News Release

Department of Education certifies Elders as key part of learning in Nunavut schools

IQALUIT, Nunavut (February 2, 2011) – In a ceremony today in Iqaluit, five Elders were certified as *Innait Inuksiutilirijiit* in Nunavut schools, acknowledging their skills, knowledge and abilities as an integral part of education in Nunavut.

"Today is a great day for learning in Nunavut," said Premier Eva Aariak. "The certification and recognition of Elders and their expertise is an important step in creating a Nunavut education system that is founded in Inuit culture, language and traditions."

Mary Akumalik, Sinea Kownirk, Serapio Ittusardjuat, Letia Tikivik and Sheepa Ishulutaq, all from Iqaluit, are the first Elders to be certified as *Innait Inuksiutilirijiit*, under the new *Education Act*. Under section 102 of Act, District Education Authorities (DEAs) may employ Elders to assist in teaching about Inuit culture, tradition and knowledge. Elder certification means Elders are considered a part of the school education staff, alongside the principal, counselor, teachers and student support assistants. They are able to participate in instruction of school programs, in cooperation and with the support of the school team and classroom teachers.

"My congratulations and thanks to Mary, Sinea, Serapio, Letia and Sheepa for their commitment to Nunavut's learners. I encourage all DEAs to begin this important process and certify Elders in their communities. It will certainly enrich the learning experiences of our students and help build a strong foundation of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* in our schools," said Aariak.

The Department of Education recognizes the vision, leadership and education offered by Elders is vital in building a school system that is substantially shaped by *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, reflects local needs and values and supports life-long learning. The certification of Elders is one of many initiatives under the *Education Act* to strengthen Inuit culture and language in Nunavut schools.

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