

Improving Access to University Education in the Canadian Arctic

Project Leader

Rodon, Thierry (Université Laval)

Network Investigators

Frances Abele (Carleton University); Frédéric Laugrand (Université Laval); Fiona Walton (University of Prince Edward Island)

Collaborators

Sheena Kennedy (Carleton University); Morley Hanson (Nunavut Sivuniksavut); Francis Lévesque (Université Laval)

Post-Doctoral Fellow

Darlene O'leary (University of Prince Edward Island)

Doctoral Student

Kelly Black (Carleton University); Marise Lachapelle (Université Laval)

Masters Student

Lucille Villasenor-Caron (Carleton University)

Undergraduate Student

Joel Eastwood (Carleton University)

Northern Students

Pam Gross, Teevi Mackay (Carleton University); Melissa Ruston (Concordia University)

Northern Research Staff

Naullaq Arnaquq (Government of Nunavut); James Kuptana (Inuit Circumpolar Council (Canada)); Lori Tagoona, (Nunavut Sivuniksavut)

Abstract

- Increased participation in post-secondary education is of primary concern for Inuit. The goal of this project is to provide evidence-based research on Inuit participation in University education throughout Inuit Nunangat and to promote a national discussion amongst provider of university program in Inuit Nunangat, Northern institutions and Inuit organizations in order to develop a more coordinated effort in program delivery, curriculum development. More specifically this research has three objectives: 1) Make an inventory and evaluation of past and present university initiatives in Inuit Nunangat or for Inuit in term of curriculum, delivery methods and success, 2) Evaluate the Inuit Peoples needs and experiences with post-secondary programs or courses in order to better understand educational paths and university successes from the point of view of the Inuit 3) Develop different scenarios to improve access to university education for Inuit and Northerners in Inuit Nunangat. The data is being collected through surveys, in-depth interviews and workshops. This research provides evidence-based data on the Inuit students' university experience: Inuit participation in university programs; definition of university and educative success from a point of view of Inuit that will help university program providers deliver programs better adapted to the needs of Inuit students; monitoring of Inuit student success according to this definition; inventory and evaluation of the university program delivered in Inuit Nunangat and for Inuit students; and development of scenarios to improve access to University program for Inuit students.

Key Messages

Inuit students are striving for more choices: Choices in universities, programs and courses and choice in alternating work and school and thus studying at their own pace. The project has identified many

challenges:

- In the North, lack of housing and lack of choice in post-secondary programs;
- In the South, loneliness, problems of adaptation, problems with funding.

The Inuit students have identified the following solutions:

- In general: better funding programs and more equity between regions;
- In the North: better housing to allow to have its own space for studying, more choices in the type of program offered (not only programs geared toward the needs of the industry);
- In the South: student support in the southern universities, better guidance for choosing the programs, many student had no idea of what the program involved, coordination of student to avoid sending students alone in a program. Inuit students cohorts could be organized through a website with a list of student willing to take a program in the South;
- The importance of role model and mentorship was stressed by participants.

Objectives

1. Make an inventory and evaluation of past and present university initiatives in Inuit Nunangat or for Inuit in term of curriculum, delivery methods and success;
2. Evaluate the Inuit Peoples needs and experiences with post-secondary programs or courses in order to better understand educational paths and university successes from the point of view of the Inuit;
3. Develop different scenarios to improve access to university education for Inuit and Northerners in Inuit Nunangat.

Introduction

Given the multiple and interconnected challenges within the Arctic, the absence of an accessible university level post-secondary institution in Inuit Nunangat is disquieting. The mandate during the first two years of the project has been to provide evidenced-based research on Inuit participation in university education in Canada and to promote a national discussion amongst provider of university program for the Inuit. While, since 1981, the Inuit population has made noticeable gains in enrolment and completion at the high school, College and trade level (ITK & Research and Analysis Directorate 2006), access to university is still very limited in spite of a series of initiatives lead by a variety of Southern universities. As a result, the number of Inuit who have completed a post-secondary degree remain quite low (from 1.6 in 1981 to 2.7 in 2006). Recently, the Government of Nunavut and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami have adopted strategies to increase post-secondary success (Government of Nunavut 2011, National Committee on Inuit Education 2011).

