  
and we became good friends.*

*Knud Rasmussen from Fifth Thule Expedition*

From *Fifth Thule Expedition Volume Three*, published by the Department of Education, GNWT, 1976

<sup>1</sup> From *Childrearing Practices* from the Interviewing Inuit Elders series, with Naqi Ekho and Uqsuralik Ottokie, published by Nunavut Arctic College, Iqaluit, 2000

# Immersion in the Stories and Customs

By Paul Ongtooguk from *Aspects of Traditional Inupiat Education*<sup>1</sup>

As the child is immersed in the stories and customs of the communities, he learns more about the traditions, values, and beliefs associated with hunting in an Inupiat community. Before his first hunt, he has listened to hunting stories for years. These were both entertaining and informative. As a result of these stories told by Elders and veteran hunters, the young child constructs a mental image of all that is required and some sense of the important aspects of preparing and engaging in the hunt.

Many of the stories he listens to as a child were stories that emphasized the disposition, the attitude, of the hunter. In these stories bragging and pride in personal accomplishment would be condemned. In the stories animals can read the mind of the hunter and either give themselves or not, in part based on an appreciation of the giving of the physical body. Even after the animal gives up the body, respect should be shown in definite ways according to the stories and traditions. This is why some hunters, who are deacons and respected members of churches, still pour fresh water in the mouth of a seal after it has been shot. The belief is that the seal likes fresh water and that the undying nature of the seal will remember the gesture and bring another body for the hunters later.

The stories about animals giving themselves to hunters might not seem to make sense to outsiders, but it is difficult to imagine anything else, if a person has hunted very long. There are times, when in spite of careful planning and preparation, cautious stalking and quiet approaches, no animal will allow a hunter to even remotely approach. At other times a person will be setting up camp and a caribou or moose will walk within a stone's throw and then patiently wait for the hunter to take advantage of their good fortune. How else to account for these turns of events that have so little to do with skill and more to do with the disposition of the animal? Today, some Westerners might deride such practices and beliefs.

<sup>1</sup> From the Alaskool web site [www.alaskool.org](http://www.alaskool.org)

But perhaps the stories are actually about protecting and helping the hunter. Respect for the animal being hunted may prevent the hunter from becoming overly confident or prideful. Pride often produces carelessness and may prevent learning and observation from occurring. In fact, pride and arrogance can be fatal in the Arctic where the best lesson to keep in mind is how little we actually know and how easily we can be swept from the world.

Showing respect for the animals also ensures that better care will be taken of the physical remains of the animal. The importance of such a disposition for the Inupiat hunter is obvious. Often the stories children hear will emphasize how clever, thoughtful, and ingenious a person has been in becoming successful as a hunter and a provider to the community.



# Black History

Black History, Oral History and Genealogy. By Alex Haley<sup>1</sup>

When I was a little boy I lived in a little town which you probably never heard of called Henning, Tennessee, about fifty miles north of Memphis. I lived there with my parents in the home of my mother's mother. My grandmother and I were very, very close. Every summer that I can remember, growing up in Henning, my grandmother would have, as visitors, members of the family, who were always women, always of her general age range, the late forties, early fifties. They came from places that sounded pretty exotic to me – Dyersburg, Tennessee; Inkster, Michigan, St. Louis, Kansas City – places like that. They were like Cousin Georgia, Aunt Plus, Aunt Liz, so forth. Every evening, after the supper dishes were washed, they would go out on the front porch and sit in cane-bottomed rocking chairs, and I would always sit behind grandma's chair. Every single evening of those summers, unless there was some particularly hot gossip that would overrule it, they would talk about the same thing. It was bits and pieces and patches of what I later would learn was a long narrative history of the family, which had been passed down across generations.

As a little boy I didn't have the orientation to understand most of what they talked about. Sometimes they would talk about individuals, and I didn't know what these individuals were; I didn't know what an old massa was and I didn't know what an old missus was. They would talk about locales; I didn't know what a plantation was. At other times, interspersed with these, they'd talk about anecdotes, incidents which had happened to these people or these places. The furthest-back person that they ever talked about was someone whom they would call 'The African'. I know that the first time I ever heard the word Africa or African was from their mouths, there on the front porch in Henning.

<sup>1</sup> From *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, published by Routledge, 1998

I think that my first impression that these things they spoke of went a long way back, came from the fact that they were wrinkled, greying, or completely grey in some cases, and I was a little boy, three, four, five, and now and then when some of them would get animatedly talking about something, they would fling their finger or hand down towards me and say something like ‘I wasn’t any bigger than this young’un here’. The very idea that someone as old and wrinkled as she had at one time been no older than I, just blew my mind. I knew it must be way, way back that they were talking about.

When they were speaking of this African, the furthest-back person of all, they would tell how he was brought on a ship to this country to a place they pronounced as ‘Napolis’. He was bought off this ship by a man whose name was John Waller, who had a plantation in a place called Spotsylvania County, Virginia. They would tell how he was on this plantation and he kept trying to escape. The first three times he escaped he was caught and given a worse beating than previously as his punishment. The fourth time he escaped he had the misfortune to be caught by a professional slave catcher. I grew up hearing how this slave catcher decided to make an example of him. I grew up hearing how he gave the African the choice either to be castrated or to have a foot cut off. The African chose the foot. I grew up hearing how his foot was put against a stump, and with an ax was cut off across the arch. It was a very hideous act. But as it turned out, that act was to play a very major role in the keeping of a narrative across a family for a long time.

The reasons were two. One of them was that in the middle 1700s in Virginia, almost all slaves were sold at auction. A male slave in good condition would bring on the average about \$750. At the end of every slave auction they would have what they called the scrap sale, and those who were incapacitated, ill, or otherwise not so valuable for market, would be sold generally for amounts of \$100 or less in cash. This particular African managed to survive and then to convalesce, and he posed then to his master an economic question. His master decided that he was crippled and hobbled about, but could still do limited work. The master decided that he would be worth more kept on that plantation than he would be worth sold away for cash of less than \$100. That was how it happened that this particular African was kept on one plantation for quite a long period of time.

Now that came at a time when, if there was any single thing that probably characterized slaves, it was that they had almost no sense of what we today know and value and revere as family continuity. The reason simply was that slaves were sold back and forth so much. Characteristically slave children would grow up without an awareness of who their parents were, and particularly male parents. This African, now kept on the plantation by his master's decision, hobbling about and doing the limited work he could, finally met and mated with another slave on that plantation, and her name (in the stories told by my grandmother and the others on the front porch in Henning) was Bell the big house cook. Of that union was born a little girl who was given the name Kizzy. As Kizzy got to be four or five or so, this African would take that little girl by the hand, and he would take her around and point to various natural objects, and he would tell her the name for that thing – tree, rock, cow, sky, so forth. The names that he told her were instinctively in his native tongue, and to the girl they were strange phonetic sounds which in time, with repetitive hearing, the girl could repeat. He would point at a guitar and he would make a single sound as if it were spelled 'ko'. She came in time to know that ko was guitar in his terms. There were other strange phonetic sounds for other objects. Perhaps the most involved of them was that contiguous to the plantation there was a river, and whenever this African would point out this river to his daughter Kizzy he would say to her 'Kamby Bolongo'. She came to know that Kamby Bolongo in his terms meant river.

There was another thing about this African which is in the background of all the Black people in this country, that was whoever bought them off the slave ship, when they got them to a plantation, their first act was giving them an Anglicized name. For all practical purposes that was the first step in the psychic dehumanization of an individual or collectively of a people. In the case of this particular African his master gave him the name Toby. But whenever any of the other adult slaves would address him as Toby, this African would strenuously rebuff and reject it and he would tell them his name was 'Kin-tay', a sharp, angular two-syllabic sound that the little girl Kizzy came to know her father said was his name.

There was yet another thing about this African characteristic of all those original Africans in our background, that they had been brought from a place where they spoke their native tongue, and brought to this place where it became necessary to learn English for sheer survival's sake. Gradually, haltingly, all those original Africans learned a word here, a phrase there, of the new tongue – English. As this process began to happen with this African, and he began to be able to express himself in more detailed ways, he began to tell his little daughter Kizzy little vignettes about himself. He told her, for instance, how he had been captured. He said that he had not been far away from his village chopping wood to make himself a drum when he had been set upon by four men, overwhelmed, and taken thusly into slavery. She came to know along with many other stories the story of how he was chopping wood when he was captured.

To compress what would happen over the next decade, the girl Kizzy stayed on the plantation in Spotsylvania County directly exposed to her father who had come directly from Africa, and to his stories, until she had a considerable repertoire of knowledge about him from his own mouth. When Kizzy was sixteen years of age, she was sold away to a new master whose name was Tom Lea and he had a much smaller plantation in North Carolina. It was on this plantation that after a while Kizzy gave birth to her first child, a boy who was given the name George. The father was the new master Tom Lea. As George got to be four or five or so, it was his mother Kizzy who began to tell him the stories that she heard from her father. The boy began to discover the rather common phenomenon that slave children rarely knew who their fathers were, let alone a grandfather. He had something which made him rather singular. So it was with considerable pride the boy began to tell his peers the story of his grandfather; this African who said his name was Kin-tay, who called a river Kamby Bolongo, and called a guitar ko and other sounds for other things, and who said that he had been chopping wood when he was set upon and captured and brought into slavery.

When the boy George got to be about twelve, he was apprenticed to an old slave to learn the handling of the master's fighting gamecocks. This boy had an innate, green thumb ability for fighting gamecocks. By the time he was in his mid-teens he had been given (for his local and regional renown as an expert slave handler and pitter of fighting gamecocks) the nickname he would take to his grave decades later – Chicken George.

When Chicken George was about eighteen he met and mated with a slave girl. Her name was Matilda, and in time Matilda gave birth to seven children. Now for the first time that story which had come down from this African began to fan out within the breadth of a family. The stories as they would be told on the front porch in Henning by grandma and the others were those of the winter evenings after the harvest when families would entertain themselves by sitting together and the Elders would talk and the young would listen. Now Chicken George would sit with his seven children around the hearth. The story was that they would roast sweet potatoes in the hot ashes, and night after night after night across the winters, Chicken George would tell his seven children a story unusual among slaves, and that was direct knowledge of a great-grandfather; this same African who said his name was Kin-tay, who called the river Kamby Bolongo, and a guitar ko, and who said that he was chopping wood when he was captured.

Those children grew up, took mates and had children. One of them was named Tom. Tom became an apprenticed blacksmith. He was sold in his mid-teens to a man named Murray who had a tobacco plantation in Alamance County, North Carolina. It was on this plantation that Tom, who became that plantation's blacksmith, met and mated with a slave girl whose name was Irene and who was the plantation weaver. Irene also in time bore seven children. Now it was yet another generation, another section of the state of North Carolina and another set of seven children who would sit in yet another cabin, around the hearth in the winter evenings with the sweet potatoes in the hot ashes. Now the father was Tom telling his children about something virtually unique in the knowledge of slaves, direct knowledge of a great-great-grandfather, this same African, who said his



name was Kin-tay, who called the river Kamby Bolongo, who said he was chopping wood when he was captured, and the other parts of the story that had come down in that way.

Of that second set of seven children, in Alamance County, North Carolina, the youngest was a little girl whose name was Cynthia, and Cynthia was my maternal grandmother. I grew up in her home in Henning, Tennessee, and grandma pumped that story into me as if it were plasma. It was by all odds the most precious thing in her life – the story which had come down across the generations about the family going back to that original African.

I stayed at grandma's home until I was in my mid-teens. By that time I had two younger brothers, George and Julius. Our father was a teacher at small black land grant colleges about the South and we began now to move around wherever he was teaching, and thus I went to school through two years of college. When World War II came along I was one of the many people who thought that if I could hurry and get into an organization of which I had recently heard, called the US Coast Guard, that maybe I could spend the war walking the coast. I got into the service and to my great shock rather suddenly found myself on an ammunition ship in the Southwest Pacific, which was not at all what I had in mind. But when I look back upon it now, it was the first of a series of what seemed to be accidental things, but now seem to be part of a pattern of many things that were just meant to be, to make a certain book possible, in time. On the ships in the Coast Guard, totally by accident, I stumbled into the long road to becoming a writer. It was something I had never have dreamed of...

### *Many Years Later*

One morning, I was in the British Museum and I came upon something, I had vaguely heard of it, the Rosetta Stone. It just really entranced me. I read about it, and I found how, when this stone was discovered in 1799, it seemed to have three sets of texts chiseled into the stone: one of them in Greek characters, which Greek scholars could read, the second in a then-unknown set of characters, the third in the ancient hieroglyphics which it was assumed no one would ever translate. Then I read how a French scholar, Jean Champollion, had come along and had taken that second unknown set of script, character for character, matched it with the Greek and finally had come up with a thesis he could prove – that the text was the same as the Greek. Then in a superhuman feat of scholarship he had taken the terribly intricate characters of the hieroglyphics and cross matched them with the preceding two in almost geometric progression, and had proved that too was the same text. That was what opened up to the whole world of scholarship, all that hitherto had been hidden behind the mystery of the allegedly undecipherable hieroglyphics.

That thing just fascinated me. I would find myself going around London doing all sorts of other things and at odd times I would see in my mind's eye, almost as if it were projected in my head, the Rosetta Stone. To me, it just had some kind of special significance, but I couldn't make head or tail of what it might be. Finally I was on a plane coming back to this country, when an idea hit me. It was rough, raw, crude, but it got me to thinking. Now what this scholar worked with was language chiseled into the stone. What he did was to take that which had been unknown and match it with that which was known, and thus found out the meaning of what hitherto had been unknown. Then I got to thinking of an analogy: that story always told in our family that I had heard on the front porch in Henning. The unknown quotient was those strange phonetic sounds. I got to thinking, now maybe I could find out where these sounds came from. Obviously these strange sounds are threads of some African tongue. My whole thing was to see if maybe I could find out, just in curiosity, what tongue did they represent. It seemed obvious to me what I had to do was try to get in touch with as wide a range of Africans as

I could, simply because there were many, many tongues spoken in Africa. I lived in New York, so I began doing what seemed to me logical. I began going up to the United Nations lobby about quitting time. It wasn't hard to spot Africans, and every time I could I'd stop one. I would say to him my little sounds. In a couple of weeks I stopped a couple of dozen Africans, each and every one of which took a quick look, quick listen to me, and took off. Which I well understand; me with a Tennessee accent trying to tell them some African sounds, I wasn't going to get it.

I have a friend, a master researcher, George Sims, who knew what I was trying to do and he came to me with a listing of about a dozen people renowned for their knowledge of African linguistics. One who intrigued me right off the bat was not an African at all, but a Belgian. Educated in England, much of it at the School of Oriental and African Studies, he had done his early work living in African villages, studying the language or the tongue as spoken in those villages. He had finally written a book called in French, *La Tradition Orale*. His name: Dr. Jan Vansina, University of Wisconsin. I phoned Dr. Vansina and he very graciously said I could see him. I got on a plane and flew to Madison, Wisconsin, with no dream of what was about to happen. In the living room of the Vansinas that evening I told Dr. Vansina every little bit I could remember of what I'd heard as a little boy on the front porch in Henning. Dr. Vansina listened most intently and then began to question me. Being an oral historian, he was particularly interested in the physical transmission of the story down across the generations. I would answer everything I could and I couldn't answer most of what he asked. Around midnight, Dr. Vansina said, "I wonder if you'd spend the night at our home," and I did. The following morning, before breakfast, Dr. Vansina came down with a very serious expression on his face. I was later to learn that he had already been on the phone with colleagues, and he said to me, "the ramifications of what you have brought here could be enormous." He and his colleagues felt almost certain that the collective sounds that I had been able to bring there, which had been passed down across the family in the manner I had described to him, represented the Mandinka tongue. I'd never heard the word. He told me that that was the tongue spoken by the Mandingo people. He then began to guess translate certain sounds. There was a sound that probably meant cow or cattle; another probably meant the bow-bow

tree, generic in West Africa. I had told him that from the time I was knee-high I'd heard about how this African would point to a guitar and say ko. Now he told me that almost surely this would refer to one of the oldest stringed instruments among the Mandingo people, an instrument made of a gourd covered with goat skin, a long neck, 21 strings, called the kora. He came finally to the most involved of the sounds that I had heard and had brought to him – Kamby Bolongo. He said without question in Mandinka, bolongo meant river; preceded by Kamby it probably would mean Gambia River. I'd never heard of that river.

It was Thursday morning when I heard those words, Monday morning I was in Africa. I just had to go. There was no sense in messing around. On Friday I found that of the numerous African students in this country, there were a few from that very, very small country called Gambia. The one who physically was closest to me was a fellow in Hamilton College, Clinton, New York. I hit that campus about 3:30 Friday afternoon and practically snatched Ebou Manga out of an economics class and got us on Pan American that night. We flew through the night to Dakar, Senegal, where we caught a light plane that flew over to a little airstrip called Yundum – they literally had to run monkeys off the runway to get in there. Then we got a van and we went into the small city of Bathurst, the capital of Gambia. Ebou Manga, his father Alhaji Manga (it's a predominantly Moslem culture there), assembled a group of about eight men, members of the government, who came into the patio of the Atlantic Hotel, and they sat in kind of a semi-circle as I told them the history that had come down across the family to my grandmother and thence to me; told them everything I could remember.

When I finished, the Africans irritated me considerably because Kamby Bolongo, the sounds which had gotten me specifically to them, they tended almost to poo-poo. They said, "Well, of course Kamby Bolongo would mean Gambia River; anyone would know that." What these Africans reacted to was another sound: a mere two syllables that I had brought them without the slightest comprehension that it had any particular significance. They said, "There may be some significance in that your forefather stated his name was Kin-tay." I said, "Well, there was nothing more explicit in the story than the pronunciation of his name, Kin-tay."

They said, “Our oldest villages tend to be named for those families which founded those villages centuries ago.” Then they sent for a little map and they said, “Look, here is the village of Kinte-Kundah, and not too far from it is the village of Kinte-Kundah-Janneh-Ya.” then they told me about something I never had any concept existed in this world. They told me that in the back country, and particularly in the older villages of the back country, there were old men called griots, who are in effect walking, living archives of oral history. They are the old men who, from the time they had been in their teen-ages, have been part of a line of men who tell the stories as they have been told since the time of their forefathers, literally down across centuries. The incumbent griot will be a man usually in his late sixties, early seventies, and underneath him will be men separated by about decade intervals, sixty, fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, and a teen-age boy, and each line of griots will be the experts in the story of a major family clan; another line of griots another clan; and so on for dozens of group of villages. Another would go into the history of the empires which had preceded it, and so forth. The stories were told in a narrative, oral history way, not verbatim, but the essential same way they had been told down across the time since the forefathers. The way they were trained was that the teen-age boy was exposed to that story for forty or fifty years before he would become the oral historian incumbent.

It astounds us now to realize that men like these, not only in Africa but other cultures, can literally talk for days telling a story in the most explicit details and not repeat themselves. The reason it astounds us is because in our culture we have become so conditioned to the crush of print that most people have almost forgotten what the human memory is capable of if it is trained to keep things in it. These men, I was told, existed in the back country, and they told me that since my forefather had said his name was Kin-tay they would see what they could do to help me.

I came back to this country enormously bewildered. I didn’t know what to do. It embarrasses me to say that up to that time I really hadn’t thought all that much about Africa. I knew where it was and I had the standard cliché images of it,

the Tarzan Africa and stuff like that. Well, now it was almost as if some religious zealotry came into me. I just began to devour everything I could lay eyes on about Africa, particularly slavery. I can remember after reading all day I'd sit on the edge of a bed at night with a map of Africa, studying the positions of the countries, one with relation with the other.

It was about six weeks later when an innocuous looking letter came to me which suggested that when it was possible I should come back. I was back over there as quick as I could make it. The same men, with whom I had previously talked rather matter-of-factly, told me that the word had been put out in the back country and that there had indeed been found a griot of the Kinte clan. His name, they said, was Kebba Kanga Fofana. When I heard there was such a man I was ready to have a fit. Where is he? I figured from my experience as an American magazine writer, the government should have had him there with a public relations man for me to talk to. They looked at me oddly and they said, he's in his village.

I discovered at that point that if I was to see this man, I was going to have to do something I'd never dreamed before: I would have to organize a safari. It took me three days to rent a launch to get up the river, lorry, Land-Rover to take supplies by the back route, to hire finally a total of fourteen people, including three interpreters, four musicians (they told me in the back country these old oral historians would not talk without music in the background), bearers and so forth. On the fourth day we went vibrating in this launch up the Gambia River. I was very uncomfortable. I had the feeling of being alien. I had the queasy feeling of what do they see me as, another pith-helmet? We got up the river to a little village called Albreda on the left bank. Then we went ashore. Now our destination by foot was a village called Juffure where this man was said to live.

There's an expression called 'the peak experience'. It is that which emotionally nothing in your life ever can transcend. I know I have had mine that first day in the back country in black West Africa. When we got up within sight of the village of Juffure the children who had inevitably been playing outside African villages,

gave the word and the people came flocking out of their huts. It's a rather small village, only about seventy people. Villages in the back country are very much today as they were two hundred years ago, circular mud huts with conical thatched roofs. From a distance I could see this small man with a pillbox hat and an off-white robe, and even from a distance there was an aura of 'somebodiness' about him. I just knew that was the man we had come to see. When we got closer the interpreters left our party and went straight to him. I had stepped unwittingly into a sequence of emotional events that always I feel awkward trying to describe, simply because I never ever verbally could convey, the physical power of emotional occurrences.

These people quickly filtered closely around me in kind of a horseshoe design with me at the base. If I had put up my hands I would have touched the nearest ones on either side. There were about three, four deep all around. The first thing that hit me was the intensity of the way they were staring at me. The eyes just raped. The foreheads were forward in the intensity of the staring. It was an uncomfortable feeling. While this was happening there began to occur inside me a kind of feeling as if something was turgid, rolling, surging around. I had this eerie feeling that I knew inside why it was happening and what it was about, but consciously I could not identify what had me so upset. After a while it began to roll in: it was rather like a galeforce wind that you couldn't see but it just rolled in and hit you – bam! It was enough to knock you down. I suddenly realized what upset me so was that I was looking at a crowd of people and for the first time in my life every one of them was jet black. I was standing there rather rocked by that, and in the way that we tend to do if we are discomforted, we drop our glance. I remember dropping my glance, and my glance falling on my own hand, my own complexion, in context with their complexion. Now there came rolling in another surging galeforce that hit me perhaps harder than the first one. A feeling of guilt, a feeling rather of being hybrid, a feeling of being the impure among the pure.

The old man suddenly left the interpreters, walked away, and the people quickly filtered away from me to the old man. They began talking in an animated, high metallic Mandinka tongue. One of the interpreters, A.B.C. Salla, whispered in my ear and the significance of what he whispered probably got me as much as all the rest of it collectively. He said, “They stare at you so because they have never seen a black American.” What hit me was they were not looking at Alex Haley, writer, they didn’t know who he was, they couldn’t care less. What they saw was a symbol of twenty-five million black Americans whom they had never seen. It was just an awesome thing to realize that someone had thrust that kind of symbolism upon me. There’s a language that’s universal, a language of gestures, noises, inflections, expressions. Somehow looking at them, hearing them, though I couldn’t understand a syllable, I knew what they were talking about. I somehow knew they were trying to arrive at a consensus of how they collectively felt about me as a symbol of all the millions of us over here whom they never had seen. There came a time when the old man quickly turned. He walked right through the people, he walked right past three interpreters, he walked right up to me, looking piercingly into my eyes and spoke in Mandinka, as if instinctively he felt I should be able to understand it. The translation came from the side. The way they collectively saw me, the symbol of all the millions of black people here whom they never had seen was, “Yes, we have been told by the forefathers that there are many of us from this place who are in exile in that place called America and in other places.” That was the way they saw it.

The old man, the griot, the oral historian, Kebba Kanga Fofana, seventy-three rains of age (their way of saying seventy-three years, one rainy season a year), began to tell me the ancestral history of the Kinte clan as it had been told down the centuries, from the times of the forefathers. It was as if a scroll was being read. It wasn’t just talk as we talk. It was a very formal occasion. The people became mouse quiet, rigid. The old man sat in a chair and when he would speak he would come up forward, his body would grow rigid, the cords in his neck stood out and he spoke words as though they were physical objects coming out of his mouth.



He'd speak a sentence or so, he would go limp, relax, and the translation would come. Out of this man's head came spilling lineage details incredible to behold. Two, three centuries back. Who married whom, who had what children, what children married whom and their children, and so forth, just unbelievable. I was struck not only by the profusion of details, but also by the biblical pattern of the way they expressed it. It would be something like: 'and so and so took as a wife so and so and begat and begat and begat', and he'd name their mates and their children, and so forth. When they would date things it was not with calendar dates, but they would date things with physical events, such as, 'in the year of the big water he slew a water buffalo', the year of the big water referring to a flood. If you wanted to know the date calendar-wise you had to find when that flood occurred.

I can strip out of the hours that I heard of the history of the Kinte clan (my forefather had said his name was Kin-tay), the immediate vertical essence of it, leaving out all the details of the brothers and the cousins and the other marriages and so forth. The griot, Kebba Kanga Fofana, said that the Kinte clan had been begun in a country called Old Mali. Traditionally the Kinte men were blacksmiths who had conquered fire. The women were potters and weavers. A branch of the clan had moved into the country called Mauretania. It was from the country of Mauretania that a son of the clan, whose name was Kairaba Kunta Kinte (he was a Marabout, which is to say a holy man of the Moslem faith), came down into the country called the Gambia. He went first to a village called Pakali n'Ding. He stayed there for a while. He went next to a village called Jiffarong; thence he went to a village called Juffure. In the village of Juffure the young Marabout Kairaba Kunta Kinte took his first wife, a Mandinka maiden whose name was Sireng. By her he begat two sons whose names were Janneh and Saloum. Then he took a second wife; her name, Yaisa. By Yaisa he begat a son whose name was Omoro. Those three sons grew up in the village of Juffure until they came of age. The Elder two, Janneh and Saloum, went away and started a new village called Kinte-Kundah Janneh-Ya. It is there today and literally translated means 'The Home of Janneh Kinte'. The youngest son, Omoro, stayed in the village until he had thirty rains, and then he took a wife, a Mandinka maiden, her name Binta Kebba. By Binta Kebba, roughly between 1750 and 1760, Omoro Kinte begat four sons, whose names were Kunta, Lamin, Suwadu and Madi.

By the time he got down to that level of the family, the griot had talked for probably five hours. He had stopped maybe fifty times in the course of that narrative and a translation came into me. Then a translation came as all the others had come, calmly, and it began, “About the time the king’s soldiers came.” That was one of those time-fixing references. Later in England, in British Parliamentary records, I went feverishly searching to find out what he was talking about, because I had to have the calendar date. But now in back country Africa, the griot Kebba Kanga Fofana, the oral historian, was telling the story as it had come down for centuries from the time of the forefathers of the Kinte clan. “About the time the king’s soldiers came, the eldest of these four sons, Kunta, went away from this village to chop wood and was seen never again.” He went on with his story.

I sat there as if I was carved out of rock. Goose-pimples came out on me I guess the size of marbles. He just had no way in the world to know that he had told me that which meshed with what I’d heard on the front porch in Henning, Tennessee, from grandma, from Cousin Georgia, from Aunt Liz, from Cousin Plus, all the other old ladies who sat there on that porch. I managed to get myself together enough to pull out my notebook, which had in it what grandma had always said. I got the interpreter Salla and showed it to him and he got rather agitated, and he went to the old man, and he got agitated, and the old man went to the people and they got agitated.

I don’t remember it actually happening. I don’t remember anyone giving an order, but those seventy people formed a ring around me, moving counter-clockwise, chanting, loudly, softly, loudly, softly, their bodies were close together, the physical action was like drum majorettes with their high knee action. You got the feeling they were an undulating mass of people moving around. I’m standing in the middle like an Adam in the desert. I don’t know how I felt; how could you feel at a thing like that? I remember looking at the first lady who broke from that circle (there were about a dozen ladies who had little infant children slung across their backs), and she with a scowl on this jet black face, her bare feet slapping against the hard earth, came charging in towards me. She took her baby and roughly thrust it out. The gesture said, ‘Take it!’ and I took the baby and I clasped it, at

which point she snatched it away and another lady, another baby, and I guess I had clasped about a dozen babies in about two minutes. It would be almost two years later at Harvard when Dr. Jerome Bruner told me, you were participating in one of the oldest ceremonies of humankind called ‘the laying on of hands’; that in their way they were saying to you, ‘through this flesh which is us, we are you, and you are us’. There were many, many other things that happened in that village that day, but I was particularly struck with the enormity of the fact that they were dealing with me and seeing me in the perspective of, for them, the symbol of twenty-five million black people in this country whom they never had seen. They took me into their mosque. They prayed in Arabic which I couldn’t understand. Later the crux of the prayer was translated, ‘Praise be to Allah for one long lost from us whom Allah has returned.’ That was the way they saw that.

When it was possible to leave, since we’d come by water, I wanted to go out over the land. My five senses had become muted, truncated. They didn’t work right. If I wanted to feel something I would have to squeeze to register the sense of feeling. Things were misty. I didn’t hear well. I would become aware the driver sitting right by me was almost shouting something and I just hadn’t heard him up to that point. I began now, as we drove out over the back country road, with drums distantly heard around, to see in my mind’s eye, as if it were being projected somehow on a film, a screen almost, rough, ragged, out of focus, almost a portrayal of what I had studied so, so much about: the background of us as a people, the way that ancestrally we who are in this country were brought out of Africa.

*The late Alex Haley is best known as the co-author of “Autobiography of Malcolm X” (1965) and author of “Roots: The Saga of an American Family” (1976).*

*Jose Kusugak, on establishing a common circumpolar Inuktitut writing system...*

*“I think Inuit will have to trust linguists and mandate professional users of the Inuktitut language, such as teachers, curriculum developers, writers and others.*

*People will have to leave their emotional attachments out of it.*

*If you do it scientifically, it’s workable because there is a natural similarity and same history and background.*

*So, if it is the will of the people to develop a common writing system internationally, it can be done. At some point it will be absolutely necessary because of computers and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference.*

*If we develop a virtual university, for example, and if we want to read each other’s newspapers and e-mails and so on, we will need a common Inuktitut writing system that we can all read and understand.”*

*Inuktitut 93, 2003*

# Language and Literacy in Nunavut



### *Magic Words*

*In the very earliest time,  
when both people and animals lived on earth.  
A person could become an animal if he wanted to  
and an animal could become a human being.  
Sometimes they were people  
and sometimes animals  
and there was no difference.  
All spoke the same language.  
That was the time when words were like magic.  
The human mind had mysterious powers.  
A word spoken by chance  
might have strange consequences.  
It would suddenly come alive  
and what people wanted to happen  
could happen –  
All you had to do was say it.  
Nobody could explain this:  
That's the way it was.*

*Inuit – anonymous*

# Language

## What Does 'Language' Mean to Nunavummiut?

### What Does It Mean to Be an Eskimo?

By Abe Okpik

The survival of the Eskimo people depends on the survival of the language. When people meet Eskimos, they are disappointed if they cannot show their knowledge of Eskimo ways. The Eskimo language is big. It could be used to give many great thoughts to the world. If the Eskimos themselves don't use their language more, it will be forgotten, and very soon the Eskimo too will be a forgotten people.

It is up to the Eskimos of today to use their Eskimo strength of word and thought. It is up to the young people. If they don't learn and use the language and the stories and songs, they will have nothing special to give to their children. It's no good looking like an Eskimo if you can't speak like one.

There are only very few Eskimos, but millions of whites, just like mosquitoes. It is something very special and wonderful to be an Eskimo – they are like snow geese. If an Eskimo forgets his language and Eskimo ways, he will be nothing but just another mosquito.<sup>1</sup>

An excerpt from *North*, 9, March/April 1962.

*Abe Okpik was born near Aklavik. He is known for heading "Project Surname" in 1969, a Government of Northwest Territories project in which they asked Inuit to replace their old government disk numbers with surnames.*

*Literacy is not an end in itself, but rather  
a means for participants to shape reality,  
accomplishing their own goals.*

*Pat Campbell in Teaching Adults to Read*

<sup>1</sup> From *Northern Voices, Inuit Writing in English*, edited by Penny Petrone, published by University of Toronto Press, 1988

## Will Inuit Disappear from the Face of This Earth?

By John Amagoalik

We must teach our children their mother tongue. We must teach them what they are and where they came from. We must teach them the values which have guided our society over the thousands of years. We must teach them our philosophies which go back beyond the memory of man. We must keep the embers burning from the fires which used to burn in our villages so that we may gather around them again. It is this spirit we must keep alive so that it may guide us again in a new life in a changed world. Who is responsible for keeping this spirit alive? It is clearly the older people. We must have the leadership which they once provided us. They must realize this responsibility and accept it. If the older people will remember, the young must listen.

When I talk about the future and try to describe what I would like for my children, some people sometimes say to me that I am only dreaming. What is wrong with dreaming? Sometimes dreams come true, if only one is determined enough. What kind of world would we live in if people did not have dreams? If people did not strive for what they believe in? We must have dreams. We must have ideals. We must fight for the things we believe in. We must believe in ourselves.<sup>2</sup>

An excerpt from *Inuit Today*, May 1977.

*John Amagoalik was born at Inukjuak, Nunavik, and grew up in Resolute Bay. He has been a force in Inuit politics for many years and is often called 'the father of Nunavut'.*



<sup>2</sup> Also from *Northern Voices*



## Why is Our Language Important?

From *Inuuqatigiit, The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective*<sup>3</sup>

The Inuit language has undergone changes like any other language but the major change has taken place since formal education was introduced. New words have been introduced and borrowed from English which has affected the structure of the language. Inuit who speak Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun or Inuvialuktun know there is a real fear their language will die. What can this mean to Inuit? History in some parts of the Arctic or even in some families shows that the absence of the language in the early years of a child's schooling deters, weakens or even loses the language for the individual. If this is so with all students, eventually it affects a generation of speakers.

Some say that when a language is no longer spoken, the culture also dies, but Inuit who do not speak the language still feel 'Inuit'. They have Inuit values and beliefs, and practice and live Inuit customs. It is this that Inuuqatigiit is saying; that we have to create, develop and acknowledge in our students a strong identity and to feel proud of their people's history and traditions. It is possible to talk and live the Inuit culture to some extent in another language, but what will be missed or left out from the Inuit culture? There are various personal answers to this question which you and your community can discuss.

Strong messages of the importance of using and maintaining our language have been voiced by Inuit. Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun and Inuvialuktun has to be used in order for them to survive. Language cannot be saved by the school; it has to be spoken in the homes for it to be strong within the community. The school can teach some of it and support it. It is essential for the school to work with the parents, D.E.A. and community to promote the Inuit language.

<sup>3</sup> From the *Inuuqatigiit Curriculum Document, Kindergarten - 12*, published by GNWT Education, Culture and Employment, 1996

For those who already speak it and for those who are learning it, how do we maintain, strengthen and develop it so they are using it academically, intelligently and professionally? Through each subject, language is used and learned by the students. When an Inuuqatigiit topic or theme is integrated into all the subjects, language is naturally integrated which provides a more meaningful context for children. It is important to create a language rich environment for students at all levels through play, print, books, oral stories, drama, use, singing, reading and writing.

A strong sense of pride and respect for Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun and Inuvialuktun and the different dialects has to be created for all, particularly our students who will eventually become the carriers of the language. The Inuit language has developed and evolved over many years and through vast experiences and knowledge of a people. It is these experiences and knowledge that Inuit want to preserve, use, and in some cases, revitalize through language.

*“No matter how good the language program is in the school, it will not save the language. It has to start in the home and the school program can support that.”*

*“We cannot afford to bury our language with our Elders.”*  
Public Hearing, Aklavik, Learning Tradition and Change

### **Annie Arngnauyuq on Language**

In Qitirmiut the children all speak English, but when I come to the Kivalliq and Qikiqtani regions I hear very small children speaking fluent Inuktitut. My ears perk up when I hear them speak and I wish our children could speak as fluently... and another concern that I have about language is that some of the words are said in Inuktitut and some in English. This is very disturbing. If they speak Inuktitut they have to speak all Inuktitut. I have seen too much of this mixture being used.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> From the Elders Advisory Meeting held by the Department of Education in Rankin Inlet, April 2002

# Language Assessment Chart

This Language Assessment Chart is from *Languages of the Land: A Resource Manual for Aboriginal Language Activists*, prepared for NWT Literacy Council in 1999. It is a simple chart that can be used by communities to understand the strength of their language. It can later be used to develop strategies to maintain or revive that language. Check off the boxes that apply to Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun in your community.

## ***The Flourishing Language***

- Has speakers of all ages, some of them monolingual.
- Population increases lead to an increase in the number of speakers.
- Is used in all areas of communication.
- The language adapts to the changing culture of the community.
- Speakers become increasingly literate.

## ***The Enduring Language***

- Has speakers of all ages; most are bilingual.
- The number of speakers remains the same in spite of population increases.
- English tends to be used exclusively in some situations.
- The language adapts to the changing culture of the community.
- There is little or no Aboriginal language literacy in the community.

## ***The Declining Language***

- There are more older speakers than younger ones.
- Younger speakers are less fluent in the language.
- The number of speakers actually decreases over time, in spite of an increased population.
- All speakers are bilingual and English is preferred in many situations.
- There is very limited literacy in the language.

***The Obsolete Language***

- The language is not taught to the children at home.
- The number of speakers is declining rapidly.
- The speakers are all bilingual and English is preferred in most situations.
- The language no longer adapts to new situations.

***The Extinct Language***

- There are no living ‘mother-tongue’ speakers.

*“On every inhabited continent, languages keep falling silent. New replacements are rare. Linguists believe that about six thousand languages still flow into human ears: the exact total is a matter of debate. By some estimates, a maximum of three thousand are likely to be heard at the century’s end, and fewer than 600 of those appear secure. Within our children’s lifetimes, thousands of human languages seem fated to dwindle away.”*

*Mark Abley in Spoken Here*

# Literacy

What Does ‘Literacy’ Mean to Nunavummiut?

## The Nunavut Literacy Council’s Definition of Literacy

The Nunavut Literacy Council Board developed this definition at their May 2002 board meeting:

Literacy is a skill that enables people to interpret and effectively respond to the world around them. Based upon language development from birth, it includes the ability to learn, communicate, read and write, pass on knowledge and participate actively in society.

## A Vision for Literacy in Nunavut

Participants at the Arviat Literacy Summit in September 2000 developed this vision for literacy in Nunavut:

All Nunavummiut have the right to participate fully and be included in their community. Literacy is much more than reading and writing; it also means being connected to your language and culture. Literacy involves everyone and is fundamental to the development of health and well-being. Literacy is fostering and nurturing understanding, knowledge and wisdom.

## Pauktuutit’s Vision of Literacy

At the annual general meeting of Pauktuutit, the Inuit women’s organization, in October 2000 they discussed literacy issues:

For most of the women in the workshop, literacy is about the survival of their language and culture through their children, families and the community.

*“Literacy is seeing and knowing what you see.”*

Elders from Gjoa Haven

*Because we of the younger generation are less knowledgeable, we tend to rely on documents for references. You, as Elderly people, will not forget what you lived through; the knowledge you have gained will always stay with you. We, the younger generation, will write down what we do not understand so someday we will remember it and be able to say, “So this is how it was!”*

Louis Tapardjuk, at the Department of Education Elders Advisory Meeting in Arviat, in September 2000

## **I Want to Learn Syllabics**

By Mark Kalluak

I know I don't stand alone when I say I never learned syllabics in school... like many others, I learned it from the back of prayer books and Bibles, and I believe people who claim learning syllabics is one of the simplest systems there is. When I was sent to the hospital at the age of four, I thought I was being transported to another world and my parents would never find me. Perhaps because of my desire to communicate with my parents, I had one object in mind – to learn to write. Maybe that is why I learned to write syllabics so early.<sup>1</sup>

Excerpt from Kenn Harper, *Writing in Inuktitut*, Inuktitut, September 1983

*Mark Kalluak has been active in language development for many years. His work with the Inuit Cultural Institute in Arviat and recently with the Department of Education has helped preserve valuable stories and knowledge.*

## **Reading and Writing in the Iglu**

Excerpt from an Interview with Rachel Uyarasuk

There were no pencils. I'd never seen a pencil. I'd never seen anything to write on. When the Bibles were brought, our parents would work at learning how to read. That's when our parents started reading to us children, and we got the desire to learn to write. We tried to be better than our fellow-children. We would practice writing on the frost in winter.

For instance *ikuma*, or *mannik*, because there were only two or three letters in these words.

<sup>1</sup> From *Northern Voices, Inuit Writing in English*, edited by Penny Petrone, published by University of Toronto Press, 1988

Sometimes when we were playing outside, we would go where there was fresh-fallen snow and write on it, because there was nothing to write on and there were no pencils. We would learn to write the ‘ai ii uu aa’. We learned that from our parents. We would be told that if we learned these, then we would know how to read, and we would learn how to write. So we would practice with words on the snow. Whenever we were travelling, and an iglu was built, there would be fresh snow. There would be a lot of writing on it.

Then we started to have little short pencils. They were very precious, and we were told never to lose them when we started to write with these pencils. Also, whenever there was anything that was store-bought, there would be paper containers such as sugar and tea packets. If there was any part that was blank we would write on it, because we had never seen any writing pads. That’s what we did.<sup>2</sup>

### **Rhoda Karetak on Writing**

It is unfortunate that our ancestors did not have written laws. They never wrote down their wisdom and knowledge, but their knowledge of their brain is here. It exists.

We want to see their knowledge and use it today, but a lot of it is not going to become available to us by word of mouth. It is like sewing kamiks – using the kamik as an example, it is not easy to come by. First you have to hunt for the skin, then you have to prepare it by skinning it and making it soft. Where do we get the thread from? How will we get it soft? We also have to make sure it fits properly and that it is comfortable. All the necessary steps for how to come up with a perfect kamik can be recorded today. It can be provided in writing now...

<sup>2</sup> From *The Transition to Christianity*, from the Inuit Perspectives on the 20th Century series, with Victor Tungilik and Rachel Uyarasuk, published by Nunavut Arctic College, Iqaluit, 1999

Ptarmigan intestine is something we do not think of as useful. Yet it was used for survival... even though it is not used any more, we have to recognize it and put it in writing.<sup>3</sup>

*Rhoda Karetak is an educator and artist who has been involved with many projects related to Inuit language and culture in her community, in Nunavut, and in Canada. She currently works with the Department of Education in Arviat.*

*On the Dreamtime –  
Yolngu stories of Aboriginal Australia...  
“But it was our ancestors moving  
across the land, singing and dreaming  
and talking, that made it possible  
to live in a world we find human.”*

*Michael Christie from Northern Territory University in Australia*

From *Spoken Here* by Mark Abley, published by Random House Canada, in 2003

<sup>3</sup> From the Elders Advisory Meeting held by the Department of Education in Rankin Inlet, April 2002



# Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

Literacy, Oral History and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

The Government of Nunavut is working towards bringing government processes closer to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) – closer to Inuit ways of thinking and being.

Here's how the Inuit Qaujimajatuqanginnut Task Force defines IQ:<sup>1</sup>

## The Nature of IQ

Though we tend to think of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit almost exclusively as traditional knowledge, it is more properly defined as is 'The Inuit way of doing things: the past, present and future knowledge, experience and values of Inuit Society'. This definition makes clear that it is the combining of the traditional knowledge, experience and values of Inuit society, along with the present Inuit knowledge, experience and values, that prepare the way for future knowledge, experience and values.

IQ, in its traditional context, consists of six basic guiding principles:

1. *Pijitsirniq*. The concept of serving – serving a purpose or community and providing for family and/or community
2. *Aajiqatigiingniq*. The Inuit way of decision-making – comparing views or taking counsel.
3. *Pilimmaksarniq*. The passing on of knowledge and skills through observation, doing and practice.
4. *Piliriqatigiingniq*. The concept of collaborative working relationships or working together for a common purpose. The community and the families who live there will only be as strong as the culture; and the culture will only be as strong as the community and its families.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Inuit Qaujimajatuqanginnut: The Next Steps*, the first annual report of the Inuit Qaujimajatuqanginnut (IQ) Task Force, May 2002

5. *Avatittinnik Kamattiarniq*. The concept of environmental stewardship – the intimate and respectful relationship between humans and all aspects of the land. The vast store of Inuit knowledge about the environment.
6. *Qanuqtuurniq*. The concept of being resourceful to solve problems.

Could these IQ principles guide you as you plan and work on your oral history and literacy project? Your group may want to spend some time thinking about and discussing Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit when you begin your project. If the group feels the principles are valuable, you could post them in your workspace and use them as guiding principles in your work.



### The Government of Nunavut’s Vision for Nunavut

In 1999 the Government of Nunavut identified a vision for Nunavut and made a plan for reaching that vision by 2020. The result was a document called *Pinasuaqtavut* or *The Bathurst Mandate*. The vision is guided by four priorities: Healthy Communities, Simplicity and Unity, Self-Reliance and Continuing Learning. Here are some of the Government of Nunavut’s hopes and plans for the future in each area:<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. *Healthy Communities*

*In 2020, Nunavut is a place where...*

- self assured, caring communities respond to the needs of individuals and families;
- we respect the accumulated wisdom of our Elders, examining and evaluating our actions based on the best of both modern knowledge and traditional ways;
- the raising and teaching of children and the care of those in need, ‘*Ilagiinniq*’ (kinship) and ‘*Inuuqatigiinniq*’ (community kinship), are a collective community process; and
- we enjoy and manage a clean, pristine environment, in our communities and on the land and waters.

#### 2. *Simplicity and Unity*

*In 2020, Nunavut is a place where...*

- Inuktitut, in all its forms, is the working language of the Government of Nunavut;
- equal opportunities exist across Nunavut in areas of jobs, education, health, justice and all other services; and
- an informed public has taken up the challenges and assumed the responsibilities of active community.

<sup>1</sup> From *Pinasuaqtavut: The Bathurst Mandate*, Government of Nunavut, 1999

### 3. *Self Reliance*

#### *In 2020, Nunavut is a place where...*

- there are options for individuals to achieve personal growth within Nunavut communities;
- an informed society is making decisions for self, family and community; and
- Nunavut is an active and respected contributor, nationally and internationally.

### 4. *Continued Learning*

#### *In 2020, Nunavut is a place where...*

- our population is adaptable to change and welcomes new skills, while preserving its culture, values and language of origin;
- we are a fully functional bilingual society, in Inuktitut and English, respectful and committed to the needs and rights of French speakers, with a growing ability to participate in French;
- Inuit professionals of all kinds have been supported in their training and have taken leadership roles in our communities;
- our history and accomplishments have been preserved and recognized in books and artworks, in recorded stories, in places of learning, and in the common knowledge of our people. We are a source of pride to all Canadians; and
- in our areas of strength, we have assumed a leadership role in Canada and have looked beyond Nunavut to give and receive inspiration and support, and to lead an active exchange of ideas and information.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> From *Pinasuaqtavut: The Bathurst Mandate*, Government of Nunavut, 1999

Literacy programs can help Nunavut work towards the Pinasuaqtavut vision. Raising the literacy levels of Nunavummiut through participation in oral history projects has many benefits beyond improved reading and writing:

- respect for Elders' wisdom and their teaching role;
- stronger intergenerational communication;
- understanding of traditional beliefs and values;
- pride in culture and language;
- understanding the past as we move towards the future;
- families learning and working together; and
- stronger Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun language skills.

...creating individuals and communities that are healthy, caring, active, proud, capable, respectful, cooperative, sharing, self-reliant... and a strong Nunavut territory.

*“Beware of defining as intelligent only those who share your opinions.”*

*Ugo Ogetti*

# The Nature of Inuktitut

By Alexina Kublu and Mick Mallon<sup>1</sup>

Is there a Canadian culture? Is there an Inuit culture? An Inuktitut word for ‘way of life’ is *inuusiq*. Based on the word for person, *inuk*, it means something like ‘the way of being a person’. Is there a connection between the language I speak and the person I am? Let us tell you a story.

Some years ago, Kublu applied for a job with an Inuit organization in Ottawa, and dashed off the usual résumé. On checking it over, however, she thought, “But this is an Inuit organization. If the person who reads this résumé is a traditional Inuk, what will he think of it, and of me?”

So she translated it into Inuktitut... and it sounded arrogant, boastful, and cold, cold, cold. Then she sat down and wrote a résumé directly in Inuktitut. It came out fine, until she translated it into English. The English version was vague, unfocused, even wimpy!

In fact, studies have suggested that many fluently bilingual people shift their personalities (or shall we say their cultures?) as they shift language. So there is a connection.

For an Inuk like Kublu, language and culture are inextricably entwined in the perception of who she is, to herself and to others. In the eyes of older people in the community, she is a child who has tapped into the mysterious powers of the *qallunaat* (white people), but who still depends on her Elders for so many answers about daily life in the past.

To her colleagues at the college where Kublu works, she is, we hope, an equal, with a professional competence extending beyond her particular role as instructor of interpretation and translation. To her students, she is a role model, one who has attained a balance between two worlds. To herself... well, she knows she can never be the kind of Inuk her Elders were, but, with all due respect, she doesn’t want to be, and she never could be a *qallunaaq*.

<sup>1</sup> From the web site [www.nunavut.com](http://www.nunavut.com)

The language of Inuit, Inuktitut, has changed in the last century, but it is still the same. In a good portion of the circumpolar world, it is alive and well. Kublu can communicate quite successfully with Greenlanders, for example, and if parachuted into Point Barrow in northern Alaska, which is much further away, she would be able to do the same after about a week or so.

The culture of Inuit has changed more than Inuktitut has, but most of those changes are on the outside. Kublu does not lead the same life her parents did, but in her approach to life, her system of values, her appreciation of the world around her, she is closer to them than to her qallunaat colleagues.

### **The Survival of Inuktitut**

The century that is passing has not been kind to the minority languages of the world, particularly the aboriginal languages (and cultures) of North America. A few years ago it was reported that, given the statistics, one would expect only Cree and Inuktitut to have a chance of surviving another 100 years in Canada. That opinion, however, is no grounds for complacency.

Today, very few native children in western Nunavut speak, or even understand, their native language, and it is the children who count. Visit a community and listen to the children playing. It doesn't matter how much Inuktitut is spoken in the store by adults shopping, or in the kitchens among Elders visiting. What language are the children using? The first sign of decay is when the children play in English. The second is when the parents speak in Inuktitut and the children reply in English. The third is when the language of the home is English, except for the Elders in the corner, a generation cut off from their grandchildren.

