

Inuit-Centred Learning in the Inuit Bachelor of Education Program

Un apprentissage centré sur le contenu inuit dans le programme de baccalauréat en éducation inuit

Sylvia Moore, Cheryl Allen, Marina Andersen, Doris Boase, Jenni-Rose Campbell, Tracey Doherty, Alanna Edmunds, Felicia Edmunds, Julie Flowers, Jodi Lyall, Cathy Mitsuk, Roxanne Nochasak, Vanessa Pamak, Frank Russell et Joanne Voisey

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Résumé de l'article

Le programme de baccalauréat inuit en éducation (IBED) au Labrador est un partenariat entre le gouvernement du Nunatsiavut (NG) et l'Université Memorial de Terre-Neuve. Il prépare les enseignants à devenir des participants clés du système éducatif de NG. Les étudiants de l'IBED et Sylvia Moore, le principal membre du corps professoral du programme, ont basé ce document sur une présentation collaborative. Les auteurs explorent les tensions entre le programme provincial actuel offert dans les écoles régionales et un programme fondé sur l'histoire, la culture et la vision du monde inuit ; qui redonne un rôle central à la langue inuit et qui se base sur la communauté, tel que recommandé dans la Stratégie nationale sur l'éducation des Inuit de 2011. Les étudiants discutent de quatre éléments clés de l'éducation culturellement pertinente : le territoire, la langue, les ressources et le savoir local. Moore réfléchit sur la façon dont le programme IBED incorpore ces mêmes éléments pour soutenir l'identité inuit et le développement de la pédagogie dans la formation initiale des enseignants.

Inuit-Centred Learning in the Inuit Bachelor of Education Program

Sylvia Moore,ⁱ Cheryl Allen, Marina Andersen, Doris Boase, Jenni-Rose Campbell, Tracey Doherty, Alanna Edmunds, Felicia Edmunds, Julie Flowers, Jodi Lyall, Cathy Mitsuk, Roxanne Nochasak, Vanessa Pamak, Frank Russell, and Joanne Voiseyⁱⁱ

ABSTRACT

The Inuit Bachelor of Education (IBED) program in Labrador is a partnership between the Nunatsiavut Government (NG) and Memorial University of Newfoundland. It is preparing teachers to be key participants in NG's education system. The IBED students and Sylvia Moore, the lead faculty member in the program, have based this paper on a collaborative presentation. The writers explore the tensions between the current provincial curriculum offered in the regional schools and a curriculum that is founded on Inuit history, culture, and worldview, restores the central role of the Inuit language, and is community-based as recommended in the 2011 National Strategy on Inuit Education. The students discuss four key threads of culturally relevant education: land, language, resources, and local knowledge. Moore reflects on how the IBED program incorporates these same elements to support Inuit identity and the developing pedagogy of the pre-service teachers.

RÉSUMÉ

Un apprentissage centré sur le contenu inuit dans le programme de baccalauréat en éducation inuit

Le programme de baccalauréat inuit en éducation (IBED) au Labrador est un partenariat entre le gouvernement du Nunatsiavut (NG) et l'Université Memorial de Terre-Neuve. Il prépare les enseignants à devenir des participants clés du système éducatif de NG. Les étudiants de l'IBED et Sylvia Moore, le principal membre du corps professoral du programme, ont basé ce document sur une présentation collaborative. Les auteurs explorent les tensions entre le programme provincial actuel offert dans les écoles régionales et un programme fondé sur l'histoire, la culture et la vision du monde inuit; qui redonne un rôle central à la langue inuit et qui se base sur la communauté, tel que recommandé dans la Stratégie nationale sur l'éducation des Inuit de 2011. Les étudiants discutent de quatre éléments clés de l'éducation culturellement pertinente: le territoire,

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ii. All the co-authors are Inuit Bachelor of Education program students.

la langue, les ressources et le savoir local. Moore réfléchit sur la façon dont le programme IBED incorpore ces mêmes éléments pour soutenir l'identité inuit et le développement de la pédagogie dans la formation initiale des enseignants.

