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ANNUAL REPORT
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UQUAHILIRINIRMUT HAVAGVIK NUNAVUNMI
OFFICE OF THE LANGUAGES COMMISSIONER OF NUNAVUT
BUREAU DU COMMISSAIRE AUX LANGUES DU NUNAVUT



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OFFICE OF THE LANGUAGES COMMISSIONER OF NUNAVUT

BUREAU DU COMMISSAIRE AUX LANGUES DU NUNAVUT

Annual Report

2004 - 2005

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Message from the New Languages Commissioner

I began my journey as the new Languages Commissioner this past March, at the end of the 2004-2005 year. I am honoured to work as the second Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, ensuring the language rights of all Nunavummiut while promoting the Inuit language.

The Inuit language is at a crucial point—we must act and act strongly or risk further language loss in our communities. As the second Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, I hope to continue the innovative work that my predecessor began.

The former Languages Commissioner, Ms. Eva Ariak, accomplished important goals before her departure this year. I commend her for her vision and effort. Under Ms. Ariak's leadership, the Office of the Languages Commissioner was able to provide key support during the review of Nunavut's inherited *Official Languages Act*. The Office made recommendations for the creation of new legislation that will meet the needs of Nunavummiut. During her time as Languages Commissioner, Ms. Ariak dedicated herself to promoting the Inuit language by speaking at many community events, publishing language-related documents, supporting terminology development, and recommending the creation of an Inuit Language Authority.

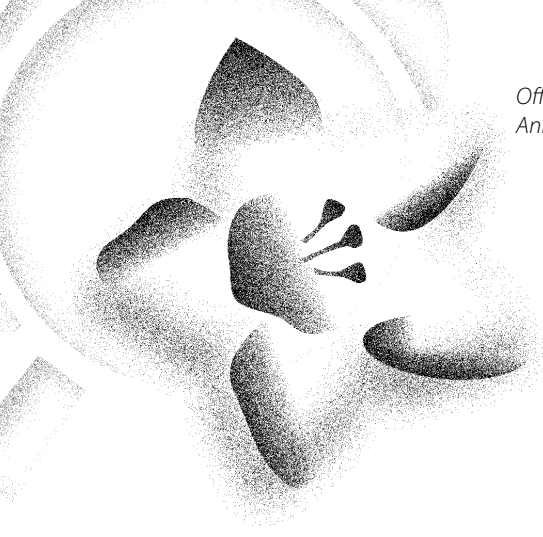
In the coming years, I will continue to support the creation of the Inuit Language Authority. I will do this by monitoring the development of the new *Inuit Language Protection Act*, which is based on recommendations made by this office. I also plan to increase public awareness—Nunavummiut need to learn about their language rights and they also need information about language preservation in the home and in our communities. The Inuit language will prosper when the community and public government work together.



I believe that it is vital that we engage youth and involve elders in language initiatives. Creating a strong link between youth and elders is the key to keeping the Inuit language rich and vibrant. This is the message I will carry with me when I visit communities and meet with Nunavummiut in the coming years. Our elders have knowledge of our traditions and the richness of the Inuit language, while our youth have the power to carry the Inuit language into the future.

I encourage all Nunavummiut to contact my office for information, for protection and investigation of language rights, and for inspiration and support.

Johnny Kusugak
Languages Commissioner of Nunavut



About Nunavut's Languages

The Inuit Language

The Inuit language, which is commonly referred to as Inuktitut, is the largest language group in Nunavut. Seventy percent of Nunavummiut speak the Inuit language as their first language. The Inuit language includes a number of different dialects, such as Inuinnaqtun, which is spoken in the western-most parts of the territory.

There are two different ways people in Nunavut write the Inuit language: *Qaliujaaqpait* (or Roman orthography) and *Qaniujaaqpait* (syllabics). Most Inuktitut speakers in Nunavut use syllabics to write their language. This writing system is made up of about 60 characters, most of them representing complete syllables. Thus “NU” in Roman orthography is written with one character in syllabics: “ᑎᑦ”. The Roman orthography writing system uses the same letters that are used to write English or French. Many people who normally use syllabics will also use Roman orthography, especially for writing e-mails or when working on computers. Inuinnaqtun speakers almost always use Roman orthography rather than syllabics.

French

Nunavut's capital, Iqaluit, is home to a thriving Francophone community. The French speaking population is served by a school, a daycare, a community radio station, and a cultural centre that stages various events almost every week of the year.

