



Workplace Learning and Career Navigation Tools

Incorporating Inuit Perspectives and Values in Workplace Learning

June 20, 2023



Human resources team member or occupational health and safety representative



The Future Skills Centre – Centre des Compétences futures (FSC-CCF) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce. As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead.

The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint, and The Conference Board of Canada.

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Funded by the
Government of Canada's
Future Skills Program



Key terms

Inuk: The singular form of Inuit.

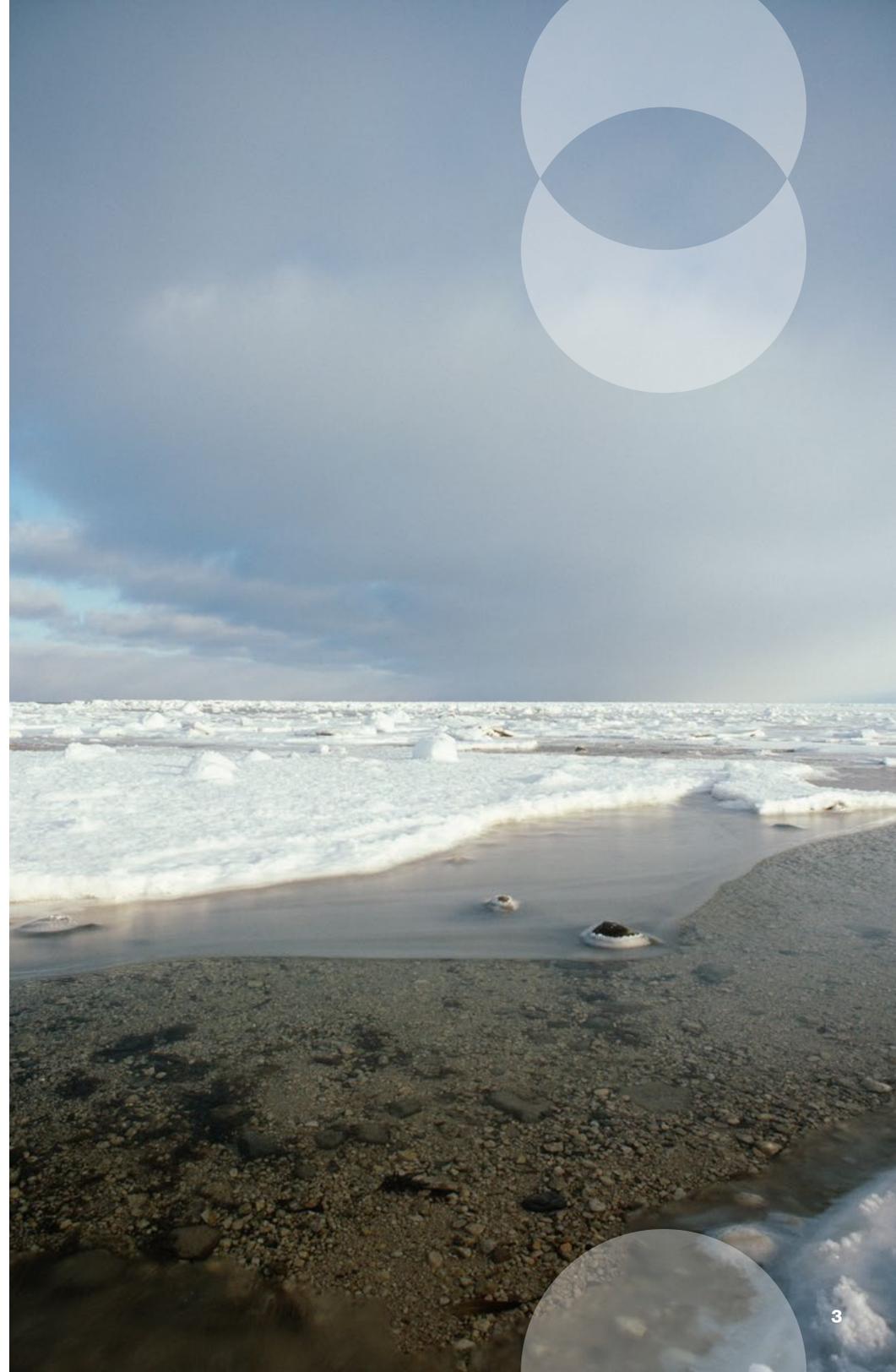
Inuit Nunangat: The homeland of Inuit in Canada, encompassing Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut across Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

pilimmaksarniq/pijariuqsarniq: “Development of skills through observation, mentoring, practice and effort.”¹

self-actualization: A state of being in which a person can take full advantage of their strengths and creativity to be the best version of themselves.