This lack of progress can be explained by many interrelated factors:

- The absence of a university in the North. Canada is the only arctic country that does not have a university north of 60 (Poelzer 2009);
- The quality of high school education in Inuit regions (Hicks 2005);
- The relevance of curriculum (Poelzer 2009). Indeed, Inuit culture should be acknowledged in educational programs to dispel the colonial heritage left by the imposition of western education in the residential school (Berger 2001, Hicks 2005). For this reason, the adaptation of curriculum to Northern needs is a critical issue (Silta Associates 2007).

Other factors like the lack of confidence encountered amongst some Inuit as a result of years of colonization have also had an impact on university success as defined in the South (Rodon 2008).

A few southern universities have strived to provide access, through specialized programs and/or supports for Northern students, to degree studies at the post-secondary level. These initiatives have never been coordinated however, have proven expensive, and have therefore been difficult to sustain. Furthermore, they offer only specific fields of study (mostly Education and Health and one experience in Public Policy and one in Law), and are only available in limited locations (mostly in the main regional center), and are often not permanent because of their expense (funding constraints or fiscal budget) or instability of partnerships. In general, at the post-secondary level, transition programs to universities do not exist. Moreover, there is very little monitoring or research from all Inuit jurisdictions regarding success of Inuit at the post-secondary level (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami 2008).

This research project is working to bridge this knowledge gap by gathering evidenced-based data on Inuit participation in University education throughout Canada. During the first two years of the project, workshops, interviews and surveys have enabled us to listen carefully to the experiences of Inuit students. It is important to better understand the educational path of Inuit students and to understand their specificity from a sociological and cultural perspective. As a way of supplementing the information, and addressing the interaction between students living in, or from, the Canadian Arctic, and the programs they enrolled in, we have also focussed on enabling a national discussion amongst providers of university programs for Inuit. This discussion will allow a coordinated effort among the variety of post-secondary information, and meaningful discussion about student challenges and barriers to success.

Activities

This year, the research teams favoured a research to action strategy. They focused on bringing the results of their research back to the communities, develop initiatives aimed at increasing post-secondary access for Inuit students, and start new projects steaming from

the conclusions obtained during the first two years of research. Activities took place between April 2012 and January 2013. They were conducted mostly in Quebec City, Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet, Cambridge Bay, Pond Inlet, Ottawa, Charlottetown, and Montreal, but networking events took place in many different locations (see details below).

1. IRIS-2

The team behind the Inuit students' post-secondary experiences led by project leader Thierry Rodon, network investigator Fiona Walton and HQP Darlene O'Leary and Francis Lévesque spent a good part of the year preparing two chapters on education for the Integrated Regional Impact Studies for region two (IRIS-2). Both draft chapters were ready by early October 2012 and were submitted to IRIS-2 research leader Trevor Bell and research coordinator Philippe Leblanc. Conclusions recommendations of both reports were shared with Nunavut decision-makers in Iqaluit on November 8th 2012 during the ArcticNet Regional Science Meeting. Final versions of both chapters will be published in the IRIS-2 report.

2. Monitoring educational and professional success amongst Inuit of Nunavut who have registered in a post-secondary program

In early 2011-2012, Thierry Rodon, Fiona Walton and Francis Lévesque developed a project called Monitoring educational and professional success amongst Inuit of Nunavut who have registered in a post-secondary program. The aim of this project is to measure and monitor the level of success enjoyed by Nunavut students who attend post-secondary education. The project would be partially funded by ArcticNet through Thierry Rodon's project Improving Access to University Education in the Canadian Arctic. In March 2012, the project also got funds from the Nunavut General Monitoring Plan (NGMP).