The Nunatsiavut land claim was settled in 2005 and includes jurisdiction over education in this Inuit region of Labrador. While the Nunatsiavut Government (NG) has not yet taken control of the education system, it is one of four regions of Inuit Nunangat that is developing plans for Inuit education that will equip graduates for the twenty-first century (National Committee on Inuit Education 2011: 7). The Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) Education Summit reported a shortfall of Inuit educators across the four Inuit regions and that “more work is required in ensuring teacher and specialist qualifications reflect the value of the Inuit and cultural knowledge” (Silta Associates 2007: 13).

The Inuit Bachelor of Education (IBED) program, based in Labrador, is a partnership between NG and Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN). It is preparing primary and elementary teachers to be key participants in NG's education system. The IBED has several aims: offering a parallel Inuttit language program; encouraging pedagogies that incorporate a cultural lens; centring Inuit heritage, culture, language, and land in teaching and learning; referencing and using learning resources that reflect Inuit and regional culture; and respecting Inuit students' prior knowledge and perspectives as an integral part of teaching and learning processes.

In this article, the voices of IBED students are interwoven with the reflections of the lead faculty member for the program. These texts come from a teacher education curriculum course during which students explored ways to create an Inuit-centred curriculum that is founded on Inuit history, culture, and worldview and which restores the central role of the Inuit language (National Committee on Inuit Education 2011). In these discussions, the students conceptualized four elements of a culturally centred curriculum: language, land, local knowledge, and resources. Their instructor reflected on how the IBED program incorporates these same elements to develop the pedagogical knowledge and skills of the pre-service teachers.

Sylvia Moore is a mother and grandmother in a Mi'kmaw family, a professor of Indigenous education at Memorial University, and the lead faculty member for the IBED program. As a non-Inuit instructor, she works closely with Elders, NG education staff, and the students themselves to ensure that Inuit-specific culture is infused into the program framework and respects both Indigenous and Western ways of teaching and learning. Many of the students, thirteen women and one man, have worked in schools or in positions with children and youth. All of the

students are Nunatsiavut beneficiaries. Some live on the north coast of Labrador and others live in the Upper Lake Melville area of central Labrador.

Educator and community health advocate Shirley Tagalik (n.d.: 1) writes that people derive “a sense of cultural identity, collective purpose and belonging” from the philosophy of interconnectivity inherent in Indigenous worldviews. “Cultural wellbeing relies on the individual becoming situated within a cultural worldview.” If well-being, identity, purpose, and belonging are aspects of learners’ connectivity to their culture, then it is important that the knowledge, skills, and understandings of the world taught in formal education be framed within the explanations of the world, be consistent with the values to which a person aspires, and promote a sense of purpose reflective of that community. In writing about assimilation through education, Battiste (1998: 6) uses the label “cognitive imperialism” to describe the process that “denies many groups of people their language and cultural integrity and maintains the legitimacy of only one language, one culture, and one frame of reference.” This process happens through schooling, but it does not have to. The curriculum and pedagogy of schooling can be interwoven with identity, connection, and cultural wellness. Such teaching engages students’ learning spirits (Battiste 2010, 2013), builds on prior knowledge, grounds learning in the familiar, supports the development of strong and healthy cultural identities, and, in the case of the IBED program, prepares pre-service teachers to be participants in Nunatsiavut’s future education system and ready to nurture their students as citizens of a self-governing Inuit region.

We will now give a brief introduction to culturally responsive education before discussing language, land, local knowledge, and culturally responsive resources.

Culturally relevant education

In examining the experiences of First Nations students in universities, Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991: 6) state that institutions of higher learning can increase student participation in postsecondary education by respecting the cultural integrity of Indigenous communities, by legitimating Indigenous knowledge and skills, by engaging in reciprocal relationships with Indigenous Peoples through teaching and learning as a two-way process, and by working with students “to build upon their customary forms of consciousness and representation as they expand their understanding of the world.” Such cultural educational institutions must be attuned to and understand Indigenous culture, language, community nuance, and pedagogical approaches consistent with an Indigenous paradigm (Demmert and Towner 2003; Castagno and Brayboy 2008; Kovach et al. 2015).