Two-Eyed Seeing: A Mi'kmaq principle about learning to see the world from multiple perspectives.

¹ Government of Nunavut, *Public Service Annual Report 2020–21*, 4.

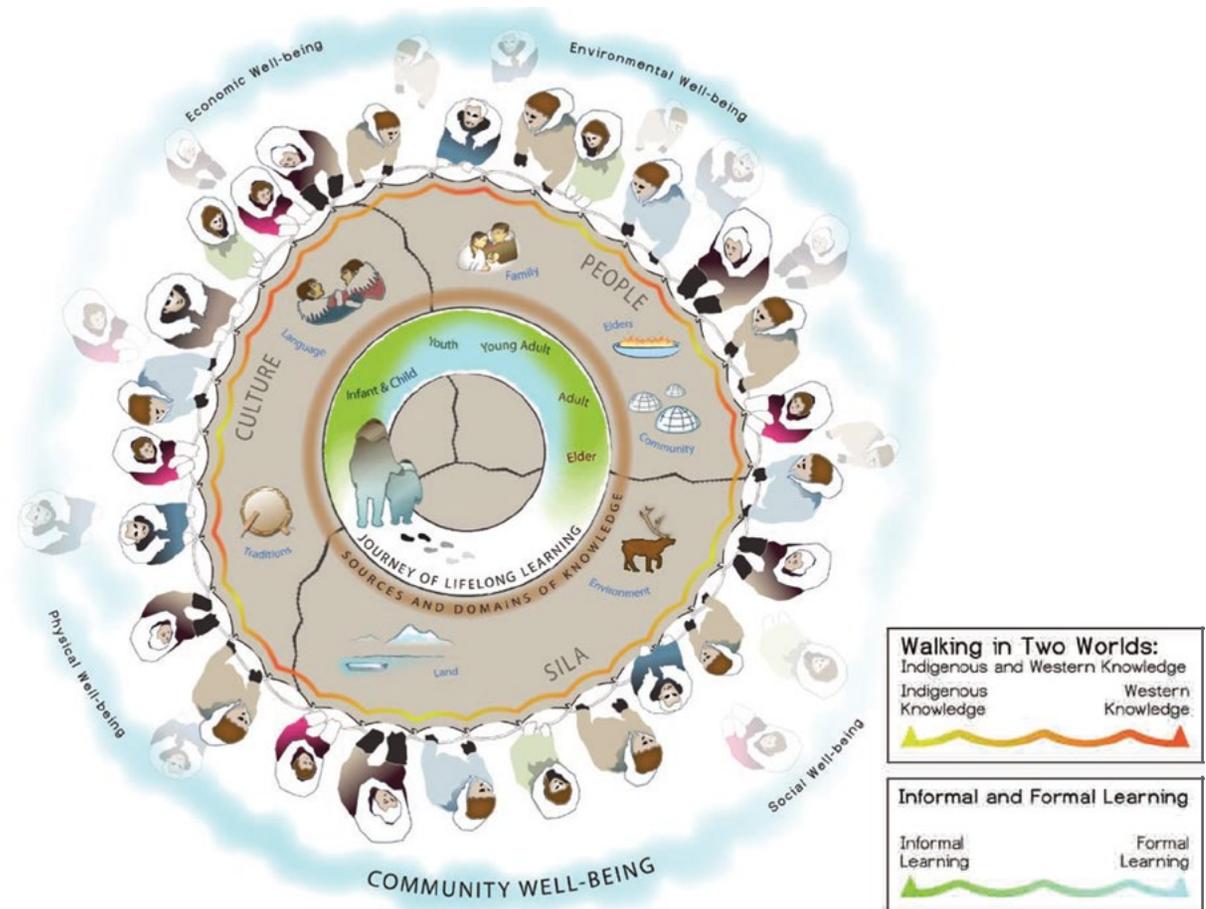


A model for understanding

The information in this tool is inspired by the Inuit Holistic Lifelong Learning Model from the Canadian Council on Learning² (see Exhibit 1) and the Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit Education Framework for Nunavut Curriculum.³

The holistic learning model visually represents community well-being, its components, and the layers of family and community that are part of the learning journey. Like Two-Eyed Seeing, this model acknowledges that Inuit navigate learning from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge perspectives.

