Building culture and community:

Family and Community Literacy Partnerships in Canada's North

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INTRODUCTION

Every day after school in the high arctic community of Cambridge Bay, Nunavut[2] children throw on their atigis and run across the street to the May Hakongak Community Library. The tiny library is host to the *After-school Homework Club,* a program developed by the Cambridge Bay Childcare Society with support from the Nunavut Literacy Council (NLC). Parents and volunteers from the community supervise the program. Nunavut Arctic College and Kiilinik High School students work with the children to help them with their homework, do arts and crafts activities and read stories. Although the program was originally designed to provide vulnerable families with additional support, its popularity has made it a hit with many other children and families. Parents too are pleased with the program and with the difference it has made to their families. The biggest impact has been on working parents who cannot afford after school care for their children. This is just one example of *Ilippallianginnarniq*, an Inuit approach to intergenerational learning which, coupled with community development strategies, have resulted in literacy initiatives that strengthen links between youth and elders, capture oral history and promote bi-literacy for young children and their families.

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[1] This article is based on case study research into family and community literacy partnerships which was part of a capacity building initiative sponsored by the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs and the Canadian Movement for Literacy, with funding provided by the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources and Development Canada.

[2] This is a glossary of Inuit terms used in this chapter:

Nunavut - (noo-na-voot) Meaning "our land" in Inuktitut, the language of the Inuit people.

Inuit – (ee-nu-eet) Meaning "The People" in Inuktitut. Commonly called the North American Eskimo.

Atigi(s) – (ah-tig-ee) A zipperless, pull-over parka worn by men and women. This garment, traditionally made of bleached caribou hide with the fur turned inside, is now made of heavy wool duffle covered by a shell of wind-proof material. The hood of an atigi is trimmed with wolverine or wolf fur.

Illippallianginnarniq – (ee-llee-pa-lee-an-gin-arr-neek) A term coined by the Nunavut Government to describe the concept of "continuing learning", or learning from the crib to the grave.

Inuktitut – (ee-nook-tee-toot) The language spoken by Inuit. In Canada's north there are 3 main dialects; **Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun and Inuvialuktun**. Inuktitut is the dialect primarily spoken in the eastern part of Nunavut. Inuinnaqtun is only spoken in Cambridge Bay, Kugluktuk (Coppermine) and Umingmaktok (Bay Chimo). Inuvialuktun is spoken in the Beaufort-Delta region of the Northwest Territories.

Kugluktuk – (kor-luk-tuck) Means "Bloody Falls" in Inuinnaqtun. Named so after a battle between Inuit and Dene people at a sight on the Coppermine River.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit – (ee-nu-eet kow-hee-my-a-tuk-aan-eet) This word does not have literal translation but the general meaning is: the way in which Inuit view and interact with their world drawing on the best of traditional cultural values and knowledge and modern values and knowledge.

Uvajuq – (oo-va-yuk) The name of a mountain located twenty kilometres outside of Cambridge Bay. A local legend says that Uvajuq, a giant living before there were people as we know them today, traveled across the land in search of food for himself and his family. They did not share the food they found and eventually perished from starvation. Uvajuq lay down on the ground and the wind blew, covering him over with the land. The giant became "Uvajuq" the mountain.

Pauktuutit – National Inuit Women's organization.

Family literacy work in Canada's North is fueled by collaborations between the NWT and Nunavut Literacy Councils, family resource programs, as well as health and social services organizations, community colleges, libraries and cultural groups. At the centre of this literacy work is a concern for community development and for the preservation of Aboriginal cultures and languages.

This paper describes the work of the Nunavut Literacy Council, with a focus on Cambridge Bay, a village of 1 500 people located on the tip of Victoria Island, sixty kilometers north of the Arctic Circle in the Kitikmeot region of Nunavut. Kim Crockatt, formerly the Community Literacy Development Facilitator for Nunavut, is now the Executive Director of the Nunavut Literacy Council. She is a non-aboriginal and a long-time resident of the north with strong ties to her community. Suzanne Smythe is a literacy instructor based in Vancouver, British Columbia. She and Kim met in November 1999 when Suzanne visited Cambridge Bay to research family literacy partnerships as part of a project on literacy in family resource programs.

CONTEXT

Nunavut is a newly formed Canadian territory that stretches from Kugluktuk in the west to Iqaluit in the east, and from the 60 parallel to the North Pole. Formerly part of the Northwest Territories (NWT), Nunavut was created in April 1999 after a long process of negotiation for the rights of Inuit people to govern themselves. The population of Nunavut is 25,153 of which 83 percent is Inuit and 17 per cent non-aboriginal. The economy is based on government, tourism and traditional activities such as hunting, trapping and guiding. Unemployment rates among Inuit people are nearly 40%; and 12 % for non-Inuit.

The majority of Inuit live in poverty. The cost of living is very high in the North and therefore even people who do have jobs continue to live well below the poverty line. Traditionally, the Inuit people lived a nomadic life supported by hunting, fishing, trapping and extended family networks. By the late 1960's, most Inuit families had settled in communities to be near their children, who were taken to residential schools by government officials, or to trade and obtain goods in the market economy upon which they had become dependent (Waluchuk: 1999). Today, most people live in social housing provided by the Nunavut Government There is a critical lack of such housing and it is not uncommon for multiple families to live together in very small homes. These crowded conditions contribute to a variety of social problems.

Literacy issues in Nunavut communities reflect the interface between Inuit traditional ways of life, and the demands of modern culture and education. Literacy levels in Nunavut are some of the lowest in Canada. Residents struggle to maintain their own language while trying to master the English that is necessary to get an advanced education and wage-paying jobs. The related themes of schooling and language speak to this.

The Inuit culture is rich in oral history and traditions of intergenerational learning, however it is only recently, historically speaking, that formal education has been introduced. Consequently, though it is valued, formal schooling is not an integral a part of modern Inuit culture. In the spring months (April to June) many families escape over-crowding and take their children out on the land to learn traditional skills that are still extremely important in terms of culture and in terms of providing for the family. Many parents also have difficulty dealing with the school institutions as a result of the residential school system.[3]

Those who attended residential schools were taught that aboriginal languages were inferior and were often forbidden to speak them. Depending on their age and the quality of teaching, many did not learn to speak or write English well either. With the current bombardment of English language television and advertising via satellite this message of inferiority has subliminally stuck. With Inuktitut speaking parents and English speaking teachers, many children have difficulty speaking fluently in either language.

The work of the NWT and Nunavut Literacy Councils

Prior to the formation of the Nunavut territory in 1999 literacy work in the Kitikmeot region was carried out by the NWT Literacy Council. This council was founded in 1990 to promote literacy in the eleven official languages of the NWT. It did this by supporting existing and new literacy projects, providing information to communities and leaders, maintaining an information-sharing network and conducting research and advocacy.

In 1999 the NWT Literacy Council divided into two new coalitions in response to the emerging linguistic, cultural and political distinctiveness of the newly formed Nunavut Territory. The NWT and Nunavut Literacy Councils continue to enjoy a strong working partnership based on their common origins and on their community development approach. An important feature of this approach is the promotion of family and intergenerational learning as a core strategy for the survival and maintenance of aboriginal languages.

The NLC's Community Literacy Development Facilitator is central to the community development approach. The facilitator's work involves,

- building the capacity of community members to start and sustain their own literacy initiatives;
- linking literacy initiatives to existing community development activities;

[3] Residential schools refer to a schooling system put in place by the Canadian Federal Government in the 1950s to late 1960's for aboriginal children. Children were removed from their families (often without parental consent or knowledge) to border in the missionary-run schools. Many such schools forbade children to speak their own languages, communicate with family members or practice their cultural traditions. See also: Haig-Brown, C. (1988).

- building partnerships and local networks that can support family literacy as a long term, integrated initiative rather than as another "flavour of the month".

We consider the work of community literacy development facilitator in more detail in the *Distinguishing Features* section of this chapter.