An example of a university program that used a culturally relevant approach to teaching was the Inuit Bachelor of Social Work program (IBSW). The IBSW program, a partnership between MUN and NG, included culturally relevant learning experiences that focused on local and cultural knowledge,

including meeting with Inuit social workers, attending a Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing, interning in coastal communities, participating in a community healing session, and training in intergenerational trauma and the use of culture as healing (Oliver et al. 2013: 78).

The Alaska Native Knowledge Network developed the *Guidelines for Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers for Alaska's Schools* (ANKN 1999), which indicate the “enhanced knowledge and skills that culturally responsive teachers need” for teaching in Indigenous and remote communities (2). On this point, the guidelines offer teachers several recommendations: “incorporate alternative ways of knowing in their teaching practice and understand the similarities and differences between them, particularly with regard to the intermingling of Alaska Native and Western traditions” (5); “engage in extended experiences that involve the development of observation and listening skills associated with the traditional learning ways of Native people” (7); and “utilize alternative instructional strategies grounded in ways of teaching and learning traditional [practices] to the local community and engage community members in helping to assess their effectiveness in achieving student learning” (12). Although intended for Alaska’s education system, the guidelines—particularly the need for serious consideration of the knowledge and skills important for culturally relevant teaching—apply elsewhere.

The IBED students have been engaged in thinking deeply about educational theories as they relate to the process of decolonizing education and creating Inuit self-determined education. The students have not only become familiar with the curriculum guides of the province in which we live but also examined the Inuit-centric curriculum guides and supporting documents from Nunavut. These activities have been the groundwork for considering the knowledge, skills, teaching strategies, and learning resources needed to promote learning and identity development.

Language

Sylvia: In addition to the university courses offered by MUN, the IBED program includes an Inuttit language training program that is a critical part of preparing the Inuit pre-service teachers. Indigenous languages encompass the collective knowledge of the language speakers, enable “communication between generations and across communities” (Townley et al. 2013: 59), and are the most significant factor in the restoration, regeneration, and survival of Indigenous knowledge (Battiste 2010: 17). “Inuit view the need to learn the Inuit language as not only the most viable model for their schools, but also a human right” (National Committee on Inuit Education 2011: 77). Sarah Townley is the retired Inuk coordinator of the Inuttit Language and Life Skills programs for the Labrador School Board. She explains the significance of Inuttit to Inuit identity and describes an emptiness that may exist for people who do not speak the language (Townley et al. 2013: 65).

I do not speak Inuttitut, but, as an instructor in the university section of the program, I encourage and support the students in incorporating Inuttitut in the learning activities they develop, acknowledging their growing vocabulary as they use the Inuttitut words to talk amongst themselves, and I comment on their Inuttitut language displays in our shared classroom. I think about these future teachers and wonder if there will be a positive ripple effect of Inuttitut language learning that will extend into their teaching even if they are not language teachers or fluent speakers. I anticipate the ways that they may participate in strengthening Inuttitut, which includes: sharing their own positive attitudes towards the language with the students; supporting the connections between language, a sense of self, and a connection to community; collaborating with the Inuttitut language teacher on lessons or themed units for a holistic approach to teaching; and presenting themselves as role models who encourage others to take up the language learning. In these ways, providing Inuttitut language training simultaneously with the teacher education program is contributing to the rejuvenation of Inuttitut as well as building towards the National Strategy on Inuit Education theme of bilingual education (National Committee on Inuit Education 2011).

The following excerpt, from a 2016 presentation by a group of the IBED students, reflects their commitment to the rejuvenation of their language.

Marina: How do we revitalize our language?

