

OPPORTUNITY

The Nunavut Education Act is an extra-ordinary document. It is a unique expression of the goals of Nunavummiut in the area of Education. It has strengths and compromises, but there is no doubt that it is an ambitious and genuine effort to speak to the education structures and goals we want for our communities and children.

Nunavut legislation, for reasons of time or resources or inclination, can look like a cookie-cutter version of the corresponding Act from another Canadian legislature. This is not true of the Education Act on any level. This Act is a massive revision of the roles and rules that our schools operated under in the past, and a considered plan designed to guide learning and society in Nunavut.

It is ambitious. It demands change. It is hopeful in expecting that educators, administrators and communities will commit to taking up this change. It is evident that a great deal of thought and compromise went into its provisions. While the compromises are not always perfect, they are a real statement of how Nunavut does operate and how we would like to see ourselves and our children in the future.

Even the requirement for a Review, built into the Act, demonstrates this forward-thinking approach. We have been given a valuable opportunity to look at ourselves, examine what we are and are not achieving, and define any needed re-direction, strengthening or realignment of our Education system.

COALITION OF NUNAVUT DEAs – HOW WE COLLECTED INFORMATION AND ISSUES FOR THE 5 YEAR REVIEW

The Coalition of Nunavut DEAs was established in 2006. . The emergence of the Coalition as a voice in education resulted in it being incorporated into the 2009 Education Act (Sec. 15) with funding provided through an annual contribution from the Department of Education. The objects of the Coalition are provided as Appendix “A” to this presentation, and they demonstrate the range of issues the Coalition addresses.

In addition to working on behalf of DEAs on a daily basis, the Coalition holds an Annual General Meeting each year to examine issues in education from a DEA perspective. Workshops are held on specific topics, training sessions are held, and there is roundtable on DEA issues. The issues identified by DEAs at the AGM become the education issues that are researched, promoted and advocated for in the year following the AGM.

At the 2014 Annual General Meeting, the Coalition prepared a presentation for DEAs on the 5 Year Education Act Review, and gave notice to DEAs that they would be asked for their opinion on “the administration and implementation of the Act, the effectiveness of its provisions and the achievement of its objectives”.

To facilitate discussion with DEAs on the Education Act Review, the Coalition has prepared and conducted surveys with the DEAs and with individual members, and some of these efforts are still under way. We have compiled the information in this report from our member DEAs and from the experiences of the Coalition over the past 5 years in working on DEA issues.

The most obvious conclusion from these consultations with DEAs is that there is a great deal of implementation work still to be done. Specifically, there is considerable work to be done to empower DEAs with their roles and authorities contemplated under the Act. Many DEA and Coalition Members are still adjusting to the shift in roles that the Act mandates.

We are not yet where the Act envisions Nunavut or the role of DEAs as partners in education.

We hope that your work will lead to a review, rethinking and realignment of resources and energies that will give renewed optimism to our education system and all our efforts for children and learning in Nunavut.

Here are the key areas for renewal as seen by Coalition Members:

Issue # 1: Partnership with Government

The Education Act is designed as a **partnership**, increasing the authority of people in communities, with safeguards at the Departmental level. It anticipates that most of the decision-making in schools will be done by the people who live there, and that each school will be a slightly different expression of the values and knowledge of that community.

The role of administration is designed as a supporting resource for teachers, for the principals and for the DEAs. It is an effective way to consolidate resources for larger tasks, for setting standards and as a back-up in the event that a community runs into issues or loses focus. We do not see the department as having a daily role in the operation of schools.

Concerns:

- ▶ This partnership with DEAs is not developing.
- ▶ The partnership expected with the Coalition of Nunavut DEAs has not evolved.
- ▶ DEA members, with some exceptions, remain fundamentally **uninformed** about the Education Act, their authority and their ability to impact education.

