



# Professional Learning for Culturally Nourishing Pedagogies in Inuit Schools

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## Abstract

This article presents a participatory action inquiry into the process and outcomes of professional learning for culturally nourishing pedagogies in Inuit schools. Culturally nourishing pedagogies are approaches to schooling that centre local knowledge, language, culture, and knowledge holders. Engaging all school staff, administrators, curriculum developers, and school boards in adopting such approaches is key to decolonizing schools and practicing Indigenous sovereignty in education. A research team of Inuit educators and university-based researchers, in partnership with the Nunatsiavut Inuit Government and the school board documented and analyzed the development, delivery, immediate and short-term outcomes of professional learning workshops addressing Inuit culturally nourishing pedagogies. Results show that the teachers have many ideas for, and intuitively incorporate land, language, local knowledge holders, and local resources in their teaching inside and outside the school building. Consistent implementation of culturally nourishing pedagogies is hindered by capacity, time, school board policies, and resource gaps. Teacher-to-teacher knowledge exchange in the workshops demonstrated the importance of identity, relationship, and safe spaces in generating ideas for and practicing culturally nourishing pedagogies. Collaborative co-creation of knowledge reveals how professional learning workshops can contribute to teachers' effective practice and to sustainable change in Nunatsiavut area schools.

**Key Words:** Teacher professional learning, culturally nourishing pedagogies, Inuit education, decolonizing education

## Introduction

Culturally nourishing schools are places where teachers and students are supported to engage with each other, their communities, learning content, and learning contexts in ways that enhance their pluricultural identities and support learning success (Lowe, Skrebneva, Burgess, Harrison, & Vass, 2020). Indigenous teacher professional learning and culturally nourishing pedagogies are central to Indigenous sovereignty in education and equitable and effective learning for Indigenous children. However, teacher training for Indigenous teachers takes place in western institutions, following colonial frameworks, with little attention to place and culturally-specific content and teaching methods.

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In Canada, four Inuit regions (Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut) deliver schooling to Inuit children who make up the large majority of students. A National Strategy on Inuit Education (National Committee on Inuit Education, 2011, p. 73) calls for greater numbers of Inuit teachers and education leaders and an Inuit-centered curriculum. Inuit-specific teacher education programs have been offered in the Northwest Territories (later Inuvialuit Settlement Region and Nunavut) and Nunavik since the 1970s, but can be inaccessible due to physical distance, housing shortages, costs, and language barriers (Berger, Inootik, Jones, & Kadjukiv, 2019). These programs also do not consistently include deliberate training in culturally nourishing approaches to teaching in Inuit schools (McGregor & McGregor, 2022).

An Inuit-specific teacher education program offered in Nunatsiavut starting in 2014 was the first to deliberately embed Inuit culturally relevant and responsive approaches (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2017; Moore & Galway, 2018; Moore & Inuit Bachelor of Education Students, 2016; Tulloch, Sandiford, Moore, Lane, Boase, & Doherty, 2017). Only one iteration of this program was offered to one cohort of students, and most graduates went on to professions outside of Nunatsiavut schools. Program evaluations and research with teachers in Inuit schools (e.g. Moore & Tulloch, 2020) have identified ongoing professional learning (PL) for all Inuit teachers focused on pedagogies to nurture and sustain Inuit culture and language as a priority.

Given the gaps in pre-service training for teachers in Inuit schools around culturally nourishing schooling, professional learning for in-service teachers is a necessary and promising activity. This research addresses the need for professional learning around culturally-nourishing pedagogies in Inuit schools, and better understanding of how such professional learning may be effectively delivered, through a collaborative participatory action research project. This collaborative inquiry aims to answer the research questions:

- Which processes and activities are effective for delivery of professional learning opportunities to teachers in Nunatsiavut area schools?
- What are the outcomes and supporting or hindering factors in training Nunatsiavut area teachers to practice culturally-nourishing pedagogies?

The goals are to inform educational policy makers about necessary supports and systemic changes, and to develop processes and products to support Inuit teachers and teacher educators to build culturally nourishing schools in the Canadian Arctic.

### **Theoretical Framework**

These efforts are anchored in broader movements of decolonization, indigenization, and reconciliation across Canada and internationally. Formal schooling for Indigenous children was established based on Eurocentric assumptions (Battiste, 2011; Proctor, 2020; Smith, 2003). Educational processes and provincial curricula have a

history of rendering Indigenous people, knowledges, languages, and voices invisible and silent (Godlewska, Rose, Schaeffli, Freake, & Massey, 2017). Decolonization “seeks to reconcile contemporary education with the past and with the peoples’ present, ensuring...Eurocentric education [is] not imposed on Indigenous peoples and they build their own present with their own agency and power intact” (Battiste, 2013, p. 26). Indigenous resilience and resistance are seen in the rejuvenation of languages, resilience of knowledges (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017) and pedagogies (Battiste, 2002; Little Bear, 2009), and in the reclamation of authority and control (Battiste, 2013). Despite efforts to decolonize schools, they remain largely colonial institutions as the ideological and discursive power of colonizers hinders the implementation of Inuit-governed policies and practices (Karetak, et al., 2017, Tollefson, 2015).