English

English is also very prevalent in the territory. In the larger centres, use of English is as widespread as use of the Inuit language, especially among Qallunaat (non-Inuit). In Nunavut, there are still many unilingual speakers of the Inuit language and speakers whose first language is the Inuit language, although the number of people with better English than Inuit language skills is on the rise. English is the de facto language of government and industry. In its *Pinasuaqtavut* document of 1999, the Government of Nunavut promised to work toward educating children in our schools to be fully bilingual with strong skills in both languages. This is a strategy they are hoping will achieve another *Pinasuaqtavut* goal: the Inuit language as a working language of the government by the year 2020.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Languages Commissioner is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly, appointed by Nunavut's elected representatives to a four year term. The Languages Commissioner has a number of responsibilities, which are detailed in the *Official Languages Act*, and include:

1. Monitoring

The Languages Commissioner and his staff monitor the Government of Nunavut's progress toward meeting its obligations to Nunavut's official languages under the following documents:

- The *Official Languages Act*
- *Pinasuaqtavut (the Bathurst Mandate)*, which commits the Government of Nunavut to
 - i. making Inuktitut its working language
 - ii. encouraging bilingualism in Inuktitut and English
 - iii. respecting the needs and rights of French speakers
- The *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA)*, which requires the Government of Nunavut to attain a level of Inuit employment that is representative of the overall population of Nunavut.
 - i. It is to achieve this partly by removing existing barriers to Inuit employment. In negotiations with the Government of Canada regarding the implementation of the land claim, the Government of Nunavut has affirmed that the use of English as its working language constitutes

a barrier to employment for the majority of Nunavummiut who speak Inuktitut as their first language.

- The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which guarantees that the English and French speaking minorities in Nunavut have the right to have their children educated in their languages.

2. Advisory Role of the Languages Commissioner

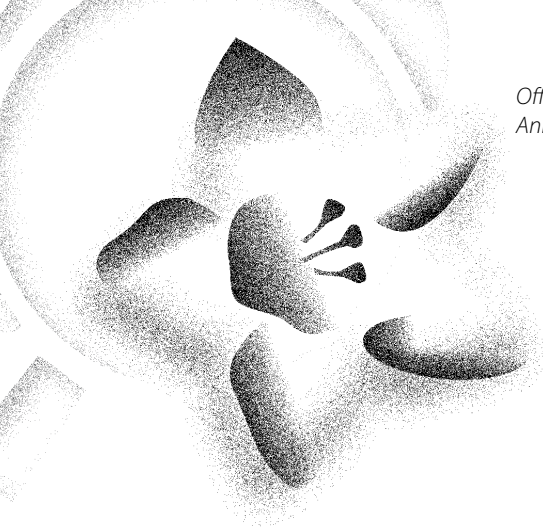
The Office of the Languages Commissioner is the only institution in Nunavut dedicated entirely to language issues. Through on-going contacts with communities throughout the territory, research activities, and policy work, the Office is able to provide the Members of the Legislative Assembly and the GN with comprehensive recommendations on the best responses to language issues facing the territory.

3. Language Promotion

The Languages Commissioner has an important role in bringing language issues to the public's attention and participating in language promotion activities throughout Nunavut. The Languages Commissioner fulfills this duty by:

- Consulting with communities about the language issues they face and encouraging them to learn and use our official languages: Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun, French and English





- Attending language events organized by communities
- Participating in the organization of the annual *Uqausirmut Quviasuutiqarniq* (Inuit Language Week)
- Maintaining a website with information about Nunavut's languages, language rights and the role of his office
- Participating in interviews with the media
- Addressing conferences on various language issues
- The right to communicate with and receive services from any regional or community office of the GN in Inuktitut.
- The right to use any of the official languages in the Legislative Assembly.

The Government of Nunavut has promised to make Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun its working language while respecting the rights of Nunavut's English and French speakers. The Languages Commissioner is monitoring the Government's progress and makes recommendations on how to achieve these goals.

4. The Role of Ombudsman

The Languages Commissioner receives, investigates and reports on complaints from the public regarding violations of the language rights contained in the Official Languages Act. These include:

- The right to use any of the official languages in Nunavut's courts.
- The right to communicate with and receive services from all head offices of Government of Nunavut (GN) departments and organizations in English and French.

If a member of the public feels that language rights contained in any piece of Nunavut legislation have been violated, they may launch a formal complaint with the Languages Commissioner. The Office of the Languages Commissioner will then investigate the complaint, and may make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly regarding any actions needed to correct the situation.

How can we help you?

The Office of the Languages Commissioner is here to make sure the Government of Nunavut follows its own laws that deal with language. The *Official Languages Act* contains a number of language rights that the Government of Nunavut is required by law to respect. If you believe that the GN is breaking any part of the *Official Languages Act*, or going against any of its own language-related policies, you can send a complaint to the Languages Commissioner and he will try to resolve the problem.