Exhibit 1
Inuit Holistic Lifelong Learning Model



² Canadian Council on Learning, "Inuit Holistic Life-Long Learning Model."

³ Nunavut Department of Education, *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit Education Framework for Nunavut Curriculum*.

Source: Canadian Council on Learning, *Redefining How Success Is Measured*.

The Inuit Qaujimagatunqangit Education Framework describes Inuit beliefs as they relate to education

When thinking about learning delivery, bring humour into the classroom! Encourage learners to be friendly with one another and set an example for this environment. The Inuit Societal Value tunnganarniq is about “fostering good spirits by being open, welcoming and inclusive.”⁴

Engage Inuit trainers

Partner with Inuit educators, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and community members to develop or review your learning content. Collaborative working relationships are built over time and should be centred on respect and reciprocity. Consider this process in the longer term, ideally before you even begin developing training for Inuit candidates and employees. You can direct initial inquiries about potential partners to community administration or an Elders council related to your industry. Consider your budget constraints and ability to compensate Inuit cultural experts for their knowledge through short- and longer-term contracts. Be mindful of—or ask about—community protocol, events, leaves, seasonality, and infrastructure when making your requests.

Build a safe learning environment that recognizes individual strengths supporting the collective

Inuit values can be embedded in workplace learning through the way you teach and assess learners. Healthy workplaces are built on respect for individuals working together as a collective.⁵ One way that employers can bring tunnganarniq to life is to develop a classroom agreement before instruction begins. Classroom agreements are ground rules for the learning environment and may contain items like learning everyone’s preferred names

and pronouns, respecting the speaker even if you don’t agree with their point, and listening carefully. As much as possible, bring community and family connections into the learning environment. If you provide in-community training, arrange for child care or provide an environment where children are welcome. Community collaborations and projects can also help learners take responsibility for improving the community, enacting pijitsirniq (“serving and providing for family and/or community”⁶).

Assess learning in adaptable ways

Another way to embed Inuit values in learning is to consider *ilitaunnikuliniriniq* (dynamic assessment that links instruction and assessment⁷) as a process rather than a milestone.⁸ This concept recognizes that all learners have individual strengths and that you can validate learning at different paces through descriptive (as opposed to evaluative) feedback—this means providing comments or conversations that help the learner understand where they can improve, rather than summarizing how well they’ve done in a task.⁹ Assessment should represent realistic situations¹⁰ and the needs and interests of learners.¹¹ It should be linked to an individual’s goals and strengths, as well as learning skills such as creative thinking, solution-seeking, and knowing how to learn.¹² You can assess collective work through projects like exhibits and portfolios.¹³

6 Government of Nunavut, *Public Service Annual Report 2020–21*, 4.

7 Nunavut Department of Education, *Ilitaunnikuliniriniq: Foundation for Dynamic Assessment*, 24.

8 *Ibid.*, 24.

9 Nunavut Department of Education, *Ilitaunnikuliniriniq: Foundation for Dynamic Assessment*; and MoEdu-Sail. “Feedback in Practice: Evaluative and Descriptive.”

10 Nunavut Department of Education, *Ilitaunnikuliniriniq: Foundation for Dynamic Assessment*, 27.

11 *Ibid.*, 42.

12 *Ibid.*, 53.

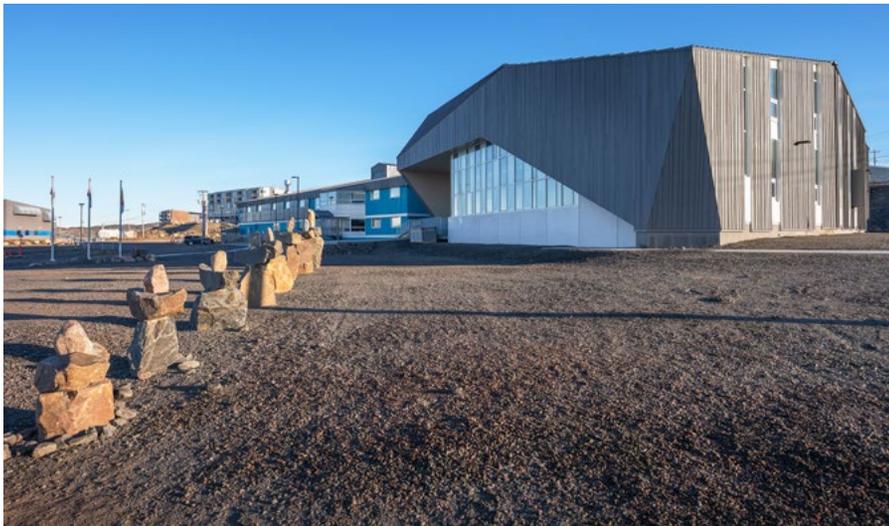
13 *Ibid.*, 57.