Culturally nourishing schooling (Lowe, Skrebneva, Burgess, Harrison, & Vass, 2020) is a response to formal schooling’s colonial roots and practices. It provides a tool through which teachers and school administrators can (continue to) resist Eurocentrism in schools and reclaim and revitalize aspects of culture disrupted by colonial education. Prior models that centre Indigenous (and other) ways of knowing, doing, and being, include culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995; Gay, 2000; Berryman et al., 2013; Pirbhair-Illich, Pete, & Martin, 2017), culturally revitalizing (McCarty & Lee, 2014), culture-based (Nutti, 2018), and culturally sustaining (Alim & Paris, 2017). All approach schooling in ways in which children and their parents can recognize themselves, and see their own ways and knowledges reflected and respected. The culturally nourishing schools framework, specifically, is a whole school approach to student success, rooted in land, culture, language, kinship, family, and community, that explicitly accounts for ‘Dissonant Forces’ such as colonization, racism, whiteness, and trauma (Lowe, Skrebneva, Burgess, Harrison, & Vass, 2020, p. 476), and leads to higher academic outcomes, cultural inclusion, and teacher professional change. It is a model for reclaiming educational sovereignty and ensuring schools offer effective, loving, and safe learning and teaching environments for Indigenous children and teachers.

Teacher professional learning is a key component of culturally nourishing schools. Teachers—Indigenous and non-Indigenous—need support to challenge and act counter to the prevailing colonial discourses in their schools (Lowe, Skrebneva, Burgess, Harrison, & Vass, 2020). This can occur in pre-service training, such as Nunatsiavut’s Inuit Bachelor of Education that provided the pre-service teachers with knowledge and skills in using culturally relevant and responsive approaches, modelled culturally nourishing pedagogies, embedded language and land-based learning, and positioned the pre-service teachers as future Inuit education leaders (Moore & Inuit Bachelor of Education students, 2016; Tulloch, Sandiford, Moore, Lane, Boase, & Doherty, 2017; Tulloch & Moore, 2018). It must also happen during ongoing in-service training, the focus of this research.

## **Methodology**

### **Research design**

This research is informed by Indigenous methodologies as it builds on respectful relations and reciprocity (Lambert, 2014; Wilson, 2008). The methodology encompassed Inuit core laws of relationship that include working for the common good and continually planning/preparing for a better future, as well as Inuit communal laws such as showing respect and caring for others, developing collaborative relationships to work together for a common purpose, and being resourceful to solve problems (National Committee on Inuit Education, 2011, p. 72).

Our research team involves local Inuit educators and university-based researchers. Ola Andersen, Colleen Pottle, Shannon Dicker, and Jodie Lane are beneficiaries of the Nunatsiavut Land Claims Agreement, holding Masters degrees in Education. Ola retired after 30 years of teaching, and is now pursuing a PhD. Colleen has been teaching for seven years in her home community of Makkovik, Nunatsiavut. Shannon Dicker has nine years of experience as an Indigenous educator, including teaching Kindergarten in Nain, Nunatsiavut for six years and working as program specialist for Indigenous education with the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District for one year. Jodie Lane is the Nunatsiavut Director of Education. Sylvia Moore and Shelley Tulloch are university-based researchers who have worked for and with the Nunatsiavut Government and Inuit teachers for ten and seven years, respectively. We work collaboratively with the Nunatsiavut government and teachers on research that supports Inuit sovereignty in education.

The research used participatory action research (PAR), specifically teacher action research (Grundy, 1982) which emphasizes inquiry (Whyte, 1991), collaborative learning, and change through a cycle of action and reflection (Morales, 2016), grounded in a problem-solving process (Marcos, Miguela, & Tillema, 2009). Our model of professional learning emphasizes teacher agency in education change (Imants et al., 2020). The research team and partners collaborated on all stages of the research from research objectives and methods, to workshop co-development and co-delivery, through data analysis and knowledge mobilization. The three Inuit educators and co-researchers drew on their relationships with and knowledge of local schools, teachers, and communities to shape, deliver, and analyze the process and outcomes of the professional learning. The team developed the workshops based on our disciplinary knowledge paired with partners' understandings of the specific needs of Nunatsiavut teachers and schools.