Nunavut languages and literacies

The mandate of the NLC is **"***To promote reading and writing in all official languages of Nunavut".* The official languages are Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun, English and French. Inuktitut is written in syllabics and is primarily spoken in the eastern part of Nunavut. It is the official working language of the government. Inuinnaqtun is written in roman orthography and is spoken in the western Kitikmeot region, which includes Cambridge Bay, Kugluktuk, and Umingmaktok. Government documents are translated into Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun. Most Inuinnaqtun speakers cannot read syllabics and this contributes to a sense of political, linguistic and geographical distance from the seat of the Nunavut government.

Most school instruction is done in English. Some schools use Inuktitut from Kindergarten to Grade Three or Grade Six. This has met with mixed success from the point of view of parents because they feel that children's English literacy skills are not adequate to meet the demands of high school, or further education at college or university in "the south", which is North America below the 60th parallel.

The relative status of each language has important implications for the planning and delivery of literacy programs. Depending on the location, audience and purposes of a literacy initiative, the focus may be on Inuktitut literacy, English literacy or Inuinnaqtun literacy. What is important for the Nunavut Literacy Council is that this choice resides with local communities and is not imposed.

Supporting English and Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun literacy outside of formal schooling is a priority and a challenge. Books and reading materials are expensive in the North and it is difficult to find literature in Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun. Many Nunavut communities do not yet have public libraries. Consequently, the NLC has concentrated on developing materials through oral history, research and writing projects. Some of these include:

- *Nunavut Writes* – a collection of stories written in many of the official languages of Nunavut, produced annually by the Nunavut Literacy Council.
- WOW a quarterly newspaper for youth-at-risk produced by the NWT/Nunavut Literacy Councils.

Other recently developed materials and literacy initiatives are described in more detail in *Partnership materials and activities.*

In spite of the challenges, many people in Nunavut feel optimistic about their future. Communities are beginning to establish their own definitions of aboriginal

language literacy as a starting point to developing long-term strategies for its survival and growth. Aboriginal languages express a distinctive way of looking at the world, which has been expressed traditionally through oral language. Language provides cultural identity, a sense of community and a sense of continuity.

Although understandings of aboriginal literacy are diverse, most people agree that programs need to provide people with the ability to connect to their community and to their culture through both the Inuktitut and English languages (NWT Literacy Council: 1999). This pragmatic and broad view of literacy is supported by the Inuit world- views of *Ilippallianginnarniq,* continued learning across generations *and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit,* incorporating the traditional into the modern. These indigenous concepts offer pathways to literacy and form the basis for the projects and partnerships the NLC has formed. This is a theme to which we now turn.

DESCRIPTION

Partnerships and capacity building

In the North, and in many other places in Canada where resources are scarce, forming community partnerships is not only a means of supporting aboriginal languages and family literacy, but also a strategy for leveraging funds and support. Cate Sills, of the NWT Literacy Council observes that,

> *While there is very limited funding for community literacy projects available, there is significant funding through both the federal government and the Government of Northwest Territories to support early intervention programs like Aboriginal Head Start, Pre-natal nutrition and family support programming. Getting the family literacy message out to these groups and providing training and support was the best way we could get some family literacy activities going (Sills: 1999)*

Communities have lots of ideas for literacy activities but often lack the capacity to implement them. In Nunavut, communities decide what kind of program they would like, what language they would like the program to be in and how they want things done. The NLC then offers support in the form of just-in-time training, on-going advice and resources. For example in Pelly Bay, located east of Cambridge Bay, the Elders and the Municipal Council decided that traditionally based Inuktitut programs were needed and generated the following initiatives:

- Making traditional puppets and writing and performing a puppet show;
- Forming a traditional seal skin clothing sewing group in which Elders teach younger women how to speak, read and write the patterns in Inuktitut;
- Illustrating stories in Inuktitut, distributing the stories through the local grocery store and then reading the stories to everyone over the local radio.

This partnership web shows Cambridge Bay's family literacy partners, their roles and their relationships to other partners. This is followed by more detailed descriptions of

partnership materials and activities that have been initiated by community organizations.

