

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MARCH 2019 COUNCIL OF COMMISSIONERS

From March 12 to 13 the Council of Commissioners met in Kangirsuk. You will find below an overview of the key points discussed during these two days.

Evaluation of the teacher certification program offered in partnership with McGill University

Based on a mandate received from the Council of Commissioners in October 2018, Education Services commissioned the University of Ottawa Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services (CRECS) to evaluate the school board's teacher certification program, which is offered in partnership with McGill University. The evaluation was conducted in Nunavik. It focused on two questions identified by the Council of Commissioners in October 2018:

1. How does the program meet its stakeholders' needs?
2. Is the program structure and timing adequate and, if not, are there alternatives?

As part of the evaluation, 13 focus group were organized, and key informants were interviewed. In total, 135 participants across 8 communities in Nunavik took part in the process. Surveys were also completed by 16 vice-principals and principals and the assessment team reviewed program documentation provided by McGill University.

The assessment concluded that as currently offered, the teacher certification program does not meet the needs of Nunavik community members, teachers, and children. The commissioners discussed the key findings and recommendations presented by the CRECS lead expert. In particular, the following points were noted:

1. Language of instruction for the program: teachers expressed that courses could be offered in English. The commissioners stressed that not all teachers are fluent in their second language, therefore this would have to be carefully assessed.
2. Teachers demanded on-going Inuktitut language courses to support and strengthen their first language skills. Along with these, instruction should also provide them with teaching strategies and approaches enabling them to support Inuit children for whom Inuktitut may be a second language.
3. Consideration should be given to a program structure where instruction is followed by in-class practicum, thereby allowing teachers to apply new knowledge and approaches before taking their next course. Commissioners noted that the role of Teacher Training Pedagogical Counsellors is important in this regard, as teachers would benefit from feedback while they apply what they have learned.

4. The teacher training program would need to include all Inuit teachers from Kindergarten to Secondary 5. The current program is only offered to Kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers. This would strengthen the school board in its efforts to bridge new programs introduced at the Grade 4 to Secondary 5 levels across first and second language instruction.
5. The need for an Inuit-centered teacher training and certification to be offered, and the acknowledgement that this is not achieved by providing Inuktitut translation of western pedagogical material.
6. Program and course outlines should allow teachers to understand the progression of learning and overall duration of the program they enroll in. At the moment, the teacher training program is not well known within the school board. The teacher training program should also be part of a global strategy to recruit and retain Inuit teachers.
7. The need for the teacher certification earned through the program to be recognized everywhere in the province and in Canada. The evaluation report clarified that the teaching certification delivered by the Ministry of Education to those who complete the current program is only valid within the school board's jurisdiction.
8. As part of the conversation on recognition, everywhere in Quebec and Canada, of the teacher certification earned by Inuit teachers, the CRECS lead expert also stressed the importance of ensuring that the program be rooted within in a faculty of education. A program delivered by a university's faculty of education would offer more guarantees in terms of upholding standards at par with provincial and national norms related to teaching certification.
9. If a new framework is developed for the teacher training program, a recommended first step would be for Inuit to identify the program's underpinning values. These values would be used by the Council of Commissioners to hold program developers accountable and aligned with the vision of Nunavik communities.
10. If the current program is discontinued, there needs to be an action plan to ensure smooth transition and recognition of credits earned by teachers currently enrolled in the McGill certification program. During this discussion, it was also clarified that the vast majority of the 135 currently active students in the McGill program have generally earned less than 10 credits. Regardless of decisions concerning the future of the current teacher certification program, Inuit teachers who are missing 9 credits or less to complete their certification are currently being offered courses in order to graduate by the end of the 2018-2019 school year.

Taking into consideration the recommendations and findings concerning the teacher certification program implemented in partnership with McGill University, the Director General was requested to work with Education

Services to develop an action plan on the way forward. This plan will be presented to the Commissioners at their June meeting.

The Council of Commissioners also adopted a resolution demanding that an external evaluation of the teacher training program offered in partnership with the UQAT be conducted.

Assessment report on the training needs of culture and land survival teachers

In collaboration with the Culture and Land Survival department, the Teacher Training department conducted a training needs assessment to identify how support to land survival and culture teachers could be enhanced.

The assessment was conducted during a full-day workshop attended by 22 land survival and culture teachers from 12 of the 14 Nunavik communities. In addition, 10 administrative leaders participated in some of the workshop activities including a sharing circle discussion.

Generally, the assessment highlighted the need for teachers to have further opportunities to meet, share resources, skills and best practices. Two sets of recommendations were presented to the Commissioners. A first one (5 recommendations), aiming to address the direct needs expressed by Land Survival and Culture teachers. A second one (3 recommendations), concerning the regional support required to strengthen and leverage the Land Survival and Culture Program as a foundation to KI's efforts to 'Inuitize' education in Nunavik.

The recommendations include, among others: piloting of a skill and knowledge sharing program, uniform material ordering process, dedicated learning space in schools and review of scheduling practices to enable integration of cultural learning; identification of areas where cross-departmental/horizontal collaboration would advance culture and land survival programming.

The commissioners discussed the recommendations. They pointed out that close collaboration needs to happen with each community's culture committee in order for cultural activities to also build on local knowledge, hunters' expertise and take full advantage of what is already offered locally.

They demanded that the recommendations be used to develop an action plan, to be presented at their June meeting.