Vanessa: *Ilinniatitsilaugit Inuttut* (“We teach the language”). In the *Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC’s): Calls to Action*, the TRC calls upon the federal government to enact an Aboriginal languages act that incorporates a number of principles. One of these is that “Aboriginal languages are a fundamental and valued element of Canadian culture and society, and there is an urgency to preserve them” (TRC 2012: 4).

Tracey: *Ilinnialaugit Inuttut* (“We learn Inuttitut”). In my family (*ilagijaga*), my grandmother was Anânatsiaga Shiwaki. The Shiwak’s family name came from *Sikoak*, meaning “the first thin ice.” In our family, over the generations, we lost Inuttitut. The Inuit are very family-oriented and our core beliefs about family and kinship have been kept in the language. However, we are the most southerly Inuit in the world, and we were in close contact with non-Inuit. My family members historically travelled so far that, by my generation, the connections to culture and language were very tenuous. I am excited because of this opportunity with Nunatsiavut and our Inuit Bachelor of Education program to learn Inuttitut.

When our Elder, Sarah Townley, is teaching us Inuttitut, her eyes sparkle as she activates the synapses in my brain with exercises that vitalize the language; learning that way makes the language real. We move our bodies. We touch things. We name them. She inspires us to use our brains and, in this way, Inuttitut comes alive.

Cathy: *UKâlalaugit Inuttut* (“We speak Inuttitut”). Imagine that you see a little baby or a toddler. She is the cutest, most beautiful, and most adorable baby you have ever seen. You just want to hug her and squeeze her and adore her and kiss her. You want her to know she’s the most beautiful baby in the whole wide world. Notice how many words and think of how much body language I would have to use to describe that feeling. In the Inuttitut language, when I describe that emotion, as a result of seeing the little one, I say, “I could just *Ugiak* her.” Everything I said in English to describe those feelings and emotions towards that little child are expressed in one word. Our language is lost in translation. The words we speak have meaning, emotion, and feelings, so when we translate these words into English we lose this meaning.

Doris: *Kinakkut ilinnialangajot, uKâlalangajot, ilinniatitsilangajot Inuttut?* (“Who will learn, speak, and teach Inuttitut?”) *Uvanga* (“Me”)

Cathy: *Uvanga* (“Me”).

Vanessa: *Uvanga* (“Me”).

Tracey: *Uvanga* (“Me”).

Marina: *Uvangu* (“Me too”).

All together: *Sotagga inosigigattigu* (“We live our language”).

Land

Sylvia: The land is a source of identity and knowledge. In a video about the politics of Inuit identity, one speaker said, “When we are born on the land that is our home. That’s what we Inuit say” (Kunuk 2006: 44:44–44:50). Land is also a place of learning. It is within a particular land base and ecology that Indigenous people learn (Battiste 2010: 17). Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2016) describes the character skills that Inuit develop on the land: “As you are waiting for the ice to form and the snow to fall and the weather to improve and the animals to surface, you are being taught patience immediately. When you are out there taking survival-based risks, you are learning how to be courageous. You are learning

how to deal with stressful situations; how to be bold under pressure. You are learning ultimately to develop sound judgment” (3: 29–4: 17).

Pedagogy that focuses on the land is evident in some of the IBED courses. Students have participated in land-based, culturally relevant activities such as dog sledding and outdoor storytelling sessions with Elders. Such experiences immersed students in the environment where their thinking about the connections of land, culture, and curriculum was nurtured. There are other equally important ways of making land the focus or centre of teaching and learning. For example, learning in relationship with the environment could include activities such as hiking and observing the landforms of the area around the community, listening as Elders tell of how landforms have changed over time, noticing how a river cuts through a valley, and learning from hunters how birds and animals live within the wetlands or forests. Certain stones from the region may be used in jewelry making and the landscape may be depicted in visual art. The approach locates learning in a particular place and the human knowledge of living within that location. It is learning in relationship to the land and the life of the land. This learning not only takes place within a specific region but also frames the teaching and learning within the ways of knowing, doing, and being of the peoples who have lived in and on that land for a long time.

Learning on the land may also be referred to as place-based learning (Sobel 2004), environmental education (Palmer 1998), or outdoor education, although these designations do not necessarily include Indigenous knowledges or pedagogies in the teaching and learning. Another way to legitimate land-based knowledge is to bridge the perceived gap between land-based learning and the provincial curriculum by challenging students to develop learning activities that meet education outcomes while connecting student learning to the land. In the IBED program, this approach has extended to students creating learning modules that connect cross-curricular learning outcomes to the land. Examples might include learning outcomes from music, language arts, and science in studying birds of Labrador. A third way of centring land in teacher education is to support pre-service teachers in being knowledgeable about the history and life of the land through both their coursework and their personal life experiences. Their learning is reflected in the following writing, from the IBED students’ presentation, where several of them discuss their understanding of the role of land in teaching and learning.

Jodi: For over a century, we have been organizing our curriculum in a way that reflects Western world and European ideologies. One of the most influential components of our culture is our connection to the land. In an effort to change the way we teach, we want to incorporate culturally centred material that connects learning to the land.

Jenni: The land is so much more than just the ground we stand on; it's a feeling, a source of identity, and a way of life. We do encourage families to take their children out on the land and teach them in a hands-on way about our traditional way of life. However, since there is a legal requirement for children of a certain age to attend school, we believe it's essential for us as teachers to make it as culturally centred and meaningful as possible.

As a class, we have come to realize certain moments when meaningful and deep learning happens. Meaningful learning happens the moment a certain connection is made. By incorporating aspects of the land into our lessons, we hope to engage and inspire our students to recognize the importance of their heritage. Doing this will help instil a sense of pride in the students and in where they come from, which will strengthen their identity as Inuit.

Alanna: It is an important goal for our children [in Nunatsiavut] to graduate from school and be eligible to further their education. However, we [as pre-service teachers] find that they are losing their interest, and also we are losing our connection with the students. It seems as though they are being taught things that are not part of their communities and their culture.

Taking students outside to become active will benefit them physically and mentally. Instead of using blocks or pictures and sitting inside in a chair, we can use land-based activities to meet the mathematics curriculum outcomes. For example, berry picking is an important activity in our communities. Students could add and subtract with pieces of our land.

Felicia: We could learn about the growth and environmental surroundings of the berry bush in science class, engage students in reflecting on the activity and how they felt while they were doing it, or use it as an English-language arts project. We could create a history lesson, guided by the question, "How were these berries used before we had ovens and advanced cooking technology?" This simple, cultural activity opens up so many different learning opportunities. We hear so often about the lack of resources available. Teachers are struggling with budget restraints that make it difficult to access materials they deem necessary to meet the teaching objectives. Let us learn to think outside the box and look around us. Our environment provides endless resources that can easily be incorporated in every subject in the primary and elementary grade levels. Let us start taking these amazing resources that are readily available to us and create lessons that promote meaningful learning.

Elders and local knowledge holders

Sylvia: Elders are the culture bearers who are able to pass on the knowledge, skills, traditions, and history that has been passed down from their parents and grandparents. It is important that Elders are part of formal education in order to share their knowledge with students. In Inuit regions, the ITK standards include “collaboration with Elders on development of long-term planning and initiatives through advisory groups at various levels” (Silta Associates 2007: 3) and the engagement of Elders in schools and school governance as well as advisory bodies (5).

The knowledge that Elders pass on is *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ), which translates to “that which Inuit have always known to be true” (Tagalik n.d.: 1). IQ is based on four core laws of relationship: working for the common good; respecting all living things; maintaining harmony and balance; and continually planning and preparing for the future. There are also communal laws or guiding principles: “*Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* (showing respect and caring for others), *tunnganarniq* (being welcoming, open, and inclusive), *piliriqatigiigniq* (developing collaborative relationships to work together for a common purpose), *avatimik kamattiarniq* (environmental stewardship), *pilimmaksarniq* (knowledge and skills acquisition), *qanuqtuurunnarniq* (being resourceful to solve problems), *aajiqatigiiniq* (consensus decision-making), and *pijitsirniq* (serving)” (National Committee on Inuit Education 2006: 72).