If you have a complaint regarding your language rights, or if you have a question about anything in this report, please contact us. You can reach us by mail, telephone, email, or by filling out a simple form on our website. If you are in Iqaluit, please feel free to come by our office and we will be happy to help you.

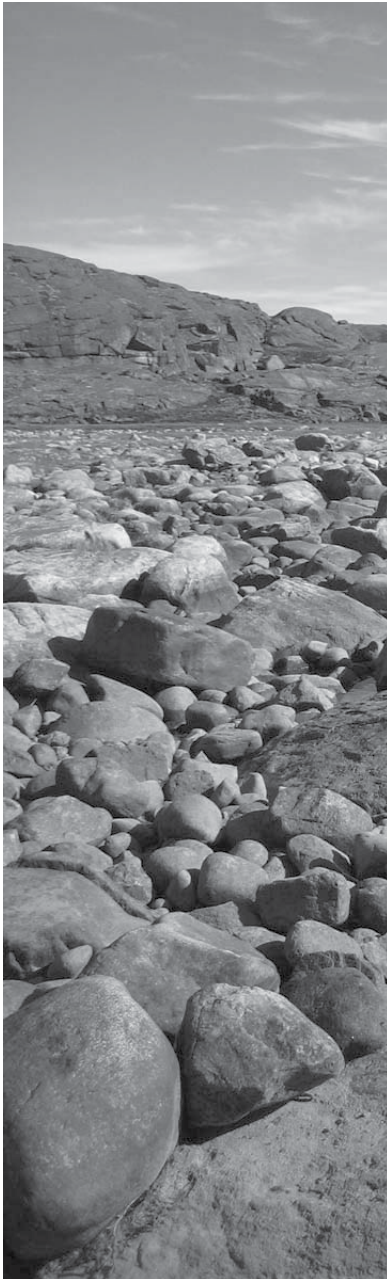
About Complaints

We rely on the public to inform us if a GN organization isn't living up to its obligations under the Official Languages Act. Infractions that aren't reported to us could continue, and each complaint we receive helps us to identify problems and work with departments to improve Government of Nunavut services in all of our Official Languages.

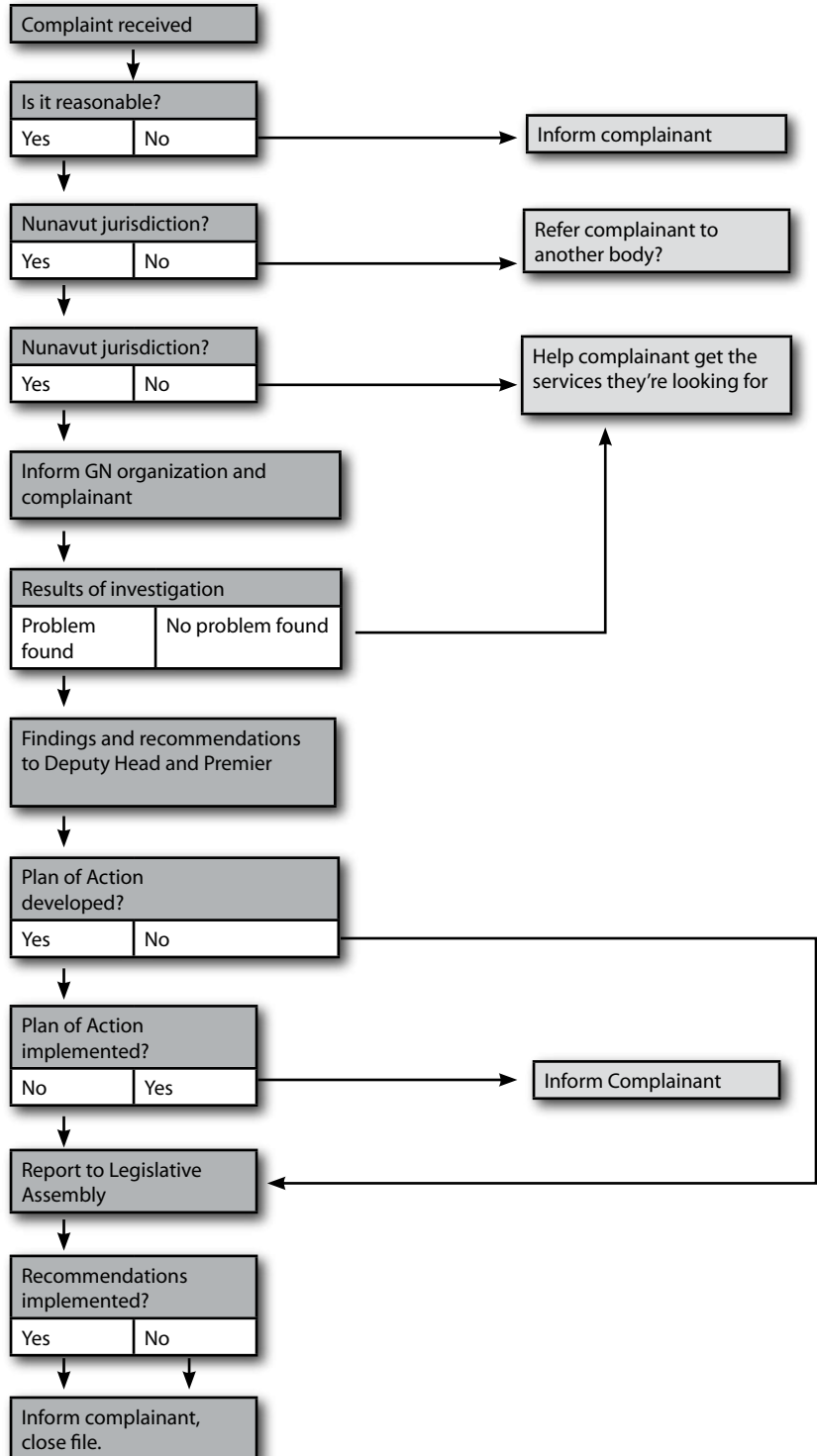
Although the idea of “complaining” is often considered contrary to Inuit culture, we believe that the idea of contribution to the betterment of society as a whole is fundamental to Nunavut. We conduct our inquiries and make recommendations in the spirit of respect and cooperation with the complainant and the agencies involved.