As soon as funds from the NGMP were secured, a survey was created and put online during the Spring of 2012. All necessary ethics and research license

were also obtained in the following weeks. On June 15, 2012, funds were granted for 2012-2013 by the NGMP. During the summer, Dr. Blair Stevenson was hired to become the survey and project coordinator. His job consists of overseeing the project and organizing activities. Five Inuit survey administrators were then hired: Pam Gross (Cambridge Bay), Lori Tagoona (Rankin Inlet), Jena Merkosak (Pond Inlet), Kevin Qamaniq-Mason (Ottawa) and Elisapee Ryan (Iqaluit), two of which were already Northern HQP for the ArcticNet project (Gross and Tagoona). They were sent iPads purchased with ArcticNet funds to administer the surveys. Throughout the summer and fall, Inuit survey administrators have synchronised the surveys they administered with our central database.

3. Tukitaarvik – Inuit Student Centre

A website called Tukitaarkik – Inuit Student Centre (www.isc.fss.ulaval.ca) was designed during 2011-2012 and launched in beta format in April 2012. The project was carried under the supervision of Thierry Rodon with material produced by Carleton and Nunavut Sivuniksavut students under the supervision of HQP and graduate student Lucille Villasenor-Caron. Ideas for the website also came from a focus group held in Iqaluit. The architecture of the website was designed by the Centre de service APTI (Application pédagogique des technologies de l'information) of Université Laval.

Highlights for the Inuit Student Centre (ISC) team in 2012-2013 have been:

- Bi-weekly meetings and/or weekly email correspondence between ISC team members in working towards developing additional website content and tools, and polishing the website itself.
- Amongst many new additions, a virtual map linking members to one another was added; a list of universities, possible programs and support services of interest specific to Aboriginal Canadians was added; a section for mentors (e.g., teachers) to share insight and/or answer inquiries; and a chat function and distribution list.

- The ISC team facilitated two workshops with Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS) for feedback and input on the content, feel and look of the website. The first one was held in Nunavut Sivuniksavut (Ottawa) on April 10th, and the second was held on November 12th for feedback and input on the changes requested from the previous feedback workshop.
- The ISC team had several meetings with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) with the aim of establishing a partnership. The first one was held on June 13th, during which the project was introduced to ITK. A second meeting was held on July 26th, during which ITK's contribution was discussed. A large meeting was held on November 2nd during which the project was presented to many ITK's departments. ITK voiced their interest to move forward with the Tukitaarvik project. ITK discussed the connections to this work with Inuit Qaujisarvingat: Inuit Knowledge Centre, the Education Strategy and the National Inuit Youth Council. An agreement in principle was reached therefore the site will be hosted by ITK in the near future.

4. Videos with Wapikoni Mobile

Since 2011, HQP Marise Lachapelle has been working with Pierre Laberge and Nathalie Martin of Wapikoni Mobile, Michel Pruneau of Intégration et Exploration – Inuits at Cégep Marie-Victorin as well as Paul Katchadourian of the Kativik School Board to record videos of Inuit post-secondary experiences. The students have been trained to make the videos themselves where they share their post-secondary experiences. During the winter of 2012, five Inuit students from Nunavik attending the Intégration et Exploration – Inuits program at Marie-Victorin made fiction films or documentaries on topic of their choice (<http://wapikoni.tv/blog/projet-articnet-reprise-de-la-session-avec-les-inuits-du-cegep-marie-victorin>).

5. Improving Access to University Education in the Canadian Arctic – Graduate Students

The UPEI research team has continued gathering and analyzing data involving current students and graduates of the Master of Education Nunavut program. They have participated in presentations and contributed to reports providing opportunities to share preliminary findings. Activities included the following:

- Interviews with five Master of Education (M.Ed.) graduates during the Nunavut-wide Teachers' Conference in Iqaluit, February 13-17, 2012;
- Interviews with three members of the present MEd cohort, as well as three Inuit educational leaders in Iqaluit, July 2012;
- Completing an outline and chapter, as well as contribution to an additional chapter, for the ArcticNet IRIS-2 report;
- Initiation of profiles of M.Ed. graduates and current students on the Nunavut Programs website (UPEI);
- Revision of article draft Building Inuit Graduate Educational Leadership and Graduate University Access: Contributions of the Nunavut Master of Education.