Linguists use a term to express the effort to revive a dying language: 'salvage linguistics'. The situation along the central Arctic coast of Nunavut – the communities of Cambridge Bay, Kugluktuk, Umingmaktok and Bathurst Inlet – can today be realistically described as one of salvage. There is a race against time, as a small group of Inuit teachers there work to preserve and transmit their language before it is too late.

Will they solve the problem? Or to put it more broadly: can institutions such as government and education save a language on their own? No.

### **Commitment in the Home**

The essential element is commitment in the home: commitment by parents. Institutions can't legislate that. What they can do is encourage and support it. But the essential element will come from the people. The essential element will be a pride in the language, and a determination to use it.

Two factors chip away at the stronghold of a minority language such as Inuktitut. One is that by the time parents realize its use is disappearing, it is already too late. The second factor is the overwhelming power of English, a power felt today across the world. It's not just that English is the language of Shakespeare, and Ernest Hemingway, and Margaret Atwood. It is also the language of Coca-Cola, and the Apollo program, and Bill Gates, and Michael Jackson, and Disney World. English is the language of power, and of glitter. Parents use English to link their children to the source of power.

### **Education**

However, many people believe that Inuktitut will be a source of strength to Nunavut. So what else can the institutions do to ensure its survival and growth? Education comes to mind immediately. Research and development in Inuktitut curriculum began soon after the birth of the NWT Department of Education in 1970, and has continued. A training program for Inuit teachers teaching in Inuktitut was started in the early 1980s.

But there is still room for improvement. While a fully developed curriculum for high schools is lacking, even more crucial is the need to develop skills in second-language instruction, and to ensure that there is funding for Inuktitut second-language curriculum and materials. It is not only that the situation in the central Arctic is critical, and that the handful of dedicated Inuit teachers there needs skilled technical support. Even children in eastern Nunavut, in communities such as the territory's capital, Iqaluit, need an Inuktitut second-language emphasis in their language classes. This is especially true for children in cross-cultural families.



In the vital area of adult education, there is a demand for classes in first-language literacy training, and in second-language training.

**Government**

Inuktitut will be one of Nunavut's three official languages (English and French are the other two). What's more, Inuktitut is to be the working language of the government. For those who believe in the importance of the language, this is a laudable objective. But there will be obstacles along the way.

In the central Arctic, where many younger Inuit are much more comfortable working in English, will there be an exception to the rule of using Inuktitut, or some compromise permitted?

A second complication is that for years to come, certain specialized positions will need to be filled by skilled southerners until such skills are acquired by residents of Nunavut. If Inuktitut is to be the working language, then there must be Inuktitut instruction for non-Inuit. This won't be easy. Thirty-odd years of French instruction in the Canadian federal government have had mixed results at best.

One possible compromise is an increased Inuktitut flavor in the workplace, combined with a well-thought-out language training program. Inuktitut expressions would increasingly be used in the office. A growing number of non-Inuit staff would be able to communicate at a very basic level before having to fall back on English to develop their ideas, and some would eventually be able to function in the language.

**Language and Culture Tomorrow**

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.

# Aqqaluk Lyngé is Right

Editorial by Jim Bell in *Nunatsiaq News*, January 30, 2004

*Question for discussion: Would Inuktitut be stronger if there were a common writing system across the Circumpolar world?*

Aqqaluk Lyngé, the Greenland vice-president for the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, made yet another pitch last week for one of Greenland's long-cherished dreams – a common, pan-Arctic writing system for the Inuit language.

In an interview with CBC in Iqaluit, Lyngé, in Iqaluit for a meeting of ICC's executive council, tried to reassure Canadian Inuit radio listeners that ICC does not want to replace the syllabic writing system – only supplement it.

Despite the clarity and sincerity of Lyngé's proposal, it's likely to go nowhere, just as it always has. Inuit leaders in Canada and abroad have been banging their heads against the writing system issue since the late 1980s, when the ICC first raised it.

Some Inuit leaders, such as John Amagoalik and Jose Kusugak, have long advocated a common writing system, and even a move from syllabics to Roman orthography. But such enlightened suggestions are always smothered by the conservatism of Canada's eastern Arctic communities, where attachment to the syllabic system is deep.

As a poet and politician, Aqqaluk Lyngé knows the power of the written word. He knows that a language without a common writing system will eventually sicken and die, as history has demonstrated repeatedly. He knows that different writing systems create barriers to communication and unity among people who otherwise have much in common.

In Nunavut, advocates for better Inuktitut programming within the schools are crying out for more curriculum material, and more things to read. In Greenland, a well-funded publishing system has produced books, magazines and newspapers in the Inuit language for more than 150 years.

But this vast storehouse of written material is not accessible to most readers of the Inuit language in Canada. Similarly, if Greenlanders want to communicate in writing with their Canadian cousins, they are usually obliged to do it in English, now standard for international communication everywhere on the planet.

It's impossible to believe that this is what ICC's founders had in mind when they created the organization in 1977.

The development of common language standards is always a difficult, lengthy process. But whenever it's raised in Nunavut, it's always put off until later. The danger is that it will be put off one time too often, when it will be too late to serve any useful purpose.



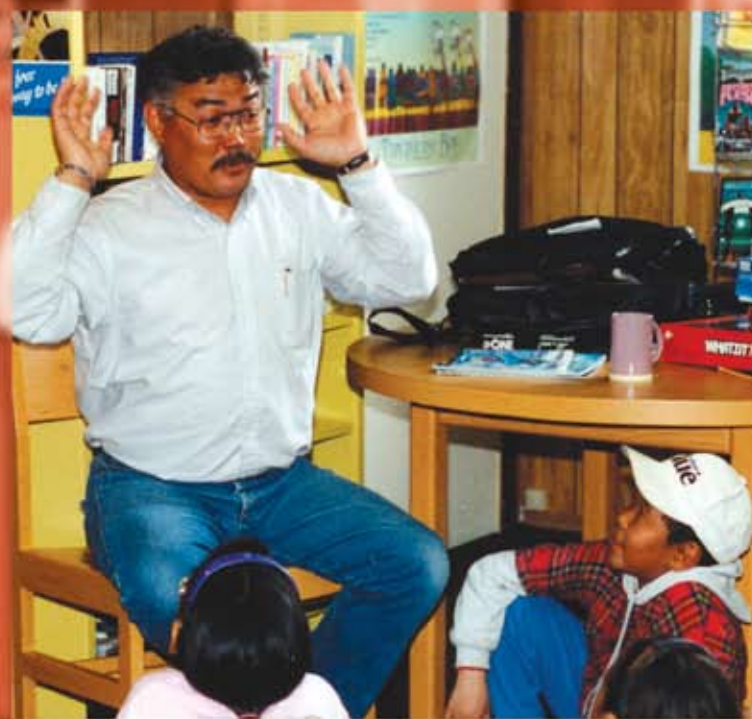
*And so, in January 2002, Kahnawa:ke  
became the first Mohawk territory  
to put its own language law into effect.  
(The law) arose from a declaration made  
by the community's Elders in the winter of 1998.*

*'Fearful of the loss  
of our beautiful Kanien'keha language,  
the Elders urged the Mohawk Council of  
Kahnawa:ke to take action.*

*What emerged was a law that sets out  
'...to revive and restore the Kanien'keha  
language as the primary language  
of communication, education, ceremony,  
government and business  
within the Mohawk territory of Kahnawa:ke.'*

*Mark Abley in Spoken Here*

# Building Language and Literacy Skills



*“We must be aware, however, that capacity-building programs not become elitist, not focus exclusively on strengthening the skills and knowledge-base of the already-empowered, the already-articulate among the Arctic’s young people. For as important as it is to nurture tomorrow’s community and business leaders in the North, this still represents only a small portion of the children and youth who need our help.”*

*“Preventable solutions to illiteracy in the North cannot be piecemeal or isolated, however, but are best conducted within the context of the whole family and, indeed, the whole community.”*

*Arctic Ambassador, Mary Simon in  
Children and Youth of the Arctic: A Critical Challenge of Sustainable Development,  
The Northern Review #18: 70-78*

# The Benefits:

## Why Use Oral History Projects to Develop Language and Literacy Skills?

### Studying Oral Histories...

#### *Builds a sense of personal and cultural identity*

- ✓ People develop pride and a sense of identity when they study the day-to-day life skills and traditional stories of their culture.
- ✓ When learners, younger children, parents and grandparents come together to share a common goal, there is an exchange of ideas, skills, knowledge, beliefs and values that reflects traditional society and yet serves modern needs.

#### *Brings Elders back to the teaching role they held traditionally*

- ✓ Parents and grandparents once had children with them for the whole day in all seasons and could gradually pass along skills, knowledge and values. Elders' involvement in oral history and literacy projects could help restore them to their traditional role as teachers.
- ✓ Elders' wisdom becomes more accessible to the whole community when their knowledge is recorded.

#### *Helps people understand their own culture and heritage*

- ✓ Studying oral history helps people understand themselves and their place in the world.

#### *Records important cultural and historical knowledge*

- ✓ It is critical to record Elders' knowledge before they pass away.

#### *Empowers*

- ✓ People get a sense that they are part of history.
- ✓ In books and history classes people are lead to believe that history is all about important people – queens and prime ministers. Oral history gives people a sense that they are important.

#### *Strengthens communities*

- ✓ Studying oral history creates opportunities for respectful communication.
- ✓ Studying oral history creates a common understanding of the social forces that have shaped the community.
- ✓ Studying oral history allows students to feel that they belong and that their input is important.

***Strengthens Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun language skills***

- Young people listen to the Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun of the Elders and increase their vocabulary and understanding of traditional language forms.
- Today English is everywhere in the environment; when people study oral history, knowledge of Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun is important and necessary.
- Oral histories provide an interesting and absorbing topic for Inuktitut reading and writing projects.

***Oral history is based on people's own experiences***

- People learn best when they start from their own experiences and interests.
- Learners see the connection between books and school and their real world when they study their own history.

***Leaves a lasting record of the past in your community***

- Interviews and learners' projects can be kept in a library or other public places where the whole community can enjoy and learn from them.

***Allows young people to experience being part of the past as well as the present***

- Through traditional naming practices, Inuit are part of both the past and the present at the same time. When learners study kinship and naming and learn more about the lives of their namesakes and relatives, they see themselves as a part of history.

***Raises the status of literacy and upgrading programs in the community***

- Learners who work on oral history projects are performing a valued community service – making important historic information available to the public. It shows the community that learners can do meaningful work.
- Oral history projects highlight information that everyone values and shares.

***Oral histories can become resources for literacy and language development***

- Other learners can use the resources created by the literacy group working on an oral history project – resources which are interesting and relevant to them.



***Promotes communication between the generations***

- ☑ Sharing time and communicating with Elders helps learners understand the Elders' points of view, beliefs and values.
- ☑ This helps young people develop a sense of identity.

***Motivates learners to do their best work***

- ☑ Learners who are not self-confident will develop a real sense of pride from this important work.
- ☑ If learners know the final product is for the community and that their friends and family will find it interesting and enjoyable, they will do their best work.

***Oral history is accessible to many people – not just historians who study history at universities***

- ☑ Oral history gives people a sense that they make history and are a part of it.
- ☑ History is more interesting when we see ourselves as part of it.

***Learners build new skills and confidence through studying oral histories***

- ☑ Critical thinking skills
- ☑ Improved literacy skills – reading and writing (in any language)
- ☑ Listening skills – increased vocabulary and understanding of the complexities of the language
- ☑ Speaking, public speaking skills or performance skills
- ☑ Personal development and growth
- ☑ Interpersonal skills – cooperation and teamwork
- ☑ Organizing skills – planning and coordinating
- ☑ Research skills
- ☑ Interviewing skills
- ☑ Technical expertise – using computers, recorders, cameras
- ☑ Basic numeracy or math skills

# Why Intergenerational Literacy?

One way to approach a literacy and oral history program is to make it an intergenerational project. Literacy group members can work side by side with their children for parts of the project. As well, their parents, aunts and uncles or other relatives may be valuable resources to an oral history project.

## What is Intergenerational or Family Literacy?

Intergenerational Literacy, sometimes called 'Family Literacy', is the ways families use language skills, literacy skills and cultural information to do day-to-day tasks, to keep important traditional and cultural knowledge alive.

At the Pauktuutit Annual General Meeting in October 2000 delegates discussed literacy issues. They saw some challenges to Inuktitut language and culture.

Inuktitut and Inuit culture are being eroded for many reasons:

- More people have TV in their homes.
- More parents speak to their children in English and children speak more English.
- Inuit who can speak English tend to use it a lot.
- Fewer people go to church, which used to be a place outside of school where people read and could learn to read in Inuktitut.
- Problems at home make it difficult for children to learn.

Pauktuutit delegates felt it was important to support the idea of approaching literacy development through children and families.

Traditional family patterns support an intergenerational approach:

- The bond between parents and children is a natural one.
- It is traditional for children to treat their Elders with respect.
- It is traditional for Inuit to treat their children with respect.
- Elders want to work with children to strengthen Inuit language and culture.

Intergenerational approaches can enhance community development and wellness. Supporting literacy, language and culture through children and families is one way to raise the quality of people's lives by:

- ☑ strengthening family and community bonds;
- ☑ improving family communication and the ability to network with others;
- ☑ increasing people's ability to keep jobs and prevent problems related to unemployment;
- ☑ supporting community survival and create a progressive, healthy community;
- ☑ creating educational resources by documenting the talents and traditional knowledge of Inuit;
- ☑ improving individual self-esteem which can make families healthier;
- ☑ providing interactive alternatives to TV that strengthen relationships between Elders and children; and
- ☑ involving more parents in their children's learning and schooling.



# The Principles

## The Principles of Language Learning and Teaching

### **Oral Language is the Basis for Reading and Writing**

We become literate by building on and connecting to our oral language. Strong oral language skills are necessary for the development of strong reading and writing skills. A strong first language is the basis for developing critical thinking skills.

### **Language Experiences are Dependent on a Context**

The ways people speak, read and write vary depending on the task, the situation and the purpose. Literacy instruction needs a meaningful context; you can't learn to read and write without a purpose for your reading and writing. The study of oral history provides a meaningful context.

### **Oral and Written Language are Interconnected**

The four modes – listening, speaking, reading and writing support each other. Literacy programs should develop the four modes equally.

### **Language Learning is Real-life Learning**

Oral and written language experiences must be purposeful, functional and real. Oral history projects can provide real opportunities to use language, such as speaking to an Elder to arrange an interview or writing a letter to ask for donations.

### **Language and Culture are Connected**

Oral history projects combine the strengthening of Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun language skills with cultural stories, customs, skills, beliefs and values.

### **Language Learning is a Process**

In an oral history or literacy project the process of learning is as important as the final product. Learners have opportunities to evaluate their own learning as it progresses. Learners should feel safe taking risks and learning from each attempt.

### **Language Learning is Holistic and Unique**

All language reflects cognitive (thinking), emotional, social and personal differences. The oral and written language that people use shows their individuality and yet is dependent on their social, cultural and political situation.

# Principles of Adult Learning

To learn a new skill, adults need to:

- ✓ understand why they need to learn it;
- ✓ see how it is used;
- ✓ fit it into existing knowledge;
- ✓ practise it;
- ✓ review it; and
- ✓ use it in 'real' situations.

- An adult learning environment must feel safe and non-threatening to the learners.
- Adults need to make decisions about their learning – participatory approaches include learners in program design and operation.
- Adults have a lot of background knowledge and experience that contributes to their learning.
- Learning is enhanced when educators and learners talk about strategies for learning new things and for overcoming difficulties.
- Adults need opportunities to develop critical thinking skills.
- Many adults learn experientially (learning through doing). They need to be active participants in the process of learning.
- Adults increase their literacy skills when they learn in a meaningful context.
- Good programs build on learners' cultural background and language – which strengthens self-esteem and a sense of personal identity.
- Adult programs that are community-based and community controlled are most successful.
- Adults succeed in programs that are flexible – programs that draw on the strengths of each learner and accommodate learners' needs.
- Learning to read and write takes time and a lot of practice. Learners and educators need to set realistic goals.
- All adults are gifted in some area. Everyone has talents to share.
- Learning happens by moving from the known to the unknown, from the concrete to the abstract.
- Adults' learning is enhanced through group interaction, discussion and sharing.

- Adult learners need opportunities for taking risks and making mistakes.
- Adults' lives are busy and complex. Programs that include intergenerational learning or family literacy allow learners to integrate school with their day-to-day lives.
- Enthusiasm about learning can be contagious.
- Adult learners have many different ways of learning. It is important to stimulate as many senses as possible and to give learners as many options as possible. Many learners prefer to watch – then do.
- Learners need encouragement and positive feedback.
- Adults need opportunities for independent work to lessen the sense of dependency that some learners may feel.
- Adults develop self-awareness and analysis skills through assessing their own work. Formal testing may be useful or necessary at times, but it doesn't help learners learn to reflect on their own progress.
- Increased age or poor health can affect the reaction time, vision and hearing of adult learners. However, they do not lose their ability to learn.
- Learning is a lifelong process. Program facilitators and educators are also learners.

*“The important thing is  
not to have lots of ideas,  
but to live one of them.”*

*Ugo Bernasconi*

# Guidelines for Literacy Instruction<sup>1</sup>

## Create a Literate Classroom Environment

- ✓ Fill the atmosphere with talk about language and literacy use, and with talk about the ways in which people learn. *Use the Oral History Project as an opportunity for people to understand their own ways of learning and using language.*
- ✓ Constantly link reading and writing to learners' daily lives. Flexibility is important; seize the moment! *Oral history – the history and people of the community – is about people's lives! But literacy programs should also address the day-to-day personal issues that learners always bring to a program.*
- ✓ Treat learners as though they are avid readers and writers. *People will be motivated to read and write if they feel ownership of the oral history project and a passionate interest in their topic.*

## Make literacy activities real, student-centred and communicative

- ✓ Encourage learners to take ownership of the project, to make decisions about their work from the beginning.
- ✓ Use literacy for real purposes. *All the work in your oral history project is communication for a 'real purpose'.*

## Connect Content Inside the Class to the Community Outside

- ✓ Build on learners' personal needs, issues and interests in their real lives outside class. Use those contexts and purposes to develop literacy skills. *Working on an oral history project naturally makes the connection to the community for you. Oral histories are the histories of individuals, families and communities.*

## Develop Literate Practices through Research

- ✓ Collecting data – through reading, listening, observing and interviewing
- ✓ Recording data – through recording, transcribing and making notes
- ✓ Analyzing data – through finding patterns, comparing and being critical
- ✓ Reporting on the research – through group and community presentations
- ✓ Establishing a community of researchers who understand and support each other's work

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Making Meaning Making Change* by Elsa Roberts Auerbach, published by Delta Systems Co. Inc., 1992

# The Holistic Approach

## The Holistic Approach to Aboriginal Literacy

*We cannot divide Inuit knowledge and make it become small segments here and there... We know that the Qablunaat tend to go by the non-holistic view. But we tend to view things as holistic when we deal with Inuit Qaujumajatuqangit. For example, learning, hunting, beliefs and child rearing are all looked upon as one holistic issue. They are all combined into one; they have not been separated in any way... this is the foundation. It came as a whole and it cannot be divided and broken up.*

Louis Tapardjuk<sup>1</sup>

Statistics Canada says that, as of 1996, Canada has 50 Aboriginal languages, belonging to 11 major language families. In the past 100 years or more, nearly ten once flourishing languages have become extinct. At least a dozen are on the brink of extinction.

Inuktitut is one of the strongest aboriginal languages. However use of Inuktitut is also declining. According to the Canada census of 1986, 92 % of people whose mother tongue is Inuktitut could speak fluently. In 1996 this figure decreased to 84 %. Inuinnaqtun, on the other hand, has been in a very rapid decline and is considered near extinction.

*The Aboriginal languages were given by the Creator as an integral part of life. Embodied in Aboriginal languages is our unique relationship to the creator, our attitudes, beliefs, values, and the fundamental notion of what is truth. Aboriginal language is an asset to one's own education, formal and informal. Aboriginal language contributes to greater pride in the history and culture of the community, greater involvement and interest of parents in the education of their children, and greater respect for Elders. Language is the principal means by which culture is accumulated, shared and transmitted from generation to generation. The key to identity and retention of culture is one's ancestral language.<sup>2</sup>*

Priscilla George, Anishnawbe educator and literacy consultant from Ontario, has developed The Rainbow or Holistic Approach to Aboriginal Literacy.

<sup>1</sup> Comment from the Elders' Advisory Meeting in Rankin Inlet, April 2002

<sup>2</sup> From *Handbook for Aboriginal Language Programming, A Report Prepared for the First Nations Education Steering Committee, Aboriginal Languages Sub-Committee*, by Marianne B. Ignace, in North Vancouver, B.C., April 1998



Our traditional teachings tell us that we are Spirit, Heart, Mind and Body. To have a life of balance, we must recognize and nurture all four parts of ourselves. That is, I suggest that Aboriginal literacy is about recognizing the symbols that come to us through Spirit, Heart, Mind and Body, interpreting them and acting upon them for the improvement of the quality of our lives.

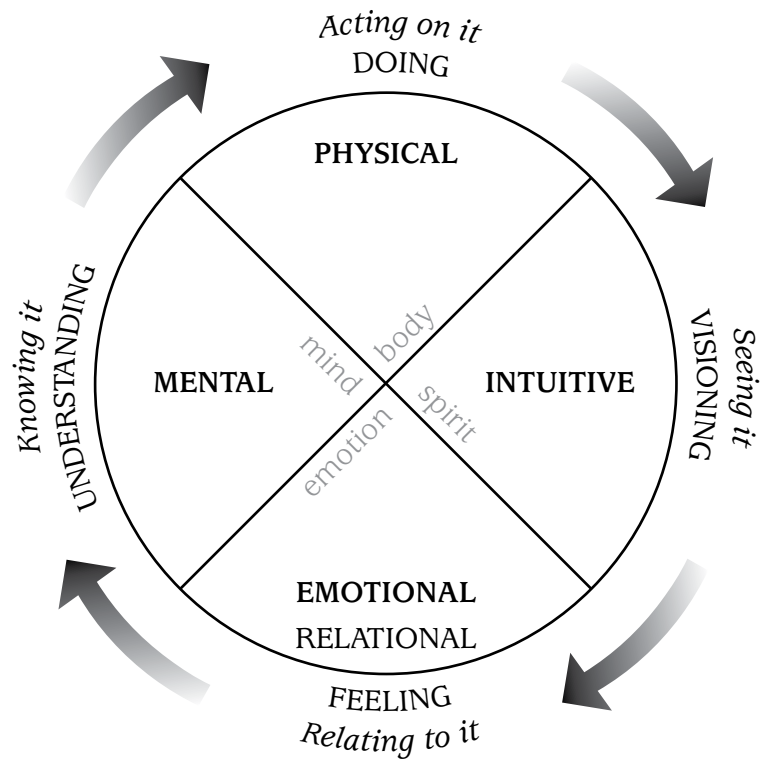
- Spirit – an attitude or insight
- Heart – a feeling about oneself or others
- Mind – knowledge
- Body – a skill<sup>3</sup>

Priscilla identifies seven different aspects of literacy or ‘ways of knowing’ that are important in the lives of aboriginal people:

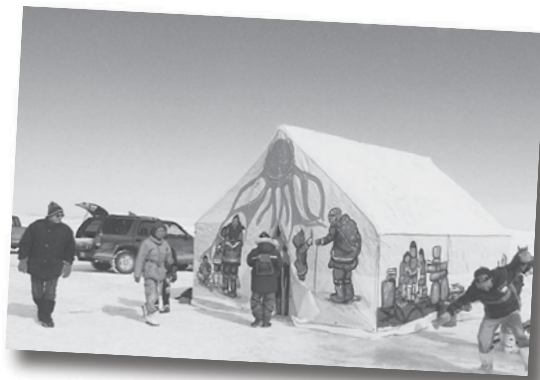
1. *First Language Literacy* – communicating in Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun.
2. *Oral Literacy* – communicating the wisdom from generation to generation orally.
3. *Literacy in the Languages of the Newcomers* – using English and French but reclaiming Aboriginal voices and interpretations of the past.
4. *Technical Literacy* – communicating through technology – computers, on-line learning, getting connected to others through the internet.
5. *Creative Literacy* – communicating through symbols – crafts, art, music, sign language, pictures, drama, clothing design.
6. *Spiritual and Cultural Literacy* – ‘spiritual seeing’ – interpreting dreams, signs, visions or natural events.
7. *Holistic Literacy* – integration of all of the ways of knowing – balancing mind, body, heart and spirit for healing.

<sup>3</sup> From *The Rainbow/Holistic Approach to Aboriginal Literacy*: Keynote Address by Ningwakwe (Priscilla George), at “Mamawenig – Sharing and Celebrating our Knowledge” Aboriginal Literacy Gathering, in Fort Qu’Appelle, Saskatchewan, May 14, 2002

## Aboriginal Approach to Learning



From "Native Learning Styles" by Michael Johnny, published by Ningwakwe Learning Press, Owen Sound, Ontario, 2002.



# Participatory Education:

## An Approach to Building Language and Literacy Skills Through Oral History Projects

*Literacy is not an end in itself, but rather a means for participants to shape reality, accomplishing their own goals.<sup>1</sup>*

Pat Campbell

Literacy and learning occurs within complex communities and is interconnected with the social, economic, historical and cultural conditions of those communities. Adult learners come to literacy programs as proficient language users with a wealth of experiences, interests, ideas and concerns. They are not empty vessels to be filled.<sup>2</sup>

### What is Participatory Education?

The concept of participatory education is a complex one – a concept that requires an open mind, reading, time, experience and soul-searching on the part of a facilitator. We offer here just a few introductory ideas about the participatory approach to adult learning. If you are interested in learning more, check the reading list at the end of this section.

Participatory education recognizes and honours the rich lives, skills, knowledge and experiences of adult learners. Instead of focusing on their deficits – on the skills and knowledge they lack, it encourages learners to become partners in creating a learning environment that is meaningful and useful to them. A participatory approach supports learners in taking small, gradual steps towards taking control of their learning and making positive changes within a safe environment. When learners are able to take control within their learning community, it gives them the opportunity to progress towards taking control and making changes in the broader communities in which they live. A participatory approach challenges facilitators and learners not to accept traditional power relationships and to share responsibility for learning environments and outcomes. This is not an easy process; it is one that involves gradual steps toward change. It involves a commitment to question the status quo – unjust situations that have, until now, been accepted by societies as unchangeable.

<sup>1</sup> Pat Campbell in *Teaching Reading to Adults, A Balanced Approach*, pg 142

<sup>2</sup> From *Educating for Change*, by Carmen Rodriguez, published by Province of BC, Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour, 1994

## The Participatory Approach to Oral History and Literacy

There is no curriculum in a participatory program; content is based on learners' interests and experiences. This manual, Unipkausivut, is not a curriculum. Rather, it is a collection of resources that can be used to guide oral history and literacy projects. The intent of the literacy program may be to 'study oral history'. But the very nature of listening to life stories of survival, hardship and triumph within one's own culture will cause learners to reflect on their own important issues – issues such as personal and cultural identity, values, families and life paths. Learners will become engaged in seeing the connections between their own lives and the cultural, historical and social issues that are raised as they explore oral histories. So the content and progress of every literacy and oral history project will be unique – driven by the collective and individual interests and needs of the group.

Pat Campbell, a writer and researcher involved in the literacy field for many years writes about participatory education:

*Participatory education* is 'a collective effort in which the participants are committed to building a just society through individual and socioeconomic transformation and ending domination through changing power relations. As educators and students work toward building a just society, participants share, create, analyze and act on their knowledge and experiences.'<sup>3</sup>

Pat Campbell identifies three themes of participatory education:

1. *Community*: Participatory education promotes the development of community by combining literacy education with social action and interaction.
2. *Social Relations*: Participatory education examines and challenges unequal power relations within our societies.
3. *Knowledge*: Learning is built around the knowledge that learners have developed from their social, cultural, and political experiences.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Participatory Practices in Adult Education*, edited by Pat Campbell and Barbara Burnaby, published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001

<sup>4</sup> *Teaching Reading to Adults, A Balanced Approach*, by Pat Campbell, published by the University of Alberta, 2003

## Participatory Education: Sharing the Power<sup>5</sup>

In a traditional classroom, teachers and curriculum developers control the learning process. They identify what is to be taught, how it is to be taught, and how to assess students' learning. In contrast, participatory learning is a collaborative process in which teachers and students share the decisions about content, teaching and learning styles, and assessment.

The essential issue for participatory educators is maintaining a perspective on the degree to which power is shared. This means that teachers and students ask questions such as these:

- Who selects the materials?
- By whose standards are learners' abilities assessed?
- Who defines the learners' goals?
- Who evaluates learners' progress and the learning process?

So much of everyone's educational experiences stem from a top-down, teacher-knows-all model that it is difficult to manage such a fundamentally different relationship between literacy facilitators and learners. More time is needed to prepare for classes as well as for reflecting on your role as a teacher, learner and facilitator. Learners need concrete ways to take more control of their learning and actively participate in defining their goals and ways of learning.

### Here are some characteristics of a participatory approach:<sup>6</sup>

- *Learners are involved in developing the curriculum* at every stage in the process. Ideally this would mean that learners identify issues to explore, decide on materials to use, produce their own materials, determine outcomes of the program and evaluate their own learning. However full participation won't happen immediately for learners who are used to teacher-lead learning environments and have little faith in their own abilities. As learners gain self-confidence, they will gradually participate in identifying the direction of the group's learning.

<sup>5</sup> From *It Brought a Richness to Me*, A Resource Manual for Participatory Literacy Practitioners, by King, Estes, Fingeret and McCullough, produced by Literacy South, Durham, NC, 1993, page II-3

<sup>6</sup> From *Making Meaning, Making Change*, by Elsa Roberts Auerbach, published by Center for Applied Linguistics, 1992, and *Teaching Reading to Adults, A Balanced Approach*, by Pat Campbell, published by the University of Alberta, 2003

- *Needs assessment is an ongoing process.* The group analyzes needs, interests, strengths and concerns as the project progresses. Through ongoing needs assessment learners take control over their own learning and begin to examine their own social contexts. Individuals receive support from the group in thinking critically about their situation and moving toward change.
- *The classroom is a model.* What happens inside the classroom shapes the possibilities outside the classroom. Making changes within the literacy program models a way of addressing issues in the broader community.
- *The focus is on strengths, not on weaknesses.* Learners are seen as experts in their own lives. They are the ones that decide the content and skills that are necessary for them to know in their personal situation, not a curriculum developer. The information that learners research and analyze within the oral history project is their own knowledge, not the knowledge of ‘an expert’.
- *The facilitator’s role is that of a problem-poser rather than a problem solver.* The facilitator guides learners towards finding answers to their own questions. The facilitator is also a learner; so is not expected to be ‘an expert’ in oral history. The group explores questions, answers and issues together. As the literacy group progresses through its examination of the oral history theme, the facilitator will find ‘teachable moments’ to share language and literacy knowledge which will help strengthen learners’ skills.
- *The content comes from the learners’ social context.* For literacy to be relevant, classroom activities must relate to learners’ lives outside the classroom. Learners develop literacy skills by speaking, listening, reading and writing about important social issues that affect their lives. The flow will be from oral history to the personal and back to oral history. When the learners see that the facilitator builds literacy experiences based on the flow of their interests, they will become motivated to participate in determining content.
- *Content also comes from interactions of the group.* Negotiating classroom dynamics and processes is an important part of the content. This doesn’t mean that the facilitator comes to the class with no plan. But what happens when the facilitator tries to implement the plan depends on group needs and processes.



- ☑ Use journal writing as an opportunity for learners to write freely – without worrying about the mechanics of grammar and spelling.
  - *Personal journals* are a way for literacy group members to explore and write about their feelings and ideas as they react to events and as they change and grow throughout the project.
  - In *learning journals*, learners analyze and record their own thinking and learning processes. It's valuable to discuss these processes explicitly in the group in order to raise learners' awareness and ability to be self-reflective.
  - *Dialogue journals* or *response journals* are informal written discussions between two learners or between learners and the facilitator. Journals can provide valuable insight and feedback from the group.
- ☑ Use the *language experience approach* with beginning literacy learners. The learner speaks his or her thoughts orally and someone writes their exact words. This becomes a reading text for the learner.
- ☑ If finding written materials at the appropriate reading level is a problem, the facilitator can create reading material based on the group's interactions. Write up summaries of group discussions, videos, interviews or other experiences. Use language that learners can clearly understand. As they progress, challenge them by creating documents that are slightly more difficult.
- ☑ Model using visuals such as time lines, pictures and charts. When learners are comfortable creating visuals themselves, they will have valuable tools to help them organize information and understand concepts.
- ☑ Use the writing process, including peer consultation and editing, writing response groups, or consultation with the facilitator to work through various drafts of written compositions. Keep all the drafts and rewrites in a writing folder or binder.
- ☑ Encourage learners to watch for new vocabulary as they listen to Elders or read written material. Learners can create personal dictionaries in small notebooks, a section in a binder, or index cards to record new vocabulary and meanings. Discuss how new vocabulary relates to root words and familiar words. Learners can identify new vocabulary words for the whole group to



learn. Or each individual or small group could generate its own vocabulary list. The group may want to have weekly formal tests; or people may prefer to work in pairs or small groups to practice and review vocabulary words.

- ☑ Use the portfolio method or other forms of self-assessment to evaluate work instead of formal marking. This allows learners to become more analytical about their own work – a skill which will be useful in many other aspects of their lives.
- ☑ Encourage regular debriefing as the project progresses. Group discussion about how a part of the project has gone encourages critical analysis and evaluation.
- ☑ Encourage the group to celebrate its successes – both individual and group achievements. Talk about hopes and plans for the future and how the project has affected your views and approach to life.

### **Books about Participatory Education**

*Teaching Adults to Read: A Balanced Approach*, by Pat Campbell, published by Grass Roots Press and the University of Alberta in 2003. ISBN: 1-894593-18-9. Available from Grass Roots Press. Read the final chapter of this book for a good overview of participatory education.

*Educating for Change: Community-Based/Student-Centred Literacy Programming with First Nations Adults*, by Carmen Rodriguez, published by Province of BC, Ministry of Advanced Education, revised in 2001. ISBN: 0-7726-4606-6. Available from Grass Roots Press.

*Learning about Participatory Approaches in Adult Literacy Education: Six Research in Practice Studies*, edited by Mary Norton and Grace Malicky, published by Learning at the Centre Press, Edmonton, in 2000. ISBN: 0-9687155-3-2. Available from [learningcentre@compusmart.ab.ca](mailto:learningcentre@compusmart.ab.ca). Tel: 780-429-0675

*Participatory Practices in Adult Education*, edited by Pat Campbell and Barbara Burnaby, published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc., New Jersey, in 2001. ISBN: 0-8058-3705-1. Available from Grass Roots Press.

*Educating for a Change*, by Arnold, Burke, James, Martin and Thomas, published by Between the Lines and the Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action, Toronto, 1991, ISBN: 0-921284-48-9

*“It Brought a Richness to Me” A Resource Manual for Participatory Literacy Practitioners*, by King, Estes, Fingeret and McCullough, produced by Literacy South, Durham, NC, 1993. Available from Literacy South, Snow Building, Rm 202, 331 W. Main St., Durham, NC 27701 Tel: 919-682-8108

*Making Meaning, Making Change*, by Elsa Roberts Auerbach, published by Center for Applied Linguistics, Illinois, 1992, ISBN: 0-93-735479-1

*“We realize that verbal practices  
were not enough to keep our languages alive.  
We needed the much appreciated skills  
of others who were able to  
put our languages into writing  
and so preserve them for the future.”*

*Foreword in Ngaapa Wangka Wangkajunga, A Dictionary of the  
Wangkajunga language from the Great Sandy Desert of Australia*

From *Spoken Here* by Mark Abley, published by Random House Canada, 2003

# Making Links to History

Participating in an oral history project makes history come alive; it allows people to see that we are all makers of history. But the oral history project is also an opportunity to link your interviews and other research to the big picture historically, to allow the literacy group to see how events in the north, in Canada and in the world affected the lives of their ancestors and the people they interviewed. In turn, people’s lives today have been affected.

You might ask questions like these to help the literacy group make links to the big historical picture:

- How do the stories we heard fit together? About what date did they happen? Which happened first, second, third?
- How do interviews on different themes link together?
- How does our oral history project relate to other oral history projects that have been done?
- What was happening in the rest of Canada and in Europe at the time of the stories we heard?
- What Canadian government policies affected the stories we’ve heard?
- How has the information we learned from our oral history project affected us and our lives today?

Your oral history project is also an opportunity for the literacy group to see the connection between the ‘real world’ and books. There are many books written about the north that offer different perspectives on an historical issue or event. Many of these books are in English and some are written at quite a high reading level. But you will be able to use selected passages from northern books to gain insight on the different factors that were at work in the time and place you have been studying.

# History Workshop<sup>1</sup>

## Learners as Researchers

Two experienced American history teachers, Karen L. Jorgensen and Cynthia Stokes Brown, developed a method for teaching history in the public school system that allows students to study history in a workshop environment where they can actually practice being historians. They believe that students have to actually ‘see and do something and figure out for themselves...’ Teachers can’t just ‘stand there and tell them.’<sup>2</sup> Their ideas apply to adult literacy programs as well as to the school system.

The idea is that history is not just facts. History, written by historians, is a series of stories told by people with different viewpoints. These people interpret the facts of the past according to their own beliefs. The historical writer’s view of history is never objective. Jorgensen and Brown’s history workshops expose students to a variety of first hand sources and encourage them to compare, analyze and think critically about what they see, hear and read, and then to produce a piece of historical writing themselves. They believe that students learn history better if they are ‘given a chance to make sense of the past, to create their own meaning, to write and construct their own beliefs about history’ rather than to focus on learning a lot of facts.

People develop an understanding of history by making guesses, predictions or theories about historical artifacts, stories, photographs, diaries or films. As they discuss their ideas with others and learn more about a topic, they either confirm their predictions and theories or develop new ones, based on new information. This is the way professional historians work. History workshops give people the opportunity to work as historians rather than having to accept someone else’s theories and predictions.

Adults, just as profoundly, need to ‘see and do and figure out for themselves’. Adults bring many past experiences, opinions, beliefs and values to the literacy class, all of which help them interpret new information in personal ways.

<sup>1</sup> This section is adapted from *Connecting with the Past: History Workshop in Middle and High Schools*, by Cynthia Stokes Brown, published by Heinemann, 1994

<sup>2</sup> From *Connecting with the Past: History Workshop in Middle and High Schools*, by Cynthia Stokes Brown

The History Workshop Method could complement an adult or intergenerational oral history project. Use it when you want to make links to written histories. Use it when you want a more structured way to explore research sources. Use it to compare the words of historians, explorers, missionaries and traders with the oral stories you hear from the Elders. Use it to encourage critical thinking and analysis during the research phase of the project, to inspire excitement about history, and to help literacy group members make sense of their own lives from a historical perspective.

Learners can then express their understanding of historical themes and build their literacy skills through writing a piece of historical fiction. (See *Historical Fiction or 'Faction'* in the *Writing Projects* section.)

## The Elements of a History Workshop

### 1. *Understanding History*

By looking at many different research sources, learners come to understand that the different opinions expressed in historical sources come from people with different perspectives and backgrounds. Literacy group members learn to compare, analyze and think critically about the material they see, hear and read. They learn that their viewpoints are just as valuable and just as legitimate as the views they read in a book or see expressed in a video.

Start the History Workshop by discussing and recording what you, as a group, already know about a topic and then ask what people would like to know. Keep the list of questions and let them guide your research throughout the project. You will answer some of the questions and probably add more questions as you learn more.

## 2. *Firsthand Sources*

A History Workshop, like an oral history project, relies on learning from firsthand sources, not only from history textbooks. Firsthand sources are those created by eyewitnesses or participants in an event. They include written sources such as journals, personal letters, correspondence from official sources or ship's logs. But they also include oral stories, artifacts, visual images (photos, maps, drawings), recordings and living people.

Try to provide learners with a variety of different sources that come from different perspectives, so they can see the issues from different viewpoints. Most of the written pieces should be short – one or two pages or less.

For example, if you were studying a relocation that happened near your community in the 1950's, you might find information in the book, *Tammarniit: Inuit Relocation in the Eastern Arctic 1939-63*, by Frank James Tester and Peter Kukchyski. This book contains quotes from documents found in many places: The National Archives of Canada, Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, General Synod Archives of the Anglican Church of Canada, the ship's log of the St. Roch, government documents and reports, the RCMP Quarterly Magazine and Beaver Magazine. You could read the quotes from these sources in *Tammarniit* or request complete copies of the documents yourselves. *Tammarniit* is a book that is critical of government decisions made during this period and is sympathetic to the position of the Inuit at the time. Another book, *Arctic Smoke and Mirrors* by Gerard Kenney takes the opposite position. Both these books are written at a high reading level, but working together on short passages learners will understand the concepts, even if they can't read the passages word for word. It could be interesting to compare the perspectives in both books, as well as comparing information from the books with stories from local people.

When learners read a firsthand document they could answer questions like these:

- Who wrote it? What kind of person? What point of view?
- When did they write it?
- Where did they write it?
- What does it tell us?
- How and why was the document produced?
- And how does that affect its trustworthiness?
- What is it silent about? What does it leave out?
- Does the author think we all share the same beliefs? If so, which beliefs?
- What audience was it written for?

### **3. Multiple Perspectives**

Use sources that come from different perspectives. Give learners the opportunity to understand the issues from different viewpoints, to explore the thinking of people that made decisions that affected their ancestors' lives. Relocation, sending children to residential schools, and the killing of sled dogs are just a few examples of difficult historical issues that might arise in the course of an oral history project. Read documents that show the RCMP position, the church position, the government position, as well as the position of people who lived through these events.

Encourage people to move beyond blame or condemnation to exploring the thinking of the people involved. Use questions like the list in #2 to gain insight. Try to understand the social situation and commonly held beliefs at the time of the event.

### **4. Journal Writing**

*Quick-writes* – writing in journals for ten minutes at the beginning of a literacy session can be a good daily routine. Quick-writes improve writing fluency and help people develop their ideas on an issue. Literacy group members could respond to questions that arise from their research, or they could respond to artifacts, a recorded interview, video or guest speaker you've recently seen.

Explain the process to the learners: The idea is to write quickly without planning; just get the ideas down as they pop into your brain – don't worry about the perfect way to express yourself and definitely don't worry about sentence structure or spelling. Just write as the thoughts come – stream of consciousness!

As the literacy facilitator, you may find it helpful to ask permission to read the quick-writes to gain an understanding of how your literacy group is thinking and feeling about the issues that come up in your project. It may show you gaps in understanding and give you ideas on other approaches to add to your project. Consider using dialogue journals, in which you respond to the writings of the group members, creating an ongoing conversation.

#### **5. *History Talk Groups***

History Talk Groups are designed to allow small groups of people to respond to firsthand sources. The literacy group can break into small groups to discuss a written document, visual image, guest speaker, recording or artifact.

If there are a number of firsthand sources, you could create 'resource centres' – a series of tables that each contain one firsthand source and questions to guide the discussion. The small groups move from one 'resource centre' to the next exploring each of the firsthand sources. This process might take several days or a week, with each group visiting just one table a day and discussing the source found there.

You could pose open-ended questions like, "What surprised you?", "What did you find interesting?", "What are your responses to this source material?"



You could create a poster that includes a series of general questions to guide all discussions:

- What is the name or title of the document? What is the artifact called?
- When was it written, made, produced?
- Who wrote it or made it?
- What do you know about the writer or creator? What would you like to know about him or her?
- What perspective or bias is shown in the writing?
- How does the material fit into the history of the time period?
- Summarize the piece of writing or describe a visual image, recording or artifact.
- What does it mean? What is its purpose?
- What don't you understand? What is confusing to you?
- Ask questions about the document, artifact, visual image or recording.

Group members could take roles: facilitator, recorder, source manager and reporter. The facilitator guides the group through the discussion; the source manager makes sure that everyone has the information or can read the document; the recorder writes down the comments of each person in the group; and the reporter makes an oral presentation to the whole literacy group about their discussion.

History Talk Groups provide a small intimate setting where learners can explore their feelings and ideas about the information contained in the sources.



## **6. *Lectures and Whole Group Discussion***

As the literacy group explores different sources, people may come up with questions that are not answered in the material you've collected. Write these questions on flip chart paper as they come up. Although the literacy group members will take responsibility for most of the research, it may be your role as literacy facilitator to do some research in order to fill in the gaps and answer the group's questions. You may want to invite a guest speaker. Or you could give mini-lectures, followed by a discussion among all the literacy group members. The large group discussion serves as a model for the discussions in the History Talk Groups. You may want to hand out a one-page chronology showing the dates and events in the time period you are discussing. Whenever you have a few spare moments, focus on discussing the questions collected on the flip chart paper.

## **7. *The Writing Assignment and Its Process***

The assignment could be to write a piece of biographical or historical fiction about the time period you are studying. This type of writing is called historical fiction because the writers will have to invent some aspects of the story – they won't know exact details about their characters' activities or day-to-day life. But the writers will try to use as many historical facts as they know and to create a setting that is as realistic as possible.

- Talk about the differences between fiction and non-fiction, between narrative and expository writing. Fiction is stories about imaginary people and events; other writing is non-fiction. Narrative writing is 'storytelling'; expository writing involves 'explaining' something.
- Ask literacy group members to choose a fictional character from the place and time you have been studying. It could be an adult, a child, an Inuk, a Qallunaq, an ancestor, a government worker, a priest, a Hudson's Bay manager, an RCMP, a captain or sailor on a ship... anyone who would have lived in that place and time. Or it could be an actual character from oral or written stories.

- Give people some time to think about their characters while the group continues to explore source material. What type of character will he or she be? What personal traits will she or he have? What perspective will the character bring to the story? Will they write in first person “I” or in third person “she” or “he”?
- Ask people to think about the other elements of a story-setting, problem or dilemma, rising tension and resolution of the problem.
- Read other historical fiction to gain an understanding of the elements and style of this type of writing.
- Encourage people to think about the information they learned about that period in history and include as many details as possible in their story.
- You could use a visualization technique to inspire drawings or writing about the setting of their story. (See *Historical Fiction or Faction in the Writing Projects* section.)
- Teach mini-lessons on the writing process, grammar, spelling, punctuation, syllabic keyboarding and any other topics as they come up during the progress of the writing.
- Make available dictionaries, thesauruses and other reference guides, as well as northern magazines, books and resources. (See the *Useful Resources* section.)
- Use peer consultation and editing so people can get feedback during the writing process.
- Learners can type up their stories on the computer and use them for reading material in your literacy group and in future literacy groups.
- Consider adding a title page and illustrations.

*“Languages differ  
not just in what its speakers can say,  
but in what they must say.”*

*Mark Abley in Spoken Here  
on the land claims process in Australia*

- Literacy group members can give an oral presentation to the group explaining their story. You might create a guide to help people prepare their presentation:
  - First, retell the story.
  - Why did you choose the character?
  - What is the character's perspective?
  - What helped you most in writing this story?
  - How did you work historical information into the story?
  - Are there any facts in your story that you wonder if they are historically accurate?
  - Is there any place where you really got stuck in your writing?
  - How did you get unstuck?
  - Did you appear anywhere in your story?
  - How did writing this story help you understand life in the time and place we are studying?

Literacy group members can take home their own stories to read to their children; or they can share stories and read other group members' stories to their children. Or hold an after-school program for the children of the literacy group and other children. Invite them to your literacy group to read and talk about the stories.

### **Books about History Workshop**

*Connecting with the Past: History Workshop in Middle and High Schools*, by Cynthia Stokes Brown, published by Heinemann, NH, 1994, ISBN: 0-435-08901-3

*History Workshop: Reconstructing the Past with Elementary Students*, by Karen L. Jorgensen, published by Heinemann, NH, 1993, ISBN: 0-435-08900-5

*Keepsakes, Using Family Stories in Elementary Classrooms*, by Linda Winston, published by Heinemann, 1997, ISBN: 0-435-07235-8

# Planning Your Project



*Inuktitut Protection Act Needed, Aariak Says*

*Eva Aariak, the languages commissioner for Nunavut, is urging Nunavut's Legislative Assembly to amend the Official Languages Act with an Inuktitut Protection Act.*

*"An Inuktitut Protection Act would ensure that Nunavut's majority language is treated as such, ensuring that neither the language nor its speakers are discriminated against,"*

*Aariak said in a press release this week.*

*"Nunavummiut want Inuktitut and Innuinaqtun to receive status equal to English and French. This is necessary to ensure that Inuktitut and Inuit culture are encouraged to thrive in all aspects of day-to-day life in Nunavut."*

*During the current sitting of the legislature, a special committee that review the Official Languages Act will present its findings.*

*From Nunatsiaq News, October 24, 2003*



## What is the Focus of Your Project?

- Is your focus collecting information about a certain area or time period? Do you want to focus on certain Elders?
- Is your focus to present oral history information to the community?
- Is your focus raising language and literacy skills? If so, it's important to encourage the group to take ownership of the project. Leave as many decisions as possible to group members once the project is up and running.

## What is the Scope of Your Project?

Depending on the scope of your project, you can do your own oral history interviews or you can listen to recordings that have already been recorded.

- Does your group have the skills, knowledge and equipment to do oral history interviews or will your group need learning time?
- Is your project short-term? If the project is only a few months long, you might work with oral history interviews that already exist, rather than doing your own interviews.
- Is your project long-term – perhaps seven to eight months? Or do you hope to seek funding to continue the project every year?

Then there will be enough time for group members to learn to do oral history interviews, carry out and preserve the interviews and present information to the community.





# Working Together as a Community

Look for partnerships for your oral history project. When community organizations work together and share resources, knowledge and skills, community projects are stronger.

## *Which groups could you partner with in your community?*

- Elders, youth or cultural groups
- Churches
- Inuit organizations
- Nunavut Arctic College – Community Learning Centre
- District Education Authority or schools
- Library
- Friendship Centre or Family Resource Centre
- Hamlet
- Businesses
- Service organizations

The partners work together to plan the project.

## *What factors contribute to successful planning?*

- A shared vision
- An understanding of the current situation
- Leadership
- A long-term commitment
- Community support
- Resources – financial, physical and human
- Funding support

### ***What can partners provide?***

- Funds
- In-kind services – such as space or equipment
- The programming for the project
- The participants
- Public awareness
- Resources

### **Community Consultation**

Let individuals and groups in the community know what your plans are. You could have a local radio show or a public meeting to talk about your plans for the oral history project. Through community consultation everyone becomes interested in your project and supportive of it.