Elders and local knowledge holders have been involved in the IBED program through visits to the classroom to share stories, language, and skills and by telling stories and offering presentations during land-based classes. For example, a local knowledge holder demonstrated snowshoe making, another discussed the Churchill River and showed photos from the many trips he has taken down the river, and another Elder told stories about her life as a child going to a boarding school. The IBED students have also consulted Elders as part of various research projects and small group activities. Elders and local knowledge holders also facilitated a healing circle that students requested as we began to talk about residential schools.

In the following section, students describe how they value Elders and local knowledge holders in education.

Cheryl: Local knowledge refers to the knowledge systems that are embedded in the cultural traditions of regional, Indigenous, or local communities. As Inuit pre-service teachers, we are becoming more aware of the importance of incorporating local knowledge in schools. By using local knowledge as a primary source in all areas of the curriculum, we can make learning more centred to the students, which in turn creates a deeper and more meaningful learning experience. By availing of local knowledge in our communities, we can make meaningful and strong connections that will foster relationships within the schools and communities.

Joanne: Local knowledge is not only readily available but it is also user-friendly. The knowledge people possess can be easily utilized and incorporated into any lesson plan with a little creative thought and an open mind. By inviting Elders, local craftspeople, wildlife officers, local historians, and even dog-team drivers, teachers can bring a wealth of knowledge into the classroom that will enhance the curriculum and student learning.

Julie: I developed a Grade 5–6 social studies lesson plan that includes local knowledge. It is one of five lessons I created on the topic of caribou. I want my students to learn how caribou was hunted many years ago and how hunting styles have evolved over time, what parts of a caribou can be used and for what purpose, how a caribou is skinned, and how to tell a young caribou from the older ones.

I think the students retain more information and have a deeper, more meaningful learning experience if they are taught from hunters and Elders, people they know, and people from their communities. The guests can sit down and talk about special hunting experiences and engage [small groups of] students in storytelling, which is another aspect of our culture. When I developed the lesson, I was able to meet general curriculum outcomes and specific curriculum outcomes from the Newfoundland and Labrador social studies curriculum guide. This is just one example and one way to bring a culturally valued resource into students' education.

Joanne: We have so much useful, practical knowledge right at our fingertips that needs to be recognized. Not only will we be covering our objectives and outcomes; at the same time, we will be passing on traditional knowledge. As future Nunatsiavut teachers, we want students to walk away knowing who they are and where they come from, and for us teachers to find ways to keep our culture strong in the future generations.

Culturally relevant resources

Students in the IBED program recognize the importance of culturally relevant teaching resources and the nature of such material.

Frank: All communities have resources for teachers to use. There are four types that can make teaching culturally centred. The first is print resources. There are an increasing number of print materials available that reflect Aboriginal cultures and can be utilized to make lessons more significant to students. Books such as *Polar Bear in the Rock* (Labrador Institute 2009), written in both English and Inuttitut, celebrate Labrador Inuit culture through the telling of an Inuit legend. It also provides a Western context to contrast the Inuit legend. The story can be a resource in meeting curriculum outcomes in language arts, social studies, science, and art. The second type of culturally centred resource is

non-print resources, which can be anything from a fishhook to a photo of an Elder when she was a child. Such material objects enrich learning.

Local people are also a resource as mentioned by the group on Elders and local knowledge holders. Teachers will find that Elders and others in the community, who have traditional knowledge, are also willing to help develop materials to share the culture with the next generation. [On a regional level, some of this work is being done by Inuit teachers for the Inuttit Language and Life Skills courses. These staff are funded by NG and employed by the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District—the regional education authority.]

Teachers can also create learning resources. For example, if a book has pictures of high-rise apartment buildings or escalators, children may not know what they are. If teachers can substitute or also use pictures of things in the northern environment, such as an igloo or a drum, students will more likely relate to what is being taught.

Sylvia: Using resources in the local environment can link language and traditional knowledge. Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2000: 127) quotes an Elder as saying, “Children do not learn language writing words on a blackboard. They learn it by watching someone do something, like skin a seal.” Watt-Cloutier suggests, “Have the child skin a seal and you have interactive learning.”

Sarah Townley and two curriculum workers were responsible for development of the lesson plans and the resource materials for both Inuttit and Life Skills programs in schools that are now within the Nunatsiavut land claim region. Sarah explained the development of Life Skills course binders that contain patterns and instructions to make a variety of traditional Inuit items, such as clothing and snowshoes. Sarah and the other curriculum workers also create books in Inuttit for the language classes. For both Life Skills and Inuttit, this staff produced the curriculum resources for Grades K–12.

Students can also be producers of knowledge. In demonstrating the knowledge they have gained, students’ learning products may, in turn, teach others. As a classroom teacher, there were several occasions when students in my class created projects that reached a wider audience. One was when a group of high school students created a video about the people of Wildcat First Nation. The video was subsequently added to the Nova Scotia Department of Education’s authorized resource list and was shown on the Learning Channel numerous times over a span of several years (Moore 2003). A second example is when a group of students interviewed scientists at Kejimikujik National Park and National Historic Site as well as scientists from the Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute to learn more about the species-at-risk in southwestern Nova Scotia. The students focused on five of the twenty-five species and created a video showing what was learned. They subsequently showed the video at schools around the region and challenged other students to learn more about the other twenty species-at-risk (Moore 2007).

The power of student projects as the basis of learning and of teaching others is evident in the wall hanging created by the IBED students in a course about teaching in northern and Indigenous communities, which Roxanne explains (Figure 1).

Roxanne: This wall hanging is an example of a resource created by our class in an education class with Sylvia. It visually represents the Inuit societal values from the National Inuit Education Strategy. We collectively decided to use the Labrador colours of white, green, and blue. The four blocks represent the northern lights, which stand for the laws of relationship. The other eight blocks are in the shape of an *inuksuk* and represent the laws that provide guidance. The person and polar bear stand for being respectful of all living things. The *inuksuk*, in the middle, stands for Nunatsiavut. Around it are the symbols of the departments that make up the Nunatsiavut Government. They stand for the value of working together for the common good. The blanket toss represents maintaining harmony. The picture of an Elder helping a child over a harpoon stands for continually planning and preparing for a better future. The sealskin and *inuksuk* represent consensus in decision making. The hunter sharing seal with an Elder and child shows respect and caring for others. The *kullik* represents knowledge and skills acquisition. The sealskin mitt is a symbol of an Inuk shaking hands with a non-Inuk, representing the act of being welcoming and inclusive. The dog team symbolizes serving. The person recycling represents environmental stewardship. The *ulu* and boat stand for being grateful. And the two people holding a person on a *kamituk* represent working together for a common purpose.

The original wall hanging is in our classroom in Goose Bay, Labrador. Photographs of the piece were reproduced full-size and framed. One was presented to Dr. Kirk Anderson, Dean of Education, and hangs in the Faculty of Education at MUN. The second was presented to Minister Patricia Kemuksigak, Minister of Education and Economic Development for NG. This work of art represents a learning process in addition to being a product of student learning, and now others learn from it.¹

1. A wall hanging of *Sila*, the life force in Inuit cosmology, was in the classroom when the IBED began. The art was created by students in the Native and Northern BED, an earlier Aboriginal teacher education program offered by MUN in Labrador.



Figure 1. Wall hanging created by IBED students, 2016.
Photo: Michelle Baikie

Conclusion

As part of their learning in a teacher education course, the IBED students conceptualized culturally relevant teaching with four components: language, land, Elders and local knowledge holders, and learning resources that reflect cultural knowledge. These elements connect curriculum and pedagogy to the people and the environment of the school community, and thus situate teaching and learning within a cultural context. These same threads of connectivity are evident in the IBED program as Inuit culture is infused into the teacher education degree.

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