6. Tracing the Idea of a Northern University

Frances Abele and her team of HQP Sheena Kennedy Dalseg and Kelly Black have worked at developing a working paper that traces the idea of a Northern University. A comprehensive history of post-secondary education and the northern university concept within the Northwest Territories and Nunavut has received very limited attention from academics, authors, and government. As such, this working paper traces the history of the various -often competing - visions for a northern university from 1960 to 1998, before Nunavut was founded. This is an essential first step towards the larger project of drawing out key historical moments and actors, discussions, and debates surrounding adult and post-secondary higher education in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

F. Abele, K. Black, and S. Kennedy Dalseg are using the historical and bibliographic information collected for this working paper as a foundation for a number of other writing projects currently underway, with projected completion by Spring 2014.

7. Creating Citizens, Building Societies: Education, Citizenship and Change in the Eastern Arctic

In September 2012, Sheena Kennedy Dalseg began developing her doctoral dissertation proposal. The rapid introduction of formal education in the 1960s brought massive changes to Inuit family relations and society. The complex Inuit experiences of these changes are not generally represented in writing about the period. S. Kennedy Dalseg's doctoral research seeks to document and understand the extent to which formal education, including adult and post-secondary education, influenced peoples' ideas about, and the ways in which they practiced citizenship in Igloolik, Nunavut. She will trace the evolution of the concept and practice of citizenship alongside the evolution of the education system between 1960, when formal schooling was introduced by the federal government, and 1999 when Nunavut was founded.

8. Transfer of Knowledge and Modern Education

The planned workshop Transfer of Knowledge and Modern Education organized by network investigator F. Laugrand that was scheduled to take place in Iqaluit during the summer of 2012 has been rescheduled to occur in conjunction with the International Ph.D. School for the Study of Arctic Societies (IPSSAS) that will be held in Québec City, Wendake and Essipit in May 2013. This workshop deals with the question of how parents pass on the knowledge they have received from their elders to their own children and how they view the role of post-secondary education in this field.

9. Conferences and seminars

9.1 ArcticNet Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) 2012,

December 10-14, Vancouver

- “Improving Access to University Education in the Canadian Arctic. Learning from Past experience and Listening to the Inuit Students and Developing Tools and Policies”. Presented by T. Rodon, Teevi McKay and Fiona Walton. Prepared by T. Rodon, Fiona Walton, F. Lévesque and F. Abele. Education and Outreach Topical Session, Dec. 12th.
- T. Rodon, F. Walton, T. MacKay and F. Lévesque participated in the roundtable “Future Directions in Inuit Education Research: A Roundtable Discussion” organized by Inuit Qaujisarvingat: Inuit Knowledge Centre at Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK).
- “Alluriarniaq [stepping forward]: Youth perspectives on high school education in Nunavut”. F. Walton. Plenary Session, Dec. 14th.
- “Tracing the Idea of a Northern University: Competing Visions for Post-Secondary Education in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories”. Kelly Black and S. Kennedy Dalseg. Poster Presentation.

9.2 ArcticNet Regional Science Meeting, November 8, Iqaluit

- “Education in the IRIS-2 Region. Part III Responding to Change. 3.3 Socio-Economic Development”. Prepared by F. Lévesque and T. Rodon, presented by F. Walton.
- “Education in the IRIS-2 Region. Part II Understanding Change: drivers, trends, uncertainties. 2.3 Arctic Society: Political, social, economic and health trends in Nunavut. Chapter: Education access and transmission of traditional knowledge and skills”. Prepared and presented by F. Walton.

9.3 Pathways to Prosperity Northern Governance and Economy Conference, Yellowknife, October 10-12

- “The Economic Legacies of Colonial State Institutions: Can Territorial Governments Foster

Economic Wellness?” Prepared and Presented by S. Kennedy Dalseg and Jerald Sabin.

9.4 Mobilisé pour le Nord durable, Québec City, June 19

- “Améliorer l’accès à l’université dans l’Inuit Nunangat. Apprendre des expériences passées et faire entendre la voix des étudiants Inuits”. Prepared and presented by T. Rodon.