You might find out about other groups who have done similar work or who are planning to do oral histories. It will help you avoid duplicating oral history work that another group is considering. It may give you ideas about individuals and groups that could partner with you.

Elders' groups may have advice or guidelines for you to follow. Ask for their input and the input of others in the community. Be prepared to be flexible and rethink your plans and goals if people make useful suggestions.

*“In terms of the cultural traditions contained in it, the death of any language is an event to mourn. But whereas many aspects of a floundering written language will endure in books and on-line, the death of an oral language is absolute.”*

*Mark Abley in Spoken Here*

# Ethics in Research

*Ethics* are moral principles or beliefs about the ways humans must behave in order to do no harm in the world.

Any group or individual that is doing research must follow ethical guidelines. Ethical guidelines are rules that are written down to ensure that, as researchers, we treat the people we interview with respect. These guidelines are meant to protect the interviewees and make sure that they are not taken advantage of. The knowledge that they share with us is their knowledge and they have final control over how that knowledge is used.

When you begin an oral history project you must give the interviewees a copy of your ethical guidelines and explain the guidelines to them verbally. All the people who work with you should be aware of their rights in this project. It is up to your group, the researchers, to be certain that each interviewee understands his or her rights.

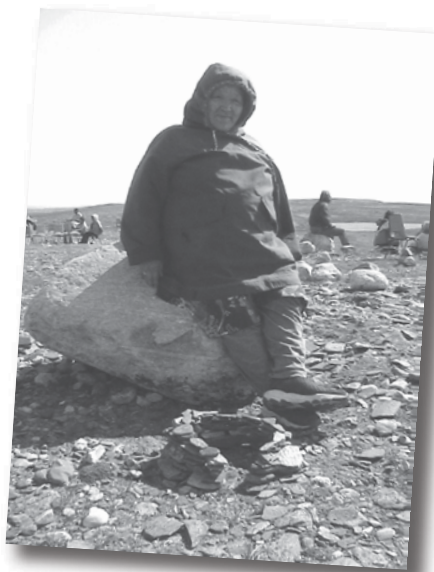
Your group could spend some time developing your own ethical guidelines at the beginning of your project.

## Here are Some Principles to Follow<sup>1</sup>

- We must get signed consent from the people who will be involved in our projects.
- We must tell the interviewees what we have planned as goals and outcomes for the project. We must tell them what will happen to the information they give us.
- We will consult with individuals or groups who agree to work with us when we are setting up the project.
- We must protect the rights of the people we work with. The interviewees own their knowledge – control over their knowledge is their ‘intellectual property right’.
- We must be open and honest with the people who work with us about all the parts of our work.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Protocols and Principles for Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context*, by University of Victoria Faculty of Human and Social Development, February 2001

- The people who work with us as interviewees have control over the research process. They have the right to control the information they give us. They can withdraw information or say that it can only be used in a certain way. It is our responsibility as researchers to make sure the interviewees know that they have control.
- We must be open and honest with the interviewees about the level of our skills and experience.
- We will consult with the interviewees as the project goes along to see if any changes are necessary.
- We will not use the interviewees or their information for our own benefit or personal gain. If we get money from a project, the interviewees will get a share.
- Interviewees have the right to remain anonymous or remove their names from the project if they choose.
- The interviewees' personal and cultural values must be respected throughout the project.
- All people involved in the project will get a copy of these ethical guidelines.
- We, as researchers, must answer to or be accountable to our interviewees before any other group or individual.
- We will give the interviewees a draft copy of anything we create with their information. We will get their approval before we make the final version.
- We will credit the interviewees in any public work we create – unless they choose to remain anonymous.



# Planning

## Steps in Planning Your Oral History Project

- 1) Meet with others in the community. Create a vision of an ideal project for your community.
- 2) Determine the goals of your project. (See the beginning of this section.)
- 3) If the main goal is to do research, decide what the theme of your project will be. If the main goal is literacy, language or personal development, allow the participants to choose a theme once the project starts.
- 4) Find out about other oral history projects that have been done in the community.
- 5) Decide if you need money to run the project.
- 6) Get support. Find partners.
- 7) Find a local organization that will sponsor the project.
- 8) Decide if the oral history project should have an advisory committee.
- 9) Decide on your equipment needs.
- 10) Decide if you will pay honoraria if you are interviewing Elders.

If you don't need money, skip to number 14.

### *If you do need money...*

- 11) Look for funders whose criteria match your project. Contact the Nunavut Literacy Council for a free copy of *Funding Sources for Language and Literacy-based Projects*.
- 12) Plan your project budget.
- 13) Get a small group of people together to work on a proposal. (See *Writing a Funding Proposal* later in this section and the sample proposals in the *Sample Documents* section.) If you don't feel confident, ask for help from an experienced proposal writer in your community. Or contact the Nunavut Literacy Council for support.
- 14) Make a work plan. Write down all the tasks that need to be done to prepare for your project. Decide who will do each task and by what date.
- 15) Find out if you need a license to do your project from the Nunavut Research Institute. Phone: 867-979-4108, E-mail: [slcnri@nunanet.com](mailto:slcnri@nunanet.com), Web site: [www.nunanet.com/~research](http://www.nunanet.com/~research).

# Recording Equipment

Because technology changes so quickly we won't attempt to give up-to-date information on the best equipment to buy. But here are some general considerations to think about:

- Your group should find an organization such as a museum or archives that can store your recordings safely. Oral history professionals recommend that you talk to the archives before you buy equipment and ask them what type of recordings they can support. Then you can buy the recording equipment that suits their storage system.
- Contact the Culture and Heritage Division of The Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth (CLEY) to find out where recordings from Nunavut are currently being stored. Then you can get in touch with that organization to find out about their storage system. CLEY web site: [www.gov.nu.ca/cley](http://www.gov.nu.ca/cley) – click on Culture and Heritage. Phone: 867-975-5524
- Oral history professionals recommend that, if your budget or experience is limited, choose analog over digital media. In other words, choose recording equipment that uses reel to reel or cassette tapes instead of MP3 or CD systems. Digital media are constantly changing and you will have the expense of changing your computer system and software to match. The tapes can be digitized later.
- Cassette tapes don't store well; they require maintenance. But you can record on cassette tapes and later transfer to reel to reel or digital media for storage.
- You could contact CBC in your region for technical advice. They may be able to suggest the best equipment to buy or help you transfer from one media to the other.



*Also Useful:*

- ☑ A vu meter than shows recording volume – will also show if the batteries are getting weak.
- ☑ A signal to show when the tape or disk is about to run out.
- If you have the skills, the technology and the money, check out the most current digital media, such as mini-disk or MP3 players. With these you will be able to download information to your computer. However, contact the archives where you will store your recordings before you buy any equipment.
- Use only high quality tapes or disks. If you use cassette tapes, 60-minute tapes are recommended. Anything longer can tangle and break.
- Use electrical power instead of batteries if you can – it is more reliable.

*Microphones:*

- Use only an external microphone. Don't use a built-in mic; it will pick up all the machine's operating noises.
- Buy an excellent omni-directional microphone (picks up sound from all directions).
- You may want to use a mic that attaches to a piece of clothing. They work well when interviewing softly-spoken people.
- Table mics should be placed close to the interviewee.
- Most microphones have batteries. Make sure to order extras. Test the mic before each interview and replace batteries if necessary.





# Writing a Funding Proposal

Writing proposals is often seen as a difficult thing. But if you have done good project planning before sitting down to write your proposal, most of the information you need to complete the proposal will be available to you.

## Some General Information

Before getting into the specific areas a proposal should include, here are some general tips:

- Make sure that your request fits the funder’s mandate. You may want to call the funder to discuss your project ideas before you write your proposal.
- Answer all the questions asked by the funder.
- Be as clear and concise as possible.
- Support your comments.
- Keep the language simple and direct. Avoid jargon and acronyms (or initials such as APTN).
- The final copy should be neat, easy to read and carefully proofread.
- Make sure the numbers add up.
- Be positive.

## The Components of a Proposal

Any proposal that you write will probably include the following topics.

### *Introduction*

The introduction describes your organization, its qualifications and experience.

In this section, you will describe your organization, its mandate, its membership or clients and its programs and activities. This kind of information helps to establish your experience and your ability to successfully manage and complete the project.

### ***Problem or Needs Statement***

A Problem or Needs Statement describes the need for the project.

In this section, you should be able to answer these kinds of questions:

- What problems are you trying to address and what needs are you attempting to meet?
- If your project is to help people, are they interested in participating in the project?
- Why does your organization want to do this project?

Needs statements should be focused on some specific aspect of the problem – language and literacy development is a long-term, complex issue and it won't be possible to meet all of the language and literacy needs of people in your community through one project.

### ***Goals and Objectives***

Goals and Objectives describe what you hope to accomplish and what steps need to be taken in order to meet your goal.

Goals describe what you want to accomplish and objectives are the specific steps you will take in order to meet your goals.

Here's an example of a goal:

*“To support Inuktitut language and literacy development within the community.”*

For each goal, there are several short-term objectives. Objectives state the main activities or tasks you need to carry out to meet your goal. Your objectives should be SMART:

- S**pecific
- M**easurable
- A**chievable
- R**ealistic
- T**ime-limited

Here are some examples of objectives:

- To set up a Family Oral History Project in the community library.
- To promote Inuktitut language and literacy development by encouraging families to interact with Elders in a meaningful way.
- To support the Family Oral History Project participants in sharing their research with the community.

### ***Action Plan and Schedule***

Action Plan and Schedule describes what you will actually do to achieve the objectives.

In this section, you will clearly describe in detail the steps you will take to meet each objective. The Action Plan describes what you will do, who will do it, how you will involve the target group and when each activity will occur. Funders want to see that your group has anticipated and thought through each step of the project.

For example: We have approached the community to see if there is interest in a family oral history project. We have approached the local librarian to set up the family oral history project in the library two nights a week. The Family Literacy Coordinator will organize and lead the project, will be responsible for promoting the project throughout the community, evaluating the project and writing a final report.

### ***Project Time Line***

<i>June</i> .....	Purchase equipment and supplies
<i>August</i> .....	Promote family oral history project
<i>September</i> .....	Begin family oral history sessions
<i>October to March</i> .....	Evaluate project
<i>March 31</i> .....	Write final report

### ***Evaluation***

An evaluation describes a plan for determining how well the objectives are met.

Evaluation is helpful for these reasons:

- It lets you think about what you are doing and why.
- It lets you know if you're doing what you said you would do.
- It tells you what's working well.
- It lets you know what you need to change and how you can improve your project.
- It shows other communities what has worked for you.
- It gives you ideas for future projects.

An evaluation plan is linked to your project objectives and activities. A plan should include the following information:

- How you will measure success (indicators) e.g. number of families participating in the oral history project; participants' observation of any changes in the amount of Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun spoken in the home.
- What results you hope to achieve e.g. families with more awareness of their family and community history; families using more Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun in their homes; family members with a stronger sense of personal identity and increased self-esteem; more awareness of the importance of maintaining Inuit languages in order to maintain cultural identity.
- How you will gather information e.g. survey, feedback session with project participants.

### ***Budget***

The budget outlines the total costs of the project, including in-kind support.

The budget is a very important part of the proposal. It should very clearly show how much money you require in order to carry out the project as described in the action plan.

The budget should include:

- all salary costs listed by position;
- benefits (Employer's share of EI and CPP; Vacation Pay);
- any other costs related to staff;
- rent;
- materials and supplies;
- telephone and fax;
- equipment rental; and
- other costs (provide clear details).

Some funders may have limits on how much you can request for each item. It is important to stay within that limit.

### ***Other Funding***

Describe other sources of funding or support that you have received or are applying for in order to deliver the project.

You should also list any donations, in-kind support or other sources of funding. An example of in-kind support may be free space for your program or donation of a computer.

### ***Example Budget***

#### *Family Oral History Project*

<b>Staff Costs</b>	
Family Literacy Coordinator (\$20/hour x 20 hour/week x 16 weeks)	6,400.00
Mandatory Benefits Costs (10%)	640.00
<b>General Project Costs (or O&amp;M)</b>	
Rent	in-kind
Materials and Supplies	1,500.00
Phone, Fax, Photocopies	600.00
Purchase of Recording Equipment (2 Sony MP3 players)	1,200.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 10,340.00</b>

### ***Letters of Support***

Letters of support show that other groups, organizations and individuals in your community are aware of your project and support it.

Most funders will ask for at least two letters of support. They let the funders know that you have discussed your project with others in the community and that there is support for the activities you are proposing to carry out.

### ***Appendices***

Any supporting documents such as a needs assessment, community profile or information about your organization, should be included in the Appendices.

Appendices are attachments to the proposal that provide useful additional information for the funders. It is helpful to use appendices rather than overcrowding the proposal itself. Any supporting documents that demonstrate the need for your project or the structure of your organization can be attached to your proposal as appendices. For example, if you held community consultations about the need for an oral history project, include information from the consultation in your appendices.



## Top Ten Ways to Get Your Proposal Read!

1. Make sure you know something about the funder – the organization, company or agency – before you submit your request. Call and ask them for their guidelines.
2. Individualize the proposal. ‘To whom it may concern’ indicates you haven’t done your homework. Find out the name of the person you must submit the proposal to.
3. Be sure to include all the information they request.
4. Don’t overwhelm them with support materials such as videos. The ideal length of a proposal should be four to six pages.
5. Be sure to call and follow up on your request three to four weeks after submitting it.
6. If an organization supported you in the past, make sure to say thank you. Keep in touch with them and let them know how the funds were spent.
7. If this is your first time requesting funds from this organization ‘don’t ask for too much’ – \$5,000 to \$10,000.
8. If you are turned down – call the organization to find out why.
9. Illustrate the benefits of supporting your cause to the organization.
10. Be passionate about your goals and objectives and make your enthusiasm clear in the proposal.

(See *Funding Sources for Language and Literacy-based Projects* in the *Useful Resources* section for information about funding options in Nunavut.)

*“Language is an anonymous,  
collective and unconscious art;  
the result of the creativity  
of thousands of generations.”*

*Edward Sapir*

*“The strength of a language  
does not lie in rejecting what is foreign  
but in assimilating it.”*

*Johan Wolfgang Goethe*



# Sample Documents



*“The Government of Nunavut shall seek agreements, contracts and treaties with governments, self-government authorities and land claim organizations in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), Nunavik, Labrador and the Inuvialuit Settlement Area to co-operate on matters of language policy with an aim to promoting and strengthening the status of Inuktitut as a language of communication among regions of the circumpolar world.”*

*Recommendations regarding changes to the Official Languages Act.  
Submitted to the Special Committee of the Legislative Assembly  
reviewing the Official Languages Act, January 18, 2002.  
Office of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, Eva Aariak*



## **Objectives**

1. To set up a field research camp on Ferguson Lake adjacent to the mouth of the Ekalluk River.
2. To record the recollections, stories, legends and traditional knowledge of the Elders and other participants involved using digital videotape and/or audiotape and carefully written notes.
3. To record traditional place names, using topographical maps.
4. To enhance the archaeological research by combining it with the oral history and traditional knowledge of the Elders.
5. To visit archaeological features and significant sites and to record Elders' observations in regard to these sites.
6. To chronicle the fieldwork using a 35mm camera and digital video camera.
7. To provide Cambridge Bay youth with job experience.
8. To create a language immersion experience for all participants.

## **Outcomes**

1. Elder's oral histories will be preserved in perpetuity.
2. Elder's recollections and knowledge of the area will enhance and enrich the information being gathered by the archaeologists.
3. Participants' fluency in Inuinnaqtun will be improved.
4. Youth will have increased respect and awareness for the Elders and for traditional knowledge.
5. Inuit culture will be promoted.
6. Materials developed will be used to promote and encourage the use of Inuinnaqtun.
7. Teaching materials in Inuinnaqtun will be developed for the elementary schools, the high schools and communities of the Kitikmeot Region.

## **Background**

In September of 1999 the KHS carried out an oral history project at Iqaluktuuq, an area around the Ekalluk River approximately 30 miles west northwest of Cambridge Bay. Based on information gathered through the interviews, the Elders invited Dr. Friesen of the University of Toronto up to look at the site and to see if an archaeological study would be feasible. This site was initially chosen by the Elders due to its proximity to the community, its diversity, uniqueness and the significance it has to the people of Iqaluktuuttiaq.

In October of 1991, the KHS Board of Directors met to discuss the results of the site inquiry done at Iqaluktuuq in September with Dr. Friesen. Dr. Friesen felt that the site was extremely important and that the University of Toronto would indeed be very interested in working with the KHS on the project. The Board of Directors agreed that a partnership with the University of Toronto would be beneficial to the whole community.

Research was conducted at the Iqaluktuuq site in the summer of 2000. The outcome of this was an agreement between the KHS and the University of Toronto to undertake a long-term research project at the site.

In 2001, Elders returned to the site to work with students and archaeologists. Important information was gathered – information that has benefited the community as well as the archaeologists who are working at the site. The direction and information provided by the Elders has vastly enriched the research being conducted and has served to answer many questions that the archaeologists have had.

## **Need**

As research at the Iqaluktuuq site continues, it becomes more and more apparent that the site is much more significant than earlier thought. The Ekalluk River is the site of a seasonal char fishery and muskox harvest, which is very important to our community. These harvests have been carried out respectfully and with little disruption to the archaeological sites. However, because of the proximity to town, the Elders are concerned about others using the site and unknowingly damaging

features or removing artifacts. The importance of this site and the information contained therein cannot be overstated. Elder Frank Analok stated that the area is one of the oldest traditional sites that he knows of.

In keeping with the goals of the Society, as well as Dr. Friesen's perception of the importance of this regional archaeological sequence, the primary contribution to knowledge of this research program will be in the expansion and refinement of the culture history of Iqaluktuuq. Relatively speaking, there has been very little published research on the area of the Copper Inuit.<sup>1</sup> Combined with the oral history research, the information published will provide an insight into the culture that is richer and more in depth than most research papers.

Of equal importance to the presence of these archaeological sites is the fact that Inuit Elders living in Cambridge Bay retain detailed knowledge of past activities in the area. Within the lifetimes of some Elders, caribou were still hunted from skin qajaks, and winters were spent living in snow houses on the sea ice, hunting seals at their breathing holes. These direct memories provide an unparalleled opportunity to compare first-hand knowledge of past Inuit life with the archaeological traces, which they left behind.

*“The various sites around Ekalluk contain an archaeological record at least 4,000 years long – by far the longest in the region, and even in the earliest time periods there is good preservation of delicate materials such as animal bone, antler, and ivory. Also, the caribou drive system at Ekalluk is one of the largest and most complex in the Central Arctic, and is itself worthy of research. When all of this archaeology is combined with Elders’ traditional knowledge of the area, I think we will be able to produce a particularly detailed picture of past life ways in the Ekalluk River area.”*

Dr. Max Friesen, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto

<sup>1</sup> *The Iqaluktuuq Project: Community-Based Research into Long-Term Inuit Culture History – 2001 Field Season.* Dr. Max Friesen. University of Toronto, 2001



to the KHS and Dr. Friesen and will serve to provide us with a direction for future work at the site.

The Iqaluktuuq field camp will commence during the last week of June 200\_. The duration of the oral history portion will be approximately one week. Elders will be flown to the site using a Bell 212 helicopter, provided to us in-kind by the Polar Continental Shelf Project.<sup>2</sup>

Two youth, recommended by Kiilnik High School and chosen by the KHS will work one-on-one with graduate students from the University of Toronto and with the Elders. These youth and their mentors will work on the actual archaeological dig. After the oral history work is completed the field camp will remain in place for an additional two to three weeks. During this time the archaeologists and the students will continue work at the sites. Elders and other members of the community are encouraged to come out to the site to participate in the work.

During the oral history research, important sites (camps, hunting places, caribou blinds, fishing places, and graves) will be visited in order to trigger the memories of the principal informants. The focus of this season's research again is on the excavation of a Late Dorset longhouse. The Elders were intrigued by the construction of the longhouse and were anxious to talk about stories they had been told about the Tuniit. They felt that these people must have lived here side by side with their own ancestors. The past field season allowed the archaeologists to map the entire Dorset site. According to this work it is clear that this is one of the largest Dorset longhouse sites in Nunavut.<sup>3</sup> The research collected at the site in 200\_ has been used to build a replica of the Dorset Longhouse for the new cultural centre (see Appendix H).

Stories and knowledge of the area and its history will be documented using digital videotape and/or audiotape, carefully written notes and photographs taken using 35mm film.

<sup>2</sup> This has been confirmed by the Polar Continental Shelf Project.

<sup>3</sup> *The Iqaluktuuq Project: Community-Based Research into Long-Term Inuit Culture History - 2001 Field Season*. Dr. Max Friesen. University of Toronto, 2001



During the camp, families will be encouraged to come and visit the sites so that they can see their Elders' history as a living phenomenon. To the extent possible they will be encouraged to communicate with the Elders exclusively in Inuinnaqtun.

After the fieldwork is completed, all of the audiotapes will be transcribed in both Inuinnaqtun and English. A final report, including the transcriptions and field notes will be produced. Excerpts from the fieldwork will be used to publish Inuinnaqtun stories for use by students learning and practicing Inuinnaqtun. This project will be funded separately.

Traditional place names will also be recorded and will be added to the information that forms the basis of another KHS project – the Kitikmeot Atlas. The atlas project will also be funded separately.

## Time Line

Month of the Year	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
Preplanning with Elders	✓											
Transport ATV's to site		✓										
Hire students		✓										
Draw up equipment lists			✓									
Background research/literature search			✓									
Development of interview guide			✓									
Purchase special equipment (audio/video tapes)			✓									
Provide personal equipment lists for participants			✓									
Parental consents for youth participants			✓									
Have informants consents signed			✓									
Purchase equipment, fuel and groceries				✓								
Prepare equipment to go by helicopter				✓	✓							
Iqaluktuuq Camp				✓								
Debriefing and evaluation with participants					✓							
Final report and recommendations												✓

## Evaluation

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Measures</b>
To record the recollections, stories, legends and traditional knowledge of the Elders and other participants involved, using digital videotape and/or audiotape and carefully written notes.	What was recorded? What medium was used? Did the recollections enhance the research being conducted? How is/will this information be used?
To record traditional place names, using topographical maps.	Were any new place names recorded? How is/will this information be used?
To enhance the archaeological research by combining it with the oral history and traditional knowledge of the Elders.	How was this information used? What was learned? Did this information enhance the work of the archaeologists? In what way?
To visit archaeological features and significant sites and to record Elder's observations in regard to these sites.	What was learned by the archaeologists/Elders? Did this enhance the work being done at the site? How did the Elders feel about being included in the archaeological work?
To chronicle the field work using a 35mm camera and digital video camera.	How did this enhance the project? How were these materials used?
To provide Cambridge Bay youth with job experience.	What did the students learn? What did the other participants learn from the students? Did they find the experience valuable? Will they use this experience in future?
To create a language immersion experience for all participants.	Was Inuinnaqtun used at the site? Was any new vocabulary discovered through the Elders? Were the students using the language more? Did the non-Inuinnaqtun speakers find this experience useful in teaching them the language?

## **Conclusion**

The value of this project, in keeping with previous and ongoing projects of the KHS, is multi-faceted. Not only are we able to document important traditional knowledge and oral history, we are also able to collect the raw material and research to create several very worthwhile products.

The KHS will be using information gathered at Iqaluktuuq to create displays for the cultural centre in Cambridge Bay. The artifacts that will be taken from the Iqaluktuuq site will be shipped to the University of Toronto for analysis and preservation. Once this process is completed, the artifacts will be shipped back to Cambridge Bay where they will be on temporary exhibit at the cultural centre. This is the wish of the Elders of our community. (See Appendix I for artist renderings of displays)

As a whole, the project will:

- enhance the use of Inuinnaqtun;
- increase the exposure of young people to Inuinnaqtun;
- provide Inuinnaqtun learning materials;
- encourage intergenerational transmission of the language's complex terminology, used extensively when 'out on the land';
- provide Inuinnaqtun audio, visual and written materials for use by the general public;
- promote traditional methods of learning;
- provide a vital, living environment for language use while in the field camp;
- encourage sharing of information on language-use among communities of the region; and
- create pride in the strength of the culture and the language.

**Kitikmeot Heritage Society****Budget Iqaluktuuq 2003**

Item	Requested	Revenue	Total
Administration (10 % of total budget)	0.00	0.00 <sup>1</sup>	0.00
Coordinator (\$/hour X 7 hours X 30 weeks)		0.00	0.00
Field Assistants (\$ X 7.5 hours X 20 days X 3)		0.00	0.00
12 % Mandatory Employer Costs		0.00	0.00
Researcher/Interviewer (\$/day X 24 days )		0.00	0.00
Videographer (Contractor \$ X 10 days)		0.00	0.00
Elder's Honoraria (\$ X 7 X 5)		0.00	0.00
<b>Total Salaries</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Office O&M (\$/month X 4 months)	0.00	<sup>1</sup>	0.00
Transportation (helicopter)	0.00	<sup>2</sup>	0.00
Ground transport ATV (\$/week X 10 weeks X 1)	0.00	0.00	
Researcher's airfare (Yellowknife to Cam. Bay return)	0.00	0.00	
Videographer's airfare (Toronto to Cam. Bay return)	0.00		
Accomodation (7 days X \$150 X 2)		0.00 <sup>3</sup>	0.00
Per diem (7 days X 9 X 2)		0.00 <sup>3</sup>	0.00
Office space		<sup>1</sup>	0.00
Materials and supplies	0.00	0.00	
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>

<sup>1</sup> Kitikmeot Heritage Society through funding requested from Kitikmeot Inuit Development Fund and funding requested from CLEY – Canada-Nunavut Cooperation Agreement

<sup>2</sup> Polar Continental Shelf Project

<sup>3</sup> Private in-kind donation



*“The limits of my language  
are the limits of my world.”*

*Wittgenstein Ludwig*

# Kitikmeot Research Project

## The Fur Trade in the Kitikmeot A Research Project



Submitted to  
Hudson's Bay Foundation  
Submitted by the Kitikmeot Heritage Society  
Date: 2003

Samples

## **Project Summary**

The Kitikmeot Heritage Society (KHS) will research the history of the fur trade in the Kitikmeot Region of Nunavut. This research will focus on the lives of individual traders and in particular, Angulaalik (Stephen Angulalik), highlighting his life's work with the Hudson's Bay Company, Canalaska Trading Company and as the first Inuit free trader. This research will be used to develop a historical exhibit for the May Hakongak Community Library and Cultural Centre. It will also be used to develop educational materials for the local schools and the general public.

## **Project Goal**

To provide students, community members and visitors with information and resources on the history of the fur trade in the Kitikmeot. These resources will be based on accurate historical research, traditional knowledge and oral histories relating to this important aspect of our more recent history.

## **Project Objectives**

1. To collect published and unpublished historical and ethnographic materials as well as transcripts, sound and video recordings and photographs relating to the fur trade in the Kitikmeot.
2. Using this information, to develop the preliminary design for a permanent exhibit on the fur trade for the May Hakongak Community Library and Cultural Centre.
3. To put together a collection of photographs on the history of the fur trade. These photos will be added to the albums currently on display in the Cultural Centre and will be used to create a photographic exhibit.
4. To make this information immediately available to students and others through the library and cultural centre and to use the information for the development of future publications and an educational web site.



## **Project Need**

In 1990, staff and volunteers at the May Hakongak Community Library were determined to make the library more accessible to the local community. It was felt that more culturally relevant material, written in Inuinnaqtun, and more non-text materials should be available. The Library developed some of its own materials through oral history project funding. Transcripts in English and Inuinnaqtun, historical photographs, and videos of Elders talking were made available through the Library.

In 1995 the public library moved into Kiilnik High School combining with the school library. Public library staff and volunteers continued to develop oral history materials, which were distributed through the library. As a result of these efforts, during the period from 1990 to 1995, library statistical data showed that library use increased from an average of 300 people per month to 1000. As this work became more important to the community, the KHS was formed and incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1995.

Since 1995 the KHS has amassed a large collection of audio and video interviews, transcripts and other archival materials. Included in this collection is a considerable amount of information on fur trader Stephen Angulaalik and the people of Kuukyuak (Perry River).

In 1996 and 1998 the KHS traveled with the Kuukyuammiut (the people of the Perry River area) back to their homeland. The first trip included nine Elders who were originally from Kuukyuak. The following year the camp was expanded to include Kuukyuammiut from Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven and Baker Lake – 13 Elders and a total camp size of 43 people.

Through this project we were able to construct a fairly detailed look at life in Kuukyuak. The project was followed up with research and additional interviews. It was clear from the interviews and the research that the Hudson's Bay Company and the fur trade in general played a central role in the community of Perry River and in the development of the communities of Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven, Taloyoak (Spence Bay), Kugluktuk (Coppermine) and Kugaaruk (Pelly Bay).

Strong links to the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) remain in all of these communities. Many of our community members are directly related to HBC fur traders. Their lives revolved around the trading posts. People such as George Porter, Stephen Angulalik, Red Pedersen, Duncan Pride and Ernie Lyall all contributed significantly to the history of our region. George Porter and Red Pedersen still live in the Kitikmeot and both of these men have valuable information which should be shared and recorded. Many of the KHS board members and staff are directly related to some of these men.

Unfortunately access to this research, which includes sound archives, video archives, transcripts, reports, articles and photographs, is fairly limited. The KHS would like to ensure that the public has access to all of these rich resources through an interpretive exhibit and through educational materials which will be developed from these collections. The research will include information and materials on other trading posts across the Kitikmeot, including Bernard Harbour, Gjoa Haven, Kent Peninsula, Rymer Point, Bay Chimo and Read Island.

### **Project Description**

The KHS will research the history of the fur trader in the Kitikmeot region of Nunavut. This research will focus on the lives of individual traders and in particular, Angulaalik (Stephen Angulalik), highlighting his life's work with the Hudson's Bay Company, Canalaska Trading Company and as the first Inuit free trader. Angulaalik was born at Ellice River 1898. He was the first Inuit free trader and a well-known philanthropist. His fascinating story records the changing social, cultural and economic conditions of the era. The oral history interviews and research we obtained during the Perry River project will draw upon Angulaalik's experiences and the places he visited. The Perry River research will provide a framework for this project which, when combined with information on other Kitikmeot trading posts and traders, will give people a glimpse of this fascinating era through the eyes of individual fur traders. This research will be used to develop a historical exhibit for the May Hakongak Community Library and Cultural Centre. It will also be used to develop educational materials for the local schools and the general public.

## Language

In addition to providing information on this aspect of Nunavut's history, this research is intended to promote the awareness of, and use of Inuinnaqtun – the local dialect of Inuktitut. Through the research collected, and in future, through the fur trade exhibit, students, community members and visitors will be able to select text and sound files in Inuinnaqtun or English.

## Project Framework

### *The Hudson's Bay Company*

#### Places

- Kent Peninsula
- Flagstaff Island
- Gjoa Haven
- Spence Bay

#### People

- Stephen Angulaalik
- Red Pedersen
- George Porter
- Ernie Lyall
- Scotty Gaul

### *Canalaska Trading Company*

#### Places

- Cambridge Bay
- Read Island
- Sherman Inlet
- Gjoa Haven

#### People

- Stephen Angulaalik
- Captain Pedersen
- Hugh Clark
- Managatik
- Eetooalik

### *Angulalik's Trading Post*

#### Places

- Flagstaff Island
- Kuukyuak
- Ikaluakpalik
- Ittimnigigut

#### People

- Stephen Angulaalik
- Ekvanna Angulalik
- Norman Evalik
- Red Pedersen
- George Oakoak

## **Work Schedule**

Using materials from the KHS collections, as well as published and unpublished historical and ethnographic material available in-kind from the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre and the Hudson's Bay Company archives at the Manitoba Museum, and other sources, we will research the history of the fur trade in the Kitikmeot using the project framework. After initial review of the material available, a concept document will be written to propose an outline and approach to the KHS. The concept for the exhibit will be developed by the KHS with the assistance of a contractor hired to design the exhibit. Recommendations for the design concept will then be drafted.

The collection of research and materials for use in the exhibit and for the development of educational materials will involve:

- reviewing oral history transcripts and selecting quotes;
- reviewing relevant historical and ethnographic sources;
- identifying video clips;
- identifying audio clips;
- selecting photographs;
- having selected materials reproduced;
- designing maps; and
- writing a report outlining recommendations for the development of the educational materials. The report will also include recommendations for ways to make these materials as accessible as possible to as many members of the community as possible.

**Work Plan**

<i><b>What Tasks?</b></i>	<i><b>By When?</b></i>	<i><b>By Whom?</b></i>
Review of existing research and materials in the KHS archives.	April 2003	Senior Researcher Archivist
Locate and obtain sources of information and materials from outside of the community.	May 2003	Senior Researcher
Order materials, video and audio tapes . and photographs	May 2003	Senior Researcher Archivist
Conduct oral history interviews with Elders.	June 2003	Senior Researcher Staff Interpreter
Compile research and other materials. Make recommendations on potential themes for the exhibit and for educational materials.	August 2003	Senior Researcher
Contract an exhibit designer.	August 2003	KHS Executive
Develop recommendations for an exhibit.	November 2003	Exhibit Designer Senior Researcher KHS Committee
Draft preliminary drawings of exhibits.	December 2003	Exhibit Designer
Review drawings and choose exhibit.	January 2004	KHS Committee Elders Senior Researcher Exhibit Designer
Write final report and recommendations for the development of educational materials.	March 2004	Senior Researcher

## Evaluation

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Measures</i>
To collect published and unpublished historical and ethnographic materials as well as transcripts, sound and video recordings and photographs relating to the fur trade in the Kitikmeot.	What kind of information was found? How was this information used? Was any information found that people previously, were unaware of? Were any new place names located?
Using this information, to develop the preliminary design for a permanent exhibit on the fur trade, for the May Hakongak Community Library and Cultural Centre.	Which themes were chosen for the exhibit? What involvement did the Elders and other community members have in the development of the display?
To put together a collection of photographs on the history of the fur trade. These photos will be added to the albums currently on display in the Cultural Centre and will be used to create a photographic exhibit.	Where were the photographs collected? What subject matter do the photographs cover? How were the photographs used in the Cultural Centre?
To make this information immediately available to students and others through the Library and Cultural Centre and to use the information for the development of future publications.	How was the availability of this information promoted? Do teachers/students/community members feel this information is useful? In what ways has it been used? What other kinds of information have they requested? Has use of the Library/Cultural Centre increased as a result of this project? What kinds of publications will be produced using these materials?

**Kitikmeot Heritage Society**  
**Hudson Bay History Foundation Fur Trade Project**  
***Budget 200\_***

Item	Requested	Revenue	Total
Administration (10 % of total budget)	0.00	0.00	0.00
Researcher (\$ X 16 weeks)	<sup>1</sup>	0.00	
Archivist (\$ X 2 weeks)	0.00	<sup>1</sup>	0.00
Programs Coordinator (\$ X 2 weeks)	0.00	<sup>1</sup>	0.00
Culture and Language Specialist (\$ X 2 weeks)	0.00	<sup>1</sup>	0.00
12 % Mandatory Employer Costs	<sup>1</sup>	0.00	
Elder's Honoraria (\$ X 5 X 5 days)	0.00	0.00	
<b>Total Salaries</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Display Design Consultant	0.00		
Office Space (\$/month X 4 months)	0.00	<sup>1</sup>	0.00
Office O&M (\$/month X 4 months)	0.00	<sup>2</sup>	0.00
Photographs (various archives)	0.00	0.00	
Copy archival records, audio, textual (PWNHC)	0.00	<sup>3</sup>	0.00
Materials and supplies	0.00	0.00	
<b>Total Budget</b>			

<sup>1</sup> Provided by the KHS

<sup>2</sup> Provided in-kind by the Department of Education, GN

<sup>3</sup> Donated in-kind by the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre



*“You have to prove people’s connection  
to country prior to white occupation.  
So you end up hiring anthropologists  
to do genealogies. The proof is stronger  
if people still speak an ancestral language,  
for then the names of a grandfather,  
a water hole, or a dreaming site  
continue to pulse with meaning.”*

*Mark Abley in Spoken Here*



# Angulaalik Web Site Project

## Angulaalik A Web Site Development Project



Submitted to  
Culture, Language, Elders and Youth  
Submitted by the Kitikmeot Heritage Society  
Date: 2002

## **Project Summary**

The Kitikmeot Heritage Society (KHS) will create an interactive web site designed to provide students, community members and people around the world with a rich and accurate source of research on the Copper Inuit. The first module of the site will be a history of fur trader Angulaalik (Stephen Angulalik), highlighting his life's work with the Hudson's Bay Company, Canalaska Trading Company and as the first Inuit free trader. This module of our web site will link to the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre's web site on the fur trade in the Western Arctic. The site will also be a piece of a much larger, circumpolar web site – the Arctic Circumpolar Route<sup>1</sup>.

## **Project Goal**

- To develop a large and in depth web site which will allow the KHS to share its rich and extensive collection of materials and research collected over the past 12 years.
- To provide students and the general public with Inuinnaqtun language resources and accurate historical research, traditional knowledge and oral histories.

## **Project Objectives**

1. Using existing published and unpublished historical and ethnographic materials, as well as transcripts, audio and video recordings and photographs in the collections, to research, write and design a web site on Stephen Angulalik and his life as a fur trader. The material will be used to produce two streams of information:
  - one stream which will contain educational materials for use in schools; and
  - the second stream will provide a rich source of historical information and research materials for researchers and the general public.

<sup>1</sup> The Arctic Circumpolar Route (ACR) is a Participation Project with UNESCO, which also sponsors similar World Heritage Routes that have served as conduits for the exchange of knowledge, goods and cultures among nations and peoples, such as the Silk and Spice Route. The Arctic Institute of North America at the University of Calgary is launching the project, lending the expertise and support of its multidisciplinary staff. See appendix F.



Since 1995 the KHS has amassed a large collection of audio and video interviews, transcripts and other archival materials. Included in this collection is a considerable amount of information on fur trader Stephen Angulaalik and the people of Kuukyuak (Perry River).

In 1996 and 1998 the KHS traveled with the Kuukyuammiut back to their homeland. The first trip included nine Elders who were originally from Kuukyuak. The following year the camp was expanded to include Kuukyuammiut from Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven and Baker Lake – 13 Elders and a total camp size of 43 people.

Through this project we were able to construct a fairly detailed look at life in Kuukyuak. The project was followed up with research and additional interviews. It was clear from the interviews and the research that Stephen Angulalik, the Hudson's Bay Company and the fur trade in general played a central role in the community.

Unfortunately access to this research, which includes sound archives, video archives, transcripts, reports, articles and photographs, is fairly limited. The KHS would be able to provide people with access to all of these various media forms through a web site. Through internet access in the new May Hakongak Community Library and Cultural Centre, home computers and those in the schools and college, the web site could provide people with a rich source of historical and cultural information as well as critically needed Inuinnaqtun resources.

The web site will also provide Iqaluktuuttiarmiut with a way in which they can present their traditional knowledge, research, oral histories and other information as they would like it to be presented.

### **Project Description**

The Angulaalik module will present information on the recent history of the Copper Inuit. In order to personalize the module, the information provided will be linked to the real-life experiences of Angulaalik (Stephen Angulalik).

Angulaalik was born at Ellice River 1898. He was the first Inuit free trader and a well-known philanthropist. His story records the changing social, cultural and economic conditions of the era. The Angulaalik module will draw upon Angulaalik's experiences and the places he visited as a framework for learning about the Copper Inuit.

### **Language**

In addition to providing information on Copper Inuit culture and heritage, the Angulaalik module is intended to promote the awareness of, and use of Inuinnaqtun. Visitors will be able to select text and sound files in Inuinnaqtun or English.

### **Learning Streams**

In order to meet the different needs of learners and audiences at different age and grade levels, two learning streams are being planned:

- One stream, intended for Grades 4 to 6, will have an emphasis on narrative, travel and place. Students visiting this stream of the Angulaalik module of our web site will first be presented with a map of the Copper Inuit area, showing a variety of places that can be visited (in a virtual sense) and where lessons can be learned. Each of these locations will focus on a separate theme relating to Copper Inuit culture and heritage. Students will have opportunities to read and hear (in Inuinnaqtun and English) stories and explanations, and to view still and moving images. Teachers' guides and on-line resource materials will be provided with this stream; in addition, hands-on materials will be made available for Nunavut schools. These resources will be developed during Phase II of the project, in partnership with the Department of Education.
- The second stream, intended for older learners and the general public, will be written at a Grade 9 comprehension level. It will use themes (the same or similar themes that are presented in the first stream) as the starting point, and will include resources, or links to resources, of a more academic nature.

## Themes

Two types of themes will be presented: non place-centred, and place-centred. Non place-centred themes will provide general information about contemporary Copper Inuit, about Angulaalik and topics such as transportation. Place-centred themes will be tied to a specific locations mentioned by Angulaalik, or that were within his sphere of travel.

The following are sub themes that will be used in this module.<sup>3</sup>

### **Introduction**

- Angulaalik
- The Hudson’s Bay Company
- Canalaska Trading
- Angulalik’s Trading Company
- Travel and Transportation
- Copper Inuit Today
- Place names
- Dwellings
- Clothing
- Music and dancing
- Hunting, trapping and fishing

### **Work Schedule**

Using materials from the KHS collections, as well as published and unpublished historical and ethnographic material available in-kind by the PWNHC and the Hudson’s Bay Company archives at the Manitoba Museum, we will research and write the contents of a web site. After initial review of the material available a concept document will be written to propose an outline and approach to the KHS. Writing will begin after the concept is approved. This work will involve:

- reviewing oral history transcripts and selecting quotes;
- reviewing relevant historical and ethnographic sources;
- identifying video clips;
- identifying audio clips;
- selecting photographs;
- designing maps; and
- maintaining contact and consulting with *Lessons from the Land* development team at the PWNHC.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix G

- writing a concept document after a review of available materials and after meeting with *Lessons from the Land* development team, and after consulting KHS Steering Committee.

As each sub theme of the project is produced it will be reviewed and edited by a steering committee made up of members of the Angulaalik family and those working on the project.<sup>4</sup> The content will not be used unless approved by the steering committee members.

<b>Work</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
Initial review of sources, meet with PWNHC, and consult KHS. Produce Concept document.	April-June 2003	Project Team
Continue research, media selection and writing and produce web site contents	July-Sept 2003	Researchers, Steering Committee
Launch of web site	March 2004	Project Team
Write final report	Late March 2004	

The web site will be hosted by Polarnet Technologies, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. Polarnet is donating the host site as an in-kind contribution to the Kitikmeot Heritage Society. Technical advice as well as copies of relevant audio, textual and video archives will be provided in-kind by the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. The PWNHC will also be providing us, free of charge, with the template database that they are using for similar modules in their *Lessons from the Land* web site. The development of this template represents a considerable amount of research and technical expertise and allows users to use advanced search capabilities.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix D

## Evaluation

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Measures</i>
Using existing published and unpublished historical and ethnographic materials, as well as transcripts, audio and video recordings and photographs in the collections our collections, to research, write and design a web site on Stephen Angulalik and the fur trade.	What kind of information was found? How was this information used? Was any information found that people previously, were unaware of? Were any new place names located?
To provide our community with a way to present and disseminate local research collected by Iqaluktuuttiarmiut and presented by Iqaluktuuttiarmiut and in a way that is sensitive to the culture and values of the community.	How was this information used? What was learned? How did the Elders and other community members feel about having this information readily available? What were the issues arising from this project?
To ensure that our research and that of others does not remain hidden in the backroom collections of museums and archives.	What kinds of materials were made available on the web site that could not be made available before?
To develop a bilingual site that students and the public can use to develop their Inuinnaqtun language skills.	Do teachers and students feel this information is useful? In what ways has it been used? What other kinds of information have they requested?



**Angulaalik – A Web Site Development Project**

***Budget 2003***

Item	Requested	Revenue	Total
Administration (10 % of total budget)	0.00	<sup>1</sup>	0.00
Project Coordinator	<sup>1</sup>	0.00	
Archivist	<sup>1</sup>	0.00	
12 % Mandatory Employer Costs	0.00	0.00	
Researcher/Interviewer (\$400/day X 25 days)	0.00	0.00	
Elder's Honoraria (\$200/day X 5 days)	0.00	0.00	
<b>Total Salaries</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Office Space	0.00	<sup>2</sup>	0.00
Office O&M (\$325/month X 4 months)	<sup>1</sup>	0.00	
Phone/fax/internet	0.00	0.00	
Host web site	0.00	<sup>3</sup>	0.00
<i>Lessons from the Land</i> web site database template	0.00	<sup>4</sup>	0.00
Research archives (PWNHC)	0.00	<sup>4</sup>	0.00
Copy archival records, audio, textual (PWNHC)	0.00	<sup>4</sup>	0.00
Promotion	0.00	<sup>1</sup>	0.00
Translation	<sup>1</sup>	0.00	
Materials and supplies	0.00	<sup>1</sup>	0.00
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>

<sup>1</sup> Funded through separate projects (Community Initiatives (CG&T), Aboriginal Languages Initiative, Royal Bank Foundation)

<sup>2</sup> Facility owned by the Kitikmeot Heritage Society

<sup>3</sup> Polarnet Technologies, Cambridge Bay, NU

<sup>4</sup> Donated in-kind by the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre



*“ ...a few times I have told legends to the children but today they are only interested in television. In the old days we had no movies to keep us entertained – not even church – so we would hear legends and songs.”*

*Janet Kigusiuq in a 1981 interview*

From *Inuit Myths, Legends and Songs*, The Winnipeg Art Gallery, by Bernadette Driscoll, 1982



**SECTION 3: PROJECT PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION**

**6. Project duration:**

Period of operation: June 18/200X to Aug 5/200X

Proposed term of permit: June 15/200X to Aug 15/200X

**7. Location(s) of data collection:**

Location Name	Region
Ekalluk River	Kitikmeot Region
Ferguson Lake	Kitikmeot Region
<i>For additional sites, attach a separate page</i>	

**NON-TECHNICAL PROJECT PROPOSAL SUMMARY**

**8. On a separate page, please include the title of your research project and a non-technical description of the project proposal, no more than 300 words, in English & Inuktituk (Inuinaktun, if in the Kitikmeot). See Appendix C for information on project proposals.**

**SECTION 4: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & REGIONAL BENEFITS**

**9. List the community representatives that you have contacted about this proposed project:**

Community	Name	Organisation	Date Contacted	Means	Telephone #	Fax #
Cambridge Bay	Mayor XXXXX	Hamlet of Cambridge Bay	January 200X	Mail	983-XXXX	983-XXXX
Cambridge Bay	XXXXX	Kitikmeot Inuit Association	January 200X	Mail	983-XXXX	983-XXXX

**10. Describe the level of involvement that the residents of Nunavut have had with respect to the proposed project. Elaborate on local employment opportunity, local benefits, training programs (if applicable):**

The KHS will oversee the entire project, all members are residents of Nunavut  
All persons employed during the course of the project, with the exception of the Archaeologists from the University of Toronto will be hired from the community of Cambridge Bay.

**11. Describe and attach documentation regarding community concerns or support for the proposed project:**

Full support from Mayor and Hamlet Council of Cambridge Bay and Kitikmeot Inuit Association

**12. Is there a Traditional Knowledge (TK) component to this research project? If yes, see Appendix C.**

yes

<b>Applicant:</b> Kitikmeot Heritage Society
_____, <b>President</b> , _____ <b>January 10, 200X</b>
<b>Signature</b> _____ <b>Title</b> _____ <b>Date</b> _____

# Sample Consent Form

## Consent Form

Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Translator: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_  
Project Title: Iqaluktuuq 2003  
Location: Ekalluk River, NU

These interviews and the resulting translations and/or transcriptions and/or images will be used for the following purposes:

- In part or whole by the Kitikmeot Heritage Society for use in publications, reports, books and videos which will be used primarily to educate and document traditional knowledge.
- To preserve cultural values and knowledge.
- To preserve Inuinnaqtun and Inuktitut and to promote its use.

I have been fully informed of the objectives of the project being conducted. I understand these objectives and consent to being interviewed for the project. I understand that steps will be undertaken to ensure that this interview will remain confidential unless I consent to being identified. I also understand that, if I wish to withdraw from the study, I may do so without any repercussions.

The Kitikmeot Heritage Society will not use the interviews and images for any other purpose without the permission of the interviewee.

I agree to the use of the information  
I have provided according to the  
conditions stated above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Interviewee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I agree to use the information  
according to the terms outlined  
above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Interviewer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Sample NRI Project Summary

## Iqaluktuuq Project 2003

The Iqaluktuuq Project is a study of the cultural history of the Iqaluktuuq area near Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. In July of 2003, the Kitikmeot Heritage Society (KHS), a group that includes many Elders from Cambridge Bay, began a collaborative oral history/archaeological research project with the University of Toronto. This project has been carried out annually since that time. The Iqaluktuuq Project combines the best of community-based research and a careful academic research approach to this important group of archaeological sites.

We would like to continue with the cooperative field research, which will include two parts: First, Elders will fly out to the sites with other members of the KHS, and with the archaeologists. KHS interviewers will record the oral history and traditional knowledge of the area, elaborating on information obtained last summer and asking new questions. They will also provide direction and guidance to the archaeologists and the work that they are doing. The project will record the great volume of important, undocumented traditional knowledge extant among the Elders of Cambridge Bay. Secondly, the archaeologists will:

- continue to investigate site NiNg-17 which contain three Dorset longhouses; and
- continue to investigate other sites such as the Bell site.

All of the archaeological work will be performed under a Nunavut Archaeology Permit. The community of Cambridge Bay will be involved at every level and at every stage of this process.