- ▶ DEA coordinator positions in the Department of Education are often vacant. These positions are not given hiring priority and are generally not placed in the structures where they would have impact.
- ▶ There is a very low expectation of communications flow. Many DEAs are convinced that their resolutions are not read by RSOs and there is a very low expectation that there will be any response. *(There is some regional variation in this as well as some people in the system who work hard to make this happen.)*

The Act encourages schools to take initiatives and to develop community resources. Every time a DEA makes a decision it will be slightly different from a neighbouring community. Wherever there is a discussion about consistency in education we need to ask: is this consistency valuable for the schools and students, or is this designed to make the task of administration simpler?

A diversity of approaches will permit new ideas to form, and the good ones will spread.

NEED: The Department of Education needs to focus resources on developing and supporting its relationship with DEAs including empowering DEAs with knowledge of their authority and responsibilities.

The Department of Education needs to view the Coalition as a true partner in education. DEAs need ongoing learning and development opportunities similar in concept to what is provided to Nunavut municipalities.

Issue # : Consultation and Collaboration :

The new Education Act is intended to strengthen the partnership between the Department and DEAs, with consultation and collaboration on local education goals. There are many areas where consultation is part of the Act itself - to the extent that the Act prescribes the creation of a consultation registry (Sec. 203 (1)). However, the Act is silent on what constitutes fair and reasonable consultation.

The concept of collaboration is found throughout the Act which is unusual since collaboration is not typical of legislation. One of the key tools in the Education Act for collaborative planning with schools is the School Program Plans (Sec. 20), which are to be developed by Principals under the direction of DEAs - 20 (1). DEAs have never received training from the Department on how to direct or shape a School Program Plan for their community.

The collaborative approach set out in the Education Act is very desirable, but when it is not functioning well it can lead to frustration and inaction.

Concern:

- ▶ Many aspects of the Act intended for collaboration have not been used.
- ▶ Consultations on new regulations have been weak and fairly mechanical from the perspective of DEAs and regulations seem to be a high priority item for the Department, while for the DEAs they tend to be more rules and imposed structures.
- ▶ The use of “Directives” in the Act has meant more control and less collaboration.
- ▶ Priorities identified by DEAs such as increasing programs on suicide prevention and addressing the issue of social passing have been ignored by the Department, yet these issues are fundamental expressions of community concerns.

NEED: There need to be additional resources directed at DEAs learning about and using the tools available in the Act - beginning with the provisions of the Act that are directed at the quality of education in their community (e.g School Program Plan under s. 168 and s. 20(1)). Consultations need to take place BEFORE text is created. DEA concerns need to be seen as important expressions of community aspirations for education. Consultation processes should be fair and reasonable and ensure that sufficient background information is provided to DEAs in a timely manner before they are consulted.

Issue # 3: Fulfilling DEA Responsibilities under the Education Act:

Since the introduction of the 2009 Education Act DEAs have consistently reported difficulty in meeting expectations of their role with resources provided by the Department of Education. In response to these concerns, in 2010, the Coalition of Nunavut DEAs conducted an external review of DEA budgets. This review demonstrated that the 2009 Education Act introduced an expanding range of rules and expectations for DEAs. The text of this review is provided as Appendix “B”.

The Government of Nunavut set aside \$8.6 million in 2009 for the introduction of the *Education, Official Languages, and Inuit Language Protection Acts*. DEA operating budgets did increase by approximately 4% per annum in subsequent years, but these increases did not address the root problem of insufficient operating funding to adequately address the new responsibilities under the Act:

- Since 2009 there has been a 43% increase in DEA responsibilities.
- DEAs have responsibility for 49 different tasks. 21 of these tasks were added in the new Act.
- Many DEAs don’t have full-time staff to deliver their new responsibilities.