The Living Library

"Uvajuq" is an ancient Inuit legend of the origin of death. The story was recently recounted by Elders in Cambridge Bay and transcribed and published by Kitikmeot Heritage Society in Inuinnaqtun and in English. The process of gathering and publishing stories like *Uvajuq* is a family and community literacy activity. Youth, elders and families become involved in interviewing, transcribing, discussing, editing and translating oral history to produce literacy materials of historical and community importance. When the May Hakongak Library became involved in oral history based literacy, circulation increased from 300 borrowed items per month to over 1000.

These materials also offer an opportunity to teach both English and Inuinnaqtun literacy in a culturally relevant context. The following is an example of a story that has been adapted for use in a literacy class. Activities that extend from the reading and sharing of such texts include translation, vocabulary development, conversation, story telling and writing.

Unipkaaqtuq (Informant): Donald Kogvik, Inutuqaq, Kuukyuak, Nunavut
Unipkaaliuqtuq: (Interviewer) Kim Crockatt
Numiktiriyuk: (Translators) Emily Angulalik, James Panioyak
Qaritauyaliriyuq: (Transcriber) Martha Angulalik
Uplua: (Date) 10 August 1997

Ikaluakpalik: The place where there is big fish

Donald Kogvik

I will tell you about a fish who swallowed two men and their kayaks. This is hard to believe. I did not see it myself. I can tell you what my parents heard from their parents. It happened a long time ago.

If I could see the things in the story myself I could be sure of what I am telling you. We cannot see the things in the story. I will tell you what I have been told.

Two Inuit tied their kayaks together. This made a good raft. Two kayaks together will not tip over. A river can be crossed safely this way. This was a good way to travel on water. Have you tied two kayaks together to cross a river?

Now try to imagine a big fish swallows the men and their kayaks. I was told that the men and their kayaks were swallowed in one gulp!

I do not know more about the men that were swallowed. I do know more about the fish….

Ikaluakpalik

Unipkaarniaqtunga ilingnut iqaluk iihiyuq malruknik inungnik qayaillu. Una akhut ukpirnaqtuq. Uvanga takuhimanggitatka. Unipkaalaaqtatka angayutkaatka tuhaavaktait angayutkaamingnit. Taimaniraalungguqtuq unipkaaq.

Ahiin takuhimagupkit unipkaaqhimayut ilingnut unipkattialaaraluatka. Takuhimanggittugut hulilugaartut unipkaanit. Kihimi ilingnut unipkaarniaqtunga qanuq unipkaaliuqtauhimayuq…

.

May Hakongak Community Library Reading Tent

The library in Cambridge Bay wanted to promote reading and storytelling within their community and help Inuit people to feel more at home in this traditionally southern institution. They obtained funding to buy a tent, which was subsequently painted by a local artist and volunteers. The tent hosts story telling events, readings by local authors and informal family story times during community events.

The After-school Homework Club

This program is a partnership between the Cambridge Bay Childcare Society, the elementary and high schools, Arctic College, the May Hakongak Library and the NLC. The homework club was initiated in response to a community need for safe and affordable after school care for the children of working parents or those with little parental support. These children need a place to go where they can be supervised, enjoy a healthy after school snack, get help with their homework and socialize with other children and adults in a supportive environment.

High School, college students and parents volunteer as homework tutors. Many children use the library as a hangout where they socialize while waiting for their parents. These informal activities are very important not only for developing literacy skills but a sense of belonging to the community. Children who are no longer in the program continue to use the library for resources and social contact.

Read To Me Kits.

The Nunavut Literacy Council produces *"Read to Me*" kits as a literacy promotion project. These are distributed to all new parents through the local health centres. The kits include Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun and English children's storybooks that families can read to their babies, a baby-size T-shirt with the "Read to Me" logo on it and pamphlets that explain the importance of reading. Community Health Representatives use the kits as a tool to promote family health and wellness and connect new parents to other services and programs.

