



Background

Nunavut's New *Education Act*

Since 1999, Nunavut has used the *Northwest Territories' Education Act*. In 1999, the Department of Education began work on a new draft specific to Nunavut.

Bill 1, the first draft of the made-in-Nunavut *Education Act* was introduced in 2002 and withdrawn from consideration by the Legislative Assembly in 2003.

Community consultations for this proposed *Education Act* began in late 2004. Every community in Nunavut was visited, with meetings with DEAs, school staff and the public. A steering committee co-chaired by NTI met numerous times during 2006 and 2007. The Steering Committee also included the three Regional Inuit Organizations, DEAs and the *Commission scolaire francophone du Nunavut* (CFSN), the Nunavut Teachers' Association, the DEA Coalition, the Nunavut Disabilities Society, and the Nunavut Association of Municipalities.

The feedback provided at the various meetings and consultations serves as the base for the draft and ensured that the new Act reflects the needs of Nunavummiut.

There are major changes involved with the new proposed legislation, including:

- Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a foundation, including requirements for the Minister of Education, DEAs and school staff.
- Dedication to bilingual education with the Inuit language.
- More responsibility for District Education Authorities in policy development, the direction of principals and administration of school activities.
- More support for students through inclusive education, counsellors in every school, attendance programs and in-school suspensions with assistance plans, and a guaranteed student-educator ratio.
- Legislated recognition of the DEA Coalition to support DEAs and participate in Department of Education planning.

The new *Education Act* incorporates recommendations made from submissions, reaction and responses from the first proposed Education Act in 2003 and the 2006 report by Thomas Berger, as well as fulfilling commitments made in *Pinasuaqtavut*.

The proposed *Education Act* was introduced into the Legislative Assembly as Bill 21 on November 5th, 2007, and referred to the Standing Committee on Health and Education. The Standing Committee received written submissions, held public hearings, and met with the Minister of Education to discuss the Bill. Numerous motions were passed by Standing Committee in cooperation with the Minister of Education to amend and improve the Bill. The Standing Committee reported the Bill back to the Legislative Assembly on September 15th, 2008.

The new *Education Act* received third reading in the Legislative Assembly with unanimous approval on September 18, 2008. The Commissioner gave assent to the Bill on the same day.