9.5 IPY Conference 2012 From Knowledge to Action, April 22-27, Montréal

- Improving Access to University Education in the Canadian Arctic. Learning from Past experience and Listening to the Inuit Students and Developing Tools and Policies”. T. Rodon, F. Walton and Pam Gross.
- Presentation of the Tukitaarvik website. P. Gross and Lori Tagoona.

10. Upcoming Activities: January 2013-March 2013

10.1 Planned Paper Submissions

- T. Rodon and F. Lévesque are preparing an article titled “Improving Access to University Education in the Canadian Arctic. Learning from Past experience and Listening to the Inuit Students” that will be submitted to the Canadian Journal of Native Education during the winter of 2013.
- F. Walton and D. O’Leary will submit the article “Building Inuit Graduate Educational Leadership and Graduate University Access: Contributions of the Nunavut Master of Education”.
- F. Abele and S. Kennedy Dalseg are currently writing a journal submission on the tension between community development and the bureaucratization of education in Nunavut between 1970 and 2012. This article will be submitted to Inuit Studies.

- K. Black is developing a paper for submission to the Journal of Canadian Studies that looks at the different ways the post-secondary education system was viewed as an extension of the wage economy, and the relationship herein with notions of Canadian nationalism.
- The presentation “The economic legacies of colonial state institutions: Can territorial governments foster economic wellness?” Prepared and Presented by S. Kennedy Dalseg and Jerald Sabin during Pathways to Prosperity Northern Governance and Economy Conference is currently being developed into an academic article for submission to The Northern Review in Spring 2013.

10.2 Planned Research and Networking Activities

- The project Monitoring educational and professional success amongst Inuit of Nunavut who have registered in a post-secondary program conjointly funded by ArcticNet and the Nunavut General Monitoring Plan (NGMP) led by T. Rodon, F. Walton, F. Lévesque and B. Stevenson is increasing its research activities. During the 2012-2013 holidays, survey administrators, most of them Inuit students from the program Nunavut Sivuniksavut, were hired to carry more surveys in their respective home communities in Nunavut. In early winter 2013, a SPSS specialist will be hired to make a first analysis of the data available in the central database. In March 2013, a meeting is already scheduled at the Nunavut Research Institute in Iqaluit to share the first results and prepare for the second phase of the project with Nunavut partners (Nunavut Government and Inuit organizations).
- Based on archival research conducted in 2011 and 2012, S. Kennedy Dalseg is developing a history of adult education in Igloolik, NU. Igloolik has been an important site of policy and institutional innovation in the Eastern Arctic. A research trip to Igloolik is planned for March 2013, during which S. Kennedy Dalseg will

present her paper to the community and visit the Igloolik Oral History Project.

- Tukitaarvik: The Inuit Student Centre team will work to develop a video on how to take public transportation. Out of all the subjects discussed with Nunavut Sivuniksavut students, this particular one was first choice. In collaboration with the Inuit Knowledge Centre and ITK's Youth Department, the ISC team will develop a communication strategy to disseminate the website to prospective students, current students and alumni through their existing networks (i.e. National Inuit Youth Council, Nipiit – Inuit youth magazine, Facebook, Twitter, etc.). This will also include a press release, launch, and presentation at ITK conferences. Links will also be added to Teevi Mackay's written interviews and to Carleton's Aboriginal Enrichment Support Program video. We hope to have an official launch of the website very soon.
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami holds a conference on Inuit education in Iqaluit on February 21, 2013, to which Thierry Rodon will be participating.
- New content from other Arctic regions (Nunatsiavut, Nunavik and Inuvialuit Settlement Area) will be added to the Tukitaarvik website.
- Projects to examine the history of post-secondary education programs offered to Inuit in Nunatsiavut and Nunavik will be developed.
- Preparation for the Transfer of Knowledge and Modern Education workshop held in Essipit in May 2013 will continue.

Results

1. IRIS-2

The Chapter on education written for Part III of the IRIS-2 report allowed T. Rodon and his team to synthesize the conclusions of the research activities carried by his Université Laval team in the first two years of the project Improving Access to University Education in the Canadian Arctic.