Books in the Home

This is a project of the Cambridge Bay Childcare Society. The NLC helped to access lower cost books, assisted with the proposal development and wrote the "Books in the Home" program manual. Over a period of four to eight weeks parents and a facilitator meet to learn a variety of ways to share books and stories with their children. At the end of each session parents spend time reading to their children and doing a craft related to the book before taking it home. The parents are also invited to keep a journal or talk about these experiences.

Partners in Design: A Northern Learning Network.

This is a joint project of the NWT and Nunavut Literacy Councils. The intent of the project is to build the capacity of Northern communities by building leadership skills. Through workshops, teleconferences and on-going electronic communication, facilitators provide a range of management training opportunities and resources. This is particularly important because of the geographic isolation and the prohibitive cost of air travel in the north. Although people generally do not have telephones let alone computers, the program introduces them to Community Access Program sites where they have free e-mail accounts and Internet access.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

> *We cannot expect families to value reading stories unless their stories are valued, in whatever form they may come*.
>
> -Kim Crockatt, Nunavut Literacy Council

Nunavut's unique location, culture and languages shape not only the literacy activities that are at the core of its family and community literacy partnerships, but the values and approaches that sustain them. The distinguishing features of these partnerships include the "iceberg model" of literacy work, the unique role of the community literacy development facilitator and the active promotion of community control of programs. The Inuit worldviews of *Ilippallianginnarniq* –"continuing learning" and *Inuit* ***Qaujimajatuqangit*** provide the underlying ethos for this work.

The iceberg model

> Our work can be compared to an iceberg. Ours is the portion underwater.
> -Janet Skinner, Labrador, Canada

90% of an iceberg is underwater and can't be seen from the surface. The work of the NLC is modeled on this Northern iconography. As the preceding description of partnership activities suggests, the NLC does not offer stand-alone programs, but rather supports the development of literacy programs "from below". This support takes the form of advice, training, joint fund raising and providing resources and facilitation. The iceberg model helps to build the capacity of community organizations and to promote literacy as an essential thread in family and community life.

The Community Literacy Development Facilitator

The work of Community Literacy Development Facilitator is integral to the "iceberg" model. Community development is essentially about building relationships and the personal qualities that facilitator brings to their work impact on the long-term success of the partnerships. These qualities include a solid foundation of mutual respect between

the facilitator and the community, in depth knowledge of cultural values and an understanding of the issues that communities face. These qualities inevitably arise from deep and varied involvement in community life.

For example, in addition to her role as the Community Literacy Development Facilitator, Kim Crockatt is the President of the Kitikmeot Heritage Society, a board member of the Childcare Society, a member of the May Hakongak Community Library Committee, the owner of a small business and a mother of nine children who attend daycare, elementary and high school. These multiple roles allow her to network and to draw out the literacy threads that link organizations and people together.

The tendency to "wear many hats" in their community is shared by literacy workers in other regions of Canada. This is related to strong traditions of community involvement in small and rural towns but also to the gendered and poorly funded nature of literacy work in Canada.

If the cost of maintaining partnerships is not factored into the project funding, there is a risk that this work becomes one more aspect of women's non-remunerated work in the community. This carries personal costs for the facilitator and affects program credibility. As one facilitator in rural community in BC put it,

Being a community literacy facilitator means putting yourself out on a limb. We work hard to build trust and to get people to participate and take ownership of programs, only to have the program funding cancelled or slashed the following year. Those families won't be coming back to a literacy program very soon after that experience.

The challenge of building program credibility exists for other reasons, too. In Kim's experience, local knowledge and expertise is often under-valued because people have been conditioned to believe that anything worthwhile must come from the south. For example, regardless of her skill and knowledge, people may distrust a program in which the facilitator is a neighbour. Similarly, the value of the partnership work often needs to be recognized outside the community before it is valued from within. Kim notes,

> *It was not until we started gaining recognition from outside the community that organizations we had approached to collaborate began to show interest. For example, the Kitikmeot Heritage Society is partnering with the Arctic Institute of North America on a UNESCO sponsored project called "Arctic Circumpolar Route: Cultural Pathways in the North. Now that the KHS is a pilot site for this UNESCO project, we are the belle of the ball!*

Negotiating community control of programs

The process of negotiating governance structures and mandates for the new May Hakongak library/cultural centre in Cambridge Bay illustrates the importance of formalizing mechanisms for meaningful community involvement in literacy programs.