- In addition to inadequate staffing budgets for their new responsibilities, DEAs are obliged by the system to attend to administrative requirements, at the expense of focusing on improving the quality of education in the community.
- DEAs are held responsible for budgets and overspending when the most common source of deficits is spending directed by school principals (who are department employees) and by bad communications with or absences in bookkeepers.
- Multi-year planning or spending is not provided for and surpluses are not permitted.
- Government funding can arrive late or be focused on goals that the DEAs do not share or prioritise. In effect the government uses funding to direct the DEAs to government priorities, and gives almost no resources for the DEAs to address the DEAs own goals.
- Occasional training provided by the Department has focused on bookkeeping but not on effective use of DEA budgets to further the community 's goals in education.
- Consultations with the Coalition on funding (as required in the Act) have been at a very minimal level, and have not looked at the fundamental issues of structure and mandate.
- DEAs and the Coalition have not been provided with funds to participate in the Education Act Review.

Need: The DEAs need to take up the role envisioned in the 2009 Nunavut Education Act. In a true partnership DEAs would negotiate levels of responsibility and resources with the Department. This empowering of local authority needs to be a shared goal in the Education system

The Coalition and DEAs should be provided with funding to effectively consult and participate in the Education Act review.

Issue # 4 : Inuit Teachers

DEAs agreed with the 2013 findings of the Auditor General that Nunavut is not producing the Inuktitut curriculum and teachers needed to meet the goals of the Education Act. DEAs have asked for information on the number of Inuit teachers in schools, and the recruiting efforts, but this information has not been forthcoming. Trained teachers with high levels of skills in Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun and in other subjects are not available to be hired.

Concern:

- We know that children and societies have the capacity to be excellent in more than one language, but we do not see this as a result of our current structures.

- The need for Inuit teachers and curriculum and the levels of training and skill required by all teachers have not been effectively addressed.
- We need unilingual Inuktitut teachers and spaces in our schools.
- It is important that Inuit ways of teaching and learning become part of every school program plan and principal and teacher evaluations.
- We need unilingual people on our DEAs to support this kind of learning.
- These needs are fundamental to the survival and development of Inuit culture and community in an era when southern and English pressure are everywhere.

DEAs want our children to learn and be challenged and valued in school. No one wants a “baby sitting service” to be the standard for schools at any level. To do this we need to train, support and monitor all our teachers, have high expectations, commit the resources needed for this process...and get results.

NEED: The GN needs to identify and train Inuit language teachers and measure and monitor quality standards for ALL teachers. We need to pursue subject learning and language specific learning for everyone in the system, and progress toward these goals needs to be reported on regularly.

Issue # 5: Resources should be focused on all students, classrooms and teachers

The purpose of DEAs and of the Department of Education is to build the future we want by helping our children to learn the skills they need. The Education Act is simply a tool to achieve that. It is a complicated, multi-party, hard-to-get-a-grip-on tool, but it is only a tool. A great deal of focus and energy was spent since the creation of Nunavut in putting this tool in place.

While a review is useful, tinkering with authorities and wording are likely not an important focus for the Education system. A renewal of relationships and a common discussion of how we are going to use this tool to achieve our education goals is a more valuable and effective way to use our scarce resources.

Concern:

- Much of the Act is not implemented or used. Attached as Appendix “C” is a spreadsheet of the Education Act sections related to DEAs, each with an notation of “F” – full implemented, “P” - partially implemented and “M” – minimally implemented and “N” – not implemented.
- If small changes are needed, that is fine. Some overlaps, like the ECE rules and the Daycare rules can be confusing and contradictory – they can be realigned.
- The system has more serious problems than the words of an Act, and most of what needs to be done is within the capacity of one or the other actors in the system.
- Overall attendance rates in Nunavut declined for the period 2002 to 2011. (Statistics for the 2011-2014 period have not been released). Improving attendance should be an aspect of every School Program Plan developed as a collaborative effort between parents and schools.

WE ALL NEED to acknowledge that the needs and gaps in the system are great and that a plan to address them seriously is essential. Mental health needs of students, confidence, ambition, growing capacity – these are the big goals that an education system needs to focus on. Too much time spent re-dividing the responsibilities may well mean we are avoiding facing the main issues; competent qualified graduates, and healthy students and communities.

Issue # 6: Inclusive Education

Part 6 of the Nunavut Education Act deals with Inclusive Education defined as: “a student who requires adjustments to the education program or support to meet his or her learning needs or to achieve appropriate curriculum outcomes is entitled to such adjustments and support”. (Sec. 41.1).