Here is a summary of the conclusions:

1.1 The existing lack of progress at the post-secondary level in Nunavut over that past decade that can be attributed to many factors:

- There is no University in Nunavut.
- Students often mention that high school education may not prepare them adequately for post-secondary education.
- The long-term relevance of vocational programs is limited.
- Few university-designed programs for Inuit have proven to be sustainable.
- Online programs are not well adapted to Nunavut and Inuit.
- Inuit students often suffer from a lack of confidence.
- The personal path of many Nunavut students differs from that of Southern students for whom the post-secondary education programs are designed.

1.2 Choices of personal development are important because students who undertake post-secondary education do not necessarily do it to prepare their future or to access the career market in Nunavut. They do it to achieve personal goals, because they enjoy learning and because they want to become models and contribute to their communities. Graduate students are also looking to improve their skills.

1.3 In order to succeed, students need to feel supported. Support takes many forms: counselling and orientation, schools, employers, families and friends. One of the most meaningful results of this project has been to demonstrate that Inuit students who study in programs that favour a cohort approach (i.e., Nunavut Sivuniksavut) are more successful than students who study on their own. The cohort approach is successful because it allows students to support each other on a personal and academic level.

1.4 Programs and courses must be relevant to Inuit students: courses should have a northern focus and incorporate Inuktitut. Courses delivered in face-to-face classes are more appreciated, those delivered online though supplementing learning with distance education can be advantageous.

1.5 There are advantages and disadvantages to studying in the North and in the South. In the North, there is a lack of programs, but it is easier to receive support from relatives. In the South, there are more academic options, but there is a serious lack of support at school and at home (for relatives who remain behind).

1.6 The availability of housing is a determining factor when students make the decision to undertake post-secondary education and to choose a location, a school and a program. Lack of non-profit units force many Nunavut students to work to cover the costs of rents.

1.7 The project also showed that not all Nunavut students have access to the same funding programs, and that funding does not necessarily reflect students' needs. The project also allow researchers to realize that not much is known about the overall efficiency of funding programs available to Inuit students: do they allow students to meet their needs? Do they contribute or not to the success of students? Etc.

2. Monitoring educational and professional success amongst Inuit of Nunavut who have registered in a post-secondary program

This project is still in its beginning phase and although some data has been collected, no analysis has been done as of January 2013. The data will however be compiled and analysed in the upcoming weeks and the preliminary results will be shared with our partners during a meeting held in March at the Nunavut Research Institute in Iqaluit.

3. Tukitaarvik – Inuit Student Centre

The website Tukitaarvik – Inuit Student Centre (www.isc.fss.ulaval.ca) has not been officially launched yet. It has not yet been the object of an advertising campaign and has not yet been used in high schools and post-secondary programs designed for Inuit. Therefore, at this point, it has only reached a limited audience. For this reason, and also because it is brand new and still under development, it is difficult to estimate its impacts among the population of Inuit post-secondary students.

However, many Nunavut Sivuniksavut students have had the opportunity to test the website and propose improvement. Thirty four of them, all from Nunavut, are now registered and using the site.

When the site is officially launched later this year, and when its content is adapted to all Inuit Nunangat regions, the number of registered students and past students should increase significantly.

4. Wapikoni Mobile

This project allowed five Inuit post-secondary students from Nunavik studying in Cégep Marie-Victorin to each make a film with the assistance of Wapikoni Mobile. Out of the five projects, four were completed. Among those, three were documentaries and one was a fiction. The project that was not completed was a fiction.

Students could choose any topic. Two of the three documentaries dealt with the differences between the North and the South. The third one was introducing future students to what awaited them when they would get to college. The fiction was the story of an Inuk student who is studying in the South finds out she can go back home in Nunavik through thoughts. The incomplete fiction presented the story of an Inuk student studying in the South who had difficulties achieving success in school but ultimately achieved success.

This activity was not meant to make filmmakers out of the five students. However, it allowed them to reflect on their own experiences as Inuit students in the South. It was also an evaluated component of their curriculum. It was a very successful experience.