# The Process of Collecting Oral Histories



*“The simplest way to keep a language alive is to ensure that the children speak it, and the simplest way to accomplish this is to teach them when they are infants.”*

*This statement by Bauman (1980, p. 4) could be termed the First Law of Language Retention.*

*Applying this principle to real life, however, is far from simple, because children learn their language from adults. Language loss in fact begins when parents no longer teach their own language to their children, usually because they themselves have come to see it as of little value or importance.*

*Reversing this trend is difficult. Parents will need much encouragement, training and support in order for such efforts to be successful. Nonetheless, if the community has chosen as its goal any type of full or reduced bilingualism, or true language revival, it must place the family at the centre of its strategy.*

*Mark Fettes – A Guide to Language Strategies for First Nations Communities,  
Assembly of First Nations Language and Literacy Secretariat,  
December 1992*



# Choosing a Theme or Topic

*The people in the literacy group should direct the oral history project. People learn best when they work on ideas that interest them. The planning and organizing is an essential part of the learning experience.*

- To choose the theme of your project, the group can start by brainstorming all the possible areas that interest them.
- There is a list of possible themes in the next section of the manual. But usually it works best to have the group come up with their own ideas first.
- Narrow the first list you brainstormed. One way to narrow ideas is for everyone to put sticky dots or check marks beside their three top choices.
- Spend time discussing the top choices – even several days. Discussions are a valuable critical thinking tool and help focus people’s ideas for writing.
- You could create charts to help the group make an informed decision on the themes or topics for the project.

Example 1:

Theme	What we already know	What we want to know

Example 2:

Theme	Why this theme is interesting

- If there is lack of agreement on your topic, you may find that people can work on related topics within one theme.
- Before you make a final decision about your theme, check out the available resources in the community. Are there Elders that are experts in the topic and who want to be involved in your project? Is there other information – books, videos, newspaper articles, radio or TV shows that has been recorded? If you find that you don’t have enough resources, you may want to rethink your theme.

# Oral History Themes

Here are some ideas for oral history themes:

- Special celebrations: Christmas or Easter, the first kill, qaggiit, feasts, seasonal transitions. How did people celebrate in the past?
- Stories of survival: surviving a difficult or dangerous situation, great acts of bravery.
- Memorable stories: memorable hunting trips, times of great joy.
- Life stories: Elders' stories of what they feel is important or significant about their lives.
- Skills: detailed information about hunting techniques, how to create a tool, a dwelling, a means of transportation or prepare skins and sew an article of clothing.
- Information from Elders about what they believe are the most important values or insights that they can pass on to the next generations.
- Saviours, heroes or leaders – memories of special people
- Memories from a specific place or time:
  - People who lived in a particular area.
  - People who worked for the Hudson Bay Company, the Anglican or Roman Catholic Church or the RCMP.
  - People who were involved with whaling.
  - People who spent time in hospitals for TB.
- Transitions:
  - Moving from the land into a town.
  - From a traditional lifestyle to a community-based lifestyle.
  - From a small community to a large one.
- Community Mapping: Make a map of your community now; create a map of your community as it was in 1965. Then compare the two.
- Firsts:
  - First time to see a qallunaq, a plane, an orange, ice cream, movies
  - First time to go to school.
  - First hunting trip.
  - First time to make something – sew a piece of clothing, make an iglu.
  - First time to live in a southern-style house.

- Childrearing:
  - ☑ What values were important traditionally?
  - ☑ How did children learn to be part of society?
  - ☑ How were children molded into responsible adults?
  - ☑ How were roles defined – mothers, fathers, grandparents, children, other relatives?
  - ☑ How did families deal with difficult issues?
- Weather:
  - ☑ Reading the weather.
  - ☑ Changes in weather from the past to the present.
- How Elders have overcome difficult times and dark forces in their past history:
  - ☑ The effects of colonialism.
  - ☑ Famine.
  - ☑ Deaths of family members and friends.
- Legends and myths
- Traditional spiritual beliefs



# Doing the Research

Do your research first – before you start looking for people to interview! Through background research you can find out what is already known about your topic. Then you can ask questions to fill in the gaps.

*There may already be resources about the theme your group is interested in. Check the library, CBC, resource centres, heritage centres, archives, schools, churches – for audio recordings, written material or videos on your topic. Your group may be able to get a lot of information from existing resources. Then you will be much better informed when you do interview Elders. You will be able to prepare better questions for Elders. You could call on Elders to fill in the knowledge gaps or demonstrate a skill. The more you already know, the more you will be able to learn from an Elder.*

## Steps in Doing Research

***Involve the whole group in the process of looking for resources.***

Doing the research is an important learning opportunity. It is easier to understand and remember information that you actually discover yourself. Discussing the theme in different ways will increase people's background knowledge. Also, in the future when they are looking for information or working on another project, people in the group will have knowledge about where to find resources.

***One place to start the research is at home!***

Group members can talk to parents, grandparents, relatives and friends informally about the topic and bring back information to share with the group. Private people may have audio tapes that relatives recorded years ago. Your group could go on the radio and ask if people in the community have recorded stories or other information, such as audio letters, songs or pisiit. If you borrow recordings, copy them immediately and return them to the owners. You might offer to make additional copies for the owners as well.

***Brainstorm different ways to get information.***

Your group may come up with some of these resources... and more:

- Video tapes
- Audio tapes
- Written material kept by people in the community
- Tools, clothing or other objects
- Personal interviews
- Books
- Radio phone-in shows
- Photographs
- Newspapers and magazines
- Statistics and records – like baptisms and marriages, births and deaths, work logs or records
- Personal letters, journals or diaries
- Web sites

***Brainstorm different places where you can find resources.***

People in your group may already know about some of the sources listed below or you may have other ideas of your own. Post your brainstormed list where everyone can see it.

***Resources in the community:***

- Library – books, newspapers, videos, subject or vertical files, oral history videos and audiotapes
- Schools – teachers know a lot about resources
- Churches – for records of births, baptisms, marriages, deaths, the writings of priests and missionaries'
- Elders' centres and groups
- People – Ask on the local radio. Some people may have audio tapes, pictures, tools, clothing, books, etc. made by or about relatives. It's better not to borrow these items; instead look at them at the person's home or copy them. These may be precious items that could be easily damaged.

***Resources outside the community:***

- Nunavut Research Institute
- Archives – government, church, Hudson Bay Company, RCMP
- Education Resource Centres and Teaching and Learning Centres (there’s one in each region)
- Heritage Centres
- CBC – they have many recordings, but they may not be available for borrowing because many are not catalogued and copied.
- Newspapers – some newspapers offer internet searches of back issues
- Colleges and universities

(See the *Useful Resources* section.)

***Go and check out the local resources.***

Literacy group members could go in pairs or small groups to look at the different resources in the community. Make sure everyone is familiar with the theme first. Your discussions and brainstorming will have helped develop people’s ideas on the theme. If group members are shy, or will have to communicate in a language in which they are not very comfortable, you could role-play the scenario of asking for the resources. People can gain confidence from practicing the necessary phrases and possible responses. Make a list of the questions you will ask the resource people:

- Can we borrow materials – if so, for how long?
- Can we copy material?
- Do you have a catalogue?
- Do you know of any other sources of material on this theme?

When you go to look at the resources, stronger readers and writers can pair up with those with weaker literacy skills. It may be helpful to take along a written description of the theme. Group members may need to make notes or lists of resources that they can’t take out that day, so take a notebook and pen. When each group has finished looking for resources, make an oral report about the resources you have found. Keep a group list of resources and add to it as the project progresses.

**Check out other resources.**

- ☑ *Internet Research:* if you have access to a computer lab, the whole group could check web sites. (You will find some web sites in the *Useful Resources* section.) Again, stronger readers can be paired with less strong ones to explore web sites.
- ☑ *Phone Research:* You may have to phone resource centres, museums or archives for catalogues or to order material. Again, write down the questions you want to ask and practice role-playing the phone conversation before the call.

**Study 'firsthand sources' or physical items that relate to your topic.**

Collect tools, pieces of clothing, games, photographs, carvings, drawings, drums, musical instruments, rocks, plants, animals or animal parts – skins, bones, or other objects. Use these to stimulate discussion on your theme. You can talk about the uses of objects and what it must have been like to live in 'those days'. (See *History Workshop* in the *Building Language and Literacy Skills Through Oral History Projects* section.)

**Ideas for working with the research material.**

One way of dealing with the research is to make a chart like this:

Topic	What we already know	What we want to know

As your group watches videos, reads different materials, looks at tools and other objects, talks to people or listens to recordings, you will add more information to the 'What We Already Know' section and maybe you will add more questions to the 'What We Want to Know' section. Keep updating the chart. You can work as individuals or in small groups and bring the information to the whole group

when all research sources have been explored. Or you can keep one big chart on the wall and the group as a whole can add new points that you find in the various resources.

***Try different ways to explore the resources.***

As you go through the research materials – whether books, videos, recorded interviews or objects – try different ways of working: whole group, individually, in pairs or small groups. This is an opportunity for people to see which working style they prefer. If several different formats are tried throughout the project, people will also learn that different methods work better for different tasks. They will learn to be flexible in their approach. But people who are new to group work and formal learning may take some time to feel confident and comfortable and may not be ready to try new approaches right away.

*Here's an example of exploring a resource:* You may choose to watch a video as a whole group. First, review the points on your list, 'What we want to know'. Add to the list if people can think of more questions. Have the list visible while watching the video. Everyone can look for information that answers your questions. You may choose to watch the video all the way through once first, then watch it again, stopping the video when people want to record information and make notes. Take the opportunity to discuss issues as they come up. Group discussions help build people's knowledge and confidence.

***Record information from the resources.***

Each person in your group may have different ways they prefer to record information. Here are some examples of ways to record information from Dawn Loney's book, *Research in the Community*:

- Index cards
- Post-it notes
- Experience charts
- File folders

(For info about Dawn Loney's book see *Oral History Resources* in the *Useful Resources* section.)



The important thing is to show people different methods and let them try for themselves. People may already have learned strategies for organizing themselves. If you have recording equipment available, some people may prefer to record their information orally.

***Store the information where the group can access it.***

Create a filing cabinet drawer, bankers' box, an information wall, index card box or another method that can hold all the information you collect. Store the information where people can access it as the project continues. You may want to choose one person or a small group to be responsible for the files.

*Donald Ritchie, a professional historian with 20 years of experience as an oral history interviewer, says that you should count on 10 hours of research for every hour of interview.<sup>1</sup>*



***“Change is full of both sadness  
and opportunity.”***

*Unknown*

<sup>1</sup> *Doing Oral History*, by Donald A. Ritchie, published by Twayne Publishers, New York, NY, 1995

# Interviews

## Steps in Getting Ready to Do Interviews

### ***Tape TV and Radio Interviews.***

Tape TV and radio interviews from CBC North Radio or TV or APTN and use them with the literacy group to develop awareness of interviewing techniques. Talk about the different types of questions you hear and the responses those questions get. Discuss which style of interviewing people like best and why.

### ***Listen to previously recorded oral history interviews.***

If you can't find any in your community library, you may be able to borrow recorded interviews from the Nunavut Research Institute, CBC, educational resource centres, museums or archives. Talk about the style of interviewing in these interviews. How is it different from the TV and radio interviews? Who does most of the talking? Talk about the kinds of questions you hear in different interviews and different ways of asking them. What kinds of responses come from different ways of asking questions?

### ***Identify the people you plan to interview.***

Find out something about their backgrounds and what they are interested in talking about. Write this information on index cards or type it on the computer, so the interview teams have access to it. People that you interview might suggest other people in the community that are knowledgeable about your theme.

### ***Plan how you want to conduct the interview.***

Will oral history teams do the interviews, with each team responsible for interviewing one person? Or will you conduct the interviews in front of the whole literacy group, with one interview team doing the work and the rest of the group as the audience?

### ***Consider a suitable location for the interview.***

Quiet is very important in getting a good quality recorded interview. Choose places where the interview won't be interrupted by phones, TV or radio, children or other family members, noisy appliances or noise from the road. Think about electrical outlets for recording equipment and light if you are videotaping. Think about where the storyteller will be most comfortable. If you decide to have the whole literacy group watching and listening to the interview, everyone will have to agree to be very still and quiet throughout the interview.

***Plan questions to guide the interview.***

The process of planning the questions is valuable for the literacy group. It gives them a chance to bring together all their knowledge so far and to think critically about the theme.

***Become very familiar with the recording equipment.***

You may be working in oral history teams, with one person responsible for the recording equipment, but everyone should know how to work equipment in case the equipment person is away unexpectedly.

***Practice interviewing before you actually go out to do a real interview.***

- ☑ Make up questions in small groups and literacy group members can interview each other.
- ☑ Practice interviewing in small groups: one pair can be the interviewer and the storyteller, and the rest of the small group can listen and discuss what worked best. Change roles so everyone has a chance to try interviewing.
- ☑ Use this opportunity to practice using the recording equipment.
- ☑ Listen to, analyze and critique the interviews and discuss changes you would make for future interviews.
- ☑ You could invite someone to be interviewed before the whole class in a practice session: a friend, another literacy worker, a priest or minister, a teacher, an adult educator.
- ☑ Literacy group members can practice interviewing friends and family members. They can take the recording equipment home to practice with, bring the recordings back to the literacy group and meet in small groups to listen to the recordings and critique them.

***Plan a visit between the storyteller and the interviewers.***

Use this as an informal time to get to know each other, to arrange the time and place for the formal interview, to discuss the theme of the interview, to explain your ethical guidelines and to sign consent forms. Since this session sets the pace for future meetings, try to be relaxed and calm and allow plenty of time, so as not to rush the conversation. Reassure the storyteller that you will work together and that they can have input and can set the pace. Encourage them to make their needs known throughout the interview process. Assume that no recording will take place at this meeting, but have the recording equipment along and ready to use – just in case the interviewee begins to tell his story.<sup>1</sup>

***Plan how you will record the answers to the questions you listed.***

Although you may not ask direct questions during the interview, you will want to check regularly that you are collecting information that answers your questions. At the end of each interview, go back to your questions and check off the ones that were answered. Each interview might generate more questions as well as answers. Perhaps two people from each oral history team – those who are not the interviewers – could take on the responsibility of recording answers to the group's questions

***Each oral history team should plan how to organize the material they collect.***

Each team could prepare filing cabinet drawers or bankers' boxes to store their information. The team should plan how to organize their files and be very aware of the value of their notes and recordings. Establish a system for getting materials directly to the file after the interview, so there's no chance of losing important research.

***Plan to immediately copy all interview recordings.***

Make copies of interviews and store them in a different location from the original. This is in case of fire or other disasters.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Voices: A Guide to Oral History*, by Derek Reimer, published by Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Victoria, BC, 1984

***Plan how you will review and analyze your interviews.***

Depending on your working format, the oral history teams or whole group should plan to meet after each interview to look at how the interview went, which questions were answered, what new questions or knowledge gaps came up and what changes you would make for next interview. Use this opportunity to encourage the group to think critically about their work.

***Schedule the first interview at a convenient time for the storyteller.***

Prepare the equipment for the interview.

- ☑ Test the equipment before you go to the interview.
- ☑ Make sure you have extra batteries – for both the recorder and the microphone, more tape or disks than you plan to use, extension cords and all the necessary cables and adapter.



***“Live as if you are to die tomorrow.  
Learn as if you were to live forever.”***

*Mahatma Gandhi*

# The Oral History Team

An oral history project is an opportunity to develop the skills needed to work as a team. Team skills are necessary in the job market, as well as valuable in day-to-day life. The number of people on a team depends on the total size of your group and the scope of their work. But four can be a productive number for a working team. Small groups often need some practice working together before they start work as a project team.

Small groups can decide on roles or tasks for their members to carry out. Some people may be good at certain tasks and want to focus on those tasks only. But it's important to encourage people to stretch themselves and try things that don't come so easily to them – start small and encourage people to gradually increase their responsibilities. It is also important to keep the group members' literacy skills and needs in mind. People with stronger literacy skills shouldn't expect to do all the reading and writing tasks; they can work with those with weaker literacy skills to build the capacity of the whole group. Everyone in the group should be familiar with all the tasks: looking after the files, operating the equipment, contacting the storyteller, and so on. That way the interviews can still take place if one group member is unexpectedly absent.

## Definitions

*Interviewer:* The person who asks the questions to the interviewee or storyteller.

*Interviewee or storyteller:* The person who tells the stories and shares the knowledge.

*Transcriptions:* A written word-for-word copy of an interview.

*Transcribe:* The act of listening to a recording in order to write out every word of an interview.

## Roles and Tasks for Oral History Team Members

- Finding resources and resource people
- Getting information from the resources and organizing the information
- Researching, preparing for interviews, creating questions (a whole group task)
- Contacting storyteller, setting schedules
- Operating and maintaining equipment
- Being the interviewer
- Taking notes
- Taking photographs
- Keeping track of questions – which have been answered, which new ones need to be added?
- Organizing files – being responsible for keeping material orderly and accounted for, recordings copied and labeled, etc.
- Writing a short biography of the storyteller
- Writing an interview summary
- Transcribing interviews (if your group chooses to do that task)



# Working with Elders

*Do your research first – before you start looking for people to interview! Through background research you can find out what is already known about the topic. You will be better informed when you interview the Elders and you will be able to learn more from their knowledge and skills.*

There may be an Elders' group in your community. Your group could work with them to find experts to interview on specific themes. Different people are experts on different topics. And not everyone is comfortable being interviewed. You could attend an Elders' meeting or write a letter to explain the purpose and theme of your study. Ask for suggestions about who would be the best people to interview on different topics.

***Elders may have several reasons why they want to participate in an interview:***

- They may want to pass along a sense of dignity and cultural pride to future generations.
- They may want to talk about the struggles their generation went through to achieve things that the younger generation just take for granted.
- They may think of themselves as 'stores of information and history' and want to pass this information along to future generations.
- They may believe that they have interesting and important stories to tell; they want to show their sense of their place in history.

***Find out if work has already been done on your theme.***

Check with other groups in the community to make sure they are not planning to work on a similar project or have already worked on a similar project.

Elders' knowledge and time is valuable and the years are passing quickly. You don't want to repeat projects that have already been completed. If interviews have already been done on the topic you are interested in, you could request completed recordings and transcripts to use in your project.



***Talk about your project and ask for Elder volunteers.***

You could go on the local radio and ask for Elders who are interested in being involved in an oral history project.

Sometimes the same people are asked over and over again and people who are interested are never asked. Keep lists of people who are experts in different areas.

***Respect the roles of Elders.***

The oral history team should understand and respect the relationship between Elders and youth. Your group might have an agenda, a project with particular goals, but at times you may have to patiently put aside your goals and let the Elders take the lead. The interviewers should be sensitive to when it is appropriate to ask direct questions or to ask for more details or clarification.

***Invite Elders into the process from the beginning.***

Consider inviting some interested Elders to speak to your group near the beginning of your project to discuss social relationships between Elders and younger people. Talk to them about traditional relationships and interactions, and about issues related to interviewing. Ask them to help you decide on the best approach to your project.

***Choose suitable interviewers.***

There will be plenty of jobs for everyone in your project. Some people will be interested in being an interviewer and some will not. Interviewers should understand their role and be sensitive to the Elders' needs.

Choose interviewers who will be able to:

- feel comfortable and relaxed;
- visit with the Elder for a while before the formal interview starts;
- be a good listener;
- be patient and be able to read Elders' body language;
- be sensitive to the storytellers' needs;
- allow for pauses and silences;
- avoid interrupting when the Elder is speaking;
- speak Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun fluently;

- ☑ look interested, pay attention and get involved in the stories;
- ☑ be sympathetic and respectful;
- ☑ be responsive, but quietly – so the interviewer’s comments don’t dominate the recording;
- ☑ be prepared and organized with equipment, notebooks, etc.;
- ☑ ask for clarifications in a tactful manner, if necessary;
- ☑ notice when the Elder is getting tired and suggest taking a break or continuing another day; and
- ☑ wind down after the interview by chatting with the Elder.

***Talk about whether you can pay the storyteller.***

If you have funding for your project which includes honoraria for Elders, you will be able to give the storyteller some money for participating in your project. If you don’t have this option, your group may want to discuss other forms of compensation: gifts of meat or other country food, store-bought food or helpful services for the Elders in their homes or in the community.

***Plan a project that matches your group’s skills and resources.***

Elders’ knowledge is treasured, so any information collected from them should be treated with care. Not all students enjoy, or are interested in, the tasks involved with collecting oral histories. Interviewing, recording, transcribing and cataloguing are jobs that take a lot of time and care. A lot of patience and attention to detail are important.

You may consider budgeting for a professional to do the transcribing. Or think about partnering with another group of adults or older students who are highly literate in Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun.

If your time is limited or you don’t have the necessary equipment, consider working with existing oral history recordings and transcriptions – instead of doing your own interviews. Everyone will still benefit from hearing the Elders’ knowledge. Your group can do a project based on the information, but you won’t have to be responsible for interviewing, recording, transcribing and cataloguing.

***Keep Elders informed about the progress of the project.***

Ask for their advice and give them updates about your project. When the project is complete, invite them to tea and to view your display, presentation, artwork, play or video. Give them a copy of your writing or other productions.

*“In the oral tradition words are sacred;  
they are intrinsically powerful  
and beautiful... Nothing exists  
beyond the influence of words.  
Words are the names of Creation...  
Every word spoken, every word heard,  
is the utterance of prayer.  
Thus, in the oral tradition, language bears  
the burden of the sacred,  
the burden of belief.  
In a written tradition,  
the place of language is not so certain.”*

*N. Scott Momaday, Kiowa American First Nations author*

From *Spoken Here* by Mark Abley, published by Random House Canada, 2003

# Types of Interviews<sup>1</sup>

## Life Story Interviews

Life story interviews are stories of one person's life. It is best to break the interview into three or four sessions; this takes the pressure off a single interview and gives the storyteller time to remember and reflect on his or her life. It may be best if someone of the same gender is the interviewer – a male interviews a male storyteller and a female interviews a female. For most people, telling their story is a positive experience which gives them a chance to think back on the path their life has taken. But it could also be an emotional experience, so the listener should always make sure that the storyteller is comfortable at the end of each interview and has the support of family or friends.

## Family Tree Interviews

Family tree interviews explore the lives of members of one family, whether past or present generations. The storytellers offer second-hand stories of what they know about their relatives' lives. This type of interview won't give you the details and personal experience of a life story interview, but it will let you see the nature of a family or the change over time in one family. This may be an interesting approach for literacy group members who want to record their own family histories.

Cousins, siblings or other family members could work together in groups on their own histories. Two generations of one family could be interviewed about family members to show different perspectives. (*Saqiyuq*<sup>2</sup> is a wonderful book based on interviews with three generations of women in one family.)

## Single-issue Testimony

Single-issue testimony focuses on a specific theme or event in the storyteller's life. It may be shorter than a life story, but more detailed. Your group may have a specific topic you want to explore such as traditional parenting, the famines of the 1950s or qajaq building. You could interview several people who have interest in or knowledge of your topic. Interviewees may have a great deal of technical knowledge to share.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Perks and Thomson, published by Routledge, New York, 1998

<sup>2</sup> *Saqiyuq: Stories from the Lives of Three Inuit Women* by Nancy Wachowich, published by University of Toronto Press, 1999, ISBN: 0773518878

## Group Interviews

Group interviews focus on a specific topic or event. Experts suggest bringing together between five and twelve people. The discussion could last from one to two hours. There are advantages and disadvantages to a group interview. The recording quality may not be as clear – due to noise in the room, two people talking at once, or the position of the microphone being too far from some speakers. People who are less confident or who feel they have less power than others in the group or community might not speak up. The group may subtly pressure people to tell a form of the story that is accepted by the community. This could result in a ‘safe’ version of the past. The advantages are that some people may feel less shy to speak out in a group and one person’s story can trigger memories in other people in the group. You may choose to do a group interview at the beginning of your project and then ask for volunteers for individual interviews.

## Diary Interviewing

Diary interviewing involves participants who agree to write or orally record a regular journal or diary. It could be daily, weekly or less often. You may choose a specific topic such as childhood memories or hopes for future generations and ask people to write or record their memories or ideas as they think of them. A long-term project about remembering past activities in certain seasons or months could work well. Your literacy group will have to be prepared for the challenge of reading Inuktitut syllabics or Inuinnaqtun roman orthography that is not written in the current standardized form. If some people want to record their memories rather than write them, you may need access to several pieces of recording equipment.



# Preparing for the Interviews

*Recorded interviews preserve a living conversation between two people – for present and future use. Your group will have plans to use the oral histories that you record in a particular way. But the recorded interview will be available for many generations to use in the future; everyone who listens to these interviews will have different purposes and will see new insights in your conversation with the Elder.*

*When you do an oral history interview, you are changing the course of history – because you are offering the people of the future a chance to understand life as the Elders see it now. Without this opportunity, future generations may make decisions that are not based on past wisdom.*

An oral history interview is a powerful process of interaction between the interviewer and the storyteller or interviewee. But an interviewer must be a good listener; it is the interviewees' show, their story.

Interviewers should understand and respect the relationship between Elders and youth. Your group may need to seek a fine balance between respect and the urgency of recording Elders' knowledge. Your group may have an agenda, a project with particular goals, but it is best to be patient and let the Elders take the lead. Your group should be flexible and open to information that the storyteller offers but which may not have been expected or planned for. You may have to interview several Elders to get the information that you want. Or your group may consider changing the focus of your project to fit the information the storyteller gives you.

## ***Interviewers play an important role:***

- Putting the storyteller at ease about sharing memories and knowledge.
- Being respectful and sensitive to social roles of Elders and younger people.
- Thinking of the interviewer and the storyteller as partners.
- Being prepared to let the storyteller take the lead.
- Giving the storyteller time to reflect, to avoid rushing through the process.
- Being a good listener – avoiding interrupting the storyteller.
- Using his or her intuition instead of relying on a set of rigid questions.

- Knowing how to bring out detailed information, being aware of appropriate ways and times to ask for examples and illustrations of the points interviewees make.
- Being aware that the storyteller may be struggling with difficult memories or emotions – being understanding and caring.

***Points to think of when choosing interviewers and preparing for the interview.***

- The more research your group does, the more they may realize how much they don't know. Allow enough time for research and to develop background knowledge. The research phase is a valuable time to increase awareness and literacy skills; don't rush ahead to the interview phase of the project. The group members will need time to gain enough knowledge to develop meaningful questions, respond intelligently during an interview and to understand the storyteller.
- People might feel more comfortable and supported conducting interviews in pairs; one person could look after the recording equipment and make notes during the interview; the other person could act as the interviewer. If you are operating in oral history teams, the whole team could go along for the interview. Ask first, does the storyteller feel comfortable with a small group of listeners? Decide on roles ahead of time.
- It may be more effective and more comfortable for the storyteller if the same person acts as the interviewer each session. It takes time to build a relationship between the storyteller and interviewer. But if more than one interviewer shares the task, you need a plan so you won't interrupt each other or repeat questions.
- Be aware that the storyteller or the interviewer might get tired. Depending on energy levels, an interview may be as short as 45 minutes, with the ideal being between one and a half hours and two hours. Sometimes everyone is so involved in the story that they want to continue, but it's best to gently wrap up the interview after two hours maximum and reschedule for another day. At the beginning of the next interview, you can replay the last few minutes of the previous interview so the storyteller remembers where he left off.

- Take a notepad to an interview – to write down points you would like clarified or expanded, spellings of names and places and so on. Instead of interrupting the storyteller, you can ask for clarification during a pause or at the end of the interview. If you go to an interview as an oral history team, you may have two or more note-takers. This could be useful in comparing ideas and reviewing or critiquing your interview.
- The interviewer should let the storyteller set his or her own pace.
- You can use prompts such as documents, maps, tools, clothing, timelines or photographs to inspire the storyteller to remember the past.
- Feelings, attitudes and values give meaning to past activities and events and make an interview interesting. The interviewer needs to encourage the storyteller to go beyond facts.
- Some experiences ‘defy words’ – words sometimes cannot adequately explain a traumatic or amazing experience from the past.
- The interviewer should try to understand the person’s story from their point of view – to really listen!
- Pay attention to what is missing in a story. What gaps are there – and why? Maybe the interviewee finds some aspects of the story too painful to talk about.
- You may get conflicting information from different sources. Sometimes memory fails people; sometimes two people are looking at the event from different perspectives. If your project involves getting correct factual information, you may want to check other resources and then go back to the interviewees for clarification.

***Should we make up a list of questions for the interview?***

- You will plan a list of questions, but the interviewer should think of those questions as a guideline only, not a rigid list that must be followed. Often the storyteller will answer your questions without you ever asking them. Take time at the end of each interview to check off all your questions that were covered in that session.



- Sometimes the interview will be like a monologue, with the storyteller doing most of the talking and the interviewer just listening and responding quietly. Other times an interviewee may be quiet and shy and the interviewer will need to encourage him or her to share information.
- You may have prepared tough questions about emotional issues, but you won't be able to ask those questions unless the interviewee seems comfortable and ready to share this information. It may be the third or fourth meeting before he or she volunteers sensitive information.
- You will need to respect silences or pauses, to give the storyteller time to think.
- Remember that people who know very little about the topic may be listening to the recorded interview years later, so you will need to ask obvious questions and ask for detailed descriptions. Imagine that your grandchildren will be listening to the interview – in 25 years. Maybe they will have never had the opportunity to speak to a unilingual Elder and some of them may have never seen certain tools, clothing or other objects from the past.
- If the interviewee doesn't offer much information on a topic, the interviewer can use the 'five W's' to encourage more detail – who, what, where, when, how, why.
- Ask open-ended, neutral questions that don't limit or lead the response. (See *Planning Interview Questions*, on the next page.)



# Planning Interview Questions

## Here's One Way to Start Creating Questions

Write down ten reasons why you chose this person to interview. What is it that interests you about this person? Use your list of reasons to develop questions to ask.<sup>1</sup>

Example:

*She has lived a long time and seen many changes in her lifetime.*

Q: What do you see as the most positive changes from the time of your childhood until now?

Q: What do you see as the negative changes?

*He worked with the Hudson Bay in the 1940s and 1950s.*

Q: What do you remember about the fur prices in the 1940s?

Q: What were the most popular trade goods at that time?

Q: What role did Inuit see for HBC at that time?

- You may already have your list of questions created during your research phase in the 'What We Want to Know' section of the chart. (See *Doing the Research*, the first chapter in this section.) This list can guide the questions you plan for your interview.
- You might not actually ask any of these questions during the interview, for several reasons:
  - The storyteller may lead the interview in a particular direction.
  - The storyteller may be very talkative and not need any prompting from the interviewer.
  - Or the group may feel it isn't appropriate to lead an Elder by asking lots of direct questions.

However, the questions are still valuable because they guide your research – they remind you of what you still want to know to fill in the knowledge gaps.

<sup>1</sup> *Like It Was* by Cynthia Stokes Brown, published by Teachers and Writers Collaborative, New York, 1988, page 35



## Examples of Leading and Neutral Questions<sup>3</sup>

Leading questions make the interviewee think you expect a certain answer.

Leading questions show the interviewer's opinions, biases, attitudes or expectations. Neutral questions allow the interviewee to speak his or her own words and thoughts.

<i>Leading</i>	<i>Neutral</i>
You must certainly have been happy when your first child was born.	How did you feel when your first child was born?
Did you move to Iglulik then?	What did you do then?
You didn't like Uqi, did you?	Tell me about Uqi.
What did you think of Napajuq's terrible behaviour?	What did Napajuq do then?

Some questions encourage the storyteller to use the senses to describe a scene:

- What did you see... hear... feel... taste... or smell?
- Tell me about...
- Describe...
- Explain...
- Compare...
- Take me on an imaginary walk around your camp when you were a little girl.”
- What would I have seen and done if I had spent a day out hunting with you when you were a young man?

<sup>3</sup> Also adapted from *Voices: A Guide to Oral History*

- Here are some questions that encourage storytellers to reflect on their lives and offer values, beliefs, opinions and feelings rather than just facts and events:
  - What was the hardest thing you ever had to do?
  - What turning points do you see in your life?
  - What do you see as the happiest time of your life? What do you see as the worst time?
  - If you had your life to live over again, what would you do differently?
  - Do you feel that you missed any great opportunities?
  - Did your life turn out the way you thought it would?
  - How are you different from your children? How do you think your way of life compares to your children's?
- Now review and analyze the questions you have created. If you created your questions in small groups, the groups can exchange questions and critique another group's list. You can use the critique on the next page. Add your own points to the list.

### **Critique of Interview Questions**

- Are the questions related to the storyteller's area of knowledge?
- Are there any 'leading questions' – ones that make the storyteller think you want a specific answer?
- Will the questions bring out interesting answers?
- Are there any questions that might bring out boring answers? How would you change them?
- Do any of the questions show the interviewer's attitudes or opinions?
- Are the questions open-ended, not closed?

# Issues for Discussion

There are some issues about interviewing that may mean different approaches work best in different settings. Here are some questions that your group may want to discuss before you begin the interview process. You may have other issues that you want to debate as you decide how to proceed with your project.

- Do interviews go better when a woman is interviewed by another woman and a man by another man? Do people of the same gender share more common understanding about issues and skills?
- Is it better when Elders are interviewed by older people rather than younger – because older people have more knowledge and similar backgrounds and forms of spoken Inuktitut? Or are Elders happy to talk to young people because they are able to pass on important knowledge that youth might not otherwise hear about?
- How does the relationship between young and old affect the interview? What about the social rules about communicating with Elders:
  - Questioning Elders
  - Initiating topics
  - Disagreeing
- How do strict time-schedules and deadlines affect the quality of an interview?
- How do the values of modern social institutions, such as churches, legal systems and education systems, affect people's view of the past?
- How do issues of power and status affect an interview? Are the interviewees able to be open and honest if they are interviewed by someone they see as being in a position of power? Or is the interview more meaningful if the interviewer is seen as a peer and an equal? Would you, as literacy group members, be able to get a more honest and open interview than a professional interviewer from the south?

# Pre-interview Checklist

- ☑ Phone the storyteller to confirm that the planned time is still OK.
- ☑ Test recording equipment, charge batteries and check batteries in microphone.
- ☑ Pack batteries, extra disks or tapes, an extension cord, cables and adapters.
- ☑ Pack notebook and pencils/pens.
- ☑ Take the list of questions.
- ☑ Decide on roles for each interview team member.
- ☑ Provide water, tea or other drinks for the storyteller and interview team.
- ☑ Find a good place to do the interview – quiet, with no interruptions, electrical outlets handy, enough light for filming if you are using a video camera.



*“Everyone listens only  
to what he understands.”*

*Johan Wolfgang Goethe*

# At the Interview

*The best interview is almost a monologue (one person talking) which is encouraged by approving nods, appreciative smiles, and enraptured listening and stimulated by understanding comments and intelligent questions.<sup>1</sup>*

## The Eight Commandments of Oral History Interviewing

1. Do your homework.
2. Be prepared.
3. Be ready with meaningful but open-ended questions.
4. Do not interrupt responses.
5. Follow up on what you have heard.
6. Know your equipment thoroughly.
7. Promptly process your recordings.
8. Always keep in mind and practice the ethics of interviewing.

*From 'Doing Oral History' by Donald A. Ritchie, Twayne Publishers, New York, 1995, page 57.*

- Plan for a session of one and a half to two hours, but be prepared to stop sooner if either the interviewer or the storyteller is tired.
- Although you have interview teams, it may be best to keep the same interviewer for the whole interview process, once the storyteller is relaxed with that person. If you feel that the storyteller will be comfortable with more than one interviewer, you need to plan which person asks which questions. You need to make a plan that will help the two interviewers to avoid interrupting each other.
- Check your interview schedule and be sure to arrive on time. Phone first to make sure that the storyteller is expecting you.
- Take along a notebook. One person on the interview team could be in charge of taking notes – you may want to write down a point that you want clarified later, a name or place you need the spelling for, or an issue for the next interview.

<sup>1</sup> From *What's So Special About Women? Women's Oral History* by Sherna Gluck, in *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, edited by Dunaway and Baum, published by American Association for State and Local History, Nashville, 1984



- When you arrive at the interview, take time to visit in a relaxed way before the interview to put both the storyteller and the interviewer at ease. After you have visited for a while, say that you need a few moments to set up your equipment before the formal interview begins.
- Find an electrical outlet for your recording equipment. In case the outlet isn't near the interview area, be prepared with batteries and an extension cord.
- After you get set up for the interview, do a test to make sure that both you and the interviewee can be heard clearly.
- Before starting the interview, listen through earphones so you can see how much background noise the microphone is picking up and how well your voice is coming through. If background noise is a problem, try moving the mic closer to you and turning down the volume.
  - ☑ If you hear pops or thumps when you pronounce a 'P' sound, move the mic a little to the side so your breath won't go straight into the microphone.
  - ☑ If you are recording outside, you may need to put the mic closer. The wind and your breath might be a problem.
  - ☑ It's better to try to prevent these problems by finding a good recording location, than to try to remove the noise on the recording later in the studio.
- Put the microphone between the interviewer and the storyteller. The recording equipment should be near the interview team member who is monitoring it. This person should watch that the recording equipment is working well and the disk or tape does not run out. If the disk or tape is getting near the end, she should alert the interviewer at a suitable pause in the interview and change the tape or disk before it runs out. You can put the recording equipment off to the side, but don't hide it from the storyteller since this goes against the principle of trust in an interviewing relationship.
- Make sure the storyteller is comfortable. Have water or tea on hand.
- Quiet is very important in getting a good quality taped interview. Ensure that the interview won't be interrupted by phones, TV, radio, children or other relatives, noisy appliances or noise from the road.

- Set an atmosphere of trust. Remind the storyteller once again of your group’s oral history principles. Assure him that he can set the pace, take a break or stop the interview at any point. Advise him that you may need to come back for more sessions.
- At the beginning of the recording, identify the storyteller – with her full name and date and place of birth, the interviewer, and the date and place of the interview. Also record the names of the storyteller’s parents, her brothers or sisters and children and when and where they were born. This will help identify the interviewee in the future when people are listening to the recording.
- The storyteller may be ready to launch directly into his life story or information about the theme you are researching. If he needs some prompting or you have decided that direct questions are acceptable, start with general open-ended questions: “Tell me about your childhood.” or “What is the first thing to think about when planning to build a qajaq?” You can move to more specific questions as you get more information.
- As the storyteller speaks, either the interviewer or one of the interview team members makes notes on additional questions or clarifications you would like to ask for when he is finished speaking on a specific subject.
- Don’t speak immediately after the storyteller stops talking; he may just be pausing for a breath of air or to gather his thoughts together.
- If it helps the interview team or the storyteller keep facts and dates straight, print up a timeline or sheet with dates and names of important players in the stories. Take this sheet to the interview in order to refer to it.
- Use prompts such as photos, tools, clothing or maps to encourage people to remember and talk about a topic.
- You may have brought along a camera to take pictures of the storyteller or interesting items he shows you. Ask if he minds if you take a photograph. Keep notes about what each photograph is about, when and where it was taken, and any technical information.

- As you conduct the interview, try to keep in mind the people who will listen to the recorded interview in the future – ask for information which seems to be obvious or common knowledge. It will help outsiders to the culture or people of future generations picture the details of the story.
- The interviewer should let the storyteller take the lead, but keep the questions prepared by the group in mind throughout the interview. The interviewer should be prepared to respond to and follow-up on unexpected information.
- You don't have to agree with the words or opinions of the storyteller. But try to listen and understand the situation from his point of view. It is not the place of an interviewer to express his or her opinion.
- It is important to respond to the words of the storyteller, to smile and use body language to show you understand – or to look confused to show you don't understand. But too much verbal interruption from the interviewer will make the recording difficult to listen to and transcribe. The words of the storyteller are what you are trying to capture. One oral historian says that everyone should try transcribing at least part of an interview – in order to understand the importance of getting a good quality sound recording.
- The interview team should be sensitive to the storyteller getting tired. Two hours is the maximum time for an interview. You may all be enjoying yourselves and want to continue, but it is better to reschedule another interview.
- Look for a natural 'wrap up' question that causes the storyteller to think about her life, to compare early years to the present, to come to conclusions about events or to look ahead to the future.
  - How would you compare your childhood with the childhood of your grandchildren?
  - What advice could you give young people which would help them lead better lives? What experiences have you had that they could benefit from?
  - What advice do you have for people who want to build a traditional qajaq?
- Ask the storyteller if there are any other issues which should be discussed in the next interview.

- Wind up the interview with an informal visit after the recording equipment has been turned off. Make sure that the storyteller is comfortable, especially if remembering the past has been an emotional experience. You can't just run off and leave the person to deal with the thoughts that have been stirred up by the interview. Ensure that she or he has the support of friends or family.
- As soon as the interview is finished, label the recording with the full name of the storyteller, the interviewer, the date and place of the interview.
- If you are coming back for another interview, schedule the date and time.



# After the Interview

*As soon as possible after the interview, the oral history team should do these tasks:*

- Make copies of the recordings and take them directly to another location. Label all the recordings with project, interviewer, interviewee, date and recording number. Use a permanent colourfast marker.
- If possible, send the master copy or original to an archive, museum or cultural centre that has the facilities to store recordings safely.
- Develop or download any photographs.
- Label the interview notes and photographic information and put them safely in the file.
- Write a short biography of the storyteller.
- Write a short summary of the content of the interview.
- Listen to the complete recording and review how the interview went. What do you like and what could you improve next time you do an interview?
- Look at your question list and check off the questions that were answered in the last interview. Add to your list any new questions that came up during the interview.
- As you listen to the recording and review the questions, write the answers to the questions. Add them to your file.
- Make a plan for the next interview or next phase of your project.

## Documenting the Interview

If your project is doing several interviews, a records manager could be chosen to keep a project log. The records manager should keep the following information about each interview:

- Who was interviewed.
- Who was the interviewer.
- How long was the interview.
- What was the date and time of the interview.
- How many tapes or disks were used.
- Whether the interview has been transcribed.

Make a file for each interview which includes this information:

- Name, address, phone number of the interviewee.
- Time and date of the interview.
- A short biography of the interviewee.
- Letters or notes about arranging the interview.
- A summary of the interview, the subjects that were talked about and the names of the people discussed.
- The consent or release form.
- Explanation of restrictions on the use of the interview.
- Other libraries or archives where a copy of the interview can be found.
- Name, address, phone numbers of the interviewer.



# Transcribing Interviews

*Transcribing is writing word for word what you hear when you play back a recorded interview. Spoken language is very different from written language. Spoken language is less formal; it is looser with more rambling and run-on sentences. So a transcript of an oral interview is not at all like formal written language.*

*Transcribing:* listening to a recording of an interview and writing it out exactly as it was spoken

*Transcript:* all the pages of the written word-for-word copy of the interview

You and your literacy group may be thinking only of your project which will be done in a few months or a year. But the information you have collected through recorded interviews is valuable original research. With a little more work you can create material that will be of use to future literacy groups and to other researchers as well.

## **Why Transcribe an Interview?**

- You can get information more easily from a written transcript than from a recording. You can quickly skim a written transcript to look for specific information, but you can't do that with a recording.
- Recordings are sometimes difficult to hear clearly. The quality of the recording may be lost over time and interviewees sometimes speak quietly or with a dialect that not everyone can understand.
- Transcripts can easily be kept in libraries and other public places where people will have access to them in the future.
- Listening and transcribing gives the transcriber a chance to explore the miracle and complexity of language. When you transcribe, you really pay attention to language and how people use it. Transcribers become more aware of the structure of their language: vocabulary, morphology (the different small parts that make up one word), sentence structure and pronunciation. If the interviews are with Elders, younger people will have the chance to hear more traditional and complex Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun.
- Transcribing gives interviewers a chance to critique their interview style and to make changes for future interviews.

## Issues to Think About Before Transcribing

- Transcribing is just plain hard work. It is slow, tedious and very detailed. Professionals estimate six to twelve hours of transcriptions for each hour of taped recording.<sup>1</sup>
- If your group includes very young people or those with weaker language and literacy skills, you may want to hire a professional transcriber to ensure accurate transcripts. You need to plan and budget for this from the beginning of your project.
- However, the people who do the interviews may be the best ones to do the transcriptions because they know the storyteller and were present for the actual interview. If your group plans to transcribe, do the transcriptions as soon as possible after the interview while everything is still fresh in the interviewers' minds.
- Even if you hire a professional to do the transcribing, people in the oral history group should transcribe a few passages that are of interest to them. It will give them valuable exposure to language in all its complexities.
- When people speak in non-standard dialects, how will you transcribe their words? Professionals agree that you should be faithful to the exact words of the speaker. Don't change their grammar or vocabulary if it is different from the standard form. Each speaker's unique way of speaking is part of their life story. However, use standard spelling. Do not try to spell a word in a way that reflects the storyteller's accent or pronunciation. For example, if someone says in English, "I hadded 't go home." write "I had to go home." Or if someone says in Inuktitut "pijaqtuq", write "ai and iq".

## Tips for Transcribing

- To practise transcribing, group members could interview each other and then transcribe the interviews. This practice session will help to demonstrate the importance of transcribing carefully in order to preserve the exact meaning of the interviewee's words.

<sup>1</sup> From *Like It Was, A Complete Guide to Writing Oral History* by Cynthia Stokes Brown, published by Teachers and Writers Collaborative, New York, 1988



- When you are ready to transcribe interviews use only copies of the recordings. The master copy should never be used for transcriptions or research because every time a recording is replayed, its sound quality is lowered.
  - Discuss and agree upon a 'transcription format guide' which shows the format and style your group chooses for transcribing. Then all your transcripts will be consistent. Because oral speech is so different from formal written language, you will have many questions about what to do with pauses, interruptions or asides and where to put periods to indicate the end of sentences. Here are some examples from a transcription format guide:
    - ☑ Use last names (or use initials) to indicate when the interviewer and interviewee are speaking. Underline the initials or name.
    - ☑ Use ellipsis points (...) for pauses.
    - ☑ Use square brackets when the transcriber adds comments or information to explain meaning in a passage: ITK [Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami].
    - ☑ Put non-verbal information in brackets: [laughs], [smiles], [pauses], [holds ulu in her hand], [uses hand to suggest height].
    - ☑ If you can't understand a word after listening to it several times, put a question mark in brackets in place of the word: Johnny left town in (?) – and leave a space where the word can be added later.
    - ☑ If a track or tape ends in the middle of a sentence, write that in brackets: Then we moved to... (continued on track 1, tape 2).
- These examples are not official standards. You can agree upon your own transcription guide or you can borrow a guide from an established oral history program and adapt it. The goal is to create consistent transcripts.
- Transcribe both the interviewer's questions and the interviewee's responses.
  - If your recorder has a counter, insert counter numbers in brackets in bold every 2 pages or at the beginning of a new topic. [85]
  - Transcribe everything. Even transcribe filler words such as *well*, *um* or *you know* in English and *ilaa*, *ingna-aa*, *aam* and *pui* in Inuktitut.
  - Double-space your transcripts – so you can easily edit them later with a partner. To edit, take turns reading the transcript to each other, with the other partner making corrections.

- If it is appropriate, ask the interviewee to review the transcript.
- A storyteller may use words that are only familiar in her own region or community – words that others might not know. You could ask her to explain them during the interview. Or you could add a glossary or word list to your transcript.
- If the storyteller speaks for a while about something unrelated to your interview, you could leave it out of the transcript. But show in the transcript that you have not transcribed this portion. Others may be interested in it and may choose to listen to that section of the recording. Example: [Last 10 minutes of side 2 was not transcribed. In that part Anulik tells about her stay in the hospital in Winnipeg.]

### **Transcript Format**

- The heading at the beginning of the transcript and of each session should include the following information:  
 Project Name:  
 Tape #:  
 Interviewee:  
 Interviewer:  
 Date:  
 Location:  
 Transcriber:
- Tape and session changes should be indicated in the body of the transcript in bold: **Begin tape 4, side A. Begin Session 2**
- Write out the interviewer's and interviewee's names in full at the beginning of each session. After that use initials or last names to indicate who is talking.

Here is an example of an interview done by the Kitikmeot Heritage Society:

*Tape 1 Page Two*

*Kuukyuak Phase II August 6 – 13, 1997*

*Interviewer: Kim Crockatt*

*Translator: Emily Angulalik*

*Original tapes held by Kitikmeot Heritage Society*

*Interview with James Taipana – Elder, Baker Lake*

Q: What did you remember about Perry River and coming back here?

A: This is the land where I have grown up, taught by my parents how to survive and I have been thinking quite often in returning back to the land where I was raised.

Q: Did you remember anything?

A: It brought a lot of memories.

Q: Did your family have a camp?

A: We would set up spring camp in little islands around this area. I would camp with Angulalik and his family. I would come to Perry River to trade.

Q: Where did you spend your seasons?

A: We would spend our spring camps along the river side and up to the rapids in Ittimnigut.

Q: Did you spend your spring camp along the Baker Lake area?

A: I have not been to Baker Lake at that time.

Q: From Perry River did you move to Cambridge Bay?

A: Yes. Angulalik and his family remained here at Perry River, from Perry River to Cambridge Bay and from Cambridge Bay we moved to Baker Lake via aeroplane, that's where we remained since.

Q: Were there a lot of people from Baker Lake to trade at Perry River, did you remember some people?

A: People from the Garry Lake (Hanninngayuk) area came here to trade.

Q: Was there any kind of trade or would other people come to visit?

A: Yes. I remember people coming from the Garry Lake area when Ekvana and Angulalik were newlyweds, people started coming. Tapatai came with a missionary by dog team along with Otak and Ugyuk. Their clothing was different from ours – their trousers were long, I started thinking ‘maybe their trousers are wide enough to ---- and also their stockings were so much longer than ours’.

*Tape 1 – Page Three*

*Interview with Taipana*

Q: Who are your parents?

A: My father’s name was Utugauk, my mother’s name was Tikkikluk. My siblings were Panaktannoak, I was second, a sister name Aulayuk, Mingilgak and Okalitana is the youngest.

Q: Were your parents from this area?

A: Yes, this area, Ellice River and Kulgayuk. My birthplace was in Ellice River. Kuunayuk is where I learned to hunt and survive, where I became a young man and where I was chosen a bride.

Q: Where was your wife from?

A: My wife was from the Perry River area, her name was Unnguk. My eldest brother Panaktannoak came to Perry River along with myself to pick her up. This is where we remained and raised a family.

Q: How many children did you have with your first wife?

A: Eldest child was Kolaohok a female; second to her was Amegainek; younger than Amegainek is Tikkiklok wife of Jimmy Wingnek, these were the children with his first wife. There was a fourth child born the same day as Amegainek, his twin brother. He was adopted out but did not live, he was adopted to Hovak and Kanayuk. He suffocated while asleep, and another child suffocated just shortly after being born. We had had five children, me and my first wife.

Q: Did you trade with Angulalik and what did you do around this area as a young man?

A: Yes. When his first trading post was located at Flagstaff Island that's the time Angulalik was with one of his first wives. Ekvana commented that's when both of Angulalik's wives were still alive. From there Angulalik would take in kabloonaks to and from the area. In the spring time when I first became employed by Angulalik. I started work with Angulalik by trading foxes.

Q: Did you help him trade furs?

A: Yes. That's when his first wife was still alive I have never left him but in his early retirement when he was married to Ekvana I left him. I remember travelling by ship with Angulalik and his family to Cambridge Bay. I would still have been employed if it weren't for my illness, tuberculosis. From there I left work all together.



## Translation

You may want to translate your transcript into English. If so, it is easier to translate from a transcript than from a recording.

## What If You Don't Have Time to Do a Transcript?

If your project is a short one, you may not have time to do transcripts. Or you may not have the money to hire professionals. Here are two other ways to document your interview.

## Indexing

Indexing involves listening to the recorded interview and listing all the topics that were discussed, with the counter or track number.

Example:

James Taipana  
By Kim Crockatt  
08/08/97

Tape 1 Side A

004 Returning to Perry River  
018 Spring camp  
050 Moving to Baker Lake

## Interview Summary

Write a summary for each interview, whether it is transcribed or not. Interview summaries will quickly show people about the topic of the interview. Writing summaries is an important literacy skill for your group members to acquire. But it takes practice to be able to identify main points and write a summary.

***Here are some suggestions for how to teach learners to do summaries:<sup>2</sup>***

*What is a summary?*

A summary is a shorter, concise version of an original text. It includes the main idea of the original text and some important supporting information or details.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from *Teaching the Language Arts* by Cathy Collins Block, published by Allyn and Bacon, in 2001. Also from *Reading Instruction that Makes Sense* by Mary Tarasoff, published by Active Learning Institute, 2001, available through Grass Roots Press.

- Model the summarizing process more than once, thinking out loud as you demonstrate it.
- Provide guided practice with the learners.
- Go through the process several times as a group with different materials.
- Provide feedback.
- Break into smaller chunks – don't start with a summary of a complete interview. Begin with summarizing a short conversation, a small section of an interview, short radio or TV interviews or written paragraphs.
- Identify good summaries from a variety of examples.
- Practise evaluating summaries – including the learners' own summaries after they have some experience.

Here are some guidelines you could give to the learners:

- Underline or highlight important words in the original text.
- Find the main idea of the text and a few important details that support it.
- Write in complete sentences.
- Delete repeated information.
- Delete unimportant information.
- Combine ideas with the same subject.
- Think of a category to replace lists of details eg. Sea mammals for a list including seals, belugas and narwhales.
- Remove details that are not about the main subject.
- Restate in fewer words.
- Do not include personal opinions.

The following web sites contain information on writing summaries:

- <http://www.turnerfenton.com/departme/english/strategies.htm>
- [http://www.eqao.com/eqao/home\\_page/pdf\\_e/02/02p018e.pdf](http://www.eqao.com/eqao/home_page/pdf_e/02/02p018e.pdf)
- <http://www.masters.ab.ca/bdyck/justice/web%20page/summary/>

# Writing and Publishing

## How to Write and Publish Oral Histories

*Recorded interviews and transcripts are interesting to researchers. But let's face it, transcripts are too long and rambling for most readers. The conversation usually drifts back and forth from topic to topic and repeats itself.*

*But your group can create absorbing articles, short stories or books from the raw material of the transcripts.*

### How Do We Start the Writing Process?<sup>1</sup>

#### ***Start by analyzing the interview.***

Here are some ways to do that:

- Organize the interview in order of time. When you do an interview, the storytelling often jumps back and forth in time. You ask the storyteller to clarify something that she spoke about earlier. Or she remembers a point about the early years that she forgot to tell you in the last interview. Read the transcript or listen to the interview and put all the events in a sequence from the earliest to the most recent.
- Look for themes. What are the issues, events and meanings that run through the interviews?<sup>2</sup>
- Look at patterns, key phrases and speech patterns. Look not only at *what* is said, but *how* it is said.<sup>2</sup>
- Together the group might brainstorm some questions that help guide your analysis:<sup>2</sup>
  - What are the most important points in the interview?
  - What do these stories tell us about history?
  - How do the different interviews compare to each other?
- Listen to the interviews looking for categories: life events and stories, how to do a skill, child rearing, hunting stories, beliefs, family relationships, etc. Label different parts of the interview according to the categories.

<sup>1</sup> Most of the ideas in this section are adapted from *Like It Was* by Cynthia Stokes Brown, published by Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 1988

<sup>2</sup> From *Talking Gumbo: A Teacher's Guide to Using Oral History in the Classroom* by Dean, Daspit and Munro, published by the T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, 1998



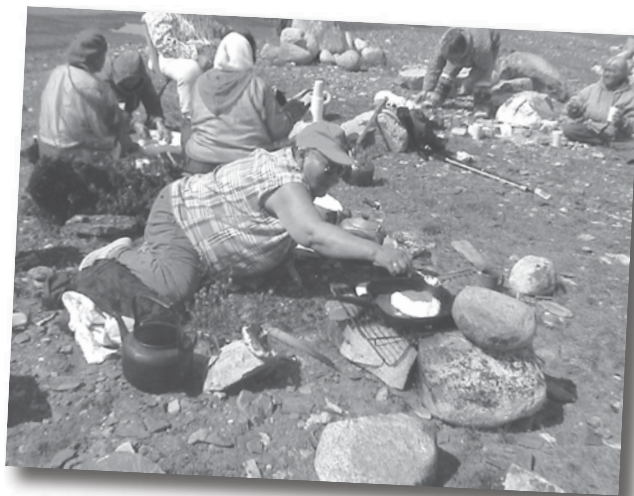
- Make a list of ‘memorable phrases’ spoken by the storyteller in the interview. You might use these words of wisdom to inspire you in your writing. You could type them up in a large font and create posters for your work area. Later you can use these memorable phrases in your writing as titles, subtitles or captions under photographs.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Writing Short Pieces from an Interview***

- Choose a *focus* for your piece of writing. Look at the themes and categories that you identified in the interview. You won’t write about everything that the storyteller spoke about. Which theme or category interests you?
- Decide who you are writing for. Who is your *audience*? Nunavummiut in general, community residents, group members, children? How you write will depend on who your audience is.
- *Choose* the parts of the interview that fit into your theme or category. You have to try to keep your story moving along fast enough to keep your readers engaged. So you may not be able to put in everything that interests you.
- Decide if you are going to be in your story or not. There are a few different ways to approach this:
  - Keep the interview format, with your questions and the storyteller’s responses. Magazine articles are sometimes done in this way.
  - Remove yourself from the story altogether. Use only the storyteller’s words, making the story flow along from one part to the next. You might need to invent a few sentences that reflect your questions. You might use your own words in the beginning where you introduce the storyteller and the process you went through together.
  - Let the storyteller speak in the first person (I or we) and you write connecting passages in the third person (he, she or they). Weave the two styles together to create a balanced story.
- You will likely have to write your own *transitions* to make one part of the story flow along to the next part. These might be a few sentences that help your reader understand the story better.

<sup>2</sup> From *Talking Gumbo: A Teacher’s Guide to Using Oral History in the Classroom* by Dean, Daspit and Munro, published by the T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, 1998

- Then you will have to write a *beginning* and an *end* to your story.  
The beginning could be:
  - the storyteller's own words for a paragraph or two;
  - a short biography of the storyteller's life;
  - a description of the setting where you interviewed the storyteller; or
  - or you could start with the reason you wanted to interview the storyteller.The ending could be:
  - the storyteller's own words to wrap up the story;
  - a summary written by you, explaining why the story is important; or
  - your feelings and opinions about the interview process as you experienced it.
- Choose photographs to go in the story and captions for them.
- Write a title and subtitles if you want to use them.
- Edit your piece of writing. Give it to other people and get their comments. Then edit it with a partner looking for sequence – is everything in the best order? Look at how you organized your paragraphs. In the final edit look at sentence structure, grammar and spelling.



## Four Examples of Writing from Interviews

### 1. *Writing in interview style with questions and responses*

This example of writing in the interview style is from *Travelling and Surviving on Our Land* by George Agiaq Kappianaq and Cornelius Nutaraq.<sup>3</sup> The editors have chosen specific selections from the interviews and organized them into topics within chapters. An introduction gives background information, but the rest of the book is written in question and response format.

Agiaq: Recollections of the Past

*Can you tell us more about your first catch?*

**Agiaq:** My first real catch was important to me, and I will always remember it. It was a large bull caribou. My father helped me get it. It was so close to me that I could see it chewing. I could see its eyes moving. It was no surprise that I killed it.

*What was your second kill?*

**Agiaq:** It was a nurraq, a caribou calf.

*Do you remember when you got your first seal?*

**Agiaq:** Yes, I was still a boy then. Although I was very proud of it, I cannot remember if it was male or female. Perhaps, because it was not my first kill, I didn't take note of this.

*So these were your first kills?*

**Agiaq:** Yes, my first kill was a big bull caribou. We were living in an area where there were no caribou then. I was a little bit older when we moved to where the caribou were.

*Was it only after you had your first catch that you were able to get a wife?*

**Agiaq:** It was long after my first kill that I got married. I did not get married when I wanted to get married. I had a prearranged marriage, and my wife started living with us. She was an orphan. My mother looked after her.

<sup>3</sup> From the *Inuit Perspectives on the 20th Century* series published by Nunavut Arctic College in Iqaluit in 2001.

2. ***Writing an introduction and using only the interviewee's words to tell the story***

In this excerpt from an article in *Inuktitut* magazine, January 1983, the editor uses the words of the interviewee, Ekaksak Amagoalik, taken from an interview with Moses Nowkawalk, a reporter for the magazine. The editor chooses certain passages from the interview. He uses Ekaksak's words directly in first person (I, we) without quotation marks. He writes an introduction which explains the story that follows.

**Journey to the North Pole**

On March 4th, 1982, three Norwegian adventurers, Ragner Thorseth, Trygve Berge and Eldar Fortun departed from Resolute Bay in a Twin Otter, for Eureka, on Ellesmere Island, bound for the North Pole. With them was the man they had chosen as their guide, Ekaksak Amagoalik of Resolute Bay, who, according to Thorseth, was the most qualified guide around, even though Ekaksak had frozen a thumb in the week previous to the trip. Ragner wrote in a recent article: "Since I had been with Ekaksak on sledge trips in the Northwest Territories in Canada, I knew he kept his promises, and even with a right hand out of commission, he was worth more to the expedition than any one hundred percent sound man I knew or could have enlisted in time."

Driving three Bombardier Nordic skidoos, pulling Norwegian sleds, the party, eager to be on its way, set out immediately from Ellesmere Island, bound for the North Pole and Spitzbergen. So began the arduous trip to the North Pole, a trip that had been attempted about one hundred times before, and had rarely been successfully completed.

The following is Ekaksak Amagoalik's own account of this historic adventure, taken from an interview with Moses Nowkawalk, an *Inuktitut* magazine staff reporter.

Ekaksak presently works as a night watchman on the alert for polar bears that might roam into the mining settlement on Little Cornwallis Island.

### Starting Out

When we left Ellesmere Island the ice was comparatively smooth - and no wonder, we were travelling along a bay where the ice is landfast. Further away from the land the shifting ice was somewhat rough and some parts were impassable. I was not apprehensive about the rough ice. I was more concerned about crossing over broken shifting ice, sometimes having to skim over open water where one would sink should he stop. This is what I was most afraid of.

On our way to the pole, we passed not too far from Greenland. Unfortunately, as Robeson Channel has very strong currents, we could not travel very near Greenland. Instead we headed directly to the North Pole. It took us several weeks to reach our destination.

**3. *The writer lets the storyteller speak in first person (I, we) and writes connecting passages in third person (he, she, they)***

This example is an excerpt from an article in *Inuktitut* magazine, Winter 1985. The author, William Belsey, starts by introducing the storyteller, David Serkoak, in third person (he). Throughout the article he quotes from the storyteller, using first person (I) and putting those passages between quotation marks. The author writes connecting passages to help weave together the parts of the interview he has chosen for his article.

A Home and Native Land  
by William Belsey

David Serkoak was born at Ennadai Lake in the early 1950s. He was only four or five years old when his family was forced to move from their traditional camping area at Ennadai Lake. David was too young to remember much from those times, but his late father Miki, his mother Kaho, as well as other family members have contributed much to his knowledge of that early time in his life.

“From what I have gathered from various sources,” he says, “starvation was approaching us, although some of the people at Ennadai Lake were living quite well. Hard times came once in a while, but nothing very drastic. I don’t believe that many people had much advance warning that they would have to move. Some of them found out the same day they were to be moved. When we returned to Ennadai recently, we stopped at a traditional camping spot where, the Elders told us, a vehicle came to pick us up one day – we were told we had to move. The people had to pack so quickly that many articles were left behind.

“We were moved to the Henik Lake area. That was when the real trouble hit us. I guess it was new for some of the people. The hardest time for them was between Ennadai Lake and the coast. I think the idea behind the move had something to do with a change in caribou migration patterns, which meant that the caribou were farther away from the Ennadai Lake area. I think the government wanted the Ihalmiut to move to the coast so that we might become fishermen and make ourselves useful.”

Serkoak also recalls the way his mother and father spoke of their contact with Gabriel Gely in those days. “I don’t remember anyone directly. I only learned about Gabe after talking to my mother and father. They believed him to be a good man. I know that my father talked of him as a good friend who helped to give us a hand when we needed it in Ennadai Lake.”

**4. *Using only the words of the interviewee to tell the story***

Look at the example of an interview transcript towards the end of the previous section, *Transcribing Interviews*. You will see the transcript of an interview with James Taipana. Compare the transcript with the story called, *My Life* (Autobiography) by James Taipana in the *Stories* section. The transcript has been adapted to the style of a story.

## Publishing Your Stories

Here are some possibilities:

- Ask the local newspaper if they would be interested in running a series of oral history stories written by your group.
- Approach magazines such as the inflight magazines, *Up Here* or *Above and Beyond*.
- Look for funding at the beginning of the project to get your final stories published.
- Create a web site and post your stories there. This is a great way to get Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun reading material onto the internet. You could also post audio portions of the actual interview. This is another place where the ‘memorable phrases’ that you found in the interview could be used.
- Ask the Department of Education, Teaching and Learning Centres if they are interested in publishing your work.
- Create your own photocopied books to give out to the community, to sell or to keep in the library or Community Learning Centre. You will need to make a cover, decide on photographs or illustrations and decide how to bind the books.

You can find more suggestions for writing oral histories in the *Project Ideas* section of this manual under *Writing Projects*.

# Preservation and Accessibility

## Preserving the Interviews and Making Them Accessible to the Public

*When your group completes your interviews, you will feel a sense of satisfaction. You will be proud of your important work – preserving the valuable knowledge of Elders before it is too late. But you may not be aware of the long-term impact of your work. Your efforts will have influence well beyond your own time and place. The recordings you have created will be a valuable resource far into the future and to people from other communities, regions and even other countries.*

Your recordings must be carefully preserved for the use of future generations. The best way to do this is to send the master copies or originals of your recordings to an archive or museum that can store them in ideal conditions.

Otherwise you need to consult with others in your community and agree on a safe place to keep your recordings. Get professional advice on storing the recordings. Always keep a second set of copies of the interviews in another location – in case of fire, water damage or other problems.

Here are some suggestions for storage of recordings:

- Make at least two copies of the recording for your group to work with and to keep in the community before you send the master copies to an archive.
- Store recordings vertically, not stacked on their sides.
- Store recordings away from heat sources such as radiators and electrical equipment.
- Label all recordings with waterproof colourfast markers.
- Cassette tapes are not the best way to store interviews for the long term. Cassettes must be rewound regularly. If they are left unplayed, the sound on one layer of the tape is imprinted on the next layer. This causes an ‘echo’ on the tape. The tapes must be played at ‘play’ speed once a year to prevent this problem.



## How Will People in Your Community Have Access to Your Interviews?

- When you are finished working with the interviews, store the recordings with your written summaries of the interviews. You might package them in zip-lock bags or special library storage bags.
- See if your local library would agree to keep and catalogue the interviews. They could lend them out to people in the community in the same way that they lend books and other resources.
- If the library in your community is not able to keep the interviews, you may be able to find another group such as an Elders' group or the Community Learning Centre to look after the recordings. If no group is able to safely store your recordings right now, it may be best just to keep them in a safe place until a community group is ready to act as an oral history lending library.

### *Source for Plastic Library Bags*

Bro-dart

109 Roy Blvd., Braneida Industrial Park

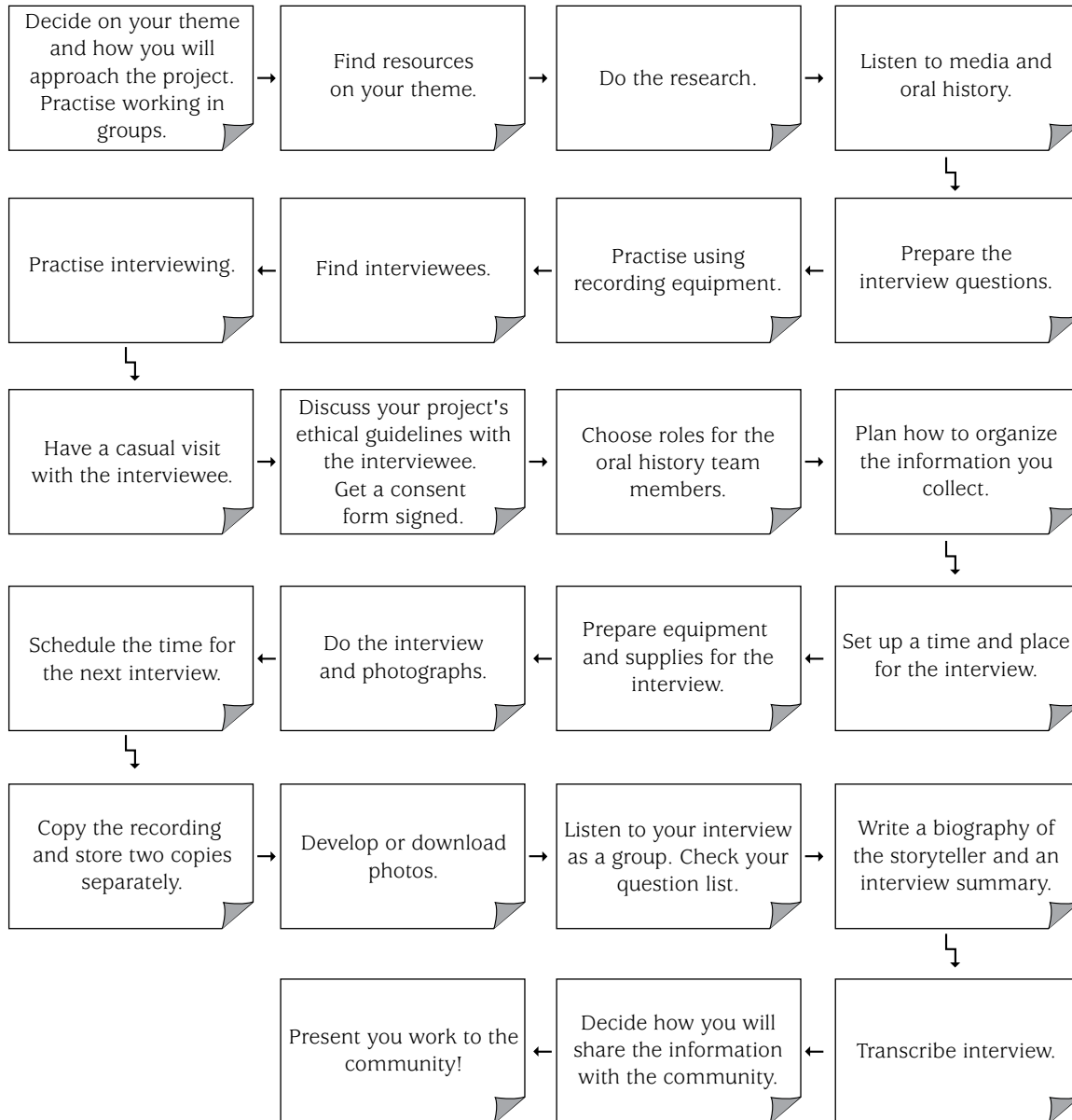
Brantford, Ontario N3R 7K1

Telephone: 519-759-4350



## The Process Flow Chart

### *For the Oral History Project with Interviewing*



# Project Ideas



*“The pupils make fair progress,  
though necessarily somewhat slow because of their  
total ignorance of the English language.”*

*From a 1906 report by Reverend Jabez Marsh, an Anglican missionary who opened  
the first residential school in the NWT in Hay River in 1894.<sup>1</sup>*

*“I have succeeded in teaching several of the  
Eskimos to read in syllabic characters;  
they are very eager to learn.”*

*Edmund Peck, written in 1877*

*“The culture, customs, traditions, skills  
and way of life of the Indian and Eskimo must be  
given their rightful place in the schools and in the  
course of study there are many things  
non-professionals can teach better than you  
(teachers) can, and we must avail ourselves of all the  
resources of the community.”*

*Norm Mcpherson at Teacher Orientation in 1972*

<sup>1</sup> These three quotes are from *Dreams & Visions Education in the Northwest Territories from Early Days to 1984* by Norman Mcpherson, published by GNWT Department of Education, 1991



There are at least two ways of approaching community projects:

**1. *Research Focused***

Your group's main focus may be collecting information for an oral history theme. But when the research is finished, you may then decide that you would like to share your information with the community. You can discuss, as a group, what would be the best way to present the knowledge to others. You might choose one or more of the project ideas presented here or make up your own ideas for a project, depending on the interests of the group. This approach might be appropriate for a long-term project, perhaps one that lasts through the entire course of a full-time literacy program – three to six months or more.

or...

**2. *Project Focused***

You may want to do a shorter-term project. In that case, your group could decide on one or more projects that interest you and listen to an existing oral history recording or read a story that will be the basis and inspiration of the project. You will still integrate the four language skills into your project – reading, writing, listening and speaking, as well as numeracy. But your project won't involve as much time for research and interviewing.

Literacy group members will build their Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun language skills almost without realizing it – because they will be focused on the research and the project, not on literacy and language skills. This is real-life meaningful learning that enhances a whole person naturally through the working to complete the project:

- Builds self-esteem and personal identity – heart and spirit.
- Builds literacy and critical thinking skills – mind.
- Builds practical and physical skills – body.



# Language and Literacy Skills

## How Can Oral History Projects Help Develop Language and Literacy Skills?

Inuit culture is rich in oral history. These stories, whether told aloud, recorded or written down, are a valuable resource for language learning and the development of literacy skills.

The development of language and literacy skills is a complex process that takes place over time. Building these skills is most effective when both the content and the experience of learning is made meaningful for learners. Language learning is made meaningful when the content is connected to the cultural, social, and political context of the learner's life. However, it is equally important that learners have opportunities to practice using language in different ways for different purposes and in different contexts.

Below we have summarized how oral history projects can support the development of language and literacy skills through the practical use of language.

### Developing Speaking Skills

- Learning and using new vocabulary – traditional Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun words that are not used by younger Inuit now and vocabulary related to technical skills.
- Developing speaking skills with a variety of audiences in different contexts – one-on-one, with small groups, with Elders, groups of mixed ages, community groups, partner organizations, professional organizations, on radio and over the telephone.
- Developing speaking skills for different purposes – to organize, negotiate, discuss, debate, invite, present, inform, announce, instruct, entertain, plan and host an event.

### Developing Listening Skills

- Listening in different contexts and with different audiences – during group discussions, brainstorming and feedback sessions, in a large audience, with peers, with Elders, with community members.
- Listening for different purposes – in order to transcribe stories and songs, to respond, to take notes, to get specific information, to remember important details, to learn new vocabulary.



### Developing Reading Skills

- Reading different kinds of text – brainstormed lists, script outlines, articles, books, instructions, transcribed stories, e-mails, advertising, commentaries, web sites and maps.
- Developing different kinds of reading skills – skimming, scanning, comprehension, predicting, decoding strategies, using personal experiences and context clues to get meaning from text, etc.
- Reading for different purposes – to find specific information, to develop knowledge of a topic, for pleasure, to learn a skill, to edit.

### Developing Writing Skills

- Writing in different ways or forms – making questions and lists, labeling, composing formal letters and essays, taking notes, making posters and pamphlets, creating poetry, songs, dialogue, narrative and captions, scripting and journaling.
- Writing for different audiences – Elders, children, families, community members, funders, etc.
- Writing for different purposes – to entertain, inform, present, persuade, self-reflect, request, make plans, instruct, explain, summarize, announce, invite, to give an opinion.

### Developing Numeracy Skills

Numeracy is an important part of literacy and being literate. It refers to a person's ability to effectively and confidently work with numbers. It includes the ability to calculate numbers, read graphs, tables, charts and time lines, measure and estimate.

We encourage literacy instructors to integrate opportunities for learners to develop numeracy skills while working on oral history projects. The following ideas are ways groups could build numeracy skills through oral history projects:

- Creating budgets for project costs.
- Checking maps and calculating distances traveled in the stories – between camps, hunting grounds and family settlements.
- Reading maps and plotting trips.

- Comparing costs to buy items at the time of the story and now.
- Working with community statistics.
- Checking with Environment Canada to compare average temperatures and precipitation in the time periods the group is researching. Calculating the average change in temperature. Working with ratios to compare temperatures.

## **Intergenerational Literacy**

Intergenerational literacy is the way children and other adult family members use language skills, literacy skills and cultural information to do day-to-day tasks, to keep important traditional and cultural knowledge alive<sup>1</sup>. Literacy programs that include people of all ages help to enrich and develop the literacy skills of both adults and children at the same time. Your group may decide to invite children, Elders and other extended family members to participate in your Oral History project. Below we have made some suggestions for including family members with reference to specific kinds of projects:

- *Photo Stories and Calendars (see Visual Projects)* – Literacy group members could create a family photo story calendar. Adults and older children could write stories to go along with photographs of themselves doing something special. Younger children could orally tell the story they want to go with their photograph and someone can write it for them. Group members could include old photographs and get stories and photographs from grandparents or other relatives. An Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun calendar in people’s homes will allow children to see more Inuktitut print in their environment. Families can read the stories or text on the calendar together. Children will recognize the names of the days and months in Inuktitut because they will see it every day.
- *Textile Art (see Visual Projects)* – Make this a mother-and-daughter project or a grandmother-mother-and-daughter project. Literacy group members can invite their daughters (or mothers) to be involved in the process from the very beginning. Schedule a time for the mother-and-daughter project after school two or three times a week. Mother and daughter teams can listen to a story together, and create a written story and a piece of textile art together based on the story. Hold a show or special event where people can see the work of these mother-and-daughter teams.

<sup>1</sup> See *Why Intergenerational Literacy?* in the *Building Language and Literacy Skills Through Oral History Projects* section for more information on intergenerational learning.

or...

- *Create a family quilt* – Literacy group members could collect pieces of fabric from clothing belonging to people in their family – special pieces of clothing that remind everyone of that person. Someone may have a piece of the parka that their child wore at age three; and a piece of material from a wedding dress; and a piece of the skin of their son’s caribou parka that he wore when he first went out hunting with his dad. Collect stories of all these pieces of fabric. Create a wall hanging or quilt with these pieces of fabric; write up the stories and display them together with the textile art.
- *Books* (see *Writing Projects*) – Hold an after school program run by literacy group members. Children could research and write their own family stories. Have children read the book written by the literacy group and create visual projects, videos, demonstrations or plays based on the book.
- *Storytelling on the Radio* (see *Oral Projects*) – An excellent intergenerational literacy program. Families can listen to the stories together on the radio and follow along on a printed copy of the story together.
- *Talking Books* (see *Oral Projects*) – Families can enjoy talking books together for pleasure or for reading practice. Group members’ children could come to the literacy program once a week or twice a week to read talking books with their parents. Hold sessions for younger children using the children’s talking books and for older children using magazine and newspaper articles or Elders’ stories.
- *Family Trees* (see *Visual Projects*) – Families could work together to create a family history and a family tree. Provide time after school two or three times a week for children to come to the literacy program to work on the project with their parents. Invite group members’ parents and other Elders to the literacy program. Hold family potluck dinners or other events during which family groups can work together on their projects. If the projects are displayed in a public place, it will add to the amount of Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun in the environment. This reinforces for children the value of their language and allows them to absorb interesting and personally relevant information in their language.

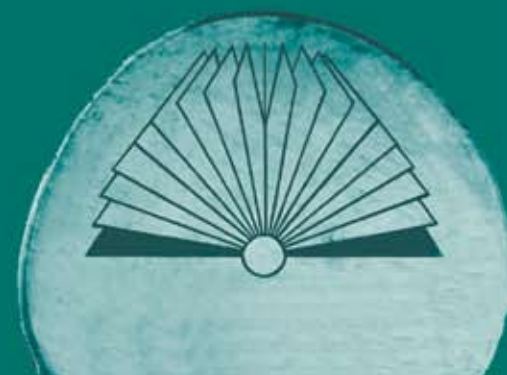


*“One who has only an oral tradition  
thinks of language in this way;  
my words exist at the level of my voice.  
If I do not speak with care,  
my words are wasted.  
If I do not listen with care, words are lost.  
If I do not remember carefully,  
the very purpose of words is frustrated.  
This respect for words suggests  
an inherent morality in man’s  
understanding and use of language.”*

*N. Scott Momaday, Kiowa Native American author*

From *Spoken Here* by Mark Abley, published by Random House Canada, 2003

# Active Projects



*Simply by becoming Christian, many Eskimos have had to add a dog to their team.*

*On north Baffin Island every Eskimo above the age of six has his own Prayer Book and New Testament printed in syllabic character writing. In addition, every family has one or two or often three books of the Old Testament, plus notebooks and paper for jotting down Bible quotations and references.*

*If there are six people in a family, the total weight, plus that of one small bag of flour, means an additional dog on the team.*

*Doug Wilkinson in Land of the Long Day*

# Public Presentation or Open House

## Ideas for Holding a Public Presentation or Open House

- When your group has completed its research, you may want to share your work with the community in the form of a public presentation or an open house.
- A public presentation is an event that happens at a specific time; for example you might plan a presentation for Saturday afternoon, 2:00 to 4:00 pm. For an open house you might set up displays which could be open to the public for one, two or more days; your group would be available to explain your work to people. You might do some short demonstrations or performances throughout the open house.
- Decide on a time and place to hold the presentation or open house.
- Discuss with the group different ways of presenting the information. Brainstorm all the possible ideas and then the group members can try to reach a consensus about the methods they like best. Depending on the form your research took, you will have different options for your presentation:
  - Visual displays on large presentation boards with pictures and text.
  - A video screening.
  - An oral presentation with demonstrations, objects, photographs, slides.
  - A cultural performance with singing, drumming, dancing.
  - An interactive display in which the audience can participate in activities.
  - A PowerPoint presentation on the computer.
  - A combination of the forms mentioned above.
- Plan your presentation – you may decide to break into groups with each group working on a section of the presentation. Groups can look at each other's work as it progresses and give feedback.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- Hold at least one practice session so everyone has a chance to see how the parts of the presentation fit together and to feel comfortable with their roles.
- Advertise the presentation on the local radio, through posters and invitations.

# Skill Demonstrations

*When you teach a skill to others, you must learn it very well yourself first. You need to think about the steps involved and techniques for being successful at the skill. Passing on a skill gives you a sense of personal and cultural pride.*

## Ideas for Skills Demonstrations

- Learn how to perform a skill – through research, listening to existing oral history recordings, speaking with Elders and through practice. Here are some examples of skills: making a tool, iglu, qajaq, qamutik, preparing skins and sewing an article of clothing, playing a game, drumming, square dancing or throat singing.
- You could teach that skill to other members of your group.
- Teach the skill to children – bring your own children to your literacy group; demonstrate the skill and give the children a chance to try it. Teach a class at school or an after-school session at the library or Community Learning Centre.
- Hold several evening sessions at the Community Learning Centre where other adults can come and learn from you.
- Plan and coordinate events where Elders can demonstrate skills.
- Volunteer to demonstrate skills at a museum or cultural centre – or as part of an orientation for new teachers, government workers or tourists from the south.

## Planning the Event

- First decide if you will need a budget – to pay Elders and buy materials – and if so, where will you get the funding? Plan in advance.
- Once your project is up and running, begin to prepare for your teaching events. First, brainstorm as a group how you are going to introduce and explain the skill. Who is going to do what? Who is going to arrange the space for the event, ask for donations of materials or food, invite guests and Elders, advertise your event? Make a work plan and post it on the wall so everyone can keep track of their jobs.
- If you are going to be speaking at an event, write down what you plan to say on cards. Hold practice sessions in front of your whole group so people can get feedback and feel comfortable with their role.



- Try to use some traditional vocabulary that you've heard from the Elders as they taught you the skill. Think about how you can use these words, explain them and help others learn them. You might make posters showing the meaning of words or handouts that people can take home.
- You could make posters of the steps in performing the skill – with drawings and text. (To make large drawings, project original drawings onto large sheets of paper on the wall with an overhead projector and trace around them.) Put these posters in the room where you are demonstrating the skill.
- You could create PowerPoint presentations on the computer.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- The literacy group members could write journal entries throughout the project. What are your thoughts and feelings about learning the skill and about teaching it to others?



# Skits, Plays or Puppet Plays

## Ideas for Creating Skits or Plays

- Your literacy group may want to use drama to show the ideas you learned through your research. Or drama may be the main focus of your project, so the group could listen to existing recordings to find a story to base a play on.
- To build confidence and to get the literacy group used to working together, the facilitator can include warm up exercises, movement and vocal exercises and improvisational exercises in the literacy program from the start. (See the list of resources at the end of this section.) These exercises can serve as energizers during the research phase of your project and make your group comfortable with the idea of creating a dramatic production.

## Steps in Creating a Skit or Play

### *The Story*

As a group, decide on the topic you want to base your play on. It could be a legend told by Elders or found in a book, a true-life story, or an issue that you want to bring to the attention of your community. Brainstorm all your ideas as a group; then try to agree on one topic. Or instead, small groups could work on one skit or story each; then all the skits can be linked together to make one performance. A skit is a short, often funny, play.

### *Creative Choices*

Look at films and videos of plays produced by other groups to introduce your group to different approaches to theatre. This will give you ideas for ways to show your story or issue visually. (See the list of films at the end of this section.) Hold discussions after you watch a video; brainstorm different dramatic approaches you see in the videos. Make a list of brainstormed ideas on flip chart paper. You might show some of the ideas in the form of drawings instead of writing.

### *Visual Images and Style*

There are many ways you could approach the drama. You may see examples of some of these different techniques in the videos you watch.

What kind of visual images do you want to use in your play to get the message across?

- Will your play include dialogue (characters speaking)? Or will it involve music, drumming and movement? Or mime? Mime shows characters, moods, ideas and events through arm gestures, facial expression and body movements, but no words are used.
- Will you have a narrator telling a story or voicing some details during the play?
- Will you use masks? – The actors could wear masks while they are onstage or hold the mask by a stick attached to it. Sometimes actors change masks throughout the play to show different characters and emotions. In some plays, the actors wear black clothing and masks that are white or brightly coloured on a white base. The lighting shows the masks, but only shows shadowy images of the body movement.
- Will the audience participate in your play? Will you set up some situations where people in the audience respond to the actors or the situation?
- Will you act out natural elements such as rocks, wind and snow?
- Will you create a set – a backdrop and items that remain on stage during the scene? Or will you have an empty stage, leaving the audience to imagine the setting?
- Will you have costumes? Where will you get the costumes or do you plan to make them?
- Will you use sound effects, such as music, wind blowing or water running? Will they be recorded on tape for the performance or done live during the play?
- Do you have performers in your group? Would they like to write music for the play or play an instrument and sing? Will you use traditional drumming and pisiit or throat singing?
- Will you use props (items used by the actors during the play – moveable things)?
- Will you need special lighting and a technical team to operate it?
- Do you need to build a stage or is there somewhere in town that already exists where you can perform your play?

### **Script Outline**<sup>1</sup>

Develop a script outline once you know the story you are going to tell and have some idea of the visual images you want in your play. A script outline tells the story from beginning to end, but without the dialogue. (See *Radio Plays* in the *Oral Projects* section.)

- Brainstorm possible scenes for the play from the story you've chosen. A scene is a part of the play where the action is continuous and a specific part of the story is told.
- Brainstorm on individual sheets of paper, so you can move the order of the scenes around as you develop your script outline.
- For each scene, list the number of actors needed and the role they perform. Discuss the props, costumes, masks, sounds or sets that might be needed.

### **Writing**

When the script outline is complete and you've decided on the style of your play, divide into small groups or pairs. Each group can take several scenes to work on writing. If you have decided to use dialogue, the groups discuss and write the words the actors will speak.

- When your small group is writing the dialogue, physically act out the scene and speak the words. Try it in several different ways and decide as a group which version you like the most. This will make your writing more fun and bring the scene to life. If the scene involves hearing joyful news, how should the actors express the joy? You could even record the different attempts at creating the dialogue; then the group will be able to replay the scene and build on each attempt. You should also write out the body movements the actors will perform, costume or prop changes, and the technical support needed, such as sounds or lighting. Type up each scene when it is complete.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Lessons from Our Oral Tradition, Legends and Theatre for Community Action* by the Arctic Public Legal Education Association and Public Legal Information Association of Newfoundland, 1992, and *Ready for Action, A Popular Theatre Popular Education Manual* by wpirg.org – the Waterloo Public Interest Research Group, Waterloo, Ontario, 1994, 2001

- During the research phase or when you were listening to stories, you will have noted traditional vocabulary and meanings. Try to work some of these words into your dialogue.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.

### ***Put It All Together***

Put all the scenes of the play together, with each group acting out its own scenes. At this point, people can use the written scripts for the dialogue if necessary. The whole group may need to discuss the result and do some rewriting to make the play flow smoothly. Groups can give each other feedback and suggestions. If you create a series of separate skits, discuss how you will tie them together – through music, a narrator, common sets?

### ***Decide and Divide the Work***

Now is the time to finalize your approach – costumes, lighting, sets, props, masks, sound effects, music. Decide who will be responsible for each job. Make a work plan and post it on the wall so everyone can remember their jobs.

### ***Choose the actors***

Who will play which role? Then the actors can begin to learn their parts in the play.

### ***Practice***

Hold as many rehearsals as you need to feel ready and comfortable to perform in front of an audience. When you are nearly ready for a public performance, hold several ‘dress rehearsals’ in which all the actors and the technical teams can try out their roles the way they will happen during a real performance.

### ***Advertise***

When you are ready, advertise the play on radio, TV and posters on local bulletin boards.

### ***Videotape***

Record your performance on videotape if possible.

## ***Journals***

Literacy group members could write journal entries about the progress of their work. What are your thoughts and feelings as you go through the process of creating and performing in a play?

## **Ideas for Creating Puppet Plays**

- Creating a puppet play could be an interesting and fun intergenerational project. You could base your puppet play on a local legend or true-life story. Parents and older children could write the script outline and scenes together. Younger children and parents could create the puppets together.
- You could use the ideas in the *Skits and Plays* section as a guideline for creating script outlines and writing scenes for your puppet play.

## **Making Puppets**

There are many different kinds of puppets you could make:

- *Marionettes* – puppets with strings to make them move.
- *Hand puppets* – made from fabric or skins.
- You could model the heads from paper-mache or clay.
- Finger puppets.
- Puppets mounted on a stick.
- *Rod puppets* – rods are attached to the puppets' hands and used to create hand movements.

## **Northern Films**

- *Artcircq*, 2001, Canada, Igloodik Isuma Productions
- *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner*, 2001, Canada, Igloodik Isuma Productions
- *Chinook Winds: Light and Shadow*, 1997, Canada, Aboriginal Arts Program – Banff Centre for the Arts
- *The Drum Dancer*, 2001, Canada, Kitikmeot Heritage Society
- *In Iirgu's Time*, 1988, USA, Sara Elder and Leonard Kamerling, distributed by Documentary Educational Resources (USA)
- *The Journey of the Stone*, 2001, Canada, Kitikmeot Heritage Society
- *Journey to Nunavut*, 1999, Canada, Martin Kreelak, NFB, IBC
- *Kikkik*, 2000, Canada, Words and Pictures Video



# Story Sacks

## What is a Story Sack?

*A story sack is a large cloth bag that holds a book and an audio recording of the book, as well as props, characters and scenery to bring the story to life. Children and their parents act out the story as they read or listen together. With the props in a story sack, parents who are not strong readers have more ways to get involved with a story and to make reading fun for their children.*

In Canada we have a family literacy program called *The Storysacks Canada Program*. *The Storysacks Canada Program* is an exciting new community literacy program which brings children's books to life for families. *The Storysacks Program* makes use of community assets – it brings together all kinds of people, with many talents and strengths, to create interactive reading kits that make books fun for everyone. The Nunavut Literacy Council is an official trainer for this program. If your literacy or community group would like to get involved in making story sacks, call the literacy development coordinators for information, resources or training.

*The Storysacks Canada Program* is based on discovering people's strengths. Story sacks are made by people in the community. Depending on the story, a story sack might include handmade masks, costumes, dolls, scenery, characters, furniture, houses, iglus or tools. Or it may include stuffed or plastic toys found in someone's toy box or at house sales. When a group of people in the community get together to make story sacks, they use their talents and have fun together, as well as creating a wonderful new resource for families.



*Gorretti Panika of the Nunavut Literacy Council demonstrating her story sack for the book, 'Silatsiavaak' at a Family Literacy Workshop in Arviat.*



## Ideas for Creating Story Sacks

- This would be an excellent project for a sewing and literacy program or a women's literacy program.
- But men can be involved as well – making tools, small houses or furniture, model skidoos and qamutiit. Husbands or other relatives of the literacy group members, community volunteers, carpentry course participants, or Elders' group members might be interested in participating.
- Creating story sacks is a great way to promote Inuktitut literacy. Your literacy group could make a series of story sacks based on Inuktitut books or oral stories and create a lending library for parents who want their children to be excited about reading in Inuktitut. Parents participate in a short training to show them how to use story sacks before they borrow them.
- Your group could team with other organizations in the community so you will have more resources for your story sacks program: an Elders' group, a sewing group, the girl guides and scouts, a school class, a carpentry course, a library committee. Or ask for volunteers to come and work with you on the story sacks program.
- Ask the Nunavut Literacy Council for resources and guidance. We have ideas about what to put in your story sack and how to make it fun and safe for young children.
- You may want to look for funding to buy materials or donations from local businesses.
- Choose written stories, recorded stories or oral stories you have heard in the past. Choose stories that are active and interesting for children.
- Decide how many people would want to work on a story sack together. Perhaps groups of four or five would be a good number. Brainstorm all the items you want to put in your story sack. Make a list. Make a work plan. Who will do which jobs? Post your work plan so everyone in your group will know what jobs they are responsible for.
- Make a recorded version of the story to go in the story sack. (See *Talking Books* in the *Oral Projects* section.)

- If the story is a recorded oral story, type up a written version in large clear print, using the exact words of the storyteller.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- Make a backdrop from cardboard, skin, fabric or light wood. The backdrop will show a background scene from the story. You may have one backdrop or more.
- Each story sack group can decide how they want to make the characters in the story: hand or finger puppets, masks, hats, costumes or handmade dolls. Or you might use stuffed toys, or plastic or wooden animals bought at house sales, dollar stores or found around home. When masks or costumes are used, the children and adults become actors and perform the same actions as in the story. The way you make the characters depends on the interests and skills of your group members and the resources you have available.
- Make or find props that go along with the story. These are things like a kakivak, guitar, rifle, fishing net – anything that will help people act out the story. The props don't have to be perfectly like the real thing or like the illustration in the book. They can be realistic, but they can also be silly or funny.

*Here are some ideas about safety:*

- Use thread to design the eyes and nose instead of buttons or commercially produced plastic eyes.
- Use fabric to fill dolls, not seeds or beans.
- Look at labels to make sure toys are non-toxic.
- Use fire-resistant materials.
- Don't include small toys or parts that might be swallowed. The inside cardboard roll from paper-towel is a good test for size. If a toy or part can pass through the roll, don't include it in your story sack.
- Check all stuffed toys carefully to make sure they are safe and washable.
- Find a non-fiction book that relates to your story.
- Make a large cloth bag – large enough to hold your backdrop and all your characters and props. Put the name of the book on the outside of your story sack. Use felt, cloth or skin letters or fabric paint.

- Create games to go in your story sack – games that relate to the story. (See list of web sites at the end of this section.)
  - Memory games
  - Matching games
  - Card or board games
  - Rhyming games
  - Number games
  - Singing, clapping or dancing games
  - Alphabet games
  - Guessing games
  - Visual discrimination games
- Make a prompt card for parents to show them how to play the games and any special information about how to use the story sack.
- Make a checklist of everything that is in your story sack, so you can easily check to see if anything is missing.
- When your story sacks are complete, share them with the other group members. Encourage people to participate in acting out the story.
- You could invite your own children to a ‘Story Sacks Party’ one afternoon and have fun reading and acting out the story with them.
- Ask the Nunavut Literacy Council to give you information about training parents to use story sacks. Your literacy group could create a system for lending out the story sacks to families in the community. You could organize and deliver a training session for parents.
- If you do lend out your story sacks, you must check them regularly to see that all the pieces are there and in good shape. Replace or repair items as needed. You need to have a system to keep the story sacks in top condition so families will always enjoy them to the fullest.
- If your group is not able to act as a story sack lending library, find out if another group is interested: the library, family resource center, wellness centre or the school.
- The literacy group members could write journal entries throughout the project. Record the progress of your work. What are your jobs within the group? What are your thoughts and feelings about working on the story sacks project?

## Story Sack Checklist – What is in a Story Sack?

- Storybook or typed story
- Recording of story
- Characters – masks, costumes, puppets, dolls, etc.
- Props that go with the story – eg. toy rifles, chairs, whistles, fishing rods, binoculars, guitars, etc.
- Backdrop or scenery
- Parent prompt card
- Game
- Non-fiction book
- Cloth bag with name of story on it
- Checklist of everything in the sack

## Useful Web Sites

*The Storysacks Canada Program* – [www.storysacks.nald.ca](http://www.storysacks.nald.ca)

## Games

[www.preschooleducation.com/ga.shtml](http://www.preschooleducation.com/ga.shtml)

[www.enchantedlearning.com/Home.html](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/Home.html)

[www.kootweb.com/games.html](http://www.kootweb.com/games.html)

[www.agameaday.com/kidshome.html](http://www.agameaday.com/kidshome.html)

[www.gameskidsplay.net](http://www.gameskidsplay.net)



*Story Sack of ‘The Bear on the Bed’  
by Ruth Miller played by Mary  
Amaujak Irkootee and friends from  
Rankin Inlet.*

# Videos

## Ideas for Creating Videos

- If your Community Learning Centre, community group or school has a video camera you can borrow, some people in your literacy group may really enjoy this project.
- You could video Elders' interviews if they feel comfortable with that. As well, make an audio recording, so you will have access to both later.
- You could video the steps in completing a skill – preparing skins, making a tool, preparing igunaq.
- Create a commentary for your video – an oral description of what is happening in the video. The commentary might be an Elder's words. Or, as literacy group members, you can create the commentary yourselves. Write out the script for the commentary and produce it after the visual portion of the video is prepared and edited.
- Your group could act out a traditional story or myth and videotape the production. First research the story or myth in as many forms as possible – written stories, oral interviews and recorded interviews. Then write a script for your production. (See *Skits, Plays or Puppet Plays* in the *Active Projects* section and *Radio Plays* in the *Oral Projects* section for ideas on preparing a script.)
- You could partner with a group in another community. Decide on a topic that both groups are interested in. Each group can research and create a video in their own community and then send the video to their partner group. This is one way to compare regional differences.
- Video a trip by Elders to a place on the land where they used to live. Video their stories for others to share.
- Each member of the literacy group could video songs, aqausiit or pisiit that are sung by members of their family. The family would then have a record of these songs to keep, as well as perhaps making them available in the library or cultural centre.
- Add music, commentary, graphics or sounds to the videos.

*Here (in Nunavik) Eskimos unable to speak their language was unthinkable a mere generation ago. The ability to speak Inuktitut, so sacredly central to who we were, seemed secure – never to be knowingly lost.*

*I am not yet an old man, and we see the dramatic erosion of the Inuktitut language very close to our homes and families.*

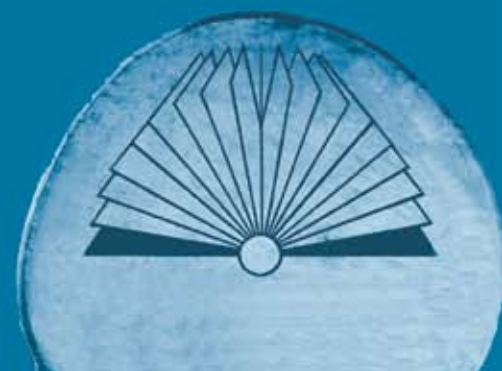
*This has caused general alarm among Inuit. We are acutely aware of the need to do something about it.*

*This realization is universal, and there is no sound argument for pretending that real threats to Inuktitut do not exist...*

*Zebedee Nungak in Inuktitut 93, 2003*



# Oral Projects



*I know I have had an unusual life,  
being born in a skin tent and living to hear on the  
radio that two men have landed on the moon.  
I think the new times started for Eskimos after the  
white people's war, when the white men began to  
make many houses in the Arctic. Eskimos began to  
move into the settlements and then the white people  
started helping us to get these houses.*

*That's why life changed.  
I don't think everybody was too fond of moving  
from the camps, but they still came anyway.  
...in some ways I like living in a warm house,  
but in the old days, before all these things happened,  
we were always healthy. I was never sick,  
not even with all the children I had.*

*...I have heard there is someone –  
not a human being, but a spirit – in the moon.  
When I heard that the two men had landed  
on the moon I wondered what the spirit thought  
of these two men landing on his land.*

*Pitseolak in Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life*



# Collecting Traditional Music

## Ideas for Collecting Songs, Aqausiit, Pisiit, Drumming, and Qiarvaag or Katajjaq (Throat Singing)

- Collect Inuktitut traditional music, create a recording and print the words to the songs so people can follow along.
- Collect aqausiit that people in your literacy group sing to their own children or aqausiit that their family members made up for them when they were small. Record these on a tape or CD with dedications to family members.
- Record Elders drumming and singing pisiit. Take pictures of the Elders and include the words to their pisiq, with their photograph, in the CD package.
- Make a video of people singing and drumming or throat singing.
- Collect traditional songs that people sing to children or used to sing to children and are now not so well known. Record these songs and include the words and an explanation of the purpose of each song in the tape or CD package. Find out about the stories of the songs – who composed them and for what purpose? Who was around when the song was composed?
- Hold a community event, a festival or a concert, where people sing traditional songs. Record the performers on video, collect the words to their songs and make the video tape and words available for people to borrow from the library or Community Learning Centre.
- The literacy group could learn the words for traditional songs and sing and record them themselves. Create a recording which includes the words of each song and photographs of the performers.

# Debates or Creative Controversy

## What is a Debate?

*A debate is an organized discussion between two groups of people about a controversial topic. Usually the debate happens in public with an audience of peers watching. Debates can be formal or informal.*

## What is Creative Controversy?

*Creative controversy allows learners to discuss an issue in small groups, instead of 'performing' in front of an audience. The goal is to present the best argument and to reach a group consensus, rather than 'winning' a debate.*

## Ideas for Discussing Controversial Issues

- After the research is complete and the literacy group has had a chance to think, discuss, read and write about the topic, consider holding a debate or creative controversy session. During your work, the group may have encountered an important issue about which people have differing views. Think about the views of the Elders you interviewed and your own views. How are they similar? How are they different?
- Debate only among literacy group members.

or...

- Invite guests from the community to be observers or participants.
- Hold a creative controversy session, an informal debate or a formal one.
- Hold a class discussion to choose the two sides of the question. Choose the exact wording that will be used for the two opposing statements. For example:
  - Drum dancing (or throat singing) should only be performed in its traditional form; altering the form or modernizing it is disrespectful and will cause the traditional form to be lost over time.
  - Young people should be able to express their individuality and their culture by changing and modernizing drum dancing (or throat singing); it will allow this cultural form to remain a vital part of our modern lives.

*Discussing controversial issues in Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun is a good way to strengthen oral language skills.*

### Creative Controversy

- Everyone should be aware that the goal of creative controversy is to reach a team consensus. In the beginning, pairs will argue forcefully for their side of a question. But teams eventually will have to agree on a common position that everyone can accept.
- First divide the group into teams of four; then divide the team into pairs. One pair takes one side of the question and one pair takes the other.
- The group or facilitator can have information ready to help teams prepare their arguments – recordings, writings, resource people that agree with either side of the question. The pairs use these resources and their current knowledge to prepare arguments for or against the issue.
- The pairs become familiar with the resources and discuss the question with their team of four – two on one side, two on the other side.
- Next, the teams switch pairs on the *same side* of the question meet in groups of four to prepare their arguments together.
- When the arguments are ready, the pairs go back to their original teams. The goal at this point is to argue forcefully for your side of the question.
- Next, the pairs exchange sides of the question and argue for the opposite point of view. Those who were for an issue in the beginning will now argue against it.
- Finally teams are asked to stop arguing forcefully and to reach a position that all team members can accept. If teams can't completely agree on one position, they should make a note of all the points they agree on and also note the areas where they don't agree.
- Teams can then write a group report on their final position.

## Informal Debate

- Choose someone as a recorder – perhaps the facilitator. Have two flip charts available. The recorder writes the points made on either side of the question.
- Post the questions on flip chart paper, one on each side of the room.
- People sit on the side of the room where the statement is posted that they most closely agree with.
- It may be necessary to choose a time limit for the debate.
- People from each side take turns giving reasons with proof why they agree with that side of the question. The recorder writes their points on the flip chart.
- As the debate progresses, people move to the opposite side of the room if they change their minds. People may move back and forth as many times as they want as the debate progresses.
- When the time is up, someone reads the points on either side of the question. Note how many people are sitting on each side of the room. As a whole group, discuss how group members felt the debate went and what they learned from it.
- Each member of the literacy group can write a short essay or opinion piece about how they feel about the issue. Use the points made during the debate to stimulate the writing.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, essay writing, grammar and any other topics as they come up.

## Formal Debate<sup>1</sup>

It is possible to find detailed rules for formal debates. But here are some brief guidelines:

- A formal debate has strict rules about the time that each person can speak.
- Choose the question for debate. It should have a *for* side and an *against* side.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from 'Debating' by Theresa Holowatuik in *Best Practices in Language Arts*, published by Kivalliq School Services, Baker Lake, 1997

- For example:
  - *For*: Life was easier in traditional times; communities worked together and shared what they had; people knew their roles and were happier then.
  - *Against*: People’s lives were harder in traditional times; there were often food shortages; now people have more resources and more choices and are happier.
- Several topics and teams could be chosen. Debates may be spread over a period of time or held all in one day.
- Choose two teams, a timekeeper, a chair and judges. The rest of the literacy group is the audience.
- The teams meet together before the debate to plan and write up the arguments for their team. They should make sure they have proof for their arguments – examples, specific situations or people that prove the point.
- *The chair* introduces the topic and the speakers on each team, states the time limits and announces the judges’ decisions. It is the chair’s responsibility to maintain order and help the audience participate in an orderly manner if questions are allowed at the end of the debate.
- *The time-keeper* makes sure than the speakers keep to the time limit and warns them when their time is up.
- *Judges* might be members of the literacy group or include invited guests as well. They decide how clear and convincing each argument is. At the end of the debate they decide which team had the best arguments.
- *First speaker on the ‘for’ team* introduces the topic, explains any unfamiliar ideas, and states the arguments for their team clearly and briefly. (time limit: four minutes maximum)
- *First speaker on the ‘against’ team* states in what ways their team agrees and disagrees with the explanation of the topic by the ‘for’ team. She or he gives the arguments for their side and argues against the points of the other team with proof. (time limit: four minutes maximum)
- *Second speaker on the ‘for’ team* argues against the points of the ‘against’ team, states the arguments of the ‘for’ team and their proof. (three minutes maximum)

- *Second speaker on the 'against' team* argues against any new points from the 'for' team, makes new points for the 'against' team with proof. (three minutes maximum)
- *First speaker on the 'for' team* doesn't make any new arguments; argues against arguments already made and summarizes the 'for' team's points. (one minute maximum)
- *The judges meet* to discuss which team has the most convincing arguments. Or the audience could vote on which team they felt had the best points.
- Again, the literacy group could write opinion pieces based on what they heard in the debates.
- *Hint for the facilitator!* The excitement and emotion of a discussion causes people to forget about their inhibitions and to try to use a language in which they are not perfectly comfortable. Take opportunities to hold discussions in Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun or whichever language the group wants to develop. As facilitator, you should not correct people while they are speaking; let them speak freely to express their ideas – even if they are not speaking correctly. Help them only if others don't understand what they are trying to say. But make a note of vocabulary and grammar mistakes that come up during discussions and teach these points as mini-lessons later.
- *Idea!* Encourage group members to keep vocabulary lists of unfamiliar words that come up during discussions. You can use them later in personal dictionaries or mini-lessons on vocabulary or spelling.

## Resources

Dominion Institute's *Great Canadian Questions Online* – [www.greatquestions.com](http://www.greatquestions.com)

*Creative Controversy: Intellectual Challenge in the Classroom* by David Johnson and Roger T. Johnson. Interaction Book Company, 1995. ISBN: 0939603233

*How to Construct an Argument*, “A Writing Centre Handout”, from Wilfred Laurier University Writing Centre. [www.wlu.ca/writing/handouts/argument.htm](http://www.wlu.ca/writing/handouts/argument.htm)

*The Basic Principles of Persuasive Writing*, from University of British Columbia Writing Centre's Writers' Workshop. [www.writingcentre.ubc.ca/workshop/tools/argument.htm](http://www.writingcentre.ubc.ca/workshop/tools/argument.htm)



# Radio Plays

## Ideas for Creating a Radio Play

- The literacy group could write and produce a radio play based on stories they listened to when they were doing research.
- If you listened to several recordings or Elders' stories, decide first as a group which one you would like to base your radio play on.
- Listen to the story again to refresh your memory.
- You could write the play together as a group.

## Steps in Creating a Radio Play<sup>1</sup>

- Start by describing the characters.
  - Working on flip chart paper, brainstorm all the characters you will need for your play. Write one character's name on the top of each flip chart page and add information about each character as you brainstorm.
  - Brainstorm the physical characteristics of the character. What does she look like?
  - Brainstorm the personality traits of the character. How does she act and feel?
  - Brainstorm the relationships between characters.
- In point form, write the plot line. What happens first, second, next in the story? How does the story end?
  - You could draw a long line on the blackboard or put a long sheet of paper on the wall and draw a line on it – to show the progress of the story.
  - People write events that happened in the story on sticky notes or pieces of scrap paper and stick them on the line in the order they happened. With this method, the order can be easily changed as the group thinks of more events and ideas.
  - Talk about whether you would like to add more details that the storyteller didn't mention. Or would you like to add fictional events to the story? If you decide to do that, brainstorm ideas, write them on sticky notes or scrap paper and stick them on the plot line in the order that fits with the original events.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Radio Plays by Scot Bishop in *Best Practices in Language Arts*, Nunavut High School Project, published by Kivalliq School Services, Baker Lake, 1997





CBC North radio in Iqaluit produced a series of excellent radio plays in Inuktitut and English based on legends. Copies of *Inuit Legends* are available through the CBC office in Iqaluit or Rankin Inlet. ISBN: 0-660-18983-6

*Traditional Storytelling, a skill possessed by most Inuit adults a generation ago, has graphically eroded. It is no longer the central source of passing down Inuit oral traditions, and no part of wondrous modern technology has accommodated any equivalent substitute.*

*Zebedee Nungak in Inuktitut 93, 2003*



# Radio Shows

## Ideas for Creating a Radio Show

- The purpose of the radio show could be to get people's ideas on a theme or topic, such as family histories of community members, child rearing methods, traditional beliefs and values, or what life was like when people first started moving into your community. Or the purpose of the show could be to collect songs, pisiit, aqausiit or stories or information about how to do a specific skill.
- The show could be a one-time event or part of a series of radio shows to collect ideas and information on different topics or themes.
- Your group may have already done a lot of research on a topic or theme and want to share it with the community.

or...

- The radio show could be another research technique – another way that your group collects information.
- You could ask Elders to be on a panel – to be the experts – either at the radio station or ready to phone in from home. People can phone in to ask them questions or contribute information
- The literacy group could make a presentation on what they already know about the topic. Then people in the community could phone in to add information or to ask questions.
- Or the show could be a discussion between a group of Elders and some members of the literacy group.

## Planning the Radio Show

- Find out from the Radio Committee when the group could schedule a phone in show.
- Decide what questions your group wants to ask. Write the questions on cards or type them on the computer.
- Decide who will ask which questions. The work could be divided up so everyone gets a chance to speak. People who feel less comfortable speaking in public could take smaller parts.

- Plan an introduction for the show, a description of your project and the work you have done so far. If the literacy group has already produced writing or collected songs, you might share your work during the radio show.
- Have a practice session of the radio show. Someone can be the host; some people can pose questions; some can phone in replies, others can be in charge of the recording equipment.
- As you were doing your research, you will have been noting traditional vocabulary and meanings. Try to use these words in your own writing and speaking.
- Go and see the radio station before the show. Ask for a demonstration of how to work the equipment. Make sure everyone is comfortable and knows what their job is when the time comes to do the show.
- During the show someone in your group can be in charge of making sure Elders have comfortable chairs, tea and water and an available washroom at the radio station.
- Record the radio show to make sure valuable information is not lost.
- Write up the transcripts from the show later.
- After the show everyone in the group can write a summary. Or divide into groups and each group can write a summary of one part of the show.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.



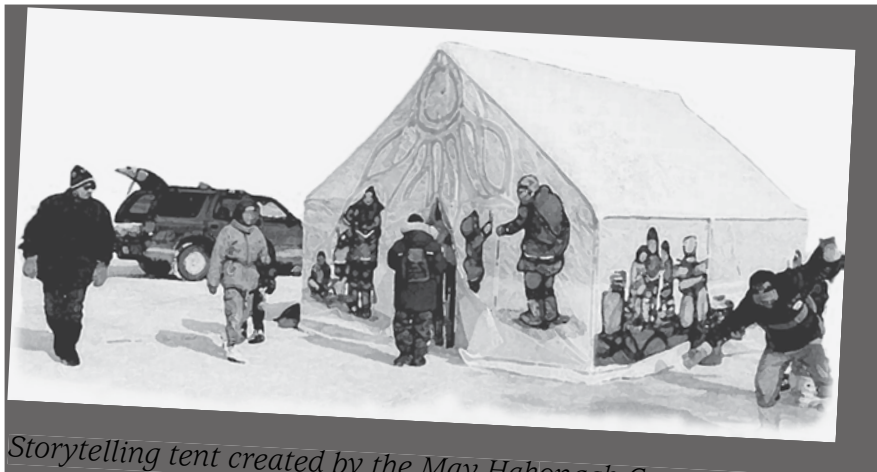
# Storytelling Events

## Ideas for Hosting a Storytelling Event

- As part of your oral history project, your group could plan, coordinate and host an event in which people tell their stories and the community comes to listen and learn.
- Plan a good time to host the event. It could be part of a spring festival, Hamlet Days or Nunavut Day.
- Or it could be a small event at the Community Learning Centre, library or school as part of the literacy group’s program.
- Your group can act as the hosts and organizers for the storytelling event. This work will build the skills and confidence of the literacy group members.
- As a group, brainstorm all the tasks necessary to organize the event: identifying storytellers, arranging the location, advertising, organizing the schedule for the performance, writing introductions for the storytellers, and so on. Decide if you will need a budget for the event. Will you pay storytellers? Will you charge admission? Do you have to pay to rent space? List your expenses and make a budget. Make a work plan with dates when the tasks should be completed. Divide up the tasks. Post the work plan where everyone can see it and be sure of their jobs.
- Break into groups to write introductions for each storyteller. Ask the storytellers for brief information about their lives and about the stories they plan to tell. Write the information on cards. You can use these cards to introduce each storyteller to the audience. Each literacy group member could be prepared to make at least one introduction during the event.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- Create an attractive program to hand out during the event; you could consider adding digital photographs of the storytellers or artwork from the literacy group members.
- Hold several practice sessions without the storytellers so everyone becomes comfortable and knows their roles and the order of the program.
- You could hold the event in a large room with one storyteller telling at a time.

or...

- If you have many storytellers, you could set up the event like a conference. Each storyteller could work in a small room (perhaps in school classrooms), with several people telling stories at the same time. The audience would have a choice to hear one storyteller during each session. Perhaps there could be three or four sessions, each one half an hour or an hour long. Ask the storytellers how long they would like for their session.
- You could have sessions about the importance of storytelling and sessions where the audience learns how to tell stories.
- You could hold the event outside in tents.
- The group members have the responsibility of making sure storytellers are aware of the schedule, are comfortable while they are waiting, don't have to wait too long and have something to drink during their performance.
- Be sure to get permission from the storytellers to record the stories that they tell at the event and later write up the transcripts of the stories.
- The process of planning an event like this involves working together as a group and has many opportunities for developing organizational and language skills.



*Storytelling tent created by the May Hakongak Community Library and Cultural Centre in Cambridge Bay.*

# Storytelling on the Radio

## Ideas for Storytelling on the Radio

- As part of your oral history project, the literacy group could plan and coordinate a weekly or monthly storytelling session on the radio.
- The group could create written copies of the stories that will be read during each radio show. Distribute the written copies to the stores, post office or other locations where people can pick them up before the show. Families will be able to listen to the story together on the radio, while following the text on the printed copy. Make plenty of copies, so everyone who is interested can have their own copy to follow. This is a great way to strengthen oral and written Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun skills within families in your community.

## Planning the Storytelling Radio Show

- Talk to the radio committee to arrange a regular time for the show.
- Group members may want to search for different people who are willing to tell stories weekly or monthly – for the regular show.

or...

- You could use stories from oral history recordings that already exist in your community. These recordings may be available in your library, cultural centre or through CBC.
- In your literacy group, listen to the story first for enjoyment.
- Spend some time discussing the story. Have people heard it before? Does the story have a message? How do they feel about the story?
- Then listen carefully and transcribe the story. Transcribing is hard work, so you could do this as group work, with each group working on transcribing a small part of the story.
- If you are working with people who will tell the story on air, ask them to come to meet with your group first and tell the story so you can record and transcribe it. You can use this recording for the radio show or the storyteller can go to the radio station at the time of the show and tell the story live on air.

- Print the transcriptions in large, clear type. You may want to include illustrations, pictures or graphics. You could create a logo for your radio show and use it on each story, so people in the community will come to recognize the stories and look forward to the show. Another way to help people recognize your stories is to use the same coloured paper each time.
- Distribute copies of the printed story in the community where people can pick them up – stores, school, library, post office, arena.
- Make announcements on the radio several days before the show, so people will know to watch for the printed stories and to listen to the show.
- Members of your group can act as the hosts for the radio show, introducing your program and the storytellers and winding up the show. Perhaps small groups can be responsible for one show each – picking up the storyteller and making her or him comfortable, or getting the recording ready, hosting the show, introducing the program and the storyteller and operating the equipment.
- Before each show, the group acting as hosts should write down on cards the information they need to introduce the show and the storyteller and to wind up the show.
- The hosts for each show should practice in front of the whole literacy group before the show – to make sure they have all the information and feel confident and comfortable. The other group members can help by giving feedback and making suggestions.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and other topics as they come up.



# Talking Books

## Ideas for Talking Books

Talking Books are a great way to strengthen reading skills in any language. Create sets of story texts and audio recordings so literacy group members, children and others can listen to stories while following the written word. These talking books can be available for people to borrow to practice reading at home. Literacy group members and high school students with higher level literacy skills could be involved in creating the talking books. Or you could look for funding or volunteers and have the talking books done professionally.

## Oral History Talking Books

- Choose an oral history recording – perhaps one your group has recorded, or one done by another organization such as CBC.
- Listen carefully to the recording and type the exact words spoken by the speaker. This is called a transcript. Typing transcripts is very difficult and detailed work, so work in pairs or small groups. Each pair or small group can work on a small part of the transcript. Type the transcript in clear large print. (See *Transcribing Interviews* in *The Process of Collecting Oral Histories* section).
- The group may decide to laminate the written transcript. Have the talking book set (recording and transcript) available in plastic library bags for people to borrow.

or...

- Photocopy Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun stories from books, newspapers or magazines, such as *Inuit Cultural Institute* publications or *Inuktitut* magazine. A good reader reads and records the story. (See *Recording Equipment* in the *Planning Your Project* section for information about recording equipment.)
- Laminate the photocopied story and have the talking book set available in plastic library bags for people to borrow.
- Keep a list or personal dictionary of new words as you read and listen. The facilitator can use these words to teach mini-lessons on vocabulary, spelling or grammar. Group members could test each other to help remember the new words.

## **Children's Talking Books**

- Adults or older children can read and record Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun children's books. This would be an excellent project for a literacy group.
- The literacy group could create a library of talking books to keep at the local library or Community Learning Centre for families to borrow and listen to together.
- Each group member chooses a book they would like to read.
- The facilitator models expressive reading, adding humour and sound effects to the story.
- The group members practice reading the story, using lots of expression and adding sounds and animal noises for special effects. Practice in pairs or small groups to give each other encouragement, ideas and feedback. Read the story as many times as you need to feel comfortable and confident.
- When individuals in the group feel ready, they can read to the whole group and then record the story. Take as much time as needed to record and re-record in order to get it the way each group member wants it.
- Put the recording and book together in a plastic library bag ready to be borrowed by families.

### ***Source for Plastic Library Bags***

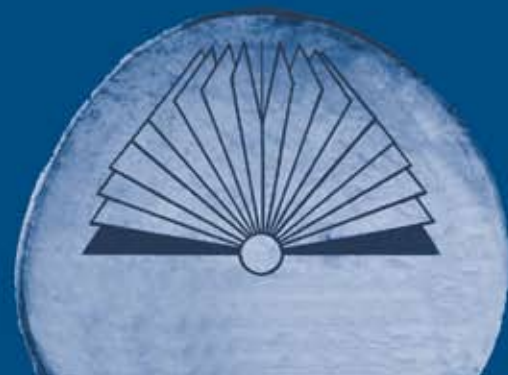
Bro-dart

109 Roy Blvd., Braneida Industrial Park

Brantford, Ontario N3R 7K1

Telephone: 519-759-4350

# Visual Projects



*“In our traditional culture,  
we ‘read’ nature (the environment).  
We must read and interpret the information we find  
there, so that we can survive.  
We use our eyes and brains just like you.  
We also use our other senses – smell, hearing, taste  
and touch – to read the coming weather,  
the presence of danger,  
and the health of the land, waters and air.”*

*Denys Auger, Elder – Bigstone Cree Education Authority*

# Bulletin Board Displays

## Ideas for Bulletin Board Displays

- The literacy group could use the information it has collected on a particular topic to create a bulletin board display in a public place. Then the whole community can benefit from the group's research.
- Think of a place in the community that has a lot of people passing by – the community centre, church, arena, the Northern or Coop. If you are working with the school in some way, you may be able to create a display in their front entrance.
- Your group could cover the bulletin board with a large piece of plexiglass to keep your display in good shape. Ask for donations or sponsors.
- If the literacy group is working on a long-term oral history project in which they are collecting information on different topics, you could change the bulletin board regularly as you collect more information. Different small groups from your literacy group could be responsible for creating a new bulletin board each month.
- The bulletin board could include writing from the literacy group, family trees, digital photographs, photocopied pictures or text from books, old photographs, maps, pictures and text showing the steps in performing a skill, clothing patterns – whatever relates to the project.
- The group could put up a display of old photographs from one of the archives. Laminate the photos first and name as many of the people in the photos as possible. Leave sticky notes and pencils near the bulletin board, so people from the community can add other names of people they recognize.
- Put traditional objects or pictures of objects in the display and ask people to guess where they came from or what they were used for. Again, leave sticky notes and pencils. Encourage a community discussion!
- Write stories and summaries of the interviews you have done and add them to the board.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up during the progress of the writing and editing.

- The literacy group could make a collage of different images and words to make a certain point or inspire people to think about issues. A collage is a form of art in which various images and words are arranged on a backing to create an artistic design or a meaningful message. Here are some examples of things that could go on a collage: drawings, pictures, photographs, fabric, quotations or meaningful words.
- Use the bulletin board as a stimulus for a radio show discussion. (See *Radio Shows* in the *Oral Projects* section).

*“Knowing others is intelligence;  
knowing yourself is true wisdom.  
Mastering others is strength;  
mastering yourself is true power.”*

*Lao Tzu*

# Calendars

## Ideas for Creating Calendars

- The literacy group may like to present their oral history research to the community in calendar form.
- Elders' stories or words of wisdom, community history, family history – many topics can be adapted to a calendar, combining photos and text opposite each month:
  - ☑ Archival photographs, and stories about the people in them, would make good calendar material.
  - ☑ You could collect stories about the seasons and times of the year to put on each month of the calendar.
  - ☑ You could research different Inuktitut names for the months and days in different regions and include information about the tasks traditionally done in each month in those regions. You could partner with a literacy group in another region to research this information.
- You could divide up the work so one individual, pair or small group takes responsibility for creating the calendar and oral history information for each month.
- Contact the Nunavut Literacy Council to request a calendar template. We can send it to you by e-mail or CD Rom. Or look for a calendar template on the computer. You could also make your own calendar format to practice computer skills.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up during the progress of the work.
- You could create your calendar in the fall for the new year and give calendars away as Christmas presents.

# Cartoon Stories

## Ideas for Creating Cartoon Stories

- This project would work well in an arts and literacy program.
- Or it could be a project option for those in the literacy group with an interest in art or those with weaker literacy skills.
- Determine if several people in the group are interested in a cartooning project.
- If someone in your community has cartooning skills, invite them to your literacy group to talk about and demonstrate cartooning.
- People who are stronger writers can work as a team with a cartoonist.
- Each group chooses a recorded story to listen to. One or two members of the team write up the story; the others create cartoons that go along with the story.
- The team works together to create text that goes with each frame of the cartoon. In this way, the cartoonists receive support from the writers to read the text and make sure the cartoons match it. Start with a rough copy.
- Notice traditional vocabulary you heard in the story and try to use it in the text you write.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- When the group is ready to do the final draft, the writers can type the text on the computer and create frames for the cartoons to be drawn in. Or they can scan the cartoons and create a booklet that can be printed in multiple copies. Your group can either produce the booklet on the computer or do it by hand.
- Create a cover page, pages acknowledging the storyteller, writer and cartoonist, a table of contents, a dedication page if you want, and insert page numbers.
- Create a kit that includes a copy of the recorded story and the cartoon booklet. This kit can be used for listening and reading material for your literacy group and future literacy groups.

### ***Gideon Qitsualik, on comic books:***

I think it would be a quicker way to learn the language if we write our language in comic book form, but in Inuktitut. If we put Inuktitut in comic books, children will use it. They will pick up Inuktitut much more quickly.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the Elders Advisory Meeting held by the Department of Education in Rankin Inlet, April 2002



# Clothing and Pattern Display

## Ideas for a Clothing and Pattern Display

This might be a good project for a traditional sewing and literacy class, such as the *Reclaiming our Sinew Program*.<sup>1</sup>

- Collect traditional clothing patterns for different articles of clothing.
- Trace the pattern onto good quality paper or cloth.
- Or enlarge the pattern pieces by projecting the original from the overhead projector onto a large piece of paper on the wall. Trace and cut the enlarged pattern pieces.
- Label the parts of the pattern. Ask for Elders’ help to be sure of the correct names for all the parts of the pattern.
- Your group can add drawings or photographs of people wearing traditional clothing to the display. Scan photographs from books. Look for traditional clothing in archival photographs. Take digital pictures.
- Add actual articles of clothing to the display.
- The group can write text for the steps in creating the article of clothing, including skin preparation.
- Write about care of the clothing.
- Write about the best time of year to get the skin for this clothing.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up during the progress of the writing and editing.
- The group could compare traditional clothing patterns to modern clothing patterns. Create a display that shows the similarities and differences between the clothing of the two different time periods.
- Compare clothing patterns from different communities or regions. Partner with another community group. The group could partner with a community group from each Nunavut region – Qikiqtaaluk, Qitirmiut and Kivalliq. Or partner with groups from other circumpolar countries to compare patterns and sewing methods.

<sup>1</sup> *Reclaiming our Sinew* is a program sponsored by the Kivalliq Inuit Association and Community Learning Centres in the Kivalliq Region. Young women learn traditional skin preparation and sewing half the day and work on Inuktitut and English literacy skills the other half of the day. The content in the literacy portion depends on the needs and interests of the women, but is often related to their sewing and skin preparation projects.

- Put the display in a public place where community members can enjoy it.
- Or hold a public event where people can look at your display and talk with your group about your project. (See *Public Presentation* or *Open House* in the *Active Projects* section for more information.)

### ***Reclaiming our Sinew Program in Rankin Inlet***



*Shauna Ussak and Sandra Amarok with sewing instructor, Monica Ugjuk.*



*Mandi Anawak and Shauna Ussak with their sewing projects.*



*Vicky Pilakapsi*



*Vicky Pilakapsi with literacy instructor, Akua Hinds.*

# Community Mapping

## Ideas for Community Mapping

Your group could consider mapping your community as it was at a certain date in the past. You could collect photographs, talk to people to learn about your community in the past. Decide on the time you would like to learn about: 1950's, 1960's, etc.

- Brainstorm things that your group already knows about your community at that time.
- Brainstorm questions that you would like to ask about your community in the past. For example:
  - Where was the first school building, church, community hall, Coop building and other buildings?
  - Where were the houses located?
  - Who lived in which houses back then?
  - What happened to the buildings that no longer exist?
  - Were any buildings thought to be haunted?
  - How many vehicles were there then?
  - Did people live in camps near the community?
  - What stories are there about the community in those days?
- Create a large map of your community at a particular date that shows all this information.
- Collect old photographs from people in the community or from museums or archives. If you get original photographs from private people, treat them carefully. Scan or copy them and return them quickly to their owners.
- Start sketching a rough version of your map on a large sheet of paper – 6' X 8' or larger.
- Invite people who knew the community on the date you have chosen. Talk with them about where the roads went, what buildings existed and where. Sketch in the information onto the map.
- When your information is as complete as possible, create a final copy of the map on good quality paper. Or draw and paint it on a large piece of plywood.

- Make the map colourful and interesting. Add scanned or copied photographs. Laminate the photographs and glue them to the map beside the areas of town they relate to.
- Translate the information into English if it seems appropriate or necessary in your community.
- Hold a community event – invite people to come and see your map and talk about what they remember of those days. If you have slides or videos, you could show them at the same time.
- Preserve your map; it could be valuable to future generations. Mount it under Plexiglas or laminate it, if possible. Take detailed photographs of it.

### **Other Options**

- Create a map of the community as it is today. Or get a copy of a prepared map from the hamlet or city office. Use it to compare with your map of the past. Show where buildings have been moved to and other changes. Show how styles of houses have changed.
- When the group invites people to see and talk about the map, record their stories about things that happened during that time period in your community. Write up their stories and post them near the map, showing the areas where the stories took place.
- If your community doesn't already have street names, your group could continue with your mapping project by naming the streets. Choose relevant and appropriate names for streets in your community. Consult with Elders about the types of street names that would be appropriate, perhaps names that relate to land forms or traditional uses of the space. Write their suggestions on your map and consult with the rest of the community to see if most people approve of the choices. The literacy group could submit their street name suggestions to the municipal government (hamlet or city) for approval.
- Group members could keep journals throughout the project. What thoughts and feelings do you have as you learn more about your community and its stories?

# Family Trees

## Ideas for Family Trees

- If the literacy group's oral history project is about family histories, they may want to share the information with the whole community in the form of family stories and family trees.
- Group members could work in small family groups to produce a family tree. (Brothers and sisters, cousins and other relatives can work together.)
- Involve Elders and older family members to get all the information correct.
- The facilitator could create opportunities to use the phone or e-mail to contact family members in other communities for information.
- Look at different ways of finding out information about family history – archives and church records.
- The family tree could be done on the computer (there are computer programs to help make family trees) or by hand on large sheets of paper.
- You might like to add digital or scanned photographs to the family tree. (See the example following this section.)
- You may want to produce copies of the family trees for all family members or you may decide to produce a large wall display that community members can look at during a special event. You could leave the wall display up in a public place where people can take their time to study it.
- Include any family stories that the group members write. You may want to produce the stories and family tree in booklet format. If you do the family tree as a large wall display, post the stories beside the family tree.
- Laminate the family trees if you can.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- Listen carefully and record traditional vocabulary that you may not be familiar with. Try to use it in your family stories.
- Group members could do presentations about their family tree or about one particular family member. You could invite family members to hear the presentations.

## Family Tree Templates

Family tree templates are available on the internet. At the time of writing this manual the following web sites offered family tree software for sale or free downloads. These web sites change, so may no longer be available when you read this. But you can try an internet search for *Family Tree Template*.

[www.family-crests.com/free-downloads/family-tree/family-tree.html](http://www.family-crests.com/free-downloads/family-tree/family-tree.html)

[www.familybookmark.com/family-tree-template.shtml](http://www.familybookmark.com/family-tree-template.shtml)

[www.storytree.net/free-family-tree-template.shtml](http://www.storytree.net/free-family-tree-template.shtml)

[www.thetreemaker.com/samples/family-tree-template.html](http://www.thetreemaker.com/samples/family-tree-template.html)

## Example of a Family Tree

On the next page you will see an example of a family tree from Angalik's family prepared by the Department of Education for their *Kinship and Relationships Module of the Inuktitut Language Arts Curriculum*. Thanks to Nunia Qanatsiaq for sharing this resource.

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Louis Angalik



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# Illustrated Stories

## Ideas for Illustrated Stories

- This project could work well in an arts and literacy program.
- Or it could be a project option for those in the literacy group with an interest in art or for those with weaker literacy skills.
- Determine if several people in the group are interested in illustrating stories. Group members could work on their illustrated stories individually, in pairs or in a small group.
- Match people who are stronger writers with those who aren't as strong but are interested in art.
- Each group chooses a recorded story to listen to. One or more members of the team write up the story. Others create drawings or paintings that go along with the story.
- When listening to the recorded story, make a note of unfamiliar vocabulary, record traditional words with their meanings and try to use them when you write up the story. You can write your own version of the story, rather than using the exact words of the storyteller.
- Invite someone to your literacy group to talk about the art of illustrating.
- The writer and the illustrator work together to create text that goes with a drawing or painting. In this way, the artist will receive support from the writer in reading the text and making sure the illustration matches it.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- When you are ready to do the final draft, the writer can type the text on the computer. The writer and illustrator could create a book with text on one page and an illustration on the facing page. Or the story and art could be placed together on the same page.
- Create a cover page; table of contents; pages acknowledging the storyteller, writer and illustrator; a dedication page if you want; and insert page numbers.



- Create a kit that includes the illustrated book and a copy of the recorded story. You might like to record a copy of your version of the story, as well as the original storyteller's version. Readers will be able to follow your written story while listening to the recording of the same story. This kit can be used for listening and reading material for your literacy group, as well as future literacy groups. (See *Talking Books* in the *Oral Projects* section.)

### Examples of Illustrated Stories

*The Shaman's Nephew* by Simon Tookoome and Sheldon Oberman, artwork by Simon Toodoome. Published by Stoddart Kids, 1999, ISBN: 0-7737-6189-6

*Qikaaluktut, Images of Inuit Life* by Ruth Annaqtuusi Tularialik and David Pelly, artwork by Ruth Annaqtuusi Tularialik. Published by Oxford University Press, 1986, ISBN: 0-1954-0505-6

*Arctic Memories* by Normee Ekoomiak, published by New Canada Publications, Toronto, 1988

*Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life*, edited from tape-recorded interviews by Dorothy Eber. Published by Design Collaborative Books, Montreal, 1971, ISBN: 019-540191-3

*Urajuq – The Origin of Death*, edited by Kim Crockatt and David Pelly, illustrated by Elsie Klengenber. Published by the Kitikmeot Heritage Society, 1999, ISBN: 0-9690783-8-2

# Maps

## Ideas for Working with Maps

- Find out if your area has already been mapped with the traditional place names.
- Get a copy of the map – make several working copies.
- If no one has done a map with traditional place names of your area, consider a project in which you interview Elders to learn the names and put them on a map.
- The literacy group could interview people who traditionally lived or traveled in the area to find out the background of the names and stories about the area. Record the interviews.
- Either write summaries of the stories or write up the complete transcripts. These two tasks involve different skills. If you want to develop Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun composition skills, write summaries. If you want to develop careful listening and attention to traditional vocabulary, write the transcripts.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- Type up the stories on the computer and post them with the map near the area the story is about.
- If the stories involve journeys, trace the trip on the map. The group could also calculate distances between places on the trip.
- The literacy group could hold a public presentation and play recordings of stories related to each geographical area. People may have their own stories to tell. (See *Public Presentation* or *Open House* in the *Active Projects* section.)
- Or take a trip on the land; invite your families and Elders. Bring the map along and talk with Elders about the stories of the places and place names.

# Murals

## Ideas for Murals

This could be an interesting and challenging project for an arts and literacy program. As part of the literacy component, the group could work on an oral history project. First the class completes the steps of the research phase of the project – watching videos, reading books and articles, listening to oral history recordings or interviewing Elders. Then they write about their theme in a variety of ways. They could share the information they researched with the community by expressing themselves artistically in the form of a mural.

- Find a place in the community where many people can enjoy the mural.
- Get support for the mural project from the municipal government (the Hamlet or City).
- Discuss among the group members what type of visual images you want to use. What images would best express an important message you got from your oral history research that you would like to pass on to others?
- Each group member could draw or paint your own ideas for the mural on art paper. This would be a mock-up or a model in much smaller form of the final mural.
- Everyone could also write a composition or prepare a speech to explain why you chose these images.
- Share the drawings and compositions with the other group members.
- Discuss ideas for the group mural, choosing images that you like from the individual paintings. Allow plenty of time to reach agreement on the composition of your mural. Continue with other work until the group reaches a consensus.
- Make a plan. Discuss how you will go ahead with the mural:
  - Who does what jobs?
  - What supplies will be needed?
  - How long will it take to complete each stage of the mural?Post the work plan on the wall so each of you knows your role.

- When the mural is finished, invite the community to an opening event! Ask the Hamlet or City to sponsor a feast and square dance or ask for donations of food. Display the group members' compositions as well. Group members can be available to talk to people about their oral history project and the mural.



*On language isolates (languages that are unique – not related to any other known language)...*

*“They are the archaeology of civilization, full of wisdom, legend and beauty, messages from the Earth’s own time-travellers.”*

*Simon Jenkins*

From *Spoken Here* by Mark Abley, published by Random House Canada, 2003

# Old Photographs

## Ideas for Working with Old Photographs

Photographs are a wonderful stimulus for storytelling.

- Order photographs from museums or archives (See *Where to Find Northern Books and Resources* in the *Useful Resources* section.) You have to plan this project several months in advance because it often takes that long to get photographs. You will need a budget for this; there are costs involved with ordering the photographs. Through some of the museum or archive's web sites you can search for photographs using a community name or a person's name. When you find a photograph that you want, write down the reference number and other information about the photo. A small number of photographs can be downloaded and printed directly from the web site.

or...

- You can collect old photographs from people in the community. Scan or copy them and quickly return the originals to the owners.
- Invite Elders and other community members to look at the photographs and identify the people or places in them. Does anyone know who took the picture and when? What stories do people remember about the people and places in the photographs?
- Record the stories or take notes. Write up the stories and publish them with copies of the pictures.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- As you work with the photographs and learn the stories, keep journal entries about your thoughts and feelings during the process.
- The stories and photographs could take different forms: books, bulletin board displays in a spot where people in the community can easily see them, web sites, community events. If your local community TV channel has the capacity, you could post the photographs on the community channel and then host a radio or TV phone-in show in which people could call up with stories about the photographs.

## Working with Photos in Sanikiluaq

Two young people in Sanikiluaq developed a project to publish old photographs on the local TV channel. Community members helped to identify people in the pictures.

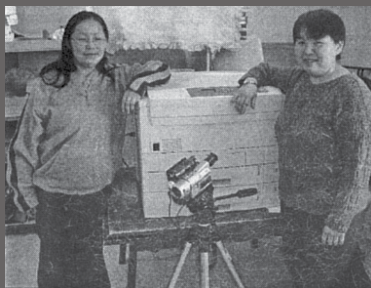
The following is the reprinted article with pictures entitled *Bringing History to Life* published in News North on February 24, 2003.

Louisa Meeko and Caroline Mickiyuk, Community Access Program (CAP) coordinators, are transmitting history into every home in Sanikiluaq with a television.

They're using the Najuqsivik Daycare TV studio and CAP site computers to do so.

Meeko and Mickiyuk scanned photographs of people in the community from 1938 and broadcast them on the local station. The photos are from the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh.

Elders are invited to phone the station and discuss the identification of individuals in the photos. Once information is gathered, the images will form a community historical yearbook.



*A new \$10,000 colour laser printer purchased for the CAP and Najuqsivik Programs is making the yearbook project a lot more fun. Caroline Mickiyuk, left, and Louisa Meeko said having good tools makes life easier.*



*Annie Appaqaq, an Elder in Sanikikuaq, watches the pictures come across her television in the hopes of seeing something from her own past.*



*A man in a traditional Belcher Island eider skin parka is the subject of one picture yet to be identified. It was taken in August 1938.*



*Meeko and Mickiyuk expect it will take some time to identify everyone in this photo but they hope with the help of the community it will all come together.*

*Photos courtesy of Louisa Meeko and Caroline Mickiyuk.*

# Photo Stories

## What is a Photo Story?

*A photo story is a series of photographs that tell a story about someone's life or show the steps in performing an activity. Each photograph inspires the writer to tell a story about it. This is a good activity for literacy groups because people can write at their own levels. Those with stronger writing skills can be encouraged to write longer stories with more detail. Those with beginning writing skills may start with one sentence for each photograph.*

## Ideas for Photo Stories

- If you have access to a digital camera, your group can make professional-looking photo stories while learning a lot about the computer. Digital cameras are useful for recording the progress of a project, because you don't have to wait for developing time. For example, if you are making a pair of kamiik, you can record each step of the process with the digital camera and write about it immediately.
- If you don't have access to a digital camera, use Polaroid, 35mm or disposable cameras. Plan in advance, though, because everyone in the group will need an opportunity to use the camera and then the film has to be developed.
- Decide whether you are going to do photo stories in small groups or individually.

### ***Group project ideas:***

- Photos of all the Elders in the community with the story of how they came to live in the community.
- Photos of Elders with their own words about what they feel has been significant in their lives.
- Photos of Elders with their own words about their hopes for the future generations.
- Photos and text of the steps in completing a skill, such as making a tool or a piece of clothing.



- ☑ Photos and stories of a trip.
- ☑ You could also use old photos from personal collections or archives, scan them and use them in your photo story. But be very careful with personal photos; scan them and get them right back to their owners.

***Individual project ideas:***

- ☑ Photos of family members and their stories.
- ☑ Photos and text of a project you worked on yourself. For example: preparing skins and making a caribou skin amautik.
- ☑ Photos of special items from home with stories about their significance.
- ☑ Photos and stories of children as they grow.
- ☑ Photos and a journal of the person’s progress through the literacy program – feelings, accomplishments, events.

**Steps in Creating a Photo Story**

- Planning – deciding on the topic, who will do what tasks, how long the project will take and if you will need money.
- Depending on the type of photo story, you may take or scan all the pictures first, download or develop them and then write the story. Or you may be recording a process – making a tuuq or kakivak. In that case, you will be recording each step of the process and writing about it as you go.
- Plan the layout of the book. Use scrap paper folded over to make a model of your book. Use it to plan which photos and text go on each page, title pages, tables of contents, credits, etc.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- There are lots of interesting things to be learned through the creation of the book: cropping and sizing photos, adding borders and graphics, inserting the photo into the text, choosing the font and format for the text.
- When the project is complete, create a CD of each photo story so other copies can be made in the future.

- If you don't have a digital camera or scanner, you can create the text for the photo story by hand or on the computer and glue the photographs on the pages. You may want to laminate the book to preserve the pictures.
- The photo stories can be used as reading material for the literacy group, their children and future literacy groups.



*Inuktitut is relevant to the regions where it originated from our ancestors. Like all important things, learning Inuktitut is not easy. It takes time, commitment, and patience but the rewards are well worth it. All families need to communicate as best possible.*

*Jose Kusugak in Inuktitut 93, 2003*

# Posters or Pamphlets

## Ideas for Posters or Pamphlets

- This would be an interesting project for a literacy group that is studying local history and wants to raise community awareness. Posters and pamphlets can contain information that is quickly and easily read and is attractive visually.
- When your literacy group has completed its research, decide what your message or messages will be. How many pamphlets or posters do you want to make to illustrate what you have learned?
- Divide into pairs or small groups to do the work. You may choose themes or historical periods for each group to work on, for example: Thule history, pre-contact Inuit history and modern community history; or location of traditional hunting grounds, trading posts and Catholic or Anglican missions.
- You may decide that each small group creates both a poster and a pamphlet based on a theme. The pamphlet will involve more writing practice than the poster, but the poster will get the creative juices flowing and give people ideas to write about.
- Bring in samples of posters and pamphlets and discuss their format and content. Talk about which approach seems the most effective for your project.
- For pamphlets, you may want to use a pamphlet template on your word processing program to make the process easier. Add photographs, maps and graphics, as well as text.
- For posters, you could use photographs – prints, scanned or digital, drawings or paintings, graphics or diagrams. Create the text on the computer. The poster could take the form of a collage of many overlapping visual images and some text, which come together to illustrate the point the group wants to make. Laminate the posters when they are complete.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- Offer to display the posters and pamphlets in a public place. Make an envelope to put the pamphlets in; attach one envelope beneath each poster and leave a stack of pamphlets, so people can take one home if they want.
- If you decide that historical tourist information is needed in your community, consider translating the posters and pamphlets into English and making them available at the airport or visitors centre.

# Slide Shows

## Ideas for Slide Shows

- Ask community residents for any slides they may have of early years in your community. Or contact southerners who used to live in your community years ago. Some people have a slide collection that they are willing to share.
- Arrange to have the slides copied so that you can return the originals to their owners. This will cost money, so plan in advance. Where will you get your funding?
- Decide as a group what form your slide show will take:
  - Will you present your show to the whole community? Or to the families of the group members? Or to a school class? Or to an Elders' group – in order to stimulate stories of the past?
  - When, where and how many times will you present the show?
  - Is the slide show your final goal? Or are you showing slides to encourage people to tell stories of the past? Will you record these stories? Will you write the stories in a book format that can accompany the slide show?
- Break into groups and give each group some slides to look at. The group writes down notes about each slide.
- Come back together as a group and look at the slides, sharing the notes the groups made about each slide. Do you need to do some research to find out more about the slide?
- Decide the format of the slide show and the order the slides will be shown.
- Write commentaries for each slide. This could be done in groups, so group members of different literacy skills can help each other.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- Type the commentaries on the computer or write them by hand and mount them on index cards.
- Practice the slide show as a group, with group members taking turns reading the commentaries. Practice as often as you need to feel confident and ready for a public presentation.
- If the purpose of the slide show is to encourage people to tell stories, have a recorder and/or a video camera ready at the presentation.

- You could present your slide show to teachers and newcomers to the community so they understand the history of the community. Translate the commentaries into English and mount them on index cards. Practice the English version of the show before you present it.



*On his devotion to the  
Mohawk language...*

*“Our language is very picturesque,  
everything is descriptive.”*

*“In English, most people even forget  
to thank the waters each and every day.”*

*Tiorahkwathe Gilbert, Kahnawa:ke Councillor*

# Textile Art

## Ideas for Textile Art – Wall Hangings or Quilts

- This would be a creative project for an arts and literacy program, a women’s literacy program or a traditional sewing and literacy program, such as *Reclaiming our Sinew*<sup>1</sup>.
- The group could decide to create wall hangings based on stories. You could listen to recordings of Elders telling stories, write up the stories and create wall hangings to illustrate them. The wall hangings could be made from fabric or skins.
- The group could create quilts, with each square showing a scene from a story. Each square should be a good size (12” X 12” or larger). Each group member could illustrate an event in the story by creating appliqués for a square of the quilt. Put all the squares together in order to illustrate the story.

## Steps in a Wall Hanging or Quilt Project

- Decide on the story or stories you want to illustrate with your textile art. People might work in pairs or small groups on one story. Or the whole literacy group could work together on one story and divide up the writing and sewing tasks.
- Make a materials list; brainstorm all the materials you will need – different colours of fabric or skins and thread. Make sure you can get all the supplies before you start the project. If you need to fundraise to purchase materials, plan for that well in advance.
- Listen to the story at least once just for enjoyment and to get the idea of what the story is about.
- You will probably need to listen to the story several times and make notes, so you will be prepared to do the writing.
- Groups or individuals can write up the story in their own words – not using the exact words of the storyteller. If you are working in one big group, use a group writing process in which everyone is involved.

<sup>1</sup> *Reclaiming our Sinew* is a program sponsored by the Kivalliq Inuit Association and Community Learning Centres in the Kivalliq Region. Young women learn traditional skin preparation and sewing half the day and work on Inuktitut and English literacy skills the other half of the day. The content in the literacy portion depends on the needs and interests of the women, but is often related to their sewing and skin preparation projects.

- Notice unfamiliar vocabulary when listening to the stories – traditional words, no longer used by younger people and technical vocabulary. Make a vocabulary list with meanings. Try to use this vocabulary in your own stories.

or...

- You can actually write transcripts of the recordings. Writing transcripts and writing your own version of the story build different skills. Decide if the group wants to build Inuktitut writing and composition skills; if so, choose to write your own versions of the story. If you want people to learn and remember traditional words and to listen well and remember the traditional form of the story, choose to write transcripts.
- Use peer consultation and editing for feedback throughout the writing process.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- People will now be very familiar with the story, having listened to it many times and written and edited compositions or transcripts. Your groups can then meet and decide what images you want to use to show the story.
- Divide up the work and complete the wall hanging or quilt.
- The artwork – wall hangings or quilts – can be displayed with the stories. Or hold an oral storytelling evening with the artwork on display.



# Three-dimensional Projects

## Dioramas, Topographical Maps and Sculpture

### What is a Diorama?

*A diorama is a three-dimensional display showing a scene from nature, from an historical event, or from human life during a certain time period or event. Human figures, animals, dwellings, means of transportation can be modeled from various materials and set up to show activities. They may be arranged in front of a painted or photographed background. A diorama can be a miniature scene (perhaps set up in a shoe box), a life-size scene or any size in between.*



*Diorama of Camp from the Dorset Period. May Hakongak Community Library and Cultural Centre, Cambridge Bay.*

### What is a Topographical Map?

*A topographical map (or relief map) is a map that shows the land features – the height of the land, valleys and rivers – as raised contours. This can be done by drawing lines on the map and writing numbers that show the altitude. But you can also create a map with a raised or three-dimensional surface that shows landforms. It is like a sculpture of an area of land.*



## Ideas for Three-dimensional Projects

A three-dimensional project might be an interesting project for an arts and literacy program, traditional sewing and literacy program, or for a group with a high number of visual learners. It would work well with certain types of research that involve descriptions of landforms or people's daily lives. You often see displays such as these in museums – dioramas showing life in a summer or winter camp, topographical maps of villages or hunting lands, or sculptures of historical events. Take a look at *Images of Justice*, by Dorothy Eber, a book about carvings that tell the stories of court cases from the early justice system in the Northwest Territories.

## Steps in Creating a Three-dimensional Project

- After you have completed the research, decide how your group would like to illustrate the information you collected.
  - A topographical map could be made from paper mache and painted to show various landforms. On the topographical map you could illustrate a specific trip, summer and winter camps, caribou migration routes, fishing spots or areas where different game was hunted or trapped.
  - You may want to create a diorama to show camp life, or how a tent or iglu was set up – with all the necessary tools, equipment and clothing. You could create dolls wearing miniature skin clothing, and miniature equipment or tools from soapstone, bone and sinew.
  - An arts and literacy group may want to portray their research in soapstone carvings or clay sculptures.
- Work as individuals, in pairs or small groups to create your three-dimensional projects. If you are planning a large project, the whole group may want to work together on one project, with some people creating the background scene, some sewing clothing, others modeling the dolls. You may want to create a large topographical map as a group project.
- Make up a written work plan for the group to follow, so everyone knows his or her job and can see the big picture. Brainstorm all the steps in completing the project and the dates you hope to complete each step. Post the work plan where everyone can see it. Add more tasks as they come up.