The following flow-chart outlines what we do with a complaint when it's received.





Complaints Process Flow Chart





Activities

Community Events

In May 2004, the Languages Commissioner attended *Nunavut at Five: The Nunavut Policy Symposium*, an international celebration of the fifth anniversary of the creation of Nunavut, hosted by Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. At this conference, policy analysts, researchers, and Inuit leaders discussed the development of policy in Nunavut since 1999. The Languages Commissioner participated on panels discussing territorial policy issues, contributing information about the influence and importance of the Inuit language. The Languages Commissioner also shared with participants her perspective on language issues in Nunavut and the need for a made-in-Nunavut *Official Languages Act* and Inuit Language Authority.

Also in May, the Languages Commissioner and staff met with participants in the federal Parliamentary Internship Program who were on a study tour in Iqaluit. Having already met with the federal department of Indian and Northern Affairs and with several Members of the Legislative Assembly, the participants had many thoughtful questions to ask about the state of language rights and language preservation in Nunavut.

In August 2004, Jonathan Dewar, the Public Affairs and Research Officer for the Languages Commissioner, attended the 14th annual Inuit Studies Conference at the University of Calgary. He gave a presentation on

language preservation, dialect issues, and legislative developments in Nunavut. While at the conference, he also met with many individuals interested in the promotion and celebration of Inuit language and culture, including leaders and researchers from Nunavik and Greenland and members of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference.

Promotional Activities

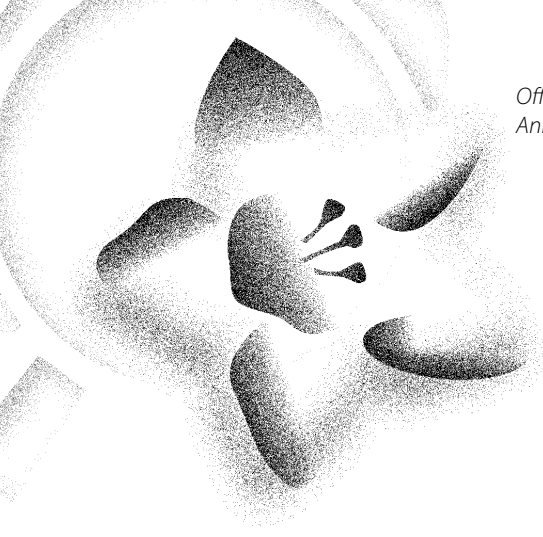
This year, the Office of the Languages Commissioner introduced its new biannual office newsletter. The first issue was distributed in the summer. The newsletter will be published biannually in order to keep the public informed of interesting developments in language issues and the activities of the Office of the Languages Commissioner.

Throughout the year, development of the Office's website continued. Extensive information about the role of the Office is available in Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun, English, and French. Many relevant documents related to language in Nunavut are available, including the *Official Languages Act*, previous annual reports, our newsletter, and language studies commissioned by the Office.