5. Improving Access to University Education in the Canadian Arctic – Graduate Students

The research on Inuit graduate education conducted by F. Walton and her team at UPEI includes interviews and focus group discussions with graduates and current students of the UPEI Master of Education (MEd) in Leadership and Learning program (offered in partnership with the Nunavut Dept of Education). Findings and results include the following:

- MEd graduate students are largely motivated to pursue higher education to give back to their communities and act as role models for younger Inuit: “[What I value as a learner is] giving back to my community and learning from other educators. Meaning I took the [M.Ed.] program not to be top of everybody, but being part of my community, being part of Inuit.” Nancy Uluadulak., MEd graduate;
- The experience of moving South for higher education is extremely isolating and overwhelming: “When students come from a safe community where they know everyone, and go to a completely different place, it is overwhelming. ... Class sizes are huge, and students don’t know the expectations of teachers. The homesickness is overwhelming.” Adriana Kusugak., MEd student;
- Hybrid programs, with a combination of face-to-face courses and distance learning, provide important flexibility for students in balancing their professional and family responsibilities;
- The cohort model allows students to work as a community of scholars and researchers, sharing their experiences and knowledge and offering each other support, inspiration and encouragement;
- Opportunities to communicate in Inuktitut with fellow students is highly valued;
- Inuit instructors and instructors with significant experience in the North provide meaning, context and understanding of the issues during courses and;
- Decolonizing methods strengthen confidence, voice, and identity.

6. Tracing the Idea of a Northern University

Some of the themes that emerged from Tracing the Idea of a Northern University include:

- Competing visions for a northern university are directly linked with competing visions of the future of the Canadian North;
- Discussion and debate surrounding post-secondary education has evolved alongside the process of Indigenous self-determination, particularly in the Eastern Arctic. These efforts culminated in the 1982 Learning: Tradition and Change report and 2011’s National Strategy on Inuit Education;
- Local and regional cultural differences, as well as the need for economic benefits, have been points of contention in determining curriculum, campus locations, and governance;
- The most prominent conceptualizations of a northern university were set on implementing a southern model that would facilitate research projects originating in southern universities.
- Other results include:
- The development of a comprehensive chronology of events related to the idea of a northern university and other post-secondary education initiatives and institutions;
- Identification and documentation of key players and organizations related to the idea of a northern university;
- Development of comprehensive bibliographic record of archival and academic and grey

literature related to northern post-secondary education from 1960 to 2012.

Discussion

During the first two years of Improving Access to University in the Canadian Arctic, the various subprojects led by project leader T. Rodon and network investigators Fiona Walton, Frances Abele and Frédéric Laugrand highlighted a certain number of preoccupations and knowledge gaps. For example, the recording of undergraduate and graduate Inuit students' post-secondary experiences during project surveys, workshops (Ottawa-2010, Inuvik-2010, Kuujuaq-2011) and focus groups highlighted many students' preoccupations. The comprehensive history of post-secondary education and the northern university concept within the Northwest Territories and Nunavut has showed how post-secondary and vocational programs are directly linked with competing visions of the future of the Canadian North and how they are not well adapted to Northern realities. The project also highlighted the lack of existing knowledge about the role of post-secondary institutions in the transmission of traditional knowledge from elders to children.

Hence the main goal of the research team in 2012-2013, which has been to translate these research results and conclusions into concrete actions.

First, the project researchers decided to develop innovative projects stemming from the conclusions in order to improve access to university education for Inuit students.

This is how the website Tukitaarvik – Inuit Student Centre (www.isc.fss.ulaval.ca) came to be. One of the results of Improving Access to University in the Canadian Arctic was the realization that Inuit students needed more knowledge about programs, funding opportunities, other Inuit experiences of post-secondary education, etc. To facilitate the sharing of knowledge and networking among Inuit post-secondary students, it was decided to create a

website that would offer 1) practical information to Inuit students, 2) advices and inspiration about post-secondary experience, and 3) networking function, providing students with an opportunity to learn directly from their peers as they explore viable career options. The website offers prospective students important information about programs and funding occasions, allows them to network together, and offers advices from former and current students. More importantly, the content of the website has been developed by Inuit post-secondary students for Inuit post-secondary students. Although it is still early to measure the impact this website will have, it is hoped that it will become one of the tools that will help increase access (and success) of Inuit post-secondary students.