Under the Act, DEAs are given the oversight authority for this aspect of education .(Sec. 42.2).

Concern:

- DEAs report that they have not been provided with any direction on using this oversight authority, or with the information on which to base any oversight decisions.
- DEAs see that Individual student support plans - Sec 43 (5) – have been used in schools for students with a physical disability (e.g. hearing or sight impaired), mental impairment or disorder, or developmental or learning disability (e.g. FAE/FAS or EBD – emotional behaviour disorder), but not for students who have been ‘socially passed’.
- The cumulative effect of social passing is students who may be eager to learn, but have not been provided with adequate supports to succeed at higher grade levels, resulting in

a high push-out rate. The system is viewed by parents as failing the student, as opposed to the student 'failing'.

- With all the challenges facing students in school, and the various levels of learning in any given classroom, there are many students who require 'adjustments to the learning program to meet learning needs and to achieve curriculum outcomes' and these supports should be provided.

NEED

DEAs need to be empowered with their oversight authority in inclusive education, and provided with regular reporting on the scope of inclusive education in their schools.

Interpretation of 'Inclusive Education' by school administrators and teachers should include all students who require adjustments to the learning program to meet learning needs and to achieve curriculum outcomes.

Issue # 7: Focus on quality of education

At our Annual General Meetings, DEAs share examples that speak to quality of education in their communities. One of the most frequently raised concerns is social passing. The Department has invested time and resources in developing new assessment systems, but these are poorly understood by parents. At the 2013 AGM DEAs rejected the student assessment system put in place by the Department.

The overall issue the DEAs raise is that the quality of education of our students needs to be higher. Nunavummiut need to be successful in our home communities, in employment and in the world, and all of this requires skills and qualifications. We want Nunavut students to access high-quality learning, however it is achieved.

DEAs speak to the long vision in Nunavut education. Most Members went to school (or did not) in the Nunavut system. Most children of DEA members are in school or are graduates (or not graduates) of the Nunavut system. Papers and reports do not change the DEAs view of education, only real on the ground change over time will be real to DEAs.

- We have common goals in fewer drop-outs, no social passing rules, mental health knowledge and support - for students and teachers, literacy, good math skills, enhanced sciences, more career planning and pathways.

Happy healthy learning children are everyone's goal.

MATERIALS OUTSTANDING

The Coalition is still collecting materials and positions from our members and will continue to submit these to the Committee over the next months.

DESIRED OUTCOME

From the perspective of DEAs and the Coalition, our goal in this process is to promote that this review lead to a revised and collaborative Education Act Implementation Plan (Part II) with appropriate staffing and funding and a common focus on quality education in our schools and qualified graduates.

**OBJECTS OF THE
NUNAVUT COALITION OF DEAS**

The Objects of the Society are:

- a) The Society will be the voice of the parents of Nunavut as represented through the member District Education Authorities (DEAs) ;
- b) The Society will act as a means of communication between the member DEAs;
- c) The Society will be an advocate for the advancement of education as identified by the member DEAs;
- d) The Society will assist, inform and represent DEAs individually and collectively;
- e) The Society will collect knowledge, do research, prepare and present information on education issues in Nunavut;
- f) The Society will coordinate with other territorial, national, Inuit and international groups with similar objects
- g) The Society will develop materials and present training and development to member DEAs on issues they identify.
- h) The Society will monitor, inform DEAs and advocate for: early childhood education, K – 12 education, adult learning, and post-secondary schooling issues.

APPENDIX "B"

**An Evaluation of the Operating Costs and Responsibilities
of
Nunavut District Education Authorities**

Discussion Document

October 10, 2012

Prepared by Aarluk Consulting Inc.

**on behalf of the
Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities**

APPENDIX "C"

**An Inventory of Provisions of the
of
Nunavut Education Act**

With assessed Implementation Levels
Discussion Document

October 2014

Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities