

From Decolonization to Conscientization: Implementing the Alaskan Inuit Education Improvement Strategy

Qikiqtaġruk, AK Think-Tank Report



Participants: Linda Joule, Helena Barr, Polly Schaeffer, Pete Schaeffer, Grant Ballot, Terri Walker, Alvin Ashby Sr., Lorena Williams, Cheryl Edenshaw, Erica Nelson, Pauline Harvey, Eilene Adams (not listed in order)

Prepared by

Jered Stewart, Cultureflo Consulting

for ICC Alaska and the Qikiqtaġruk Participants

June 1 & 2 2016

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INTRODUCTION

On June 1-2, 2016 ICC Alaska held a Decolonization Conscientization Think-Tank as part of its Inuit education strategy. There were 10 participants from various regional villages and Qikiqtaġruk present to discuss the topic of Inuit education, the impacts of colonization, and to think about the future of education for Inuit youth in their region. During the two-day workshop there were many discussions about the impacts of colonization, language preservation and how decolonization thinking can help Inuit to change education systems for the better in their region. It was inspiring and humbling to be a part of.

As the dialogue was focused on decolonization there was a lot of discussion about how we begin to shift from colonized to conscientious, about social equity, justice, and how we as Inuit can begin to take ownership for the education of our youth. The discussions also focused on how we can break down the frames and world views of colonization that have shaped so much of Inuit life in the last century and become ingrained to a point that has detrimental and devastating effects on the identity and lives of Inuit youth. In this way it is about a systemic unfreezing, reshaping, and reintegration of the traditions that make Inuit whole and healthy. Decolonization is about re-forming the children and Conscientization is about re-forming the system.

OPENING ACTIVITIES

We started each day with an invocation and a check in. Our initial check-in asked the participants to share why the meeting was exciting to them and what they hoped to get out of it. In general people were excited about the topic and the chance to work through the Inuit education strategy in a thoughtful group. The participants also expressed a general sense of wanting to learn.

Our icebreaker was an introductory activity where each participant interviewed a partner to discuss how decolonization had impacted them, what can we gain from decolonization thinking, and they shared a positive about themselves that they rarely share. I asked participants to share this because in our Inuit culture it is very hard for us to brag about ourselves, so to start off sharing something that makes us a little uncomfortable helps us to build trust and a safe

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open environment for healthy discussion. The ideas from the icebreaker activity are captured below.

Icebreaker Interviews:

Impacts of Colonization

1. There was trauma felt when students were punished for speaking the language, it was confusing and negative, we never learned the language because we were punished
2. Loss of language at home and in schools
3. Cultural ways of life were changed, subsisting and living of the land, and stories
4. Our children quit learning
5. Parental guidance was no longer there, children were sent out to boarding schools, were introduced to a new way of life – technology – social problems
6. Erosion of confidence in ourselves
7. It took my fluency, it's hard to get back, it starts at home.
8. Made it difficult to deal with identity
9. Interrupted our own systems
10. We became dependent on the Government
11. Culture barrier growing up

What we gain from decolonization thinking

1. We can get our language back
 2. We can build a stronger family foundation
 3. Hunting, food gathering and subsistence activities can be done with the young children
 4. We can find our individual strengths (play music, speak language, helping others learn, help elders to teach)
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5. We can look to elders for guidance
6. We can tie school with the community
7. We can develop our parenting skills
8. There is independence emerging from Inupiaq identity
9. We can gain fluency and revitalization of language
10. Redefining family
11. We can have healthy youth
12. We can continue with Inupiaq language past 8th grade
13. We can offer support for each other – parenting roles
14. We can have interdependence and collected strength

Once we were through the opening activities we spent time developing a proper context from which to work.

SHARED LEARNING: SETTING THE CONTEXT

To set the context for the afternoon Pauline Siqupsiraq Harvey gave a general overview of the ICC Alaska Inuit Education improvement strategy, shared some ideas on decolonization and talked about the work she is doing in all the ICC Alaska regions. Once she finished the group was broken into small groups to share a story of a time they overcame a challenge in education, talk about what is working and what gives them hope for their community's education system. The intention of the small groups was to help ground the group in reality and build trust as well as highlight positive momentum by sharing the stories of how challenges were overcome and where the region is experiencing success in education. Below are the transcribed points from the small group discussions.

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Story themes	What is working well?	Where do you see hope?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsistence, traditional Skills • Still learning • Figure out what is important to our way of life • When I started to teach Inupiaq in the school after my mother-in-law retired. • Conflict caused me to think different way of solving information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunters and providers teaching younger kids giving shares away/trading • Teach respect and identity core teachings at the school Nikautchaut to expand what we learn to bigger schools • Gathering cultural information tools, clothing food preparation • Using modern technology to teach Inupiaq • Nikaitchuat immersion school on the Inupaituun skills daily • Inupiaq values are listed as a starting point, for subsistence and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger generation to learn Inupiaq and teach it • Develop curriculum appropriate to that village real life learning, not only text books and cd's • Comprehension in Inupiaq • Today's awareness to help us move ahead • We have elders as a resource now but they are passing • Try using Jana's style of working with willingness • C-3 camps for teaching kids • Learn to be Inupiaq teachers in classrooms • Use singing as a way to practice Inupiaq

The main themes from this dialogue stem from the effects of colonization and how indigenous peoples were forced into systems and told that their ways were not the right ways, and in many ways today still experience that. Much of the discussion highlights the regions focus on Inupiaq values, traditions, culture, and the loss of language that came with colonization over time. There is hope in the younger generation, current momentum, the fact we still have fluent Inupiaq speakers, and that there are models being put in place for education systems that integrate the Inupiaq way of life.

TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGUE

To get us grounded in reality, prepared for strategizing work and to get to know each other further the group participated in a transformative dialogue session. They learned how the words we share with each other build community one room and one conversation at a time. We went over the basic premise that is based on Peter Block's model as it is outlined in his book "Community: The Structure of Belonging".

We are not here alone but often we feel that we are. What these dialogue sessions do is bring us together in way that liberates us to do what we were created to do, to create a new

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future that is distinct from the past, to let go of our old story and create a new one in a more forgiving way. Western culture fosters an environment of isolation and competition it causes us to look inward and in that we lose out on precious relationships, quality relationships. We are here to create a safe environment and to take back our ownership in building something we can all be proud to be a part of, together. We can create our future one step at a time, one room at a time.

The reason I share this section of the report in so much detail is so that anyone can feel that they can use this model to bring people together to build up their tribes, villages, schools and communities.

Overall Premise:

- To build social fabric and transform isolation in our communities to connectedness and caring for the whole.
- Shift our conversations from the problems and blame to the possibility of community.
- Commit to creation of a future distinct from the past.

Operating guidelines:

- Social fabric is created one room at a time. The room we are in.
- The key to creating a new future is to focus on our gifts and assets, on associational life or our connectedness, on the thought that all our transformation occurs through language, through how we communicate and relate to one another. (This is why our Native Language is so important).
- We already have what we need to create an alternative future.
- We can do it in small groups, they are the container for the experience of belonging and transformation.

The main barriers in this journey are our inability to address, redress, or let go.”

- Address – take a look at ourselves and what is going on inside us in relation to others and the tensions that exist. How am I feeling? What does this interaction bring up for
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me.

- Redress – Make right the wrongs.
- Let go – give up the stuff we don't need anymore.

Rules for small groups:

- Get in groups of 3, people you know the least
- Sit in a circle knees 9 inches apart
- Each person gets the same amount of time to answer (3 minutes or so)
- Listen intently and look each-other in the eyes
- No advice. Ask tell me more instead
- At the end tell your group members something you appreciated about the conversation

We used the following four dialogue sessions for our time.

The Possibility Conversation

The Possibility Conversation is one that focuses on what we want our future to be as opposed to problem solving the past. This is based on an understanding that living systems are really propelled to the force of the future. The possibility conversation frees people to innovate, challenge the status quo, and create new a future that makes a difference. In new work environments this conversation has the ability for breaking new ground and in understanding the prevailing culture.

The Ownership Conversation

The Ownership Conversation is one that focuses on whose organization or task is this? The conversation begins with the question, "how have I contributed to creating the current reality?" Confusion, blame and waiting for someone else to change are a defense against ownership and personal power.

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The Dissent Conversation

The Dissent Conversation is allowing people the space to say "no". If we cannot say "no" then our "yes" has no meaning. People have a chance to express their doubts and reservations, as a way of clarifying their roles, needs, and yearnings within the vision and mission being presented. Genuine commitment begins with doubt, and "no" is a symbolic expression of people finding their space and role in the strategy. It is when we fully understand what people do not want that we can fully design what they want. Refusal is the foundation for commitment.

The Commitment Conversation

The Commitment Conversation is about individuals making promises to their peers about their contribution to the success of the whole organization. It is centered in two questions: What promise am I willing to make to our education system? And, what is the price I am willing to pay for the success of the whole effort? It is a promise for the sake of a larger purpose, not for the sake of personal return.

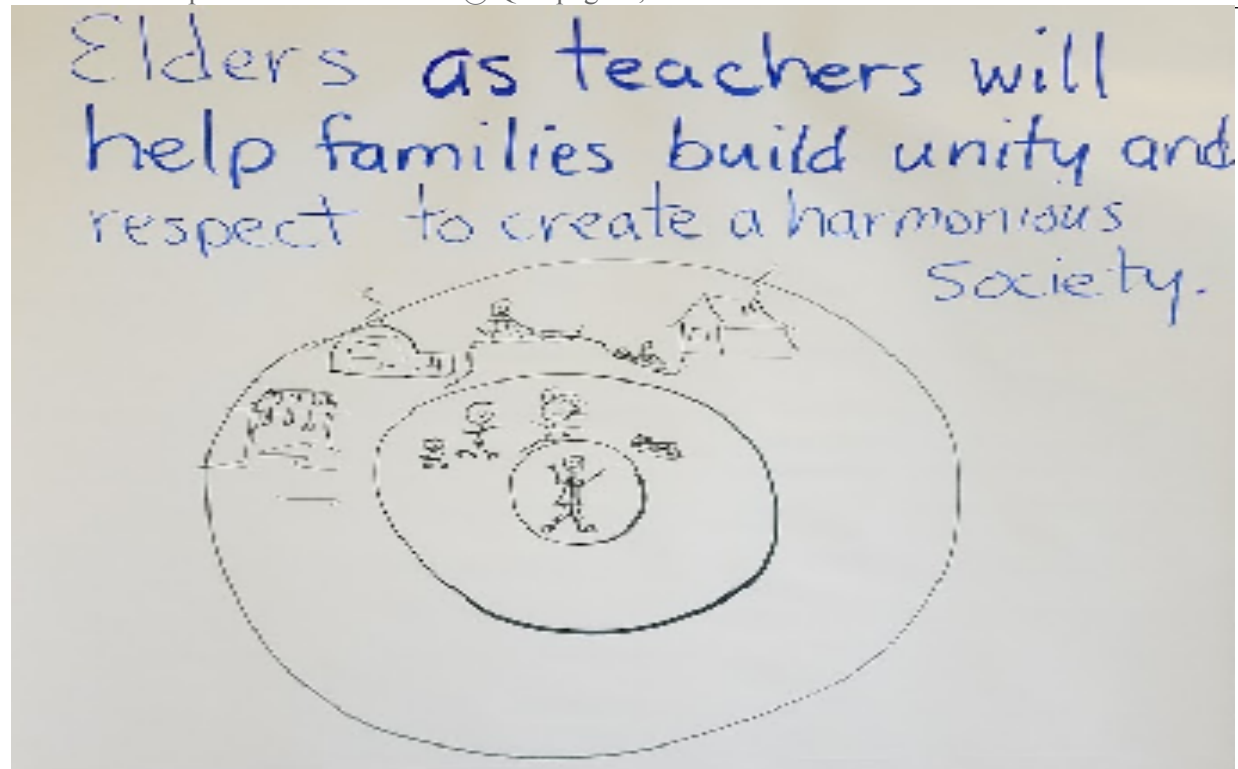
I hope that participants can use this dialogue model in their schools and communities to bring people together to make an impact for Inuit education. I am happy to support you in this journey in anyway but please feel free and empowered to use any workshop ideas yourself.

Visioning workshop

After the transformative dialogue, we spent time discussing what a vision for the future could look like if we had the perfect conditions and systems in place. The participants were broken up into three groups to brainstorm and develop an image and a tagline to go with their image. These images were to be representative icons of what the perfect future would look like. Additionally, the exercise has the effect of aligning the participants to what is important to them and how to go about moving towards their aspirations. Below are images and taglines as well as a summary of themes.

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The common themes for the brainstorm are as follows.

1. Language immersion is a must win at all levels from infant to adult.
2. Schools that are calendared with the season's community needs in mind and that teach from traditional culture, Inuit frameworks, and values.
3. Teaching Inupiaq History
4. Family ownership in the schools
5. Increasing the amount of local native teachers and elder involvement teaching culture.
6. Valuing Inuit identity, instilling a sense of purpose, fostering spirituality in the youth.
7. Inupiaq values, traditions, respect and family as the foundation

REVIEWING THE INUIT EDUCATION STRATEGY

The whole day on June 2nd was focused on reviewing the ICC Alaska Inuit Education Improvement strategy. We asked the questions outlined below about each of the six strategies to begin to gain ideas about how the region can continue to improve education and get momentum on making their vision a reality for their region.

1. Where is the strategy aligned with your vision for your region?
2. What can we tactically do to support the strategy and achieve our region's vision?
3. What will be required to accomplish the strategy?

I have included below the full strategy discussions. We used small groups work to allow everyone to speak into each area and develop an exhaustive list of ideas. These ideas should be prioritized as the group continues to meet and select areas where they can make a positive impact quickly. The regional group participants should also prioritize which strategic areas they think they will need to focus on to get the best results and traction towards creating systemic changes to get results.

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Strategy 1: Indigenization of Education Frameworks

Where there is vision alignment	Tactical things we can do to achieve the vision and support the strategy	What will be required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NIK is the strongest, Pre-k Grade 2 curriculum • Village level: Activities on Cultural skills, i.e. Shungnak • Elders meetings – Regional elders • All outreach to schools – Pauyun Bilingual teachers • Raymond woods and cultural NWABSD trips/ survival skills • NWABSD – Language Treasure chest of old videos and documents. Translating process now, Norm Eck and Hannah Loon • H. Loon @ Chuckchi adjunct to teach 200 level of Inupiaq grammar, conversational Inupiaq ongoing • Shared info on languages exists within schools in past • Can we use this process in village meetings? Fishing areas? Tools. Should be community based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency agreements in place are a must have • Talk to elders often • NWALT Revitalized to work together • Complete and share ANE NWABSD Grant results with all • Talk and address teachers concerns at NWABSD • NIK needs curriculum finished • NIK needs TCR training • Tribes/elders/Bilingual teachers • Mentor learners of language • Immersion into language • Listen and learn be willing to be learners • Need topic on indigenous education on their agendas • In region share for use • Assessment of materials and resources developed in the region (Unpack it all) • In-house to hear concerns from village voices • Need Inupiaq short story books published • Need to have and ongoing training • Need to drive the progress • Support and grow fluency via Nest • Need expertise learning for Inupiaq Teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation – ongoing organizations • Follow the Inupiaq values – In process • Request agenda topic time on NWALT agenda – start with this group • Tapes on language stories Translate or move to disc or drives • Social media use (Facebook, Website, Videos) • Inupiaq Language commission – get their support • Elders group regional – Grant Ballot on this board • ANE Grant for materials and Chukchi classes on language – NWABSD text books? Need Inupiaq books for the public about ourselves – Local fluent speakers • Immersion school start ups – By NIK founders and teachers • Honor elders – Present and past – The loss is too great of an impact – Seek support • Record elders today on any topic • NWABSD survey and Chukchi – Cheryl has a copy of the recent survey.

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Strategy 2: Education Policy Influence

Where there is vision alignment	Tactical things we can do to achieve the vision and support the strategy	What will be required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet info • International connections i.e. Inuvik • What are you teaching in the schools? And to what grade level? • Elders and tribes: Experts/partners council and Inupiaq language commission • NWALT elders wing ATC State and Federal • Nikaitchuat Funding • FAS prevention: Maniilaq/ Grants CD k-12 education • Regional and village school boards • Star of the Northwest Magnet School – Language • Pre-school funding needed (Language NWABSD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations come together – Partnerships • Elders tribes have a real leadership role • Strong historical council • Put people in the right places that will influence policy • Taking care of each-other again (Children) • Teach our Children (DVD) again (Key) Raise up our kids • Take advantage of traditional gatherings • Each person must have a voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain and keep Inupiaq certified teachers and principals, get them through the system *Ben Nageak * Donny Olson • Strong advocates plan/locals of all ages (who does what when?) • Star of the NW Magnet School • NWALT revitalized • 1st Alaskans • Need to be clear about Inuit education • Success stories – Tie in with other regions • Qikiqtagruk Youth Council – Village • Resources and materials • School Climate Survey • Former Nikaitchuat students scored higher • Highlight Nikaitchuats students accomplishments

Strategy 3: Culture Based Curriculum

Where there is vision alignment	Tactical things we can do to achieve the vision and support the strategy	What will be required

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWABSD ANEP grant funded in progress. Shared tapes and books Lor of the Inupiaq vol 3 – Photographs • Work with all students in Villages • Jana Harcharek’s Curriculum • NIK School Curriculum – Community and seasonal focus • MA-ANA on parenting ISOF in process/ progress • NRC elders booklet on Inupiat values – Conference translations • Katrjut celebration reports, videos, and records of data research • Language “Inupriagtaq” application Reid Magdanz phone app. • Rosetta Stone @ aqqeluk trust – needs updates language and technology • Language courses at Chukchi and local interest groups • Parent outreach and language terminology • H. Loon Grammar • Bilingual Inupiaq teachers lesson plans for classroom collaboration • Elder and community involvement in schools and activities • Language nests & Maori exchange of shared models - Statewide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather & catalog resources on local language and culture (Virtual cache) – NWABSD • Cultural movies – make it available to the public and parents • Statewide NYO – Hold cultural nights when done – Curriculum CITC coaching • Finishing celebrations of the inupiat – products and resources – when completed for all to know and share info. Kobuk to coastal in all areas in region • Needs constant updates and consistency • Lost dances Material video tapes – Dee Ann Hamilton • FA Institute materials – AFN materials etc. Youth and elders conference • MA Recordings of traditional healing practices – Auggie Hoffman resource person • Ray Mala – old movies from BKL – Movie “The Eskimo” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership support with system in place through agreements, resolutions, etc. • Local language and culture advisory council at the communities side for moving forward & creating focus • People are resources who remain committed to this • NIK Curriculum and guide need to publish etc. and build upon identified needs • New teacher orientation - Region and agency wide • SD ANEP grant (Curriculum) archival updates and translating into English – eventually to support the curriculum in schools, home, community • Regional assessment of all available resources (Unpack it all) • Maniilaq/SD/UA ANA parenting grant finish 2017 outreach – outreach afterwards to village • Bring people outside to teach survival hands on learning applied learning • NSB Schol district materials from Jana H. Seek presentations on Inupiaq learning framework • Disseminate local information and share with others • Media websites social, newspapers VHF – Develop these programs • Regional elders spirit II – obtain documents in storage
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Strategy 4: Inuit Language Education