Research Report: *Preserving Inuit Dialects*

This year, the Office of the Languages Commissioner commissioned Dr. Shelley Tulloch to research dialect





issues in Nunavut. Dr. Tulloch is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She has published previous studies on Inuit language issues, including a report on language issues specific to youth in Nunavut.

In January 2005, she presented her final report, entitled *Preserving Inuit Dialects in Nunavut*. This report explores some of the ways that dialectical richness can be protected as the Nunavut Government promotes the Inuit language, in all its forms, as its first official language. In the report, Dr. Tulloch compares dialect preservation issues from communities around the world to the issues facing Nunavummiut. She also makes clear recommendations for the development, conservation, and increased knowledge of dialects in Nunavut. This report is available from our office to all interested parties. Executive summaries of the report are available on our website in Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun, English, and French.

Complaints and Inquiries

Every year, the Office of the Languages Commissioner receives many inquiries from around the world about the Inuit language. Inquiries range from questions about the syllabic writing system to the availability of translation and interpretation services. We receive such inquiries from various levels of government, academic institutions, and the general public. We are happy that so many organizations and individuals are interested in and concerned about the language and heritage of Nunavut.

The OLC continues to receive and process complaints to the extent of our authority. Notably, we have continued to receive complaints about hamlet services throughout the territory. As hamlet services do not fall under our legislated mandate, we are unable to formally investigate these complaints. However, we do try to help resolve the situations when possible. Generally, we explain to the complainant that we do not have the authority to investigate the situation formally, but that we will consider contacting the hamlet informally to let them know that we have received calls from individuals in their community. If hamlet activities are included in the new *Official Languages Act*, complaints related to hamlet activities will likely become a regular part of our investigations.

Letters of Support

Many exciting projects are being initiated by community members in regions across Nunavut. The Office of the Languages Commissioner is pleased to have had the opportunity review several proposals put forth by Nunavummiut, to offer suggestions, and, in all cases, to write letters of support for funding.

We have strived to make our office accessible to those seeking information about language issues in support of projects and education campaigns. We will continue to encourage people to share their plans for language-related initiatives with us.

Working Toward New Language Legislation and an Inuit Language Authority

The Office of the Languages Commissioner has long advocated for the creation of new language legislation in Nunavut. Last year, the Government of Nunavut accepted the recommendations of the previous Languages Commissioner and began to work toward developing such legislation. The Office of the Languages Commissioner has continued to work toward a new made-in-Nunavut *Official Languages Act* and an Inuit Language Protection Act by participating on the GN drafting committee working on the new language legislation.

A full length report on our recommendations for creating an Inuit Language Authority, an *Inuit Language Protection Act*, and a new *Official Languages Act* is available from our office to any interested party. The main points of the report are outlined here.

Inuit Language Authority: Background Information on Legislative Developments and Recommendations

Nunavut is currently operating under the *Official Languages Act* that was written for and inherited from the Northwest Territories. The Act, as it stands, is not relevant to Nunavut. Although it contains basic provisions for the rights of English and French speakers in the territory, it provides only limited rights to speakers of the Inuit language, as the Inuit language is only one of the seven official Aboriginal languages recognized in the Northwest Territories. Since the Inuit language is spoken by the majority in Nunavut, and as it is integral to the identity of Nunavut and Nunavummiut, we need an Official

Languages Act that reflects this.

The First Assembly of Nunavut formed a Special Committee to review the *Official Languages Act*. Our office collaborated with this committee during their consultations and made recommendations to them in a special report. The Special Committee presented their recommendations (which echoed ours) at the last sitting of the First Assembly.

Recommendations that came from our office

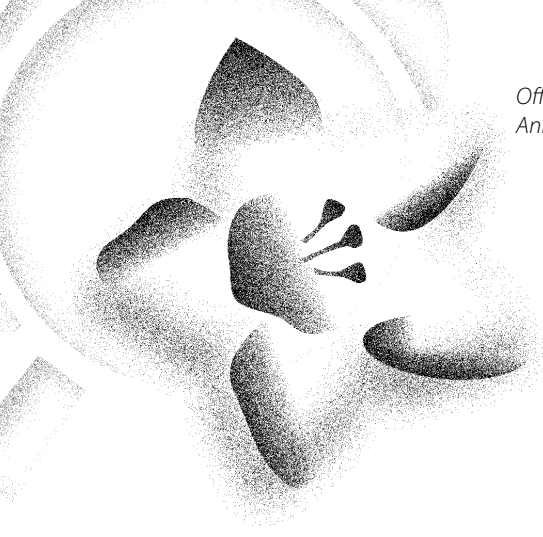
- The revision of the existing *Official Languages Act*
- The creation of an *Inuit Language Protection Act*
- The creation of an Inuit Language Authority

The Office of the Languages Commissioner investigated the feasibility of the various options for an Inuit Language Authority that were suggested by discussion panel members. We also consulted with staff of other agencies involved in the use and promotion of Inuktitut. After careful consideration, the Office of the Languages Commissioner recommends the following.