Building support for the library at all levels through discussion, consultation and dialogue was a key strategy for pre-empting the contestations over control of the facility that did arise. This strategy drew on the values and mechanisms for dealing with conflict that exist within the Inuit culture. Kim Crockatt reflects,

> *I have seen how the Elder's approach to community development is so effective. In the traditional Inuit culture, people relied on one another for their very survival. Consensus and sharing of power were critical. I see how the Elders use grassroots support to make change rather than confrontation. Although it takes a tremendous amount of time, it is much more powerful. The benefit of this approach is that in the end everyone's voice is heard and they feel ownership over the process.*

The following is a brief description of the process by which the Kitikmeot Heritage Society established community control of the library/cultural center.

The KHS consulted broadly to build support for the library. They discussed with major stakeholders, including the schools and education districts the benefits that a combined cultural centre/museum and public library would have for them. The dream of creating a "living library" was an important drawing card for acquiring their support.

Another key strategy was to lobby the Government of Nunavut and get the support of key political and traditional leaders. The KHS lobbied the Government for capital funding for cultural centres in Nunavut. Using connections with Inuit leaders, they built support for their own centre in Cambridge Bay. They were careful to demonstrate that if the Government put a capital funding program into place, other communities could benefit from that funding as well.

In the fall of 1999, the Government allocated money to the Department of Culture, Language, Elders & Youth for the 2000 proposed budget. That fall the main stakeholders wrote and signed a governance agreement for the cultural centre/library. This was done with a small amount of negotiation. The school wanted to have more control over the management of the facility but agreed in the end that community control would be better in the long run. This community control was guaranteed by the composition of the advisory committee who were representatives from community organizations and Elders. The agreement was signed in principle in early December and then forwarded to the Department of Education and to the Hamlet.

In the meantime, the regional Board of Education began rewriting the governance agreement without notifying any of the other signatories. Their premise was that the governance agreement needed to comply with existing regulations that place school districts in charge of community education. Kim called a meeting of all of the signatories and the revised agreement was revealed which had the school controlling the facility rather than the community. The KHS voiced concern over this and were backed up by the municipality and surprisingly, the Minister of Education who told his officials that if need be, they would change the Education Act or grant a Ministerial exemption in

order to facilitate community control. It was decided that the agreement would stand as is.

This experience suggests that while conflict and differences may be unavoidable, the strategy of building broad based support and meaningful involvement of community members for major collaborative initiatives can set up a context for that conflict to be addressed more broadly and not on an interpersonal or partner-to-partner level. This involves a philosophical approach to community building that embraces process and dialogue more than a technical application of logical steps that need to be followed.

This focus on relationship building allows too, for an element of compassion and understanding rather than blame and confrontation to enter into the power dynamics in a partnership. As Kim observed,

> *In retrospect, we know that these problems boiled down to a perceived loss of control at the board level. The Government recently disbanded all Education Boards leaving only the community education councils. The regional staff was concerned that its authority was being eroded by communities. The person at the heart of this issue had always voiced her disapproval for this partnership saying it would never work. She was probably the only person who we were not able to get on side.*

PRACTICAL IDEAS

In the three years since the NLC initiated its family and community literacy project, the facilitators and partners have learned much about the processes of collaboration and effective forms of community literacy work. These are some "lessons" they have learned from that experience and which others involved in collaborations may like to consider.

Form a community advisory board

It's important to invite onto an advisory committee community members who do not normally take part in school activities. Not only does this help to offset the more powerful interests of schools, government bodies or professional groups, but also helps to promote literacy initiatives that reflect linguistic, cultural interests and trends in the community.