Summer Literacy Camps in Nunavik

The literacy camps build community bonds and encourage a shared culture of literacy and learning that benefits the whole community. The camps are offered to children between the ages of 5 and 12, during the month of July.

At camp, children practice the Inuktitut, English, and French reading skills they acquired during the school year. This helps prevent learning loss that can happen over the summer break.

Initially offered in Kuujjuaraapik in 2013, literacy camps are now offered in 12 of the 14 Nunavik communities. Last year, nearly half of our 40 literacy instructors recruited by Frontier College were from Nunavik. Frontier College's long-term objective is to hire camps instructors only from the region.

This summer marks the sixth year of a successful partnership between Kativik Ilisarniliriniq and Frontier College.

The literacy camps are supported by Kativik Ilisarniliriniq with funds allocated through the INAC program New Paths for Education (\$300,000). Other financial partners include Air Inuit (\$100,000) and the Makivik Corporation Ungaluk Fund (\$250,000).

Progress towards the conclusion of an agreement between the school board and the Kativik Regional Police Force (KRPF)

The agreement aims at fostering a safe learning environment at school, through coordination between the schools and KRPF in relation to crime prevention and student protection in cases where KRPF intervention or investigation is required.

The agreement will be finalized by the Executive Committee and signed by the Director General.

Emergency repairs required needed at Isummasaqvik School (Quaqtaq)

The Commissioner of Quaqtaq reported on the dire state of Isummasaqvik School. The furnace needs replacement. It is spewing fumes and noxious odors.

The Material Resources department indicated that air quality at the school was recently tested. It is good and does not present health hazard risks. The department is currently working on finding a solution. A report will be submitted once the inspection and repairs are completed.

The commissioners asked for an immediate assessment of existing financial resources to identify funds that could be reallocated to replace the school's furnace and conduct necessary renovations urgently. If funds cannot be reallocated or are insufficient, the Council asked for a resolution to be prepared, requesting the Ministry of Education to provide emergency funding.

Response to the Quebec Ombudsman report: where do we stand?

Generally, communication and working relationships were reported to be positive.

A 2019-2020 Action Plan was developed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the school board. The Ministry of Education (MEES) submitted the Action Plan to the Quebec Ombudsman in February 2019.

Overall, the Ombudsman report has been instrumental in creating momentum to mobilize MEES support in addressing some of the key challenges the Nunavik education system is facing.

The Director General reported that as part of budget negotiations, the school board's demands for the creation of permanent substitute teacher positions, and the inclusion of these positions in the base allocation of KI's budgetary rules have been received favourably. These demands are currently being examined by the MEES.

The Quebec Ombudsman's recommendations will be addressed through 7 joint (round)tables, 4 of which were already created in 2017 and 2018. The remaining 3 are to be established during the 2019 winter and spring.

At these tables, issues related to the delivery of educational services will be tackled in a coordinated manner.

1. Provincial Roundtable on the Educational Success of Indigenous Students. This roundtable was created in 2017 and KI's participation ensures that Nunavik realities are taken into consideration.
2. A KI-MEES Pedagogical Table created in March 2018.
3. A KI-MEES Infrastructure Table created in May 2018.
4. A KI-MEES Post-Secondary Table created in September 2018.
5. A MEES Table on the indigenization of teaching programs (to be created, spring 2019).
6. A KI-MEES Table on staff recruitment and retention, with a particular focus on increasing the number of qualified Inuit teachers (to be created, winter 2019).
7. A MSSS-NRBHSS-MEES-KI Table to ensure linkage between health and educational services (to be created, spring 2019).
8. A KI-MEES Table on Student Absenteeism in Nunavik (to be created, spring 2019).

Finally, a number of measures will be put in place to ensure data collection and analysis related to student absenteeism, as well as its causes. The objective being to identify actions through which the MEES could support the improvement of students' school attendance.

The Council of Commissioners approves a Collusion and Corruption Risk Management Policy.

The Policy is aligned with the *Act respecting contracting by public bodies* and the 2016 *Directive concernant la gestion en matière de corruption et de collusion dans les processus de gestion contractuelle*.

The policy aims to protect the school board's reputation by ensuring that fair and transparent contract allocation procedures are used. The policy requires the school board to develop a yearly corruption and collusion risk management plan that will apply to all the public contracts it awards. A review and monitoring report will be submitted yearly to the Director General, based on which the school board's risk management framework will be adjusted.

Taking full advantage of locally available expertise

The commissioners shared similar experiences related to expertise available locally, which the schools and school board appear not to always be able to tap into.

In response to these concerns, closer communication with the Human Resources department was encouraged. While hiring follows specific procedures, it was noted that closer communication with the Human Resources department could be beneficial to identify suitable local candidates.

The commissioners also expressed the wish to see more resources allocated to recruitment campaigns targeting Nunavik and potential Inuit employees, not limited to teachers. In this context, the need for a comprehensive marketing of the school board as an employer was also noted.

Information sharing and access to documents

Echoing concerns they had expressed in March 2018, the commissioners reiterated the importance of accessing, ahead of their meeting, all the documents and background material related to the decisions they have to make.

They expressed concern with the fact that they are generally not provided with access to relevant background information ahead of the meeting. Last year, each commissioner received a computer. However, the required infrastructure has still not been put into place. The Council asked that this be looked into.