Structure

We believe that it would be feasible to create an Inuit Language Authority within the proposed *Inuit Language Protection Act*. This founding legislation would establish the Authority's status as a public agency that would be run cooperatively by the Government





of Nunavut and Designated Inuit Organizations, as representatives of the people most affected by the status of Inuit language in the territory.

Contributions

Support for the operations of the Inuit Language Authority should be negotiated and established in a cooperative agreement between the agencies involved. It would make logistical sense for the Authority to have close ties with the Government of Nunavut. This would optimize the Authority's use of the human resources within The Department of Culture, Language, Elders, and Youth, which has been working hard at terminology development over the past few years. The Languages Commissioner recommends that provision of administrative support for the Authority fall within the portfolio of the minister responsible for the Department of Culture, Language, Elders, and Youth.

We recommend that high-level talks begin as soon as possible between the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (and associated Regional Inuit Organizations) to discuss each body's potential for involvement with the Inuit Language Authority. Ideally, there would be agreements struck to allow cost-sharing among these stakeholder agencies based on affordable options. These agencies would also be able to work out reasonable rates for honoraria and expenses for appointed members of the Authority.

Mandate

We recommend that the mandate of the Inuit Language Authority be written into the *Inuit Language Protection Act* and that it should include the terminology to be used by the bodies involved. The Authority should be mandated to produce annual reports on its activities. These annual reports should include any special recommendations or observations the Authority would like to make regarding the status of Inuit language in general in the territory. The Mandate, as written into the founding legislation, should allow the occasional adoption of special projects, and should leave the first members of the Authority to define their own Terms of Reference.

Membership

We recommend that the founding legislation for the Inuit Language Authority should require a minimum membership of five individuals and should allow those members to ask the selection committee, described below, for an increase in their numbers if necessary.

The legislation should provide a list of stakeholders eligible to nominate *Inuit language-speaking* individuals to sit on the Inuit Language Authority, and these stakeholders should include the organizations and groups identified by our discussion panel members:



- Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
- Regional Inuit Organizations
- The Government of Nunavut
- Inuit Heritage Trust
- Office of the Languages Commissioner
- Other recognized Inuit language experts

Nominees should be reviewed and selected jointly by a selection committee of Government of Nunavut and NTI officials. This committee should make concerted efforts to select members that represent various dialects and to include at least one elder and one youth.

We recommend that the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, as monitor of the *Official Languages Act*, be given an automatic seat on the Authority.

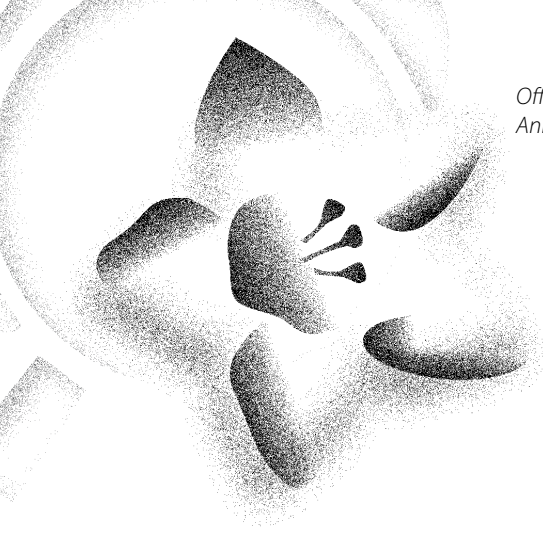
The Languages Commissioner may also serve as an interim Chair of the Authority until a chairperson can be established among the appointed members.

Founding legislation should grant powers to the Chair to monitor the attendance and performance of other members and to replace appointees with alternatives if necessary.

The appointed members should serve a standard three year term. However, initial appointments should be for three years for half of the members and for five years for the other half, so renewal of seats is not done all at once in following years. This should leave some consistency of membership while turnover of seats is in progress.

Anyone who would like to receive a copy of our full report on the development of an Inuit Language Authority, the *Inuit Language Protection Act*, and the revised *Official Languages Act* should contact our office.



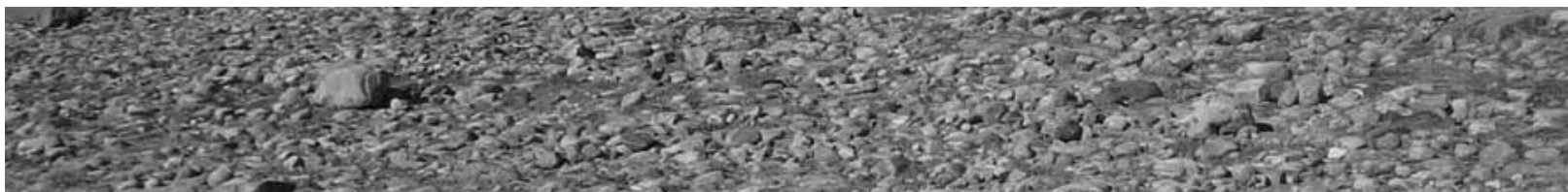


Recommendations



This year, the Office of the Languages Commissioner has focused its activities on the development of new language legislation in the territory and on establishing the groundwork for an Inuit Language Authority.

Above all else, we strongly recommend that the Government of Nunavut continue to work toward developing the new made-in-Nunavut *Official Languages Act* and the *Inuit Language Protection Act*. The creation of the Inuit Language Authority is essential, now more than ever, to maintaining the strength of the Inuit language. Now is the time to learn and record terminology from our elders. Now is the time to ensure that our young people understand and appreciate our unique linguistic and cultural heritage. We encourage Nunavut's leaders to focus their energies on getting new legislation in place as soon as possible.



Work Plan 2005-2006

Community Events and Consultations

In the coming year, the Languages Commissioner's primary goal will be to strengthen the Office's community connections. The concerns of Nunavummiut on language issues must be heard. Many Nunavummiut are more comfortable discussing difficult issues face-to-face. The Languages Commissioner wants to make sure Nunavummiut from all of Nunavut's diverse regions have the opportunity to learn about language issues and voice their concerns and personal experiences.

As such, the Office has a rigorous travel schedule planned. By the end of the year, the Languages Commissioner and his staff plan to have visited each region in Nunavut and to travel to as many communities as our budget will allow. It is a priority to make strong community connections in the western Arctic, where the Inuit language has suffered the greatest losses. Inuit in the western Arctic need the opportunity to share their circumstances and to begin to explore solutions as soon as possible.

Language Legislation

The Office of the Languages Commissioner will continue to provide support during the drafting and consultation processes for new language legislation in Nunavut, including the *Official Languages Act* and proposed *Inuit Language Protection Act*. The Office will continue to participate on the Languages Legislation Steering Committee along with representatives from the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