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Where there is vision alignment	Tactical things we can do to achieve the vision and support the strategy	What will be required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SD offers k-8 Inupiaq language class in most villages – 9-12 field trips survival and hunting • NWAB subsistence mapping • SD compile and revamp resources making it digital for easy access and use (ANE Grant) • Nikaitchaut (3-5 years) Cultural immersion school • UA Chukchi Inupiaq classes • ANLPAC • Regional Inupiaq Lanaguage commission ILC. • Language speakers, learners, teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual ownership and responsibility to take action for themselves and their family • Media campaign for language revitalizations – Aqquluk trust for classes • Safe open environment to practice language and culture (NWALT plan, Tribes, All) • Expectation to excel in being Inupiaq • Figure out ways to engage elders (What will change behavior) • Public and community access to materials • Share NWABSD digitizing of materials • Nikaitchuat for all villages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elders • Organizations • Partnership • Living our Inupiaq values

Strategy 5: Educational Leadership Capacity

Where there is vision alignment	Tactical things we can do to achieve the vision and support the strategy	What will be required

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reps senators at Juneau. NWABSD – Youth Leaders – John Baker • Snowmachine and dog teams • AFN elders and youth conference • First Alaskans – Healthy communities • Qikiqtagruk Inupiaq youth council • Traditional teacher roles • SD student councils • Parenting done early • Borough student representative • Groom the next education state commissioner • Vounterism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations have youth representatives (Invite participation for the Youth) • Community discussions on leadership (Responsibility, Respect, Roles, Knowledge, Experience, Expectations, etc.) • Develop solid good leadership • Structures in place to promote community interaction and involvement • Include healthy foods – Niqipiaq • Community responsibility to take action • Build stronger community leaders • People in the right seats to affect change – Parents are leaders in the home • Activities that foster leadership in the community • Celebrations • Compete against social media/video games movies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations • Role models • People involved who advocate and provide mentorship • Reaching out • Materials from SD project disseminate to all villages
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Strategy 6: Traditional Parenting Skills

Where there is vision alignment	Tactical things we can do to achieve the vision and support the strategy	What will be required
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICC promotes through media. Solstice • Heating and fuel projects • Linda Joule Parenting curriculum and support (Maniilaq, NWABSD, UA Chukchi) Doing the right thing • Subsistence and survival skills taught • Culture camps elders and youth • Maligaq’a Qayaq Making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revitalize Qargi – Qaqlaqs and dog teams • Parent ownership to grow and learn • Based on traditional ways of life • Make time to do things together as a family • Less dependence on state assistance • Cultural based treatment support programs • Mentorship – Extended family - People that don't have a resource • Community gatherings to celebrate family • Parents need to be encourage parenting • Crisis for plan B parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the spirit of the family series • Maniilaq’s Healthy relationships program • Church affiliated (Men’s and Women’s night) • Other parents • Tribes and services • Documentaries • Maliqaq • Elders knowledge • Before tomorrow (Canadian movie)
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The strategy discussions were very robust and lively. The participants generated a lot of ideas. I left these ideas in tact with the intention of leaving a clear record of the discussions and so that your regional group can begin deciding which of these areas are of main concern and priority. The summary and recommendations section offers suggestions for keeping momentum and sustaining this important work.

COMMUNICATION AND NEXT STEPS

To close the meeting, we asked what communication would be required to keep positive momentum. We also set the following next steps.