- Regularly consult with the Elders with whom you did the research to make sure your work is accurate.
- Note unfamiliar traditional vocabulary, record it with meanings and try to use it in your labels and other writing.
- Create labels and titles for your projects on the computer.
- As the project progresses, group members can document their progress and their feelings about their work in journals.
- When the work is complete, invite the community for a public viewing of the projects – an open house or presentation. Plan a short talk about your research and the creation of the three-dimensional projects. Everyone can take turns presenting some of the information, with perhaps one group member acting as the master of ceremonies. (See *Public Presentation or Open House in the Active Projects* section.) Advertise your event through radio, TV and posters.

*“But the most critical carrier of the  
ancient ways of understanding and of  
dreaming the world is the language itself.  
In Yuchi you cannot construct a  
single sentence without understanding  
a lot of things about how you see the world.  
It’s all built into the language,  
it’s all coded there.  
This is a different way of understanding.”*

*Richard Grounds, Yuchi Native American language office*

From *Spoken Here* by Mark Abley, published by Random House Canada, 2003

# Writing Projects



*On youth speakers of Kalaallisut,  
the Greenlandic language...*

*Per Langgaard, a member of the Language Policy Working Group, presented evidence of a significant drop in the number of young people in Greenland who speak Danish as a mother tongue. He believes that this is due primarily to a drop in the Danish population following the establishment of home rule. As a result, young Greenlanders no longer enjoy the 'free Danish education' they once had, resulting in a growing number of children who speak only Kalaallisut.*

*From An Overview of Current Language Initiatives in Greenland,  
Office of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut*

# Biographies

## What is a Biography?

*A biography is a record of someone's life. It can include important life events, such as birth date and place, family life as a child, marriage, births of sons and daughters, date and place of death. There are many other details that make a person come to life for us as we read: activities or jobs held over a lifetime, important events or circumstances, beliefs and values that guided the person's way of life.*

## Ideas for Biographies

- The literacy group could write biographies of their own parents, grandparents or other family members. If people are writing about an ancestor who has passed away, they may be able to get information through books, magazine articles and through interviewing relatives and other people in the community.
- The literacy group could decide to record the lives of all the Elders in the community. Check first to see if recordings have already been made of these Elders' lives. If recordings already exist, you could write biographies based on listening to those interviews. If no recordings exist, you could get permission to interview these Elders.
- Members of the group may also want to interview Elder's family members to get their viewpoint of the Elders' lives.
- Take photographs to include in the biographies or look for old photographs from private collections, books, magazines or archives.
- When the research phase is complete, the facilitator teaches lessons on the writing process, the elements of a biography, writing non-fiction, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and other topics as needed. These can be in the form of mini-lessons as the work progresses.
- Work through the steps of making notes and writing various drafts of the biography, using peer editing and consultation to get feedback on your work.
- Type the final drafts on the computer, adding scanned or digital photographs and graphics if you want.
- Put the biographies together in booklet form: make a cover; give credit to the authors and the people they interviewed. Inside the front cover of the book, write the date and place that the book was created. Add dedications to special people if you want.

- Make the booklets available to residents of the community and family members. Your group could give them as gifts for Christmas or for other special occasions.
- The book can be used as reading material for future literacy groups.



*“We have always been told never to give up  
or think it’s too late to learn, because it’s  
never too late even if you are grown up.  
Even those of us who are grown up  
still look for someone more knowledgeable  
in areas we don’t know as yet.  
It’s like that when it concerns the  
Inuit way of life, because even we  
the older people have regrets for not  
having paid attention more closely  
to what our Elders tried to teach us.”*

*Donald Suluk in Inuktitut, Winter 1987*

# Books

## Ideas for Creating Books

- Your group could consider creating a book from the material you have researched.
- Decide on the topic and focus of the book. You may not be able to use all the information you have collected; select information that would be the most interesting for readers in your community. For example, it could be a small booklet on how to make one tool or prepare skins. Or it could be a larger book on the whole process of making kamiik – from preparing the skins to the finished pair of kamiik. Or it could be a collection of life stories, family or community history.
- Decide who will write each section of the book. Will you write in pairs, small groups or as individuals?
- Decide if you want to add photographs or graphics.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, writing non-fiction, grammar, syllabic keyboarding and any other topics as they come up during the progress of the work.
- Work through the steps of making notes and writing various drafts of the book, using peer editing and consultation to get feedback on your work.
- Type the final drafts on the computer, adding scanned or digital photographs and graphics if you want.
- Put the sections together in booklet form: make a cover; give credit to the authors and the people they interviewed. Inside the front cover of the book, write the date and place that the book was created. Add dedications to special people if you want.
- The book can be used as reading material for your literacy group and future literacy groups and schools.

For ideas on different ways to make books, see the NWT Literacy Council web site: [www.nwt.literacy.ca](http://www.nwt.literacy.ca). Click on *Family Literacy*, then on *How to Kits*, then on *Bookmaking*.

# Comparisons

Beliefs, Lifestyles, Land Forms, Legends...

## Ideas for Comparisons

- Comparing regions or time periods can make for interesting research and topics for writing.
- Perhaps in your community there are people originating from several different areas. Group members could research information about the area that their family comes from – then compare information from these areas.
- Choose a theme for your comparison: lifestyles, hunting techniques, sewing techniques, clothing pattern styles, tool making techniques, legends, geography or land forms, weather, spiritual beliefs, birthing customs, approaches to raising dogs and running dog teams, just to name a few.
- You could also look at a theme over different time periods. For example, compare hunting techniques in 1940 and now.
- Decide what information you want to learn about your theme. Brainstorm a list of the questions you hope to find the answers to.
- Look for recorded interviews, books, magazines, videos and other sources that can help you answer your questions.
- Brainstorm names of people who come from different areas or were around in earlier times and may be able to help you with your comparison research.
- Break into small groups or pairs to divide up the research work. Each group can work on two or three questions. Or one group could research all the videos, while another group looks at written resources and another group interviews Elders.
- Plan ways to organize your information. (See *Preparing for the Interviews* in *The Process of Collecting Oral Histories* section.)
- Create a comparison chart that people can add information to as they find it:



*Dog Raising and Dog Teaming*

Question	Back River Area	Repulse Bay Area
What were the qualities of a good sled dog?		
How many dogs normally in one team?		
At what age were dogs ready to work?		
At what age did youth first begin to drive dogs?		
What were the dogs fed?		

- You can, of course, compare more than two areas or time periods.
- Post the comparison chart on the wall where people can easily add new information. Add new questions as you think of them. Include photographs, drawings or diagrams if they add to the information.
- Once all the information is complete, group members can write short essays based on the comparison chart.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on writing paragraphs, on linking words used for comparisons, on syllabic keyboarding and other topics as needed.
- Work in pairs or small groups to get feedback on your writing and help with the editing process.

# E-mail for Elders

## Ideas for E-mail for Elders

- People in your community may have relatives in another community. Partner with a literacy group in that community to set up a program where Elders from each community can e-mail their relatives regularly.
- The facilitator makes sure the literacy group is confident in their computer and e-mail skills first. The facilitator can teach mini-lessons on syllabic keyboarding if necessary. Literacy group members should feel comfortable using e-mail and have many chances to practice before you begin the project.
- Advertise your group's project in the community.
- Match up Elders with literacy group members. The group in the other community will be doing the same.
- Set up e-mail accounts for the Elders.
- If any Elders aren't literate in syllabics or don't want to learn the keyboard, someone can type for them while they dictate their message. Others may want to learn about computers.
- Show Elders how to take digital pictures to e-mail to their relatives.
- Create a special weekly time when Elders can come to check their e-mail.
- Literacy group members could keep journals about their experiences.
  - How has the regular contact with the Elder affected your approach or attitudes?
  - What are your thoughts and feelings about the project?
  - How do you feel about this chance to use Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun in a meaningful way?
  - Have you learned new or traditional vocabulary?
- Literacy group members could also keep vocabulary lists or personal dictionaries of any new words learned from the Elders.

# Historical Fiction or ‘Faction’

## What is Historical Fiction or ‘Faction’?

*‘Faction’ or Historical Fiction is an imaginative story that is based on true facts. This is a good writing assignment for the end of an oral history project. After all the information is collected, you can write a fictional story about a real-life character or about a fictional character, set in the time period you were studying in the oral history project. You should try to work into the story as many details as possible about life in that time period – details that you learned through your oral history research.*

## Ideas for Writing ‘Faction’ or Historical Fiction

- When all of your oral history research is finished, brainstorm facts that you learned. For example, think about what life would have been like for YOU in the time you were studying. What was life like in winter? In summer? What materials were available? Who would your friends be? What chores would you have done daily? What would you have done for fun? What would the camp look like? How would children interact with their parents? And so on...
- Write the brainstormed ideas on flip chart paper.
- Post the flip charts on the wall where people can see them while they are writing.
- Try a visualization technique: The facilitator or one of the group members takes the group through a visualization process. The group closes their eyes while someone paints a verbal picture for them of a scene from the time they are going to write about. The group members imagine the visual picture in their minds.
- The whole group could also do this visualization together: everyone closes their eyes and one person begins to verbally describe a scene (perhaps from a fishing camp in 1950). The others jump in as they get ideas to contribute. Everyone in the group tries to imagine a detailed mental picture of the scene.
- After the visualization, people can jot down in point form some of the images that came to mind. These notes can be used and expanded upon on for your ‘faction’ story.
- Each person can work individually on his or her own ‘faction’ piece. But meet regularly with a friend to share peer editing and consult with the facilitator as you move through the writing process

- Or you can try a group writing process, with several people contributing to one story. Divide into small groups or try it with the whole group writing and editing together on flip chart paper. The group process might be helpful when group members lack confidence to write on their own. They will be able to go through the writing process supported by their peers.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up during the progress of the writing.
- The ‘faction’ stories can be used as reading material for your group and future literacy groups.
- See *History Workshop* in the *Building Language and Literacy Skills Through Oral History Projects* section for more ideas about writing ‘faction’ or historical fiction.

### **Examples of Historical Fiction**

*Neeluk an Eskimo Boy in the Days of the Whaling Ships*, by Frances Kittredge, illustrated by Howard Weyahok Rock. Published by Alaska Northwest Books, 2001, ISBN: 0-88240-545-4

*Northern Lights The Soccer Trails*, by Michael Arvaaluk Kusugak, illustrated by Vladyana Krykorka. Published by Annick Press Ltd., 1993, ISBN: 1-55037-338-2

*The Lamp, the Ice, and the Boat Called Fish*, by Jacqueline Briggs Martin, illustrated by Beth Krommes. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001, ISBN: 0-618-00341

<LP<sup>sb</sup> (*Amaruq*), by Uvinik Qamaniq, illustrated by Craig Clark. Published by Baffin Divisional Board of Education, 1998, ISBN: 1-55015-121-5

# Letters to Ancestors

## Ideas for Letters to Ancestors

- Proceed with your oral history project, listening to audio recordings about life in past times or interviewing Elders.
- As a group, discuss what it must have been like to live in those days. You can discuss as a whole group or break into small groups or pairs and then come back together to share your ideas. Hold a free discussion or create questions to guide the discussion, such as the following:
  - What qualities must our ancestors have had to survive and live well?
  - In what ways do you think life was easier or harder in traditional times?
  - What do you admire most about your ancestors?
  - What would you say to your ancestors if you could speak to them?
- The facilitator or one of the group members can take notes on flip chart paper during the discussion.
- The project is to write a letter to an ancestor. Write to one specific ancestor in your family, to a namesake, or to ancestors in general if you don't know someone specific from your family history.
- Using the notes on the flip chart paper as a guide for ideas, each person writes a letter to an ancestor. If you could talk to this family member right now, what would you say to her or him? What would you tell your ancestor about the world today? About their family today? What are you thinking and feeling? What would you want them to know about the changes that are happening?<sup>1</sup>
- Think about using the Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun that the ancestor would have used. Remember traditional vocabulary you learned during the research phase.
- Later you could write a response from your ancestor. What do you think the ancestor would say back to you? What would his or her response be to the changes in the world and to your thoughts and feelings?

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Culture, A Way to Live* by Yukon College

- This could also be a way to begin an oral history project. Hold the group discussion before you begin the project. Each group member writes a letter to an ancestor. The letter is sealed in an envelope and kept in a special place until the end of the project. The project proceeds - doing research, conducting interviews or listening to recordings, studying a specific oral history theme and creating a presentation. When the project is complete write another letter to the same ancestor. Each group member can then open the original letter and compare it to their most recent letter. How has this project changed your approach, your attitude or your understanding of the past?
- The letters can be kept for the group's children or made into a booklet that can be used as reading material for other literacy groups and schools.

### **Letter Exchange**

- Focus on one particular story told by an Elder. Group members pretend they are the people in this story. Choose partners and, pretending to be the characters in the story, write letters to each other about the situation that happened in the Elder's story. One partner writes the first letter and the other responds. Write and exchange the letters without worrying about editing – grammar, spelling, etc. When literacy group members have opportunities to concentrate on ideas instead of the mechanics of writing, they will feel less inhibited about writing. Consider this letter-writing exchange to be a form of journal writing.
- Several letters may be exchanged in this way.
- When the letter-writing process is complete, you may want to consider editing the letters – depending on the final purpose of the activity. Partners can work together in the editing process.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up during the progress of the writing and editing.
- The letters can be typed on the computer and published in book form with the original transcript or a summary of the Elder's story.

# Local Heroes

## Ideas for a Local Hero Project

- This is an opportunity to learn about special people in your community or area today or people who lived there in the past – your local heroes!
- When you are doing your research you may come across exciting stories of people’s great accomplishments or successes. Or you may decide at the beginning of your project that the purpose of your research is to look for these kinds of stories.
- They could be stories of survival, great hunts, politics, art, love, creation or perseverance through great difficulties.
- Collect the recordings or written stories of these heroes.
- You can work as individuals or divide into groups. Each group or individual chooses a story that interests them.
- Each group or individual works at writing the story of one local hero, based on the recorded or written interviews. You may have to add details that weren’t explicitly explained in the story, but rely on your research to make the details as realistic as possible.
- Proceed through the writing process using peer consultation and editing to refine the composition.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- Type the stories on the computer and put them together in book form. Include photographs, illustrations or graphics if you want.
- People in the group can enjoy reading each other’s stories.
- These stories can be used as interesting reading material for future literacy groups and in schools.
- You could also make a video about a local hero. (See *Videos* in the *Active Projects* section.)
- Literacy group members could read the stories on the radio so other families can hear them too. (See *Storytelling on the Radio* in the *Oral Projects* section.)

# Modernizing Stories

## Ideas for Modernizing Stories<sup>1</sup>

- After listening to an oral history recording or to an Elder telling a story, literacy group members can write the story, but set in modern times.
- Imagine that the story is happening today, in present times.
  - What present-day people would be in the story?
  - How would the setting change?
  - How would the details of the story change?
  - Would the story end differently?
- Record people's ideas on flip chart paper so they can refer to them as they write.
- Continue through the writing process, using peer consultation and editing to get feedback on the stories.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- Try to use some of the vocabulary used by the storyteller. While listening to the stories, you could make lists of unfamiliar words or keep a personal dictionary.
- Consider publishing the modern stories and the traditional stories side-by-side in a booklet.
- The modernized stories will make interesting reading for your literacy group and future literacy groups.

<sup>1</sup> Thank you to Elisapee Flaherty, teacher in Kimmirut, for the idea of modernizing stories.





- If the literacy group is interested in how people celebrated special occasions, such as Christmas, date your paper December 28, 1956 and talk about celebrations that happened in different communities or camps that Christmas.
- If the group is writing a newspaper from a date in the past, think about the forms of Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun that would have been used then. Try to use some traditional vocabulary Elders' used in interviews.
- Or the group could write a modern day newspaper. Include events, politics and issues that are happening in Nunavut today. You could interview people, including Elders, to get their ideas or opinions on these topics. You could write an article that includes quotations from both older and younger people. As writers, you will need to use critical thinking skills to put together information from several sources (synthesis) and to show in your article how the different opinions relate to each other and to life in modern times (analysis).
- Decide if your newspaper will be in Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun only – or will it be bilingual. Think about your purpose for creating this newspaper. Is your goal to strengthen Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun literacy skills? If so, writing the newspaper in Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun only will create important reading materials in that language. Readers will not be able to resort to reading the English versions, if their English literacy skills are stronger. Interesting photographs and headlines will lead people to try harder to get information from the articles.
- Interviewing people in Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun will help strengthen oral language skills.
- Divide into pairs or small groups to work on different stories for the newspaper. Or some people may prefer to work independently.
- Those with stronger literacy skills could work with beginning literacy learners. Or those with weaker literacy skills could work on advertising and other pieces of writing that include less text and some art or photos.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, journalistic approaches, syllabic keyboarding, grammar, vocabulary and other topics as they come up.
- Use peer editing and consultation throughout the writing process to get feedback on your work.

- Include digital and scanned photographs. Photographs of people from the community, ancestors and family members will interest people and make them want to read the articles.
- Create headlines that make people want to read on. Articles about familiar topics, ancestors and their history and local community events will be interesting reading material in Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun for people in your community. An interesting headline will encourage them to read the articles.
- You could have a group of people responsible for layout and design of the newspaper.
- You could appoint one group to act as editors, or different groups or individuals could exchange their work for editing purposes.
- The group may want to use a newsletter template on a word processing program.
- The newspaper could be produced on 8½” X 11” paper or 8½” X 14” paper.
- Distribute the completed newspaper in the community and to schools. Your newspaper will make great Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun reading material for future literacy groups and schools.



# Poetry and Song

## *Songs are Thoughts*

*Songs are thoughts, sung out with the breath when people are moved by great forces and ordinary speech no longer suffices.*

*Man is moved just like the ice floe sailing here and there out in the current. His thoughts are driven by a flowing force when he feels joy, when he feels fear, when he feels sorrow. Thoughts can wash over him like a flood, making his breath come in gasps and his heart throb. Something like an abatement in the weather will keep him thawed up. And then it will happen that we, who always think we are small, will feel still smaller. And we will fear to use words. When the words we want to use shoot up of themselves – we get a song.*

Orpingalik<sup>1</sup>

Some of your group may be interested in writing poetry or songs based on your oral history research. The thought of writing a poem can be a bit scary for some. So read a few poems aloud and discuss them before starting to write your own. Read poems or songs together to create a chorus. Look at songs to see how they are similar to poetry. Read or listen to traditional pisiit and use them as models to write your own work.

## **Ideas for Writing Poetry**

- You could start your poetry writing sessions by writing about common things that you find in your home or your meeting area. Look at the object carefully; touch it; smell it. Try free-writing: write words or phrases that come to mind as you examine the object; describe the object. Try putting your list of words and phrases together in different ways. Don't worry about rhyming.

<sup>1</sup> From *Songs are Thoughts Poems of the Inuit*, edited by Neil Philip, published by Doubleday Canada, Toronto, 1995

***Twizzler***

*Red, long, shiny, juicy, twisted  
twizzlers – Buy it!*

*Chewy, juicy, strong tasting  
strawberry smile-making taste –  
too good to be true!*

*Pure strawberry twizzlers in my  
mouth on a cool day.*

by John Tugak

from All Ours 1992

- Write a group poem. Choose a topic. Brainstorm words and expressions about that topic. The group chooses and rearranges some of the words and expressions on the brainstormed list to create the poem. The facilitator or one group member writes as the rest of the group decides how the poem will go.
- Write poetry about childhood memories, cherished relatives or friends, or special objects.
- Use photographs to inspire poems. Describe the photograph. Don't worry about the form – just write down the ideas as they come to mind. The great thing about poetry is that thoughts that come in phrases and sentence fragments can be used in poems – as is! Complete sentences are not necessary as in other forms of writing.
- Learners could write poems from their journal entries. They might be based on responses to interviews, moving encounters with relatives or Elders or other significant journal entries.
- Write poems that are conversations between two people.

**Anaana,**

*I wish I were wolf.*

Son,

*You'd be too hungry.*

Anaana,

*I wish I were falcon.*

Son,

*You'd be too proud.*

Anaana,

*Carry me on your back.*

*That yes*

*Right away!*<sup>2</sup>

- As the group reads and writes poetry, the facilitator can point out techniques such as using metaphors and similes to paint verbal pictures. For example: safe and secure as winter ice; the dancer's hands flutter like the wings of a bird.
- At first you can provide models or templates for writing different kinds of poems to get people started.

### **Write a haiku**

Haikus are a Japanese form of poetry that has 17 syllables arranged in a three-line pattern:

Line 1 – 5 syllables

Snow gently falling.

Line 2 – 7 syllables

Covers a man made landscape

Line 3 – 5 syllables

Beauty returns home.

Leave out unimportant words

*by Issac Arngna'naaq  
from All Ours 1992*

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from *Enriching our Lives; Poetry Lessons for Adult Literacy Teachers and Tutors* by Francis E. Kazemek and Pat Rigg, published by International Reading Association, 1995

**Write a five-line poem**

Bring a special item from home – something old, something interesting or no longer used daily, something that holds special memories:

Line 1 – Write down the name of your special item

Line 2 – Write two words that describe the item (adjectives)

Line 3 – Write three action words (verbs) that tell what the item does

Line 4 – Write a thought about the item

Line 5 – Write the word you wrote on the first line – or write a related word

*Mom  
beautiful feisty  
caring supporting sharing  
I love you so  
Helen*

**Write an eight-line poem**

Here you are asked to describe certain things, but be sure not to actually name them. Change the topic to make it fit your own theme.

Line 1 – Describe the most beautiful animal you can think of. A short phrase of description will do.

Line 2 – Describe what you feel like inside when you are very happy.

Line 3 – Describe the colour you like best and why you like it.

Line 4 – Describe the smell of something you love.

Line 5 – Describe a beautiful place that you love being.

Line 6 – Describe the sound of something very beautiful and peaceful.

Line 7 – Describe the tastes or textures that you really like. You may want to compare them to something else.

Line 8 – Describe a scene of love and caring.

After you have written the poem, reread each line. Take out words that don't seem to add to the meaning; move words or phrases around to make the sound or rhythm better; add a title.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Haiku, five-line poem and eight-line poem from *Reading in the Classroom* by Carol Tapsell, published by Aurora College, 1999

- Write a pisiq or song. Find examples of pisiit; many of them tell stories. Listen and use them as models to tell the stories you learned in your oral history project.
- Look back at the lists of Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun vocabulary you have learned during your oral history project. Put these words and phrases together to make a poem.
- Write poems about the months and the seasons and the activities that happen each month.
- Write group poems. Each person in the group thinks of a phrase to start a poem: eg. Peace is..., Culture is..., Love is..., Family is..., Survival is... Write the phrase on a piece of paper. Then exchange papers and write five or six line poems in which each line begins with the phrase you received. Or each person writes one line of each poem and then passes the paper to the next person.
- Make shape poems. For example, if the poem is about an inuksuk, write the poem in the shape of an inuksuk or if it is about a star, place the lines to form the shape of a star. Or... Draw a picture in the centre of a round circle of paper; write the poem that goes with the picture in a circle around the edge of the paper.





### ***How Do I Love Thee***

*I loved your beautiful face  
With skin so soft  
And those tender loving eyes that only saw a precious child  
And that wonderful loving smile you gave me.*

*I loved your touch  
That was ever so gentle and warm  
I felt you holding me as if I was the only one  
With the most loving arms and caressing me as we lay together  
Ever so gently stroking my hair and reassuring me you loved me.*

*Most of all, I loved you with all my being  
Never had anyone loved me as you did  
I can still feel your presence ever with me  
I thank you for showing me how to love  
Had it not been for you, I may never have loved  
You are in me, and ever will be.*

*Though I miss you daily  
Your touch, your eyes, your presence will I never forget  
For you had been the most wonderful loving gentle and warm  
Grandmother I ever had.  
Thank God I was chosen to be your grandchild and namesake  
to love  
And to carry on your love.*

by Nellie Kusugak<sup>4</sup>  
Rankin Inlet, Nunavut

<sup>4</sup> From *Kinship and Relationship Module, Inuktitut Language Arts Curriculum*, developed by Nunia Qanatsiaq, Department of Education, Arviat, 2003



### ***A Poor Man's Prayer to the Spirits***<sup>6</sup>

In winter, when there is only little blubber oil in the lamps, and people are anxious lest they go out altogether, the hunter can make a new catch by repeating the following words early in the morning when the day is just dawning:

You, fatherless and motherless

*You, dear little orphan*

*Give me*

*Kamiiks or caribou,*

*Bring me a gift,*

*An animal, one of those*

*That provide nice blood-soup,*

*An animal from the sea depths*

*And not from the plains of earth*

*You, little orphan,*

*Bring me a gift.*

### **Poetry Resources**

*Songs are Thoughts; Poems of the Inuit* edited by Neil Philip, published by Doubleday Canada, Toronto, ON, 1995, ISBN: 0-385-25458-X.

*The Elders' Palace Iniqnirit Qalgiat* poems by Margo Button with Natasha Thorpe, published by Oolichan Books, Lantzville, BC, 2002.

*Enriching our Lives; Poetry Lessons for Adult Literacy Teachers and Tutors* by Francis E. Kazemek and Pat Rigg, published by International Reading Association, Newark, DE, 1995. ISBN: 0-87207-137-5. Available through Grass Roots Press.

*For the Love of Poetry; Literacy Scaffolds, Extension Ideas, and More* by Nancy Lee Cecil, published by Peguis Publishers, Winnipeg, MB, 1997, ISBN: 1895411-87-4. Peguis Publishers' web site: [www.ideasforteachers.com](http://www.ideasforteachers.com)

*Reading in the Classroom*, by Carol Tapsell, published by Aurora College, Fort Smith, 1999. Available from Director of Policy and Programs, Aurora College HQ, Fort Smith, 867-872-7012.

<sup>6</sup> From an article in *Inuktitut* magazine #75, 1992 – 'Rasmussen's Meeting with Martha Tunnuq's Family in 1923'

# Starting Writing with Art

## Ideas for Starting Writing With Art

- For those with limited writing skills or little confidence with writing, try beginning with an art project. This would work well with an arts and literacy program, but could be used in any literacy program. Some people who are beginning literacy learners may be wonderful artists. This type of project gives them a chance to demonstrate their talents within the literacy group.
- Rather than extensive research, you may want to listen to several recorded stories or ask Elders to visit your group to tell stories.
- People can create drawings, paintings, pastels, models, sculptures, or any art form – based on the stories. They could create one piece of art or a series to illustrate their concept of the story.
- When they've finished with their artwork, they partner with a fellow group member or the facilitator to talk about their drawing. The partner scribes (writes) the artist's words, which then become the artist's story. The story can be used for reading and writing practice in many ways.
- For a group project, fold a large piece of paper into 16 sections.<sup>1</sup> This activity is like group storytelling, but through illustrations. Ask people to draw the visual images for a story inspired by oral history interviews. One person begins the story by drawing a picture in the upper left corner. The paper is passed from person to person, with each one adding a new drawing to show what happens next in the story. When the illustrations are finished, pass the paper around the group again and take turns telling the story orally from the illustrations. You can write this group story on flip chart paper and use it in many ways for reading and writing practice. Or you can use this activity as a stimulus for individual writing.
- This art and writing activity could become an illustrated story booklet that your literacy group and future literacy groups or schools can read.

<sup>1</sup> Thank you for this idea to Julie Ogina, Nunavut Literacy Council Board Member and Inuinnaqtun teacher in Cambridge Bay

# Theme Magazines

## What is a Theme Magazine?

A theme magazine is a written, audio or visual project which includes separate works that all relate to a chosen theme. The individual works can be done by the literacy group members and collected from other sources as well. The separate written, oral or video pieces are formatted into an attractive format by the creators of the theme magazine.

## Ideas for Creating a Theme Magazine<sup>1</sup>

- You may decide to create a theme magazine based on your oral history research.
- Small groups, pairs or individuals can work together to create their own theme magazines. Or the whole literacy group could work together on one magazine.
- A theme magazine could be either a written production or an audio or video production.
- Decide on the theme for each magazine, based on themes you noticed in your oral history research. For example, your theme might be *Elders' Words of Wisdom for the Future* or *When People Care, They Do Amazing Things* or *Marriages Then and Now*. (See *Choosing the Theme of your Project* in the *Process of Collecting Oral Histories* section for more ideas.)
- Look at different types of magazines, such as *Inuktitut* magazine, *The Beaver*, *Up Here* or *Time*, and listen to magazine-type TV or radio programs on APTN, CBC North or southern TV channels. As a group, talk about the characteristics of a theme magazine.
- There are many choices to include in a written magazine: articles explaining an idea, a piece of persuasive writing, interviews, art, poetry, book and film reviews, cartoons, photographs, legends or myths, advertisements. In an audio or video magazine you could also include music and drama, as well. But all the pieces should relate to the theme.
- You might review books, videos or other sources that you used in the research phase.
- The creators of the magazine should write some of the material, but you can add some that you collected from various other sources.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Theme Magazine* by Irene Schmidt, in *MATE Files*, published by Manitoba Association of Teachers of English

- The written theme magazines can be created on the computer or by hand; the video magazines on videotape; and the audio magazines on audiotape.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up. You could invite people with special skills such as video producers or technicians from IBC in to teach mini-lessons to the group.
- Throughout the writing and creation process people can get feedback through peer consultation and editing.



*“Many of our most common and effective medicines derive from wild plants, but Western scientists have studied only a tiny proportion of plant species for their medicinal value. If potential cures for crippling diseases are being shredded into pulp or shipped across an ocean as plywood, we may never know about them. By “we,” I mean the mainstream cultures of wealthy nations. Indigenous peoples often know a great deal about the natural world, and part of the knowledge lies embedded in their languages.”*

*Mark Abley in Spoken Here*



# Stories



Someone who cared about their language  
asked one of these hunters,  
“What will you do when you get out of hospital?”  
“Oh, you must know that I sit waiting for the moon  
to turn back for me so that I can go to my home and  
listen again to the stories of my people.  
Oh that I could sit again listening to the stories  
which come from a great distance.  
For this is the time for telling stories.  
First I must sit cooling my arms so that the tiredness  
can go out of me, and then I must listen, waiting  
for the story to come, for the story I want to hear.  
The mountains may be between us but I will turn  
around on my feet. I will turn back on my tracks and,  
listening, open my ears to feel the story that comes  
in on the wind. Oh that I may listen again  
to the story that is the wind.”  
Now this comes straight out of the Stone Age heart.  
He was homesick above all,  
not for his people, not for his country even,  
but for the stories of this people.

*Mary Panegoosho in Where are the Stories of My People?!*

# Introduction

*These stories were made when all unbelievable things could happen.*

Rasmussen, *Intellectual Culture of the Copper Eskimos*

*The unikkaaqtuat are beneficial to children. At one time these stories were true, but they are so old they just became stories. They are very useful for children. There are all sorts of stories that can be told to children. Most times, children start settling down when you tell a story. Most of the stories that we heard were true and they have a definite benefit for children.*

Uqsuralik Ottokie<sup>1</sup>

*It is not always that we want a point in our stories, if only they are amusing. It is only the white men that want a reason and an explanation of everything; and so our old men say that we should treat white man as children who always want their own way. If not, they become angry, and scold.*

Rasmussen, *Intellectual Culture of the Copper Eskimos*

This section includes 15 sample oral history stories which have been transcribed and translated. You can use them in your literacy program in either Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun or English – or both – whatever suits the needs of your program.

If your literacy program is shorter and doesn't allow you to collect your own oral histories or listen to tapes, you can use these stories as a basis for any of the activities in the *Project Ideas* section.

We have included different types of stories: personal or community life stories, legends, and how-to stories.

We also included three versions of the same story, *Inukpak: Inukpak*, told by George Kuptana, *Inukpak The Giant*, told by Helen Paungat and *Inugpasugssuk*, a Netsilik story retold by Howard Norman. It might be interesting to compare the three versions. How is the storyline the same or different? What is the difference in the style of writing? What do you notice when you compare Inuit oral stories to the usual style of written English? How do you think the translation affects the story?

<sup>1</sup> From *Childrearing Practices, Interviewing Inuit Elders Series*, with Naqi Ekho and Uqsuralik Ottokie, published by Nunavut Arctic College, 2000

These stories might inspire you to talk to people in your community to find out if any similar stories exist. People in your group could each choose a story that they would like to tell in Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun. This is a great way to build confidence and language skills. You could practise the story until you are comfortable with it and then tell it to your own children or to small groups of children.

Enjoy the stories!

# Catching Geese: Kalgiks

Told by Mackie Kaosoni, James Evetalegak and Jimmy Nakoyak<sup>1</sup>

It isn't easy to catch geese because they can run faster than a person, as well as fly away. The Inuit had a special way to catch geese a long time ago. You may have seen rocks piled in a certain way to build small corrals on the land around Cambridge Bay. These are very old and I will explain how they were used.

Our ancestors would pile rocks to make a stone house that they could gather geese into. The geese had to be tricked into entering this kalgik, or stone house, by having a person who could lead them by honking the same way a goose does. Have you tried to imitate geese? It is not easy for everyone to do well, but when it works, the geese can be trapped in the stone house with their human leader. Once the geese follow their decoy into the kalgik, another person would block the entrance and then it was easy to kill them for food.

I have heard that the geese were killed by twisting their necks and then throwing the dead birds up and over the walls of the kalgik. I have never heard of using clubs on the birds. This is how I have heard geese were hunted in the olden times, but I myself have never hunted them that way.

Another part of the hunt started before herding the geese into a kalgik. The Inuit used their qajaqs to herd the geese from the water to the land first. I don't know how many qajaqs were needed for this. After the geese started walking on the land, then the Inuit would walk them towards the kalgik.

I think this way of hunting geese could be a lot of fun instead of shooting them with guns the way we do today.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

# The Hunting of Walrus

Two men were going qajaqing on the sea to hunt for sea mammals. They would watch for the mammal's head to bob up for breath. As they went along the men spotted many walrus. They paddled over closer to where some could be seen surfacing, and the hunt was on.

My generation has all heard this story and has learned its valuable information. These days, young boys and teenagers are not fully equipped because they have not heard all there is to know. Let this lesson of old be heard by the young now.

When a walrus is eating, one must not ride above it. He will rise suddenly and capsize the boat. That even happened to a qallunaaq once. He rode above the eating walrus and, sure enough, he capsized.

So it went that one of the hunters rode above a walrus. The walrus rose quickly and turned the man's qajaq over. The irritated walrus embraced the man and brought him under water. The other man rushed to the scene and waited, hoping the walrus would bring the man back up. The walrus came up again, all right, but would soon plunge below again.

The man who was waiting was a shaman and tried to get the walrus to release his companion. The walrus rose once again, this time closer to the waiting man. Ah, but swiftly he plunged back under with his captive.

The concerned shaman began to conjure up a spell to have the walrus release his friend. Then the submerged walrus quickly reappeared and let the hunter go! Once the released man was clear, the shaman went over to rescue him from the water. He piled him up onto his qajaq and together they headed for shore. They did not catch the walrus.

I don't know the names of these people who had this encounter with the walrus. This is a story that is passed down for young people, and adults too, to learn its lesson.

<sup>1</sup> Printed with thanks to the family of Tautunngi and to Tamalik Janet McGrath

# Ikaluakpalik

Told by Donald Kogvik, Elder, Gjoa Haven, Nunavut

## Ikaluakpalik: Place Where There are Big Fish<sup>1</sup>

I will tell you a story that has been told by the Inuit from long ago and passed on by parents to their children. I myself am not sure what everything in the story means; I can only tell it as I have heard it because I was not there to see the things in the story. Perhaps if I had lived in the long ago and been there, I could be sure I was telling the story correctly.

To understand the story, you must picture how a fish could be big enough to swallow two men who had tied their qajaqs together to make a raft. This way of traveling on water was good for balance to prevent tipping over. When crossing a creek or river it was good to make this kind of raft-like boat.

It is told that these two qajaqs and the men were swallowed all at once by a very big fish.

The big fish lived on this lake and also appeared to a woman who was frightened by it. She was on the shore doing her work alone or perhaps getting water for her camp when suddenly a beautiful looking hill seemed to form in the lake and grow bigger as it came towards her. It was a fish so big that it looked like a hill to her because this is what she thought it must be at first. So huge! This is how I have heard it told. The woman grew afraid and ran away. Something beautiful became something terrible.

I think what she saw must have had a dark color, or shades of gray and black because she was looking at a lake. This could explain why she thought it looked like a hill.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

# Inuaguliit: Little People

Told by George Kuptana, Elder, Bay Chimo, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

Do you want to hear stories about the little people? The little people and how they live? Any little things left behind when Inuit travel and move between camps will be touched by the little people.

This is what they were called a long time ago: little people. They were brother and sister, grandchild and grandparents all living together in a time when people got old very quickly. The little people would seek shelter in the things left behind by Inuit as they moved camps.

The little people were powerful and strong. They used polar bears to pull their sleds when they traveled. Their sleds were made out of stone. They were called little tiny people, these people who travelled in sleds made from very heavy rock. They had tremendous strength according to the stories told about them.

Once the little people decided to camp and spend the night under the cover of some camping gear that had been left by people who had moved on. They ate some cooked caribou meat that they had with them. When they traveled they would carry food with them rather than hunt along the way. They had young polar bears to use as dogs and to pull their sleds.

The next morning after they woke up they decided to load up their sleds after eating breakfast. While they were loading their heavy stone sleds, the old woman spit on the chest of a caribou that had been left under cover in the camp. She spit on the chest because she wanted to eat it. She didn't need any help, but she had a hard time carrying the meat she took out by herself. She said to her husband, "Take this, it's too heavy for me." "Take this, it's too heavy," she said again. Her husband replied, "If it's too heavy, then leave it here."

In fact, it was too heavy and so they did leave it there. The old woman did not like leaving the meat behind that she had spat on, but it was too much of a load even though she had wanted it for her food.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College



Those little people had stone sleds and polar bears for dogs. They had a tremendous amount of strength according to the stories we have heard.

I don't have anything more to say; I am finished.

I can add that the little people are not the same size as the tuniit people because they are different. Tuniit are the same size as humans today and they lived in rocky areas just as we do. Tuniit people build their homes where there are many rocks to allow them to go unseen. We have seen their homes in rocky areas, and we wondered what they were.

People are people everywhere and not animals. The tuniit are a part of us, they just get called a different name, the tuniit people. Big people are the size we are and they have no special name or descriptive titles. They are simply people: Inuit.



# The Inukkaknailak People

Told by George Kuptana, Elder, Bay Chimo, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

A very long time ago there were hardly any people around and life was very hard. This was the way that it was and this is the story I have heard. My story may sound like the parts of a dream as I remember them.

Inukkaknailak were the people. They were called by this name because whenever they met other people on a trail they would just kill them for no reason. I will tell you about one of these people and how the Inukkaknailak got their name when the Inuit started to realize that there were Inuit in the world.

One Inukkaknailak kept two dogs on the floor of his iglu. He would welcome travellers by killing them. When a traveller came into his camp, the traveller would usually see the Inukkaknailak without clothing on. When the Inukkaknailak saw that he had company, he would get dressed up and then start to wrestle with his visitor until he killed him. He killed him right there in his iglu.

Meanwhile this Inukkaknailak person had told his dogs they could have the blood of the man who had been killed. Near one dog there was a bone that looked like a shoulder blade. I think this must have really been a shoulder blade because that is what was used as a tool for cutting things up in earlier times.

As soon as the Inukkaknailak had cut the dead person with the shoulder blade knife, blood flowed, and the dogs started licking it up. They licked the blood up quickly, the dogs of this Inukkaknailak.

The next day another traveller came to visit. This man had clothing that made him look like the common loon. Inside the iglu, the son of the Inukkaknailak really wanted to get this man for himself. The father realized this and immediately got up and began to dress himself even faster – this man with two dogs on his floor who tracked and sniffed for blood.

The traveller with common loon clothing was seen by the Inukkaknailak. He was a common loon, and he had beautiful clothing. The traveller entered the iglu and removed his clothing and put them on the icy floor so he would not slip and fall, this man with the common loon clothing.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

There were several people in the iglu when the common loon man met the Inukkaknailak who was now fully dressed and ready. The traveller saw a young man sitting in the room who went to grab the cutting tool made from a shoulder bone. At this point the Inukkaknailak leader warned the visitor by saying, "No, no, no, watch out, that young man is just about to kill you!"

The people in the iglu were very scared now. The visitor said, "What, what my younger brother, he actually just about killed *you*!" Oh, I almost forgot to tell you that the Inukkaknailak man also said, "The dog was just about to taste your blood!" and the common loon man said, "They could taste *your* blood instead!"

These two brothers started to wrestle with each other. The common loon man killed the Inukkaknailak man and the dogs began to lick his blood, the blood that was trickling onto the floor. The dogs began to lick this blood which they had been raised to like.

Now the common loon man asked the other people present who among them were killers. He managed to get rid of all the killers. Ever since this time there have been no more Inukkaknailak people. You see, the common loon man had come to visit his younger brother in the land where he made his home, this man with the common loon clothing.

Long ago there were a lot of stories, stories about many different animals. Today I don't know how it is, perhaps there are stories today, but I don't know what else to say... wait a minute, I will tell more stories in a minute. I will tell some stories but they seem always ready to disappear from my memory...

# Inukpak

Told by George Kuptana, Elder, Bay Chimo, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

I need a little time to tell some more stories. I find that they seem to disappear from my memory and I need time to hold onto them. This is a story about a little person and two giants. A long time ago two giants lived underneath a tree where they would fall asleep together lying next to each other. A little person approached them with a rock for throwing in his hand. He was either very brave or very foolish because he planned to climb up on the huge people who were sleeping. If he woke the giants up it would not go well for him.

The small person got a better idea after he picked up a rock for throwing. He decided to climb up the tree instead of the giants. He threw his rock at one of the huge people lying below. The rock woke up the one giant who got angry with the other giant. He hit the other giant and said, “What are you doing to me? What have you done to me?” They then settled down and went back to sleep.

Next the little person threw another rock at the second giant lying beneath the tree. Now this giant woke up angry and he yelled at the other giant next to him, “What are you doing throwing rocks at me?” He was mad and he hit the other giant. Once more they settled down and went to sleep.

The little person threw another stone at the first giant he had attacked. This time the giant woke up in a rage and he started to attack the other giant beside him. They started wrestling with each other using all of their giant strength. They were so angry that they killed each other in the struggle.

They killed each other because each one thought the other was bothering him on purpose. In reality it was the little person in the tree who was responsible. He had hit them with stones and carefully waited to make them attack each other.

The little person went home to his camp and told his people that he had killed the two giants with his own hands. He really knew that they had killed each other, but he didn't tell this to anyone.

When the people from his camp went to see what he had done to the two giants, they were amazed and surprised to see how such a small person could have enough strength to kill two giants!

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkakkailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

# Inukpak ‘The Giant’

Told by Helen Paungat, Elder, Arviat, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

Once someone met a giant who was jigging for fish beside two steep ridges that we call Kitingujaajuak and Kitingujaanaq. He had an adopted son. The giant told his son, “When I go to sleep, it will be for a very long time and I won’t be easy to wake up. So when you do try to wake me, place a slab of stone on my forehead and pound me with it.” The giant also told his son that one day a huge polar bear would appear. This polar bear would be so huge that it would block the view between the two ridges, which were quite far apart.

As soon as the huge polar bear appeared, the adopted son started pounding the giant’s forehead with the slab of stone. But the giant kept right on sleeping. The son kept trying desperately to wake the giant for the polar bear was approaching fast. The giant finally woke up, grabbed his bow and arrows, placed the son in his big pouch, and started running after the bear. The giant eventually caught and killed the bear.

A few days later the same giant (or maybe another one) met a very small man jigging for fish. Beside him was a huge white whale and its baby. The giant asked the little man for a small piece of meat from the whale. Being a very stingy little man, he said, “No, that’s for my wife.” The giant and the little man began to argue and eventually started fighting. The little man, who was no match for the giant, was soon knocked down and began shouting for help.

As soon as the little man’s wife heard him calling, she started running to help him. She was a huge woman and was breastfeeding her baby when she heard the call. Her breasts were hanging out as she started to run and she ended up dropping the baby in the snow. Because the woman with her breasts hanging out was so hard for the giant to hold on to, she almost overpowered the giant and his adopted son. The giant told his son to cut off the woman’s breasts. They had a hard time killing the woman because she was so huge. After they had managed to kill her, they went looking for the baby she had been feeding.

<sup>1</sup> From *Recollections of Helen Paungat, A Life in the Keewatin*, ICI Autobiography Series, published by Inuit Cultural Institute, 1988

The giant and his son found the iglu that the little man and his huge wife had been living in. Their children, who were in the iglu, became afraid when they saw the giant. Some of them tried to get away by climbing the rope that their father used to exercise on. The others scrambled everywhere, trying to hide on the bed. I don't think the children were killed because they were just too young. The giant and the son noticed that there was a lot of food stacked up against the wall of the igloo, which left them wondering why the little man was so stingy.



# Inugpasugssuk ‘The Giant’

Netsilik Inuit Story, Retold by Howard Norman<sup>1</sup>

There was once a giant named Inugpasugssuk. He was so big that his lice were as large as lemmings. He used to fish for salmon at Kitingijait, a wide and enormous ravine in the Netsilik land. Through the ravine runs a river so deep that no one can see the bottom. There Inugpasugssuk used to catch salmon, standing astride the ravine. He took the salmon with his hands as they lay under the stones, and although they were very big fish he called them salmon fry.

Sometimes he caught seals. He waded out into the sea with a stick in this hand and killed the seals when they bobbed up out of the water, striking them with this stick.

He was always very careful with humans and always afraid of doing them harm, and therefore he used to move those that lived on the low, flat shores up onto the higher islands in the bay. Once he waded out at Arviligjuaq as usual to hunt seals. He had to swim a stroke in order to get a seal, and it made a wave so enormous that it washed people out into the fjord. That wave went far in over all the land in the vicinity and washed quantities of fish up on the shore. It is those we now find as fossils and use as wick-trimmers for our lamps. There are all types of small fish, small sea scorpions, small cod with large eyes, sticklebacks, salmon fry, cod and many other kinds.

Another time Inugpasugssuk raised a wave that flooded the whole district of Arviligjuaq. As usual he was out sealing when he accidentally struck his own penis; it had shot up out of the water but was so far away that he thought it was a seal putting its head up. The pain made him tumble over backward so that he sat down, and that movement raised a sea that went right in over the land.

<sup>1</sup> From *Northern Tales, Stories from the Native Peoples of the Arctic and Subarctic Regions*, selected, edited and retold by Howard Norman, published by Pantheon Books, 1990

Inugpasugssuk was very fond of humans and often camped close to where they were. He once fell in love with an Inuk woman and exchanged wives with her husband. The arrangement turned out so badly, however, that Inugpasugssuk never tried it again. The Inuk man who was lying with Inugpasugssuk's wife fell into her genitals and never came up again. He dissolved inside her and his bones came out with her urine. But the Inuk woman with whom Inugpasugssuk was lying was split right across and died.

Inugpasugssuk was sorry he had killed a human. To console himself he adopted a human son and reared him in such a manner that he grew and grew and became much bigger than humans usually grow. The foster son helped the giant with all kinds of work. When evening came and the giant lay down to sleep, he loved to be loused, but his foster son, who was afraid to take the big lice out with his naked hands, always wore mittens when he loused him.

One evening, it is said, the giant gave his foster son two stones, a small one and a big one, and said to him, "Tonight I expect that big game will come to our house. If a bear should appear in the ravine you must awaken me, and you must do it by first knocking on my head with the little stone. If I don't wake up, take the big stone and thump my head with it."

Then the giant lay down to sleep and the foster son kept a lookout through the window.

It was not long before a big bear appeared away up the ravine, and at once the son knocked his foster father on the head with the small stone. The giant woke up, saw the bear, and laughed heartily, saying, "Yes, but that's only a fox."

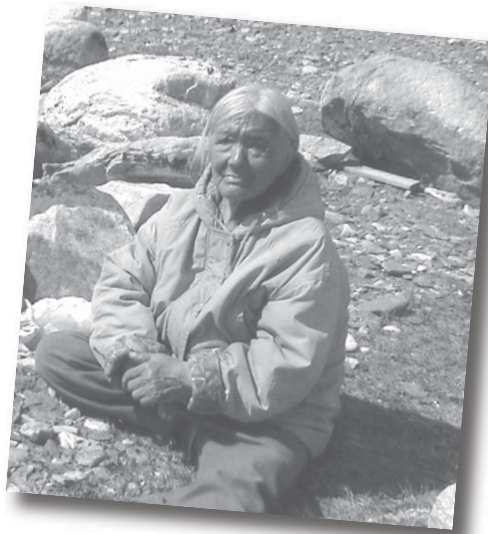
Nevertheless he went out and killed it, and lay down to sleep again. The boy kept watch again, and it was not long before another animal appeared, and this time it was so big that it turned quite dark in the ravine. Once more the foster son took the small stone and hit the giant's head with it. But by this time the giant had become sleepy, and as he did not wake up quickly enough, the boy seized the big stone and began to hammer away at his temples with it. Only then did he awake.



As he looked up towards the ravine, a slight shiver passed through his great body; it was hunting ardour, and he said, “ Yes, this time it’s a real bear,” and placing his foster son in the strap around his kamik, he ran out and killed the bear.

Once Inugpasugssuk’s foster son wanted to visit his family, but as they lived far away and he did not know the way, the giant gave him his magic wand, saying, “Every evening, when you lie down to sleep, you must stick this wand into the ground. When you wake up, it will always have fallen over and will be pointing in the direction you have to go.”

And it happened as the giant had said, and the foster son safely reached his old village. But it is told that he had now grown so tall that he could no longer get into the houses of humans. So he soon went back to the giant, and since then nothing has been heard of him.



# Kuukjuak Hunting Story

Told by Donald Kogvik, Gjoa Haven, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

I will tell you about the time when Inuit last used qajaqs in this area and when I learned about using a qajaq in my youth. I can remember the first time I had seen a qajaq made by Inuit. Angulalik had bought a qajaq made by Kupluguk and Flagstaff Island was the place where we practiced rowing and handling a qajaq. The men rowing their qajaqs in the harbour fascinated me. I decided to try it myself, and so I climbed into the qajaq and tried to paddle away from the land and out to the open water. I almost tipped over and got quite scared. I barely made it back to land without an accident in the water. I vowed that day that I would never go on a qajaq again! But time passed and my attitude about the qajaq changed.

We had spring camps at Kulgajuk (Foggy Bay) with my parents and my in-laws, Alikamik's. There was a young man named Nahaklulik. Alikamik made him a qajaq that was short and close fitting around the waist. I tried this qajaq without fear because I had already tried Angulalik's qajaq. This was my second experience and I enjoyed myself. I used Nahaklulik's qajaq to search for caribou near Kulgajuk.