### **Participants**

All Nunatsiavut teachers and administrators were invited, through the school principals, to participate in this research. Thirty-six educators attended, including all of the teachers from one school. All educators provided informed consent and agreed to have

their contributions considered as part of the research. Nine educators also participated in follow-up interviews, including four Inuit and five non-Inuit. Interviewees included a board representative, curriculum developer/Inuktitut and Ilusivut program specialist, a principal, and six teachers (three of whom were from the same school, in a group interview—other interviews were individual).

We sent school principals and teachers details about the workshop's purpose and design weeks in advance so that they could reflect on what they wanted to contribute and learn through the workshops. We centred local voices by drawing out teachers' experiences and anchoring each session in a pre-recorded talk by an Inuit knowledge holder. The knowledge holders addressed their experience in Inuit-centred learning, specifically learning through and with the land, language, local knowledge keepers, and local resources (Moore et al., 2016). They spoke about how teachers can use Inuit ways of knowing, along with the Western ways of knowing in the school system to give students a rich and culturally relevant schooling experience.

### **Data collection and analysis**

Delivery was impacted due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We wanted to offer land-based professional learning as a best practice in Inuit pedagogies (Mearns, 2017; Obed, 2017), and developed land-based workshops with embedded Inuktitut language learning. After cancelling planned in-person workshops twice due to COVID-19 waves, we moved to adapted online delivery.

The workshops were offered over two full days, based on the school board's calendar for professional learning, with two schools attending one day, and the remaining schools attending the other day. The school board provided the online platform that worked best for Nunatsiavut area schools. We used Jamboards—Google's collaborative, real-time, virtual whiteboards—for breakout discussions. Breakout questions were: "What are some challenges of incorporating Inuit content into the classroom?", and "What are some of the ways that you are incorporating/could incorporate Inuit culture in your teaching?" Teachers from K-6 and those from Gr. 7-12 teachers brainstormed and made notes for other educators to see on their respective Jamboards. We then provided examples of learning outcomes within the Newfoundland Labrador English School District curriculum for Kindergarten to Grade 6 and Grade 7 to 12 and asked educators to brainstorm how they were using, or could use, Inuit culture to reach these outcomes. The Inuit co-researchers facilitated conversations, and also spoke from their experiences as teachers. In this model of professional learning, relationships were enhanced, experiences were validated, and the ideas were shared through dialogue (Stewart, 2014), mutual support (Teague & Anfara, 2012), and reflection.

Teachers went away from the workshop with concrete ideas and tried these out. Six weeks later, all were invited to reflect further through interviews with the Inuit co-researchers on what they had heard, how it tied into their prior knowledge and experi-

ences, how their practice had changed since the workshops, and where they would go from there. Each interview lasted 30 minutes to one hour. Interviews were conducted in English, which is the first language of the Inuit interviewer and the interviewees, and then transcribed. Through reflection and conversation, research team members critically engaged in shared inquiry about their efforts in the professional learning for Nunatsiavut teachers.

Research data includes the JamBoard notes from the professional learning sessions, a shared document with results from the workshops, and interview transcripts, as well as the co-authors' reflections and observations on process and outcomes. We used NVivo software for qualitative analysis to identify trends and themes. Our results triangulate the different types of data and analysis processes. Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from JamBoard discussions (made anonymously, and sometimes ambiguous as to whether a contribution was an idea, or something already in motion).

### **Research Context**

About 100 teachers, administrators, and support staff work in Nunatsiavut schools, with most coming from outside Nunatsiavut (McGregor & McGregor, 2022). About 20 are Inuit teachers, most of whom teach Inuktitut (Inuit language, sometimes written Inuttitit) and Ilusivut. The Inuit teachers range in years of teaching experience (2 to 23 years) and in level of teacher education (no teacher education courses to Masters of Education). Outside of the professional learning offered through this research, current school district professional learning focuses on province-wide school board priorities, and so does not address Inuit-specific pedagogies and approaches.

### **Findings**

#### **Strengths and opportunities in embedding culturally-nourishing pedagogies**

The workshops created space for those who are knowledgeable about what is happening in Nunatsiavut area schools, and what could happen in the schools to share their knowledge. The educators generated understandings to address challenges and mobilize opportunities for enhancing culturally nourishing pedagogies. They shared how they are highlighting the language, land, local knowledge holders, and local knowledge and resources in teaching and celebrated successes.