In the same vein, it was realized that the role post-secondary education should play in the transmission of knowledge from elders to youth was not well-known, despite being a crucial issue in a rapidly changing world. For this reason, a workshop about the transfer of knowledge in the context of modern education was planned in 2012, but re-scheduled for the spring of 2013. This workshop will be attended by five former Nunavut Arctic College Students, Inuit from Maison du Nunavik in Québec City, education specialists from Montreal, Ottawa and Québec City (Johny Kasudluak of KSB, David Serkoak, Lisa Koperqualuk of Saturviit, etc.), non-Inuit specialists in Inuit education (Michèle Therrien of Inalco in Paris, Laurence Kaplan of the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, etc.), as well as graduate students who work on the topic of Inuit education in the Canadian Arctic and Greenland.

Project researchers also decided to develop new research activities with new partners and funding organizations in order to deepen our understanding of post-secondary education in Inuit Nunangat and bridge existing knowledge gaps.

The results of Improving Access to University in the Canadian Arctic show that little is known about the level of success enjoyed by students with post-secondary education. There is no public data on the programs attended by Inuit students, whether

in the North or in the South. Nor is information available on the graduation rate of students in post-secondary programs, their employment rate, the links between graduation and employment, whether their employment is related to their post-secondary education, and whether having post-secondary education affects their level of job satisfaction. Project leader T. Rodon, network investigator F. Walton and HQP F. Lévesque decided to ask the Nunavut General Monitoring Plan (NGMP) for funds to create a side project called Monitoring educational and professional success amongst Inuit of Nunavut who have registered in a post-secondary program that would be designed to bridge these gaps in Nunavut. It was also decided that funds from ArcticNet's Improving Access to University Education in the Canadian Arctic would be devoted to the project if the NGMP financed the project. Although this side project focusses solely on Nunavut at the moment, it could easily be implemented in other Inuit Nunangat regions like Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and the Northwest territories. This activity is thus directly stemming from the conclusions obtained in the first two years of the project. It is hoped that this project will further our understanding of what academic and professional success means for Inuit students.

The first research phase of the project Improving Access to University Education in the Canadian Arctic also highlighted the fact that funding programs offered to Inuit students in Inuit Nunangat, and especially in Nunavut and Nunavik, are not well known and not necessarily well adapted to Inuit. Not much is known about their efficiency, what role they play in the success (or lack thereof) of Inuit students, whether they are adequate to help students meet their financial obligations, and so on and so forth. This knowledge gap prompted T. Rodon and his Université Laval team to undertake an evaluation of Nunavut and Nunavik funding programs offered by governments and organizations to Inuit who want to pursue post-secondary education. It will take the form of a participative evaluation with Inuit students, the Government of Nunavut, the Kativik School Board and Inuit

organizations. This evaluation will be made with the participation of Steve Jacobs, professor at the department of Political Science of Université Laval, and specialist in participative policy evaluations. Again, this activity was born out of gaps identified during the first two years of research. It is hoped this activity will increase our knowledge of funding programs and have impacts on how governments and Inuit organizations target their assistance.

It is important to mention that already existing sub-projects have continued for the same reasons highlighted above: existing knowledge gaps need to be filled. For example, Tracing the Idea of a Northern University has made an inventory and evaluation of past university initiatives in Nunavut from 1960 until the creation of Nunavut. The project researchers realized however that not much was known in other Inuit Nunangat regions and in Nunavut after 1999.

Conclusion

In 2012-2013, the research teams behind Improving Access to University in the Canadian Arctic favoured a research to action strategy that allowed them to translate the results obtained during the first two years into concrete actions. They focused on bringing the results of their research back to the communities, develop initiatives aimed at increasing post-secondary access for Inuit students, and start new projects stemming from the conclusions obtained during the first two years of research.

In 2013-2014, this trend will continue. However, since new projects have just been started, new results will be added to the already existing ones. These results will trigger the creation of new research activities as well as the development of initiatives aimed at translating results into concrete actions in order to increase access to post-secondary education for Inuit Nunangat students.

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