Communication required

1. Ask our regional organizations for support (i.e. Nana)
2. Social media group setup or other communications tool (i.e. facebook, voxer, etc.)
3. Connect to other facebook groups
4. VTC meetings through the school district (Mid-October)
5. Write an article for release

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6. Put the report on the agenda (Elders council, SB, IRA, Tribal Council etc.)
7. Use current state budget situation to move ahead

Next Steps

1. Get this into the schools (SD Bilingual, language commission, Meeting next week on the 6th, 7th ILC) Marik Reich, Hannah Loon)
2. Announce and publicize to build awareness – All
3. Alignment Summit in November – AASB – Education Steering committee 11/8 & 9
4. Before AFN Tribes can adopt a resolution – we need to provide them the information
5. Meeting in Mid-October, in the middle of the day – Terry to Schedule

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary the workshop was very well participated in, there were many practical and visionary ideas generated. If we are to create a movement, it starts with the individual. Every individual we can have this conversation with is a potential advocate for improved Inuit education. While some changes require fundamental systemic changes, reallocation of system funding/resources, and much advocacy and support at the policy level, there are many of the practical/tactical ideas that can have immense and immediate positive impacts. My recommended course of action is outlined below.

1. Keep the group momentum going by continuing with conference calls and other online social media outlets such as facebook groups, linkedin groups or meetup groups.
2. Use this report to inform and build upon your good work, be iterative, try things, if they don't work, try new things until it does work, continue to build on what you already know is working.
3. Set a task in your first meetings to prioritize tactics and required resources by which ones are easy to implement and have the highest positive impact.

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4. Categorize each area by systemic changes required, and changes that can be carried out in shorter timeframes with individual and small group effort.
5. Develop communication outlets to build more momentum and create passionate advocates.
6. Continue to have conversations with policy makers about putting funding and resources to areas in the education system that are not currently seen as a priority to begin to create the shifts required for a new framework and system to emerge that gets you to your vision.

Appendix: All transcribed flip charts not already included in the body of the report.

Colonization Impacts	What can we get from decolonization thinking?
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trauma felt when students were punished, it was confusing and negative ● Punished for speaking our own language ● Never learned the language because we were punished ● Trauma impacted me negatively and confusing ● Cultural ways of life were changed a) subsisting and living of the land b) Stories ● Our children quit learning a) homes were changed ● Parental guidance was no longer there, children were sent out to boarding schools, were introduced to a new way of life – technology – social problems ● Erosion of confidence in ourselves ● It took my fluency, it's hard to get back, it starts at home. ● Made it difficult to deal with identity ● Interrupted our own systems ● Became dependent on the Government ● Culture barrier growing up ● Loss of language at home and in schools ● 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We can get our language back ● Build stronger family foundation ● Food gathering with the young children ● Find individual strengths (play music, speak language, helping others learn, help elders to teach) ● Look to elders for guidance ● Tie school with the community ● Parenting skills ● Independence emerging from Inupiaq identity ● Fluency, revitalization of language ● Redefining family ● Healthy youth ● Continue with Inupiaq language past 8th grade ● Support for each other – parenting roles ● Interdependence collected strength ●
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Vision Brainstorm

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive ● Fluent ● Busy ● Happy ● Good self-esteem ● Incorporate Inuunaqput seasonal way of life into it ● Inupiaq values included ● Our history and family tree ● Elders involved ● Mentorship (Elder and youth together in training) ● Culture camp settings etc. where we also learn ● Open door classroom in and out settings in the seasonal harvesting activities ● Always moving to the seasonal harvesting activities ● Knowledge of the local seasons (area's) ● Have old pictures from long ago – media archives to look up stuff, museum pictures ● Libraries of Inuit culture, stories, pictures ● Unity ● Baby to Adult ● Inuit person – family – Tribe – Everything else ● Respect the first order of life ● Family is the core of life and has ownership in their school ● Elders and their role as teachers of a harmonious society