#### ***Language***

Educators envisioned schools where Inuktitut is normalized throughout the school activities, classrooms, and hallways, and used as a link to the community and to further learning. Although neither teachers nor students are fluent in Inuktitut and Inuktitut as a second language has limited timeslots, the teachers, Inuit and non-Inuit, described schools where Inuktitut could be seen and heard through environmental print, posters, labels, background music, school routines, and the practice of everyday Inuktitut inter-



actions between anyone in the school: “Play OKâlaKatiget Society radio during down time”, “Physical space of school: Use Inuktitut on bulletin boards, classroom doors, hallways, etc.”, “using ateliKai, Atsunai, nakkumek” [these are Inuktitut words for welcome, good-bye, and thank-you; the contributor’s spelling is maintained], “Daily Inuktitut phrases on PA and posted in the school”, “Visuals and displays in culture and language in the school; classrooms, entrance”, and “English speaking teachers can encourage students to share Inuktitut phrases and words”.

Subject teachers expressed interest in having Inuktitut speakers or teachers collaborate to embed Inuktitut in subject learning: “During science or social studies, using team teaching to maybe work with the Inuktitut teacher to help incorporate Inuktitut words or phrases in the classroom”, “Social studies for example, learning about maps. Use maps relevant to the class, Inuktitut words. Science, weather words. Ways to predict the weather”. These ideas create spaces where Inuktitut’s precise vocabulary and distinctions can enhance social studies, science, and other subject learning. They also mentioned modelling a love for Inuktitut, a desire to learn, and a willingness to make mistakes. A junior high/senior high English Language Arts teacher explained, “I was trying to engage...being seen enjoying the language [Inuktitut], learning the language, [having students] teaching others about the language and having it promoted in the classroom on just that level had a cool impact in that regard.”

The Inuit language teachers described specific strategies to enhance the efficacy of their Inuktitut lessons, for example “Using pocket charts to help with breaking words into syllables, or matching picture to word, or English word to Inuktitut word”. They also spoke about enhancing Inuit language through community collaborations, including listening to local knowledge holders speaking Inuktitut and getting the students to use Inuktitut speaking on local radio and podcasts. All teachers, working across the school and with the community to embed Inuktitut, would enhance and strengthen Inuktitut learning in schools.

### *Land*

Teachers recognized sila—land, sea, ice, air, natural environment, and the knowledge and activities that go with these—as key to culturally nourishing pedagogies. They described the importance of being outside, the learning that comes from and on the land, and using land-based activities to reach provincial curriculum outcomes. A K-6 teacher uses berry picking (important cultural food and practice) for her class’s learning: “[We] Harvested berries near a spot in the community, researched them, Elder stories about berry picking, and then a field trip to home to make muffins out of them”. The Grade 7 religion teacher uses nature walks to explore Inuit spirituality, “[W]e took the opportunity to actually go out on a couple of nature hikes and just look at...What does the outdoor environment mean to you? And does it do anything to you spiritually? And...we look at some old legends and we tie that into it.”

Educators described ways that they bring the land and natural environment into classrooms and schools. One Inuktitut teacher showed her classroom, with a sealskin hanging, and murals painted by students. An educator explained how students were making a Kamutik (traditional Inuit sled): "...supplies are on the way...for the Kamutik box that my skilled trades class is going to build and convert into a bench...to display as...an awesome cultural piece" (group interview with non-Inuit JH SH educators).

They also talked about using land-based knowledge to reach provincial outcomes: "Grade 1 science: Daily and seasonal changes unit. How to dress appropriately for the season/weather bring in sealskin mitts, parkas, etc., Inuit clothing for different seasons and even what we would use for different activities, how to get ready to go off in winter vs in boat" and "Health (Grade 5) - Living off the Land menu (students researched particular food items that could be used off the Land and designed their own restaurant menu; accompanied with traditional music they wished to play at their "restaurant"). Junior high and Senior high teachers explained: "I'm teaching some physics with the 1206 course....Wherever I can, I'm using examples...where we relate it to activities that kids are doing here, you know, capping velocity of snowmobiles...looking at surface area and...snowshoeing..." and "There's a couple of kids that just struggle with division. But if I say you got to, go off and get 20 partridges and you're splitting up into three different people or like four different people, just get it like that".

They discussed how the Gr. 5 social studies provincial outcome, Students are expected to explain how the environment influenced the development of an ancient society, could be reached by teaching why Inuit lived near the ocean, building materials for Inuit seasonal homes, how Inuit accessed basic necessities such as water, food, and fire. The educators value the land as a source of knowledge and a learning site: "I think most of us, as Inuit, know the knowledge is not only in the school. And it's outside of the school, it's in our homes and it's on the land and it's all around us, really, it's a matter of preparing the curriculum to include it, in and outside of the school" (Inuktitut and Ilusivut program specialist).

### ***Local knowledge holders***

Educators emphasized creating spaces where local knowledge holders could teach the children and the teachers. Colleen Pottle reflected "...we still have a chance to save some [Inuit history and knowledge] if Elders would get involved with the system." Board (or self-governing education) policies need to change so knowledge holders and Inuktitut speakers can work as full-fledged teachers or co-teachers: "I would like to see fluent speakers as part of the staff to teach with the Inuktitut/Ilusivut teacher", and/or be hired (and appropriately paid) as part-time support: "Look to anyone in the community to help with your lesson planning around specific Inuit concepts", "Connect students with Elders either in school, through video, or community visits", "Commu-



nity members who could be used as resources expect and deserve to be compensated for their time and effort.”

Educators emphasized valuing the children, also, as local knowledge holders, letting them lead in bringing their culture and language into the classroom, teaching teachers, and also teaching younger students: “The children often teach me.” As the board representative explained, “...We look to our students as...knowledge keepers and they can be sharing with the new teachers as well and teaching them and taking on that role.” Students as teachers can take many forms. An Inuktitut teacher explained: “[S]tudents should be so proud...I tell them...once they leave my classroom, they’re teachers to other people in the community.” Another teacher explained how an older student taught her class how to set rabbit snares. (They later went out and set the snares, checked the snares, prepared the skin and meat of the rabbits caught, and shared it with Elders.) Educators want school systems to value the local knowledge carried by community members, making room for it, and dismantling barriers between school and community, and between Western and local knowledge systems.

### ***Local teaching resources***

Inuktitut, *sila*, and Inuit are core resources for culturally nourishing pedagogies. Resources made by Inuit, including those made by students, also centre Inuit ways of knowing, being, and doing. One teacher talked about students choosing Indigenous-authored novels for English Language Arts. Others described students creating stories, books, and videos for younger students: “Using buddy reading or buddy system with older and younger students to work together to use book creator to create books to share”; “Buddy reading system: Create an Inuktitut book on book creator”, “Have students make culture-based short videos, audio-taped interviews, or write stories to learn and then share with others”. They talked about embedding local knowledge across the curriculum, including teaching Inuit games (linked to land survival and culture) in Physical Education classes, using traditional drums and throat singing in music classes, and using Inuit culture to teach math: “Math...work with the Ilusivut teacher to make drums. Use the drums to practice radius/diameter.”

Social media is a tool for disseminating student work and for sharing resources between schools and regions: “Podcasts to practice the language or share what they have been doing for including Inuit content in the classroom”, “social media such as Twitter for sharing ideas/resources”, and “Twitter accounts for sharing purposes and collaborating/connecting with other teachers/schools”. Connecting with community and each other helps teachers to develop professionally, teach more effectively, and stay motivated and encouraged in their work toward culturally nourishing pedagogies.

## **Challenges in embedding culturally-nourishing pedagogies**

### ***Capacity-building***

Teachers, schools, the school board, and the Nunatsiavut Government face challenges in implementing these visions for culturally nourishing pedagogies. Schools are understaffed and have difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers, especially Inuktitut, Inosivut, and Ilusivut teachers: “JCEM does not have an Ilusivut teacher at the moment”, “L. Morrison doesn’t have an Inuk teacher”, “No Ilusivut teacher” and “having no Inuktitut teacher in our school”. The staffing shortage puts high demands on Inuit teachers. As a K-9 Ilusivut and K-6 Inuktitut teacher told us:

There’s only three days that I’m at the primary school for the full day... I’m at the big school up until recess and then I go to the small school... I might have them one hour on Wednesday, not see them until next Tuesday. [...] When I first started the position, it was only [Grade] two to three Inuktitut and Ilusivut too, and then I went from K to six.

This teacher was bumped the following year to teach Kindergarten, leaving those schools, too, with no Inuktitut or Ilusivut teacher. There was no language programming or cultural craft programming from the Indigenous Education Specialist that year either, as she was bumped to a Grade 1 classroom. She reflected:

To me, this is simply not good enough. Pulling people from positions that mean so much to us as teachers of the language and culture, to the community, and to the students. More needs to be done to protect these positions as they are vital to the revitalization and reconciliation of our identity.

Most classroom teachers are not Inuit nor from the Nunatsiavut communities and many are unable or hesitant to integrate Inuit culture: “Individuals teaching on the coast are likely not familiar with the culture. They may be open to learning while they are there but that timeframe may also be short”, “Lack of personal knowledge about Inuit content. I feel uncomfortable teaching this content if I am not entirely confident in my knowledge”, “For someone coming into a community from away, [a challenge] might be to not know the people or how to access resources”. The history of alienation from Inuit cultural practices and language means that today’s Inuit teachers similarly have knowledge gaps and are afraid of getting it wrong or ashamed of what they do not know: “[The challenge is] Not feeling confident or knowledgeable. Doubting your abilities”, “Not knowing enough myself”, “I personally get nervous about pronouncing words wrong in my classroom”, “I just wish I was to the point of being fluent. That’s... the only thing that keeps me held back” (interview with Inuktitut teacher).

Capacity gaps are exacerbated by weak connections to others and lack of profes-

sional learning for both Inuit and non-Inuit educators: “lack of guidance”, “not knowing who to ask”, “not knowing what to ask”, “where to get ideas”, and “where to obtain resources and get support”. One teacher wrote, “The regular classroom teachers, like the math teacher for instance, should also be in-serviced in incorporating Inuit content. They should also invite community guests during their regular classes”. Another said, “New teachers to the community should be in-serviced on local resources, lists of people who can help, and maybe even paired with a local staff member to help them adjust”. Educators in the workshops recognized Elders, community members, and local knowledge holders as essential to teaching capacity, but felt that school board policies blocked their contribution: “Many community members have the experience to be Inuktitut teachers and/or Ilusivut teachers, but they decide not to come to work at the school because they say the pay is not enough.”

Teachers need knowledge and skills to implement culturally nourishing pedagogies, and changes in attitudes and school ideologies are also needed. As one teacher wrote, “Our schools need to help the teachers understand the importance of Culture in order for us to be successful”.

### *Time*

Time was a recurrent challenge: time to collaborate with other teachers or community, time for professional learning, time to go on the land, and time to respectfully incorporate Elders: “Time, most Inuit cultural activities would take longer than a one hour of class time to participate in, it’s like we’re trying to fit a square peg in a round hole”, “No scheduled planning time to collaborate with Inuktitut speakers during school hours. Anything that would need to be done would have to be done outside of school hours” and “Not enough time to collaborate and try to teach cross-curricular with Ilusivut and Inuktitut teachers.” A K-6 Inuktitut and K-9 Ilusivut teacher said,

It’s a matter of those hours. A lot of the time, the teachers don’t want to be missing their classes...to ask an Elder in...it’s not going to be done within an hour. I don’t want to rush an Elder...if we want to learn from them, we can’t rush them out.

Some teachers had a perception that culturally nourishing pedagogies take away from time working toward curriculum outcomes “Curriculum material needs to be covered, the curriculum itself is not rich in Inuit culture, where do we find the time and resources to cover the curriculum and add cultural enrichment?” This question/perception was answered, in part, in the discussions where educators realized how they can concurrently teach provincial outcomes and centre Inuit language, land, knowledge holders, and resources.

### ***Provincial school board policies***

Province-wide school board policies also block culturally nourishing pedagogies, especially land-based learning. Educators wrote that challenges are: “Field trip policies within NLESD”, “Red tape, barriers that prevent many Inuit practices i.e. hunting, going off, driving skidoo, overnight hunting trips etc.”, “Some provincial policies do not support cultural learning”, “A lot of red tape on what we are allowed to do”, “Can’t go off on the land to learn how to hunt”, “We need permission slips to go anywhere. ex: fishing at 2 mile bay.) The Inuktitut and Ilusivut program specialist and curriculum developer said:

I think I’d like to see less of red tape...from the provincial government or from provincial curriculum where we always have to be asking for permission to take students out on the land when the knowledge and the learning is already outside of the school. ...the land and the knowledge should be included in the curriculum, and not have to ask.

If providing learning opportunities that are consistent with Inuit values and culture is a priority, then adapting policies to facilitate land-based and other culturally relevant activities is necessary.

### ***Resources and other gaps***

Another gap is in prepared teaching resources like packaged unit guides with lesson plans, including outcomes, activities, materials lists, assessment tools, etc. with local content that any teacher could pick up and use. Some pieces have been created (local content resources, school board curriculum outcomes, Inuktitut learning resources), but nothing ties outcomes, materials, activities, and assessment together in a cohesive and culturally nourishing way. At least one participant expressed a need to completely rethink learning, starting with centering Inuit ways of being, doing, and knowing as the foundation: “Develop a culture-based, cross-curricular theme unit and then figure out where the curriculum outcomes can be within it”. Capacity for creating such resources needs to be built alongside building teacher capacity. Practical resources can also be a challenge, such as budget allocation and timing, or “Access to materials needed for cultural practices like tent, axes, tent stove - could each school own these things”. Infrastructure is another needed resource, including physical spaces conducive to teaching local knowledge.

### ***Identity and relationship in culturally-nourishing pedagogies***

The importance of identity, relationships, and safe spaces, and their role in professional learning about, and the implementation of, culturally nourishing pedagogies also emerged as a key theme in the workshops and interviews. Culturally nourishing pedagogies are tools to reach out to the whole child and foster a positive sense of self.

An Inuktitut teacher shared:

[I]t's so important not to just be teaching Inuktitut. Yes, it's an Inuktitut driven class, but to also incorporate being Inuit as a whole, like your culture, your language, they're just pieces of who you are. So, for Inuktitut classes, I like to let them know that they're not just going to be learning the Inuktitut language, but the different aspects of being an Inuk as a whole.

As Ola Andersen reflected:

I just thought about myself as a teacher. I grew up in a system that included a lot of trauma. And it was only in later years that I understood the negative impacts that my parents felt and suffered in residential schooling and what impact that had on me.

Culturally nourishing pedagogies address the students' needs and identities, but also impact and reflect the educators' needs and identities, as the educators also live in and were educated in the context of erasure and diminishment of Inuit values and culture.

The opportunity to listen to, and be heard by, colleagues sharing the same concerns energized the teachers. The Inuktitut/Ilusivut program specialist observed "I think asking the right questions...from what I...heard from...teachers' input... they feel a bit better that they were able to discuss things." Colleen Pottle explained,:

There are many motivational statements made during the professional learning session that made a direct impact on my own teaching, not only as an educator, but as a mother and a community member as well. It was an influential session that has positively changed our school here in Makkovik, and I hope all other schools involved.

Shannon Dicker said, "I feel that being involved in this PL helped to guide where I need to be in this role and what things I can do to help teachers find success in making connections to local Elders and knowledge keepers." Developing, delivering, and being part of knowledge co-creation in the workshops helped educators to understand themselves, and be more effective personally and professionally.

For Inuit, culturally nourishing pedagogies come from within: who they are, their Inuit values, their everyday practices, their language, their relationships, how they are used to living. These work together and support Inuit identities. Having the language and the understanding of Inuit culture helps Inuit feel more connected to one another. An Inuktitut teacher shared, "It's not a job, I honest to goodness love where I am."

The non-Inuit teachers and administrators described a more deliberate effort to acquire then add in local content and resources. The Inuit and non-Inuit teachers both described efforts to build relationships and build non-local teachers' understanding of local culture. An Ilusivut teacher described how two homeroom teachers came with their students, "The two classes that I did work with, the homeroom teachers...was wanting to learn as well. So they were with us." She also explained "I've been going in the evenings teaching the teachers how to make sealskin mitts." The non-Inuit teachers recognized that taking part in these opportunities for cultural learning, and getting to know community members, was important for their own effective teaching. A junior high/senior high teacher said, "...trying to get myself out there in the community, I'm always working on that. I know that was a big part of it as well." Shannon Dicker reflected:

I also think it's very important to those newcomers and new teachers in our community to be able to come into the school and to feel welcome and to make those connections with the community, to have a mentor, to help them when they're planning their lessons and they want to bring some of the Inuit culture into the classroom, they want to bring in some of that knowledge and skills for the students to learn, to deepen their understanding or to engage them more in the learning process.

The professional learning thus helped educators individually in their roles and also collectively, building a community of practice, support and comradery. This is important for addressing some of the barriers, particularly of fear and shame regarding language and cultural loss, and revitalization and appropriation. As Shannon Dicker explained:

We don't always have many opportunities to collaborate and learn together with other schools on the North Coast, as travel can be an issue and gathering can be an issue. So this was a great way for us to come together, to share ideas, to share our learning, to share our challenges and to share some of the barriers that we face in order to have a better understanding and to move forward with the learning together as a whole.

### **Sustainability**

Months after the workshops, Colleen Pottle reflected:

If it weren't for this experience, life would be continuing as usual...the decline of Indigenous ways of knowing. The session has created a fresh outlook, which strives to include Indigenous knowledge whenever possible into the education system, but also into the communities as well.



Ola Andersen emphasized:

[W]here can we go from here? ...this PL [is] just the beginning. Within Nunatsiavut schools, it is important to keep pushing forward with PL opportunities for teachers, NAPE workers, anyone who works in this school building. It's important for everyone to be aware of...promoting...our Inuit culture within the school in an open and inclusive environment.

The professional learning opportunity impacted teachers and their practice, and Inuit leaders and researchers who work with them. Their comments about challenges—particularly the need for capacity building—and their vision for how much can be done (but with limited time, and a need to take small steps, one at a time) underline that professional learning for culturally nourishing pedagogies, and opportunities for teachers to share experiences and practices, needs to be ongoing.

Educators' brainstorming around NLESD provincial curriculum outcomes made the workshops immediately applicable and relevant and set a vision for culturally nourishing pedagogies as feasible for all teachers. The Board representative said:

I really liked when we took the curriculum guide and we tried to include Indigenous learning and practice into the current curriculum guides from NLESD. ...[O]nce when we were going, it was just so second nature, and it just speaks to how easily it can be done.

The ideas generated in the professional learning were compiled in reports sent to the Nunatsiavut Government, school board, schools, and educators, to support their future practice. We also created, based on identified need, an orientation package for schools to provide to principals and teachers with lists of local resources, information about the community, relevant publications, and other tools that were identified as needed to support teachers' work in culturally nourishing pedagogies.

Although online delivery was a necessary concession, it allowed professional learning to occur without the time commitment (and weather concerns) of travel. Having all teachers from one community gather together at the school to learn also allowed for a kind of hybrid online/in-person experience. The school board representative reflected:

I think it worked really well that at each school people were gathered because you could hear the conversations amongst the staff, whoever was logged in. I guess they had to do that anyways for connectivity, but...they were having their own conversations...engaged within their school and making it relative to their school.

The professional learning deepened knowledge and skills in pedagogies founded on Inuit knowledge, values, and culture in K-12 education despite the limitations of online delivery.

We observed the power of sustained professional learning for Inuit educators when Shannon Dicker, Ola Andersen, and Sylvia Moore adapted the culturally nourishing pedagogies workshop and delivered it province-wide during a voluntary summer professional learning program for all Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers. Those teachers said that they learned the foundational skills and understanding on how to incorporate Indigenous education into their classrooms, as well as learning to respect different cultural perspectives, and that this training should be available more frequently to all teachers across the province. A challenge in sustainability is that the context needs to change for change to be implemented. Teachers can implement their own changes, but they continue to work in western systems, and under a colonial legacy.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Our research addresses processes and outcomes of professional learning that support culturally nourishing pedagogies. The process of creating space for educators to participate as knowledge holders and scholars of their own practice through reflection, dialogue, practice, and further reflection and generated knowledge about what is being done, and could be done in Nunatsiavut schools. It also contributed to building connections and safe spaces for teachers of Inuit children to share their challenges and find mutual support and inspiration—relationships that continued to grow after the workshop. These findings are consistent with other research that shows communities of practice among Indigenous educators as important to implementing change and centering Indigenous knowledge (Marlow & Siekmann, 2013). Indeed, the 2014 Inuit Bachelor of Education program drew on a vision of Nunatsiavut-led education and positioned the pre-service teachers as future Inuit education leaders (Tulloch, Sandiford, Moore, Lane, Boase, & Doherty, 2017; Tulloch & Moore, 2018).

The only formal presentations in the workshops were pre-recorded video messages from Inuit Elders. These contributions were important because they motivated and inspired the educators, they set the scene for centering Inuit knowledge, and the format modelled possibilities for bringing Elders' and their knowledge into learning, which was one of the key action points raised in the workshops by educators. An area for growth in future workshops is more deliberately incorporating Inuktitut and the land (something we had planned, but abandoned when we went online).

The educators' approaches to incorporating language, land, local knowledge holders, and local knowledge and resources into their classrooms and schools is consistent with research in translanguaging and funds of knowledge. Translanguaging (García, Ibarra Johnson & Seltzer, 2016) is a multilingual approach to learning used to support language learning, and to disrupt the hegemony of English and monolingualism. Funds

of knowledge (Coles-Ritchie & Charles, 2011) disrupts the role of the teacher as an expert, situating the teacher as a facilitator and recognizing the wealth of knowledge and skills in the community. The teachers' intuitive adoption of these practices suggests that they could be helpful focal points for further professional learning.

Inuit teachers are carrying the burden of implementing culturally nourishing pedagogies, whether they are teaching Inuit language and culture, implementing the pedagogies, supporting other teachers to implement it, or making community connections and supporting other teachers to make these connections. The mixed workshops with Inuit and non-Inuit teachers allowed for across-the-curriculum discussions of embedding Inuit language and culture. All teachers need to be involved in changing the pervasive Eurocentric culture of schools. Cross-curricular embedding of culturally nourishing pedagogies is particularly effective for students' learning and teachers' positive experiences in schools (Tompkins, 1998).

The process and outcomes of the professional learning show that fostering culturally nourishing Indigenous pedagogies is done through nurturing Indigenous teachers. The Inuit teachers intuitively use culturally nourishing pedagogies. They are members of the community who love children, have an appreciation of their needs, and are anchored in community ways of meeting those needs. Many are still immersed in a colonial system where their own experiences of school, and the policies and expectations of schools, school boards, and administrators in which and with whom they work limit what they do, and sometimes even what they imagine as possible. As Shannon Dicker said, "We have to often try to unlearn these colonial ways that we were brought up in. I am constantly reminding myself to question what I think I should do versus what I have been doing/what is expected of me to do." This professional learning for culturally nourishing pedagogies brought implicit practices to consciousness. Through the collaborative practice of building professional learning opportunities for their peers, and through critical dialogue in the sessions, the teachers collaboratively built an understanding of what culturally nourishing pedagogies are, or would be if they had the freedom to practice them, and which contexts are necessary in order to favour their implementation.

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