I found and shot two bull caribou on that trip. I removed their hides and butchered them. I then cut them into pieces so that I could pile them onto the qajaq. This was difficult because the qajaq was small and narrow. I put the hindquarters on the back and used rope all around the qajaq to tie the pieces on so they wouldn't fall off. I also put some of the meat inside. The result was that the qajaq was barely able to float above the surface of the water. As I was loading the meat I had to keep getting on myself to see how much weight I was adding in total so I could be sure of remaining afloat. I was able to butcher only one of the caribou and put it on the qajaq without sinking. I was only a few inches above the water now.

I started to paddle towards home not knowing that my father-in-law, Alikamik, was worried about my safety because I had been gone for quite a while by this time. He had set out in search of me in his qajaq. I had to use all of my strength to paddle in my overloaded qajaq. As I paddled I had to check that I was still floating above the water's surface. At times the qajaq would disappear beneath the water as I paddled. When I paddled harder, the more I felt I was making myself sink and when I stopped paddling, I felt like I was floating on air with my waistline right at the water's edge.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

I wasn't afraid of drowning and I was not at all scared anymore. I had overcome my fear about drowning while using a qajaq. I enjoyed rowing a qajaq at this time. I was a young man, strong and confident. I made my way slowly home and knew I had made the most of my catch.

I know that our ancestors used qajaqs a lot. Qajaqs were useful for searching for game and for hunting tuktu (caribou). Caribou could be speared from a qajaq.

The Inuit did not only use harpoons with steel tips to hunt caribou; they also used wooden spears. Caribou are known to cross rivers in large herds and seals are known to go in large groups to the shores of islands. This is when a qajaq would be used for hunting. When the caribou started their crossing, hunters would row towards them and spear them in the back while they were crossing. I have not experienced this personally, so I can only say what I have heard. Likewise for seal hunting, I haven't heard personally of anyone using qajaqs for seal hunting, but it seems probable to me that they would have done this.

Seal hunting required both special training and equipment. In our area Inuit didn't use the term 'seal hunting in the winter' because they hunted year round with harpoons. In the spring time when seals started lying by their holes and ice started flowing down the rivers, the Inuit around here would use their harpoons near the seals' holes and call this 'aiming for seal using harpoon'. This was the practice in the springtime for seal hunting. The Inuit had a way of thinking about seasons that reflected our way of life on the land.

Frank Analok, an Elder from Cambridge Bay, said that the Elders before him had used the moon as their calendar to tell when the seasons were changing. He described the seasons with words that tell what happened and what needed to be done in each part of the year.

February/March .....Avuniukvik (season between winter and spring)  
 March/April .....Halunngnakvik (time to air skins outside iglus)  
 April/May..... Nauvik/Naujalikvik (first sight of seagulls, snowbuntings)  
 June/July ..... Kaumanik (24 hour daylight)  
 July/August .....Maujakvik (fish heading up river)  
 Sept/October ..... Amirajakvik (shedding of fur/rutting season of animals)  
 October/November ..... Ukiakhak  
 December/January..... Ukia  
 February/March ..... Ukiu  
 April/May..... Upinngakhak  
 June/July ..... Upinngua /Aujakhak  
 August/September .....Auja

This is the way the Inuit understood the changes in the world around them.

When seal hunters catch a seal out on the sea ice, they eat the liver as a delicacy while it is still warm. The liver is taken out through a small hole cut near the stomach. A special tool was used to make several small holes on the seal’s skin so the skin could be pinned together using this tool and thus prevent the blood and meat from coming out of the animal.

A seal hunting kit was carried in the coldest months while hunting. This included an indicator that could be set up in the seal’s hole to tell when there was a seal below ready to pop up. The indicator was made of antlers tied with a sinew and put down to the bottom of the seal hole. The bottom of the hole would be thin ice that had recently frozen. When the seal rises, the indicator would rise with the water and tell when the seal is there. The indicator would go up and tell the hunter where the seal is.

A special bag made from caribou skins would be made to hold the bones, swan feathers, and other tools used for hunting seals. These tools could also be attached to the back of a caribou skin parka with a button so that you could reach behind you to get them. These tools were awesome to see. I myself have not used a lot of these tools and have only heard about them.

The way to hunt seals long ago required the hunter to stand using his harpoon. Hunters would make chairs of snow blocks while they waited for seals to show up. I remember once sitting on such a chair and feeling sleepy. I tried hard to stay awake but I fell asleep without realizing it. The next thing I heard was a big crash when I fell over and hit the snow. I got scared because I didn't know what happened at first; I only heard the noise from my own fall.

Caribou were usually hunted by looking for their crossing places, rather than using blinds. Inuksuks would mark these places where long ago hunters had used qajaqs where the caribou crossed water. A hunter would try to use his spear according to a tradition rather than just stabbing anywhere. If a caribou was to the right of you, you wouldn't use your left hand to stab it because this could tip you over. If the caribou is on your right, you should use your right hand to spear it so the qajaq will remain stable.

*Note: Excellent story to teach Archimedes' principle of flotation and the physics of buoyancy.*



# The Little Old Woman

Told by Tautunngi, Elder, Rankin Inlet, Nunavut. Recorded and Translated by Tamalik Janet McGrath<sup>1</sup>

There used to be a gathering made up of all the neighbouring women of a specific area or camp. This was because men would often sleep over many nights on their usual hunting trips. Once they were properly outfitted with boots and mittens, they were off again to their strenuous work. In summertime, too, the men would want to collect various plants for winter food and other uses. Once winter set in they would strive again in their search for animals. It was their constant struggle and they would often camp over many nights during their hunt.

There was a big community of people with many tents. Only women were inhabiting it at the time for, as usual, the men were out. On this occasion the men were making preparations in anticipation of the onset of winter, the season when animals were scarce. This very large fellowship of women had an old woman who was a shaman of sorts. This old woman was very, very tiny. Her neighbours, her juniors, all knew that she was a shaman.

They had been alone for a long time when, one night, they heard wolf cries. It was a very large number of wolves that were heard howling. Out of fear, the women all gathered in the largest tent of the lot for it was pitch black. There was nothing for them to do in defence, they had no flood light and no hunting weapon (they were all women). You see, packs of wolves of this kind are to be feared, the kind with very little fur.

When it was evident that this type of wolf had come to their camp, some said, “Our little old woman most likely could tell what the wolves were doing. Put her ceremonial fringe belt on! Put her ceremonial fringe belt on! See if she can stop them.”

So they gathered in the tent and banged items together to create noise. The old lady’s answer was, “No, though I pity you dearly, I doubt that I can help you.”

They responded by saying that even if she couldn’t protect them, at least she should try. So they arranged her ceremonial charms and fringe belt and amulets on her. They urged her to try and find out, “Before they come in too close in proximity, just give it a try.” They were about to be finished off, eaten by the wolves.

<sup>1</sup> Printed with thanks to the family of Tautunngi and to Tamalik Janet McGrath

So there they were, gathered in the largest tent. When we would be inland hunting in the summer, our only source of light would be a precious little candle and a small amount of lard. That is all that the women had for light. They were gathered there with their tiny source of light. Then the shaman spoke, telling them to completely shut the light out; she would be the only source of light. Then she carefully lit a piece of moss which she held. She instructed them to completely darken the tent. The darkness caused a wave of fear and confusion for a moment as they realized they would be working in the dark. She warned that it would not work if anyone banged to make noise or struck a light again. She said she would give it a try. It didn't take much to convince them to listen to her.

Then the air filled with wolf sounds. She went out and walked behind and around the many tents. Her singing and the tread of her feet could be heard the whole while. She had ordered no banging and absolutely no one banged. Finally there were signs of her return and soon she stood at the door. Her little light, her guiding light, had not snuffed out and she entered with it. She said that it would be okay to light up the candle and they did so. When the place was brightened, she said, "I doubted if this little person could do it, for I am very, very poor and helpless. Have someone go out. No noise will be heard. You won't hear anything. Have someone come near the door and listen for some sound. Go just in the front area of the tent where there aren't so many tracks." More than one went because they were all afraid.

To the south there were sounds of water gushing and then the sound of water streaming. The ones out there listening were not believed, so many more came out and they all listened. The sound of streaming water to the rear of the tent disappeared as it went away.

Apparently, the little woman turned those wolves into a stream of water. The tiny old woman was surely not the biggest of them. This very tiny little old lady proved to be talented. She had no immediate family and few friends. She had a tent all to herself. This little one protected the whole camp of younger women.

# A Man With Two Wives

Told by George Kuptana, Elder, Bay Chimo, Nunavut

*My stories come from a long time ago when I was growing up and changing from a boy to a man. I will slowly tell these stories which were told to me by my relatives through marriage, in-laws, and some fox trappers.*

*The stories I will tell come from the time before qablunaat, the white man. These stories are good for animals to hear so that you can catch them when you go along and trap. That's when they were told, when you went along trapping...*

A man once had two wives and lived with them near a small lake. Whenever the husband went out hunting, the two wives would go to the shore of the small lake. Here they would take off all of their clothes and then begin to sing:

“Penis appear, penis appear. These vaginas are now open by the shore of the lake. Penis show up, penis show up!”

As soon as the penis appeared, the two wives would wade down into the water and the penis would begin having sexual intercourse with the two women.

When they were finished, the women went home to their tent. The hunter also went to their tent after he had finished hunting.

A few days later the husband went out to hunt, but this time he went to hunt for his two wives. As soon as the husband left, the two wives went back to the small lake, as was their habit. After they had removed their clothes, they once again began to sing:

“Penis show up, penis show up; our vaginas are now open by the shore of the lake. Penis appear, penis appear!”

Once again, when the penis appeared, the women waded into the water and the penis started to have sex with them again. When they were finished the wives went home.

They were using the penis in the lake as their own husband.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College



After the man had finished his hunting of these wives he decided to return to the lake while his wives were sleeping. He went back to the same spot where he had been hiding and now he tried singing the song that the wives had sung: “Penis show up, penis show up; these vaginas are now open by the shore of the lake. Penis appear!”

However, the penis did not appear at this time because he was not hungry for sex.

Now the hunter knew what was going on. The very next day the hunter left his two wives and went back to the lake. Again the hunter sang:

“Penis show up penis show up; these vaginas are now open by the shore of the lake.”

This time the penis was hungry and it appeared for him. The hunter waded down into the water of the lake and cut the penis off with a knife. He carried the penis from the small lake home to his wives and cooked it along with some other meat.

When he was done his cooking, he woke the women up so they could eat. He served himself first with real meat so he could feed the penis to his wives. Since he had done the cooking he could serve the penis to his wives.

When they had finished eating, the women said, “Where did you catch this? Where did you catch such wonderful tasty meat?”

The hunter replied, “That was the penis of your husband who comes from the lake you go to.” At this the women grew afraid because they were still naked in bed and the hunter knew their secret.

The hunter would not let them put their clothes back on as he had hidden their clothing earlier. The hunter gave them seaweed to sit on which he had gathered from the shore of the lake in a bag. Now after the women sat on the seaweed he had placed for their seats, they got worms from the seaweed. This made them sick and they started to cough and spit out mucus.

Perhaps this is how the cold got its beginning. These two wives may have caused it simply because they had started using a penis for a husband even though they had a good hunter for a real husband.

This is what I have heard.



# My Life: James Taipana

Autobiography by James Taipana, Elder, Baker Lake, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

I can remember where I grew up. It is called Perry River. When I think about that place, many memories appear and touch me. Many times I have thought about going back to the land where I was raised. It is a place I carry within me that I will always feel I can go to and live on.

My parents taught me how to live on the land and hunt so I could survive in this place. It was where everything started for me.

I can remember our spring camps when we set up our home on tiny islands or on the side of the river as far upstream as the rapids in Ittimnigut. I camped in this area with Angulalik and his family. Later I will tell how I came to work for him.

When I was growing up, I did not go to Baker Lake but I did go as far as Perry River to trade. Later on I did move with my parents to Iqaluktuuttiaq, Cambridge Bay, and from there to Baker Lake on an aeroplane, and then we stayed.

My memories tell me how I grew up as a young man and learned to hunt and survive on the land. People came to our camping area at Perry River from Hanninngajuk (Garry Lake) to trade with us. More people came to stay after Ekvana and Angulalik were married. A man named Tapatai brought a missionary with him by dog team along with Utak and Ugjuk. I was surprised to see how these people dressed. They wore different clothes from us. They had long trousers and stockings that were longer than ours. I wondered if their trousers were wide enough and I wondered if they were comfortable. I thought everyone in the world dressed the way we did until then.

I can tell you that my father's name was Utuugak, and my mother's name was Tikkikluk. I had brothers and sisters too and here are their names: Panaktannuak, the oldest one, then me, followed by another sister called Aulajuk, then Mingilgak, and last Ukalitana, the youngest.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

I know that my parents came from Ellice River and Kulgajuk and that I was born in Ellice River. Kuunajuk is where I learned how to hunt and survive. Here is where I became a young man, strong and able to do many things. A bride was chosen for me from the Perry River area, her name was Unnguk. I went to get her with my oldest brother Panaktannuak.

Now my life changed again, and I raised a family there with Unnguk. She was my first wife and we had five children. I will tell you how these children fared.

Two of them died before they lived very long. Our first child was Qulauhuq, a girl, followed by Amigainik and Tikkikluk who became the wife of Jimmy Wingneck. A fourth child was born the same day as Amigainiq; it was his twin brother. This brother was given to Huvak and Kanajuk to take care of as their own child. They adopted the child, but the baby could not breathe while he was asleep he suffocated and he died. A fifth child also suffocated just after being born, and so we had five children in all.

I worked with Angulalik when he first opened his trading post at Flagstaff Island. Ekvana said this happened when both of Angulalik's wives were still alive. I started my work by trading fox furs and helping him trade furs. Angulalik also took in Qablunaat and guided them in and out of the area. I stayed with him a long time, and only left when he was married to Ekvana and he decided to stop working. This was the beginning of his retirement.

I can remember travelling with Angulalik to Cambridge Bay on a ship in the summer time. I would still have kept working there if I had not gotten sick with

# Nukatpiak

Told by George Kuptana, Elder, Bay Chimo, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

Nukatpiak was a young boy who lived a long time ago. He was preparing to go out hunting on foot as he packed his sleeping skin blankets. I can hold out my hand to the middle of my chest to show you how high he was. After a day's journey he decided where he would settle down for the night. He made his camp and unpacked his sleeping skins. While he was preparing his camp he was unaware that the Tulugarjuaq (Big Crow) were coming towards him. Nukatpiak settled down to sleep as the Tulugarjuaq approached him and began to fly in circles over his head in the air. One of the Tulugarjuaq cried out to his companions, "Look, there is someone lying dead down there, let's go and feast ourselves on human eyes tonight."

Apparently human eyes were a delicacy for the Tulugarjuaq. As soon as they had landed, one Tulugarjuaq rolled Nukatpiak over onto his back and prepared to feast on the young boy's eyes. Suddenly the boy came to life and made an unusual sound that startled the Tulugarjuaq enough so that he dropped his knife. The boy then picked up the knife and began to walk away. As Nukatpiak walked, the Tulugarjuaq flew in front of him and said, "I will show you where there is good hunting in exchange for my knife." As they went along and looked beyond the hills, the young boy saw animals grazing. Nukatpiak thought to himself that this was a good hunting ground, but he decided not to return the knife to Tulugarjuaq.

Some time later he returned to this hunting ground and again the Tulugarjuaq approached him and pleaded, "Together we can circle this area and find more game for you if only you will agree to give my knife back to me." The boy agreed and so they flew together and they saw animals. Suddenly Nukatpiak noticed arctic foxes, and again thinking only to himself Nukatpiak reflected, "This is exactly what I have been looking for." He was so pleased with the outcome of this flight that he agreed to return the knife to Tulugarjuaq.

He then returned home to plan his trapping season using the information he had gained. He trapped until early spring, until he realized that he had enough fox pelts to tan outside.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

The leader of his tribe had noticed this success and envied the young boy's catch. He asked Nukatpiak, "How is it that you have suddenly become such a good hunter?" Nukatpiak replied by telling what you have already learned about in this story, "One day I decided to go on a hunt by foot, and as darkness approached I laid down on my sleeping skins to rest. The Tulugarjuaq approached me as I was falling asleep in order to feast on my eyes." The young boy then went on to tell how he managed to take away the Tulugarjuaq's knife and benefit from the good fortune that followed.

The jealous tribal leader decided he would try the same strategy. He packed his sleeping skins and set out on foot. After a long journey, he got to the hunting area and decided to settle down for the night. After he covered himself with his sleeping skins he waited while pretending to sleep. As the time passed he actually fell asleep, and this led to his eyes being eaten out by the Tulugarjuaq. The leader later died, having been blinded by the birds and his own jealous ambition. This is the tragedy that happened to the tribe's leader.

The End



Triumphantly, the ukpik called out to his friends, “I’ve trapped this animal; he is cornered... haul a sled in, bring him home!” The siksik was so fat that the ukpik thought he’d need to enlist the help of his friends to carry his catch. Again he called out to his fellow ukpiks, “I’ve trapped this one, he’s cornered... haul in a sled, bring him home!” By this time the ukpiks were harnessing their dogs and were soon off to the catch site. They were excited to hear of their friend’s find and eagerly went to meet him.

Meanwhile, the siksik continued, “Oh what a fine meal you will eat. Think of the tender, fat meat. Celebrate and look up in the sky. Dance and bend and open your furry legs a little wider.” The siksik sang...

Fix your view on  
the middle of  
the wide sky  
Abandon all  
to dance  
Spread your legs apart  
a little wider  
Sway this way  
and that way  
and dance.

By then the ukpik was really whooping it up, with his eyes turned so much to the sky that he was leaning totally backwards. With no more thought to the fine siksik he had cornered, he kicked his legs high as he danced.

The siksik finished the last verse of his song and, with a “ti-ti-ti-ti,” he fled for the safety of his burrow, right between the dancing legs of the ukpik. The ukpik called out again to his friends, “Iijai, jai, he got away, he got away. Go back now, go back now!”

The ukpik had been unaware of the siksik’s plan to trick him. He went along with his instructions to celebrate and, oh, what a sorry bird he was now! And there were all the friends he had summoned now returning home.



# Ukkunaanlak: Flying Shaman

Told by George Kuptana, Elder, Bay Chimo, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

*When I was growing up dogs were not chained up as far as I can remember, but they started to use chains and that is what I mostly do remember. As soon as the stores came, the Inuit started to buy chains.*

*A long time ago dogs were not chained and they didn't tear up the camp or do anything; they were loose then. Some Inuit had well-trained dogs long ago.*

*I saw the ship in these pictures you are showing me a few times. It is the Natilik. I probably was just coming home from school at the time this picture was taken; it would be around 1939-40.*

*This brings back some memories for me. I can answer your question about dogs being chained up by remembering that when I was very young dogs were not chained up. What I mostly remember though is that once stores appeared, the Inuit started to use chains and during most of my life dogs were chained.*

*Long ago dogs were not chained up and they didn't tear up camps, nor do anything bad. They were simply on the loose. Some Inuit had well-trained dogs long ago. The story I will tell comes from this long ago time.*

It was known that Ukkunaanluk could fly. He would fly to people and visit them during the winter and spring seasons. He could fly, and he was very smart. Inuit had said that people had seen him flying.

He would drop in between the tents, in the cleanest areas. Every time he dropped, he would then realize where he was after observing the people's tracks and where they led.

Sometimes he would be able to see where the seals closest to an iglu were. It was told that Ukkunaanak liked to visit while he was flying about. His plane would not fall because he was known to be brave. I have heard about this. His plane would fly him around with him realizing where he was going.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

One time he went visiting and then he flew over a herd of muskox and as he was flying he saw the herds. When he landed where the Inuit were, he said to them, “There is a herd of muskox close by, be sure to see them.” As they began to look for them and when they reached them, the herds were a great distance away. When Ukkunaak was flying like a plane he thought the herds were close by, but really they were too far away for the Inuit to reach them easily. Because he could fly Ukkunaak thought that the muskox were close by.

When the Inuit succeeded in killing some muskox, he was given portions of meat and fat to take along with him back home to his people because in the old days young children were given pieces of meat for their amulets. As he was heading home, he took the meat. His share was a small piece of meat and fat. When he got home with the small pieces of meat and fat he had given to the Inuit, the people all got filled from it; to his people the meat was a big piece. It is customary for Inuit to share their catch; you get a share and you get full from it.

His people were filled with the meat and fat that he had brought home for them. His people were the same size as the ‘little people’. It is a custom to Inuit to share their catch.

The End.

*I will tell more stories at another time, but I can tell you a bit about Kautakak from the Ikaluktutiak area. He was my cousin and he was also a shaman. Alikamik had made him into a shaman but he has been dead for some time now.*

*Kautakak must have been a shaman because he could make the fish go into his nets when no one was catching any fish. “Yes he could do that; he was known to be a shaman as well.” said the interpreter. Kautak used to fly according to stories that were told from this area by Ikhik.*

# Useful Resources



*There are many ways to be poor, but in today's world,  
not having the right kind of information  
represents a certain kind of poverty.*

*As long as outsiders decide what is important  
and are in a position to ask all of the questions,  
we will never be able to solve our own problems.*

*Without information we are nothing at all, and have  
no power to understand things or to change our life.  
If Inuit society is to develop we must be able to collect  
and use information according to our own terms.*

*If we continue to lose information,  
the age of computers will overwhelm us.*

*It is time for us to go out and do whatever has to be  
done to get the information that belongs to us. This  
is the only way we can hold on to our heritage of  
knowledge and break a dependency that will always  
keep us as second class citizens  
in our own land.*

*We have to do this today because of tomorrow.*

*For the Inuit there are two tomorrows.*

*The first is for us and this generation.*

*It is a small 't' tomorrow. But  
the most important tomorrow begins with a big 'T'.  
It's the Tomorrow of my children and their children.*

*Mark R. Gordon, from the ITK web site [www.tapirisat.ca](http://www.tapirisat.ca)*

# Northern Books and Resources

Where to Find Northern Books and Resources

Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay

*Eskimo*

P.O. Box 10

Churchill MB R0B 0E0

Fax: 204-675-2140

*Eskimo* magazine has been published by the Catholic Church for over 50 years. You can buy back issues or order a subscription. Often includes old photographs.

Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay

Eskimo Museum

P.O. Box 10

Churchill MB R0B 0E0

Fax: 204-675-2140

Has a northern booklist. They will mail out books to other communities.

Arctic Ventures

Iqaluit NU

Telephone: 867-979-4252

Fax: 867-979-4207

E-mail: [venturesbooks@nv.sympatico.ca](mailto:venturesbooks@nv.sympatico.ca)

Has a very good selection of northern books and videos. They will mail out to other communities.

Yellowknife Book Cellar

P.O. Box 1256

48th St. Panda II Mall

Yellowknife NT X1A 2N9

Telephone: 867-920-2220

Fax: 867-873-6105

Toll Free: 1-800-944-6029

E-mail: [thorn@internorth.com](mailto:thorn@internorth.com)

Has an extensive northern booklist. They will mail out books to communities.

### **United Library Services**

7140 Fairmount Drive S.E.

Calgary AB T2H 0X4

Telephone: 403-252-4426

Fax: 1-800-661-2806

Publishes a booklist – *Aboriginal Peoples of North America: A Bibliography*

### **K'noowenchoot Centre**

Aboriginal Adult Education Resources

P.O. Box 610

Salmon Arm BC V1E 4N7

Telephone: 604-832-3221

Fax: 604-832-2771

Toll Free: 1-800-665-9972

Has a list of adult education resources.

### **National Film Board of Canada**

P.O. Box 6100, Station Centre-Ville

Montreal Quebec H3C 3H5

Telephone: 514-283-9000

Toll Free: 1-800-267-7710

Web site: [www.nfb.ca](http://www.nfb.ca)

Has a catalogue and a series of videos about Nunavut

### **Aboriginal Children's Books**

Web site: [www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/lib/bib/pbl\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/lib/bib/pbl_e.html)

A web site that has a list of Aboriginal books – some are northern.

**Status of Women Council of the N.W.T.**

P.O. Box 1320  
 Yellowknife NT X1A 2L9  
 Telephone: 867-920-6178  
 Toll Free: 1-888-234-4485

You can borrow videos and cassettes. Some are in Inuktitut. They have a catalogue.

**University of Alaska Press**

P.O. Box 756240  
 University of Alaska Fairbanks  
 Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-6240 USA  
 Telephone: 907-474-5831  
 Fax: 907-474-5520  
 E-mail: [fypress@uaf.edu](mailto:fypress@uaf.edu)

Publishes a new catalogue yearly.

**Where to Find Old Photographs****Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre**

Yellowknife, NT  
 Web site: [pwnhc.learnnet.nt.ca/programs/archive.htm](http://pwnhc.learnnet.nt.ca/programs/archive.htm)

Can view old photographs on their web site, can print photos from there. But if you want better quality, you can order photos from them. They are very busy, so plan to order two to three months before you need them.

**Hudson's Bay Company Archives**

Provincial Archives of Manitoba  
 200 Vaughan St.  
 Winnipeg MB R3C 1T5  
 Telephone: 204-945-4949  
 Fax: 204-948-3236  
 Web site: [www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/index.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/index.html)  
 E-mail: [hbca@gov.mb.ca](mailto:hbca@gov.mb.ca)

There is not a lot of pictures on the web site, but if you are ever in Winnipeg, it may be a good source.

#### Museum of the North West Mounted Police

P.O. Box 776

Fort MacLeod AB T0L 0Z0

Telephone: 403-553-4703

Fax: 403-553-3451

Web site: [www.rcmpmuseum.com](http://www.rcmpmuseum.com)

E-mail: [info@nwmpmuseum.com](mailto:info@nwmpmuseum.com)

May be another source of photos

#### Itsarnittakarvik Inuit Heritage Centre

P.O. Box 149

Baker Lake, NU X0C 0A0

Telephone: 867-793-2598

Web site: [www.bakerlake.org](http://www.bakerlake.org) – click on Inuit Heritage Centre and select photo archives.

Has photo exhibition of the Churchill Vocational Centre (CVC) from the years 1964 to 1974. You can print pictures from the web site.

#### National Archives of Canada

Ottawa Ontario

Telephone: 1-866-578-7777

Archivist: Telephone: 613-992-3884

Fax: 613-995-6274

Web site: [www.archives.ca/02/02011502\\_e.html](http://www.archives.ca/02/02011502_e.html) – type in a keyword for example: “Repulse Bay” to find the photographs you are interested in.

The web site lists photographs available, but you can only view a few of them online. You can order photographs – quote the PA# or C# that you see beside photograph you want. You can pay by cheque, money order or credit card. Fax in your order and indicate whether you want black and white or colour (if it is



available in colour) and matt or glossy. Include your name, address and phone number. Ask for current prices.

## **Where to Find Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun Books and Resources**

### **Nunavut Research Institute**

P.O. Box 210

Iglulik NU X0A 0L0

Telephone: 867-934-8836

Fax: 867-934-8792

Web site: <http://pooka.nunanet.com/~research>

Collects oral histories. Tapes and transcripts are catalogued. You can request information on a specific topic and they will copy sections of tapes for you.

### **Qikiqtani Teaching and Learning Centre**

P.O. Box 1000, Station 960

Iqaluit NU X0A 0H0

Telephone: 867-975-5641

Fax: 867-975-5610

E-mail: [gcoffin@gov.nu.ca](mailto:gcoffin@gov.nu.ca)

Has a catalogue of Inuktitut books they have produced.

### **Kivalliq Teaching and Learning Centre**

P.O. Bag 002

Rankin Inlet NU X0C 0G0

Telephone: 867-645-2343

Fax: 867-645-2127

Has a materials list. Anyone can order from them.

### Nunavut Arctic College

Nunatta Campus Library

P.O. Box 600

Iqaluit NU X0A 0H0

Web site: [www.nac.nu.ca/library/publications.htm](http://www.nac.nu.ca/library/publications.htm)

Has a catalogue and books are listed on the web site.

### Inuit Tapiriitsat of Canada

Inuktitut Magazine

Sydney Sackett

170 Laurier Ave. W. Suite 510

Ottawa ON K1P 5V5

Telephone: 613-238-8181

Fax: 613-234-1991

Toll Free: 1-866-262-8181

Web site: [www.itk.ca](http://www.itk.ca)

Publishes *Inuktitut* magazine. Back issues are available.

### Pauktuutit

Inuit Women's Association

192 Bank Street

Ottawa ON K2P 1W8

Telephone: 613-238-3977

Fax: 613-238-1787

Web site: [www.pauktuutit.on.ca](http://www.pauktuutit.on.ca)

E-mail: [pauktuut@comnet.ca](mailto:pauktuut@comnet.ca)

Has publications in Inuktitut and English.

**Avataq Cultural Institute**

General Delivery

Inukjuaq, Nunavik QC J0M 1M0

Web site: [www.avataq.qc.ca](http://www.avataq.qc.ca)

E-mail: [avataq@avataq.qc.ca](mailto:avataq@avataq.qc.ca)

To order publications: [docenter@avataq.qc.ca](mailto:docenter@avataq.qc.ca)

Web site in Inuktitut, English and French. Has publications for sale through the web site.

**Itsarnittakarvik Inuit Heritage Centre**

P.O. Box 149

Baker Lake NU X0C 0A0

Telephone: 867-793-2598

Web site: [www.bakerlake.org](http://www.bakerlake.org) – click on Inuit Heritage Centre.

Has publications, books, oral histories and CDs of pisiit and traditional songs.

**Kitikmeot Heritage Society**

P.O. Box 2160

Cambridge Bay, NU X0B 0C0

Telephone: 867-983-3009

Web site: [www.polar.net.ca/heritage](http://www.polar.net.ca/heritage)

E-mail: [heritage@polar.net.ca](mailto:heritage@polar.net.ca)

Collects oral histories and preserves archaeological sites in the Kitikmeot Region.

**Nunavut Literacy Council**

P.O. Box 1049

Cambridge Bay NU X0B 0C0

Telephone: 867-983-2678

Web site: [www.polar.net.ca/literacy](http://www.polar.net.ca/literacy)

E-mail: [kimcr@polar.net.ca](mailto:kimcr@polar.net.ca)

Has a resource centre. NLC members can borrow resources. Resources can also be downloaded from the web site.

# Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun Dictionaries

*Inuktitut a Multi-Dialectical Outline Dictionary* (with an Aivilingmiutaq base), written and compiled by Alex Spalding with the cooperation and help of Thomas Kusugaq, published by Nunavut Arctic College, 1998.

*Inuktitut Dictionary Tununiq Dialect*, compiled by Elisapee Ootoova and Pond Inlet Elders, edited and proofread by Teaching and Learning Centre, Qikiqtani School Operations, published by Qikiqtani School Operations, 2000.

*Inuinnaqtun English Dictionary*, adapted by Gwen Ohokak, Margo Kadlun and Betty Harnum from a dictionary called *Kangiryuarmit Uqauhingita Numiktittitdjutingit*, published by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and Nunavut Arctic College.

*Ulirnaigatiit an Inuktitut-English Dictionary of Northern Quebec, Labrador and Eastern Arctic Dialects*, by Lucien Schneider, published by Laval University Press, 1985.

*Inuit Uqausillaringit Ulirnaigutiit*, by Taamusi Qumaq from Povungnituk, published by Association Inuksiutiit Katimajiit, Quebec, 1991.

*Uummarmiut Uqalungiha Mumikhitchirutingit, Basic Uummarmiut Eskimo Dictionary*, by Ronald Lowe, published by COPE, The Committee for Original People's Entitlement, 1984.

*Siglit Inuvialuit uqautchiita nutaat kipuktirutait aglipkaqtat: Siglit Inuvialuit Eskimo Dictionary*, by Ronald Lowe, published by Nota Bene Inc. 2001, ISBN: 2895180725

*Living Dictionary* (web site) [www.livingdictionary.com](http://www.livingdictionary.com)

# Literacy and Adult Education Resources

## Nunavut Literacy Council

P.O. Box 519  
Rankin Inlet NU X0C 0G0  
Telephone: 867-645-5506 or 5512  
Fax: 867-645-3566  
E-mail: [literacy@arctic.ca](mailto:literacy@arctic.ca)

or

P.O. Box 1049  
Cambridge Bay NU X0B 0C0  
Telephone: 867-983-2678  
Fax: 867-983-2614  
Web site: [www.polar.net.ca/literacy](http://www.polar.net.ca/literacy)  
E-mail: [kimcr@polar.net.ca](mailto:kimcr@polar.net.ca)

## NWT Literacy Council

P.O. Box 761  
5122 - 48th Street  
Yellowknife NT X1A 2N6  
Telephone: (867) 873-9262  
Fax: 867- 873-2176  
Web site: [www.nwt.literacy.ca](http://www.nwt.literacy.ca)  
E-mail: [info@nwtliteracy.ca](mailto:info@nwtliteracy.ca)

## Nunavut Arctic College

Web site: [www.nac.nu.ca/library/library\\_nacpublications.html](http://www.nac.nu.ca/library/library_nacpublications.html)

Nunavut Arctic College has developed curriculum documents for Adult Basic Education courses. They should be available at the Community Learning Centres in each Nunavut community. Use the ABE curriculum documents as guides to the skills that can be taught at each upgrading level. The ABE English 110 to 140 Curriculum Binder has lots of good suggestions on adult literacy instructional strategies. Also currently available are ABE Math, ABE Science, ABE Social Studies,

ABE Introduction to Computers, ABE Career/Life Work 120/130, and ABE Career/College 130/140. NAC is in the process of developing the *ABE Inuktitut Curriculum Binder*.

#### **National Adult Literacy Database (NALD)**

Scovil House

703 Brunswick Street

Fredericton NB E3B 1H8

Telephone: 1-800-720-NALD (6253)

Web site: [www.nald.ca](http://www.nald.ca)

NALD has a good list of web sites which will be more current than the one in this manual.

#### **AlphaPlus Centre**

Centre AlphaPlus Centre

2040 Yonge Street, 3rd Floor

Toronto ON M4S 1Z9

Telephone: 416-322-1012 – Toll Free:1-800-788-1120

TTY: 416-322-5751 – Toll Free:1-800-788-1912

Fax: 416-322-0780 – Toll Free:1-800-788-1417

Web site: [www.alphaplus.ca](http://www.alphaplus.ca)

E-mail: [info@alphaplus.ca](mailto:info@alphaplus.ca)

AlphaPlus index to web resources: <http://alphaplus.ca/opnhs/english/subjAuth.asp>

#### **Grass Roots Press**

P.O. Box 52192

Edmonton AB T6G 2T5

Telephone: 780-413-6491

Toll Free: 1-888-303-3213

Fax: 780-413-6582

Web site: [www.literacyservices.com](http://www.literacyservices.com)

E-mail: [grassrt@telusplanet.net](mailto:grassrt@telusplanet.net)

Publishes and distributes literacy resources, over 200 books, videos and CD-Roms

**Movement for Canadian Literacy**

Suite 300 - 180 Metcalfe Street

Ottawa ON K2P 1P5

Telephone: 613-563-2464

Fax: 613-563-2504

Web site: [www.literacy.ca](http://www.literacy.ca)

**Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network**

c/o The University of Western Ontario

Elborn College, 1201 Western Road

London ON N6G 1H1

Web site: [www.cllrnet.ca](http://www.cllrnet.ca)

**Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE)**

Suite 204 - 260 Dalhousie Street

Ottawa ON K1N 7E4

Telephone: 613-241-0018

Fax: 613-241-0019

Web site: [www.oise.utoronto.ca/casae/maineng.html](http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/casae/maineng.html)

**Learning Disabilities Online**

Web site: [www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org)

**Learning Disabilities Resource Community**

Web site: [www.ldrc.ca](http://www.ldrc.ca)

**Learning Disabilities Pride Online**

Web site: [www.ldpride.net](http://www.ldpride.net)

**LINCS**

National Institute for Literacy

1775 I Street, NW

Suite 730

Washington DC 20006

Web site: [www.nifl.gov/lincs/index.html](http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/index.html)

### The Basic Skills Agency

Commonwealth House

1-19 New Oxford Street

London WC1A 1NU

United Kingdom

Web site: [www.basic-skills.co.uk](http://www.basic-skills.co.uk)

### Tools of the Trade: Internet Resources for Adult Literacy

Web site: [www.arthur.merlin.mb.ca/~alce/litresources/internet\\_list.htm](http://www.arthur.merlin.mb.ca/~alce/litresources/internet_list.htm)

### Community Partnerships for Adult Learning

Web site: [www.c-pal.net](http://www.c-pal.net)

### The Literacy List

Web site: [www.alri.org/literacylist.html](http://www.alri.org/literacylist.html)

### ESL Café

Web site: [www.eslcafe.com](http://www.eslcafe.com)

### The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL)

Web site: [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov)

A federal organization in the USA that shares information about literacy and supports the development of high-quality literacy services so all Americans can develop essential basic skills.

### National Centre for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

Web site: [gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall/](http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall/)

*Focus on Basics* is the quarterly publication of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. It presents best practices, current research on adult learning and literacy, and how research is used by adult basic education teachers, counselors, program administrators, and policy makers. Go to this web site: <http://nscall.gse.harvard.edu/index.html> – click on Publications, then go to Focus on Basics.



National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)

4646 40th Street, NW

Washington DC 20016-1859

Telephone: 202-362-0700, ext. 200

Fax: 202-363-7204

Web Site: [www.cal.org/nclc](http://www.cal.org/nclc)

E-mail: [nclc@cal.org](mailto:nclc@cal.org)

Numeracy and Math Web Sites

Web site: [www.mathgoodies.com](http://www.mathgoodies.com)

Web site: [www.coolmath.com](http://www.coolmath.com)

Web site: [www.aaamath.com](http://www.aaamath.com)

Computer Web Sites

Web site: [www.nald.ca](http://www.nald.ca) – click on [Connect](#)

## Selected Literacy Resources

*Guidelines for Teaching in a Bilingual Setting*, produced by Early Childhood and School Services, Department of Education, Government of Nunavut, Arviat, in 2001. This booklet contains principles for teaching in the school system in Nunavut, but applies to teaching adults as well.

*Inuuqatigiit; The Curriculum From The Inuit Perspective*. Guided by an advisory committee of Inuit teachers, produced by GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment 1996.

*STAPLE Supplemental Training for Practitioners in Literacy Education: Unlocking the Mystique of Teaching Reading and Writing Volume 1 and 2* by Dr. Pat Campbell and Flo Brokop, M.Ed. published by Literacy Coordinators of Alberta in 1998. ISBN: 0-9680235-2-5. Available from Grass Roots Press. This is a two volume CD training program that takes adult literacy educators through the following topics: Introduction to Assessment, Reading Assessment, Teaching Reading, Writing Assessment and Teaching Writing. Volume 2 focuses on teaching beginning level literacy learners.

*Teaching Adults to Read: A Balanced Approach* by Pat Campbell, published by Grass Roots Press and the University of Alberta 2003, ISBN: 1-894593-18-9. Available from Grass Roots Press. This book condenses a huge amount of research on reading into simple and usable strategies for adult literacy instructors. It would be a valuable resource for beginning and experienced instructors alike. It comes with two videos which clearly illustrate the teaching strategies.

*Canadian Adult Reading Assessment (CARA)* by Dr. Pat Campbell and Flo M. Brokop, M. Ed. Published by Grass Roots Press in 2000. Copyright University of Alberta. ISBN: Instructor's Manual and CD-Rom 1-894593-01-4. *Student's Assessment Booklet* 1-894593-02-2. Available from Grass Roots Press. CARA is an informal reading inventory for adults. It provides graded reading passages with Canadian content. This is an excellent tool that can be used with the book, *Teaching Adults to Read*, listed above. The CARA manual describes the assessment process clearly and includes all the information you need for diagnosis or placement. CARA helps you find patterns in learners' reading; then you can consult *Teaching Adults to Read* to find teaching strategies which suit each learner's reading pattern.

*Educating for Change: Community-Based/Student-Centred Literacy Programming with First Nations Adults* by Carmen Rodriguez, published by Province of BC, Ministry of Advanced Education, revised in 2001, ISBN: 0-7726-4606-6. Available from Grass Roots Press. This is a valuable resource that includes practical strategies for developing oral language, reading and writing skills, as well as strategies for assessment and evaluation.

*Handbook for Literacy Tutors* by Chris Harwood, produced by People, Words and Change and Ottawa-Carleton Coalition for Literacy in 1999. Available from Grass Roots Press. An excerpt from this handbook is available on the internet at [www.nald.ca/Pwc/resource/handbook.htm](http://www.nald.ca/Pwc/resource/handbook.htm)

*Writing Out Loud and More Writing Out Loud* by Deborah Morgan. Vol. 1, ISBN: 1-894593-16-2, Vol. 2, ISBN: 1-894593-17-0. Available from Grass Roots Press. Two volumes that offer fun exercises and inspiring ideas to encourage even the most reluctant writer to put words on paper.

*Reading Instruction that Makes Sense* by Mary Tarasoff, published by Active Learning Institute in 1993, reprinted in 2001, ISBN: 1-895111-08-0. Available from Grass Roots Press.

*Think, Write, Share: Process Writing for Adult ESL and Basic Education Students* by Joyce Scane, Anne Marie Guy, and Lauren Wenstrom, published by OISIE, 1991, ISBN: 0-7744-0363-2.

*Native Learning Styles* by Johnny Michael, published by Ningwakwe Learning Press, 2002, ISBN: 1-896832-31-8. Web site: [www.ningwakwe.on.ca](http://www.ningwakwe.on.ca)

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*On the difference between  
Mohawk and English...*

*“...represent two drastically different ways  
of looking at life... The way that  
the English speaking world  
structures its sentences explains to me,  
in a small way, why western society is  
so self-centred and narcissistic,  
why it is so fixated on the cult  
of the individual and why it is  
so obsessed with celebrities.”*

*Brian Maracle in Back on the Rez*

# Oral History Resources

Available Through the Nunavut Literacy Council Resource Centre

*Doing Oral History* by Donald A. Ritchie, published by Twayne Publishers, New York, NY, 1995, ISBN: 0-8057-9128-0. Includes information on getting started on an oral history project, interviewing, publishing, videotaping, archiving, making public presentations and teaching oral history.

*Getting Started in Oral Traditions Research* by Elisa Hart, illustrations by Wally Wolfe, produced by Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Yellowknife, NT, 1995, ISBN: 0-7708-0095-5. A manual written for adults and students who want to do their own oral history research, but need help in getting started. An excellent resource! We highly recommend purchasing your own copy from Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife 867-873-7551.

*Guide to Oral History Collections in Canada* by Normand Fortier, published by Canadian Oral History Association, 1993. A list of oral histories available from museums and archives in Canada. Includes a brief description of the content of each recording, how to access it, whether copies are available.

*Harvaqtuurmiut Heritate, the Heritage of the Inuit of the Lower Kazan River* compiled by Deborah Kigjugalik Webster with the Inuit Heritage Centre in Baker Lake and Harvaqtuurmiut Elders. A book based on interviews with elders from this region,

*Inuit Nunamiut: Inland Inuit* edited by Hattie Mannik. Interviews with elders from Baker Lake Region.

*Inukkaknailak and Other Stories* produced by the Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College. Oral stories adapted for adult learners.

*Like It Was: A Complete Guide to Writing Oral History* by Cynthia Stokes Brown, produced by Teachers and Writers Collaborative, New York, NY, 1988, ISBN: 0-915924-12-9. Includes information on using tape recorders, interviewing, transcribing, writing short pieces and full biographies and publishing.

*Popular Oral History and Literacy* by Mary Breen and David Sobel, *Storylinks: Learning Through Dialogue*, Toronto, ON, 1991, ISBN: 1-895595-00-2. A manual for adult literacy tutors, workers or learners who would like to use oral history projects to build literacy skills.

*Provincial Archives of Manitoba Oral History Program*, an information package created in 2001 which offers guidance to those who are planning oral history projects.

*Research in the Community*, by Dawn Loney, Baffin Divisional Board of Education, Iqaluit, NU, 1991, ISBN: 1-55036-203-8. An excellent booklet on how to organize the research for a classroom thematic unit which uses community resources. Although it is designed for school students, the suggestions are adaptable for adult learners. We highly recommend purchasing your own copy from Qikiqtani Teaching and Learning Centre, 867-975-5641.

*Talking Gumbo: A Teacher's Guide to Using Oral History in the Classroom* by Pamela Dean, Toby Daspit, Petra Munro, produced by T. Harry Williams Centre for Oral History, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA, 1998. Good ideas for helping students learn about oral history techniques. Comes with a video, *You've Got to Hear This Story*, prepared by high school students – about how to do oral history interviews.

*The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, Routledge, New York, NY, 1998, ISBN: 0-415-13352-1. An international collection of writings about the theory, method and use of oral history. It is divided into five sections, including interviewing, advocacy and empowerment, interpreting memories and archiving.

*Then and Now: A Training Pack for Reminiscence Work* by Patricia Duffin, published by Gatehouse Books, Manchester, UK, 1985. Explains how to set up a reminiscence program with older people. The pack includes checklists for setting up programs, case studies and a publication, *Day In, Day Out*, based on interviews with older women recovering in the hospital.

*Voices: A Guide to Oral History*, edited by Derek Reimer, produced by Sound and Moving Image Division, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Victoria, BC, 1984, ISBN: 0-7718-8396-X. Includes information on using tape recorders, interviewing, archiving and using oral histories.

We also have oral histories from other parts of Canada, many of which have been published as reading material for adult learners. They might serve as models for literacy groups that are interested in publishing stories of Nunavut for adult learners:

*Exploring Our Homeland*, compiled by Labrador White Bear Literacy Office and Learning Centres. An adult workbook based on stories of Labrador traditions and heritage.

*Far Away But Close To Home, Local People Remember War and Peace*  
From the Eastern Shore and Musquodoboit Valley in Nova Scotia. The stories of veterans, war brides and civilians. A series of eight readers and workbooks for adult literacy learners. Also includes a workshop for tutors.

*Fishtales* series from Newfoundland

*King's Cove Head – The Light Tower, A Way of Life*

*Legends and Ghost Stories from Bonavista South*

*Newfoundland Fishery and Government – The 1930s Collapse*

Designed for adult upgrading, content is based on the history and culture of Bonavista South Region.

*Hardships and Blessings, Seniors tell their stories North Harbour to Admiral's Beach*  
by Una Hynes. Stories of seniors from the St. Mary's Bay area. Published for their children, grandchildren and future generations. This version is an easy-to-read book suitable for adult literacy programs.

*Suffer Little Children and S'posin' I Dies in D'Dory*

A series of tapes based on the books, *Suffer Little Children: An Autobiography of a Foster Child* and *S'posin' I Dies in D'Dory* by Victor Butler. Comes with a study guide for adult learners. Books are available from the publishers. Developed by the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador.

*Taking the Lead* series from Newfoundland and Labrador

*Discovering Personal Power*

*Working for Community*

*Taking on the Fight*

*Crossing Cultures*

A collection of essays and personal portraits that highlight the struggle and achievements of individuals, groups and organizations. The common thread is the urge to bring about positive change. A project of The Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador.

*Tales from the Kittiwake Coast, by Robert E. Tulk.* Stories and memories of the people of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Could be used as reading material for adult learners.

*The Great Labrador Novel, A Collection of Story Ideas*

The CBC and the Labrador Literacy Information and Action Network collaborated on a contest, in which people were invited to submit the first page of their own Great Labrador Novel. Labradorians shared memories, ideas and their love for the land. Could be used with adult learners who would have the challenge of finishing one of the stories or starting one of their own.

*Kinship and Relationships Module Inuktitut Language Arts Curriculum* developed by Nunia Qanatsiaq, Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun Language Coordinator, Department of Education, 2003.

Available through:

Department of Education, Government of Nunavut

Curriculum and School Services

P.O. Box 390, Arviat, NU X0C 0E0



# Oral History Web Sites

## Canadian Oral History Sites

- National Archives of Canada – [www.archives.ca](http://www.archives.ca)
- Canadian Oral History Association – [www.oral-history.ncf.ca](http://www.oral-history.ncf.ca)
- National Library of Canada Home Page – [www.nlc-bnc.ca](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca)
- Canadian Heritage Information Network – [www.chin.gc.ca](http://www.chin.gc.ca)

## Other Oral History Sites

- American Oral History Association – [www.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha](http://www.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha)
- New England Association of Oral History – [www.ucc.uconn.edu/~cohadm01](http://www.ucc.uconn.edu/~cohadm01)
- Regional Oral History Office – [www.bancroft.berkeley.edu/roho](http://www.bancroft.berkeley.edu/roho)

## Oral History On-line

- Alaska Native Knowledge Network – [www.ankn.uaf.edu](http://www.ankn.uaf.edu)
- Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Oral History – [www.uaf.edu/library/oral history](http://www.uaf.edu/library/oral%20history)
- On-line Speech Bank – from Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr. through Noam Chomsky to Mother Theresa get their speeches on-line – [www.americanrhetoric.com/speechbank.htm](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speechbank.htm)
- A web site based on personal narratives. This is an educational web site of the Museum Victoria, Australia, developed in 1998, aimed at high school students. – [www.mov.vic.gov.au/hearhervoice/](http://www.mov.vic.gov.au/hearhervoice/)
- An inspirational project undertaken by students from South Kingston High School in Rhode Island on the Vietnam War is posted at [www.stg.brown.edu/projects/1968](http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/1968)
- The British Library – Oral History Holdings – [www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive/holdings.html](http://www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive/holdings.html)
- Family History Resources – [www.britishlibrary.net/family.html](http://www.britishlibrary.net/family.html)
- Tell Me Your Stories – an Oral History Curriculum for high schools and middle schools involving students with their family and community – [www.tellmeyourstories.org](http://www.tellmeyourstories.org)
- Stories of the Dreaming – this is a great example of an oral history project through a museum. Features 20 stories from the cultures of indigenous Australians, collected from all over Australia – [www.dreamtime.net.au](http://www.dreamtime.net.au)

Check other museum web sites to see if they do oral history projects.

- Alaskool web site – [www.alaskool.org](http://www.alaskool.org). This web site includes a section called *People of Kauwerak – Legends of the Northern Eskimo* – [www.alaskool.org/native\\_ed/historicdocs/people\\_of\\_kauwerak/Kauwerak\\_pp.htm](http://www.alaskool.org/native_ed/historicdocs/people_of_kauwerak/Kauwerak_pp.htm)
- Kitikmeot Heritage Society web site – [www.kitikmeotheritage.ca](http://www.kitikmeotheritage.ca). This web site offers users access to many oral history research projects carried out by the organization.