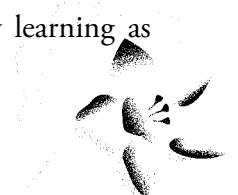
Promotional Activities

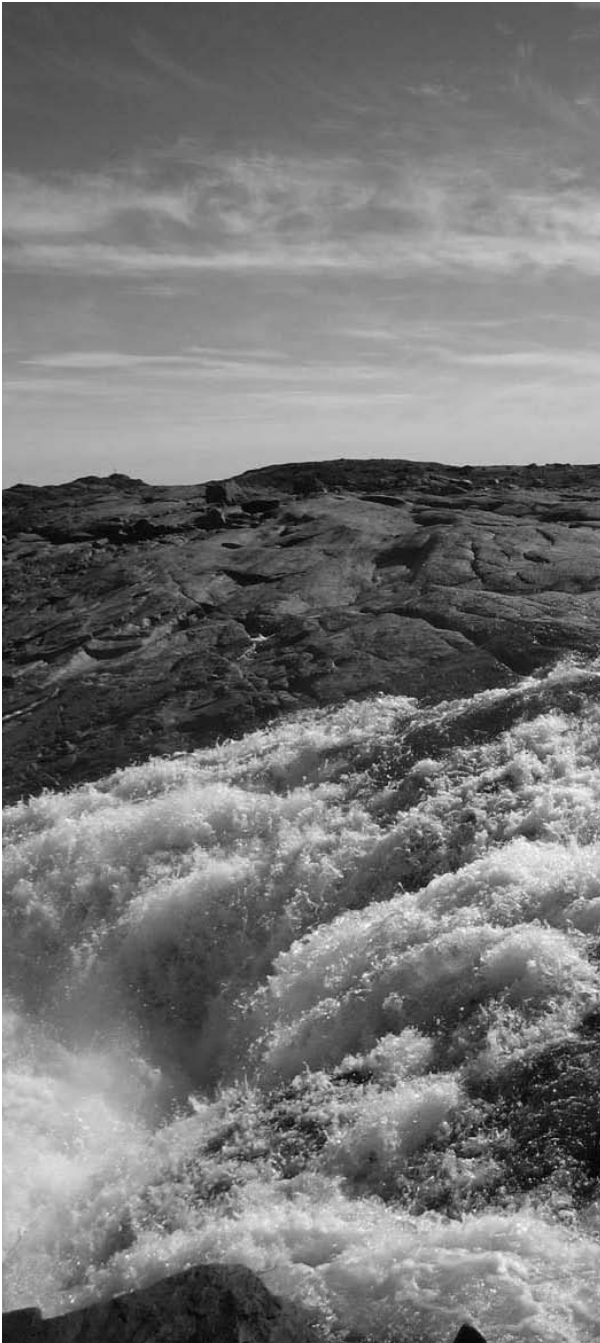
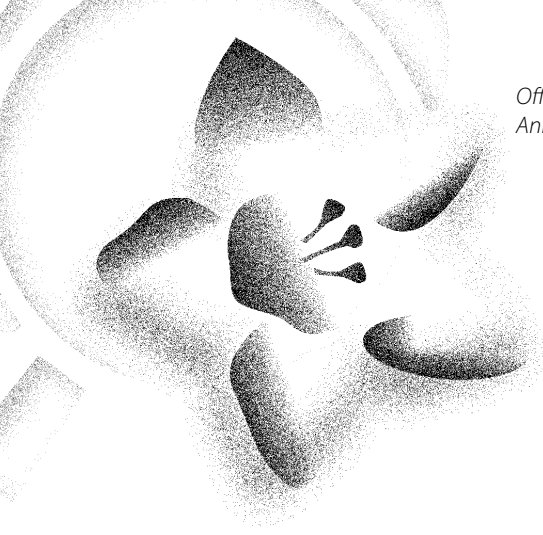
In addition to our regular office newsletter, we will produce an electronic newsletter dedicated to positive language initiatives taking place in Nunavut. This annual newsletter will outline language-related activities of each territorial government department, several federal departments, schools, and local community organizations. The newsletter will be distributed electronically in English, Inuktitut, and Inuinnaqtun to all contributors and to anyone else who is interested. This letter will be available for download on our website.

We will also continue to expand other language resources available on our website. We plan to add an Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun phrases page to our website, as we regularly receive requests from people around the world for basic information about the Inuit language. We also plan to begin development of a youth resources section. This section will include information on circumpolar youth initiatives, information about language issues specific to youth, and suggestions for positive steps young Nunavummiut can take to strengthening and preserving the Inuit language.

Sharing Our Vision

Continued strength of the Inuit language will be the result of dedicated efforts from the Government of Nunavut and from Nunavummiut. Individuals must work to carry the Inuit language forward in their own lives by teaching their children and by learning as





adults. Let's support our friends, family members, and neighbours in their efforts to use the Inuit language at work and at home.

The Government should work hard to provide the language resources needed for children learning the Inuit language and for adults relearning the language in later years. The Government of Nunavut should also work hard to create the infrastructure needed to support wide-spread usage of the Inuit language in government offices and in private business in Nunavut. This infrastructure should include an Inuit Language Authority that can oversee terminology preservation and development along with regulated translation and interpretation services.

For the Inuit language to prosper, Nunavummiut must work together and share knowledge with each other. The Government will have to dedicate significant resources to language-related programs. Most importantly, the young people of Nunavut will have to make strong connections with the elders of Nunavut. We will all benefit as our cultural and linguistic heritage is carried forward by our youth.

The Languages Commissioner and his staff are dedicated to carrying these messages to Nunavummiut and the Government of Nunavut. We are committed to raising the level of public awareness on language issues and we are committed to making strong connections with the youth of Nunavut. All of our activities in 2005-06 will be steps toward fulfilling these goals.

BUDGET REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING March 31, 2005

Budget Year 2004-2005

Summary	Budget	Spent	Committed	Balance
Permanent Salaries	413,000.00	330,742.73	22,000.00	82,257.27
Casual Wages		1723.05		(1723.05)
	413,000.00	332,465.78		80,534.22
Travel	40,000.00	34,124.91		5857.09
Materials & Supplies	40,000.00	62,185.04		(22,185.04)
Purchased Services	10,000.00	39,767.95		(29,767.95)
Utilities	-	3009.35		(3009.35)
Contract Services	60,000.00	59,805.12		194.88
Fees and Payments	5,000.00	3243.05		1756.95
Other Expenses	5,000.00	5703.05		(703.05)
Tangible Assets	5,000.00	-		5000.00
Computer Hardware & Software	5,000.00	27,808.13		(22,808.13)
	170,000.00	235,664.60		(65,664.60)
	583,000.00	568,130.38		14,869.62