Draw up partnership agreements

Partnership agreements that clarify roles and responsibilities help to build trust and avoid misunderstanding. These can be simple and straightforward. For example:

> *Party A* agrees to provide a venue for an after school homework club from September to April, from 3:30 to 5:30 pm. Party B agrees to supervise the program, clean the venue afterwards and lock the doors. Party C agrees to provide snacks and train volunteer tutors.

Try to obtain core funding to pay a salary for the community literacy development facilitator

Forming and sustaining partnerships is hard work. The creation of a community literacy facilitator or similar paid position to develop partnerships, facilitate networking amongst communities and programs and do the every day work has been instrumental in sustaining community-based literacy work in the NWT, Nunavut and other Canadian provinces. However, lobbying is often required in order to maintain funding for these community-based positions. Too often this work is regarded as an extension of what socially involved women do anyway.

Choose your own partners

Successful partnerships are usually those in which the partners have chosen each other because of shared values and compatibility and not because it was a funding requirement. Kim Crockatt offers an example,

> *We have had very successful partnerships when we have had the opportunity to choose the partners ourselves. In one case, we were asked by the Department of Education to collaborate with an organization that did not share similar values. This partnership was fraught with difficulties.*

Locate the partnership work within a cultural or community ethos

When possible, it is important to locate partnership work within a cultural or community ethos. The work of the NLC and its partners is grounded in the concepts of *Ilippallianginnarniq* and *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* discussed earlier in this paper. Together these operate as an informal but powerful mission statement that creates space for bi-literacy and multiple literacy learning within a framework of intergenerational sharing.

The ways in which this cultural ethos could be translated into practice was discussed in advisory committees and emerged out of the NLC work. Some examples include a commitment on the part of partners to reach the 'hardest to reach' while not targeting specific groups, a commitment to link literacy initiatives to existing community programs rather than competing with one another for funds and participants, and perhaps most importantly, an understanding that programs belong to the community and not to individual organizations. It's important to "let go" of a program or project and see it grow and change in another place and time.

Solicit in-kind contributions

In-kind contributions are non monetary and range from providing snacks for an after-school program to offering the use of a facility during off times. Not only are these usually essential to the daily running of community programs, they also demonstrate community support and give the community a sense of ownership.

Be flexible

With regard to the facilitation of learning in programs, participants in Cambridge Bay needed to know that they could participate according to their own comfort levels, in their own languages and in oral, literate, art and traditional forms. For example, in the *Books in the Home* program the facilitator pointed out that if people are not comfortable reading to their children they can get the same benefits by telling a story to go with the pictures or telling a story that they remember from their childhood.

CONCLUSION

Nunavut's community literacy collaborations are relatively new. Their activities are evolving according to the ever-changing landscape and interplay of language, literacy and culture. Future plans include the development of a family literacy program based on traditional knowledge, a parenting and literacy program and potentially, a national literacy project in partnership with the Inuit women's organization – Pauktuutit.

The partnership activities and their distinguishing features described in this chapter suggest that as important as the delivery and impact of programs may be, the process by which initiatives are planned and implemented is equally important and can be a community-building effort in itself. A librarian in rural British Columbia captures this idea in her observation,

> *We learn what we always learn in small communities. It takes time to get family and community projects going, but when they take root, it is well worth the time and patience.*
> *-Liz Burke. Invermere Public Library, British Columbia*

The sense that life has meaning is one of the most fundamental indicators of health and well-being and is a central theme in recent human development research (Keating and Hertzman: 1999). Re-instilling the inherent value of Inuit language and culture and the stories they carry, even when these shift and change with time, technology and modernity, is vital to cultivating among young Inuit people in particular, a sense that life has meaning. This work goes beyond the development and measurement of reading skills, English language fluency and employability. For just as Berry (1993) observes how a farm yard bucket collects leaves, and woodland sheddings that over time create soil, so too do the sacred places, ancient languages and new stories collect in the Arctic landscape "to create…a memory of itself which will be its culture." (Berry in Heller: 1999:131) As Caroline Heller concludes in her study of a women's writing group, "we have no work more important than this "(p. 133).

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