4 Government of Nunavut, *Public Service Annual Report 2020–21*, 4.

5 Nunavut Department of Education, *Ilitaunnikuliniriniq: Foundation for Dynamic Assessment*, 24.

Empower learners through team-based decision-making

Student empowerment is a way to enact the Inuit Societal Values of *aajiiqatiginniq* (“decision-making through discussion and consensus”¹⁴) and *qanuqtuurniq* (“being innovative and resourceful”¹⁵). Instructors can bring this into the learning environment through team-based decision-making, collaboration, and encouraging everyone to be adaptable and have an open mind.¹⁶ One way that Inuit engage in decision-making is for everyone to share their thoughts, discuss them openly, and then come to a final decision that everyone can accept.¹⁷ During this process, people with special knowledge could be invited to give their opinion.



14 Government of Nunavut, *Public Service Annual Report 2020–21*, 4.

15 Ibid.

16 Nunavut Department of Education, *Iilitaunnikuliriniq: Foundation for Dynamic Assessment*.

17 Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, *The Inuit Way: A Guide to Inuit Culture*, 30.

Workplace learning

Cultural immersion

The Government of Nunavut has provisions for cultural immersion days for both Inuit and non-Inuit employees as part of their employee retention strategy and their aspiration to incorporate Inuit societal values in the workplace.¹⁸ This includes events planned to engage employees in Inuit cultural activities. Each department dedicates the equivalent of two full days per year to cultural immersion days. Activities can include on-the-land and Inuit cultural activities such as team-building survival activities.

18 Government of Nunavut, “Cultural Immersion Day.”

On-the-job experience

Inuit value developing skills through observation, mentoring, practice, and effort—all concepts that are part of the Inuit Societal Value pilimmaksarniq/pijariuqsarniq (“development of skills through observation, mentoring, practice and effort”¹⁹) and that align perfectly with on-the-job experiential training.

In Agnico Eagle Mines’ work readiness training and career path program, participants learn about life skills and work foundations from Indigenous instructors, including ways to deal with working away from their communities. The career path program is led by Inuit trainers and provides a way to understand career navigation from entry-level roles, sharing the steps needed to reach higher positions, including work experience, skills, and test scores.

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. also offers on-the-job training for candidates. Further, non-Inuit staff at NTI are expected to help train and mentor Inuit staff. And employees could receive up to 100 per cent of their salary if they take leave for Inuktitut language training. Importantly, these expectations and opportunities are entrenched in their HR policies.

19 Government of Nunavut, *Public Service Annual Report 2020–21*, 4.

Building perspective

By embedding Inuit values in training, you will build up your non-Inuit workforce’s cultural awareness.

This is important for retention because Indigenous employees will leave an employer when there is a lack of cultural awareness among staff.²⁰ Indigenous employees are often singled out to explain Indigenous issues to other staff,²¹ adding mental and physical labour to their day that often goes unrecognized. Training on Indigenous content needs to be accessible locally and led by culturally aware trainers. Doing so can help ensure Inuit colleagues stay at your organization.

If your teams are beginning their learning journey in Indigenous history and cultural awareness, consider exploring Indigenous Canada, a free, 12-week virtual course developed by the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta.

If you are ready to begin embedding Inuit values in your in-house or external training opportunities, please download our ***Inuit Perspectives on Workplace Learning*** tool.

20 MacLaine, Lalonde, and Fiser, *Working Together: Indigenous Recruitment and Retention in Remote Canada*, 66.

21 *Ibid.*, 53.



Where insights meet impact

Workplace Learning and Career Navigation Tools: Incorporating Inuit Perspectives and Values in Workplace Learning

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To cite this research: Hibbert, Alicia, Twiladawn Stonefish, and Nafisa Sarwath. *Workplace Learning and Career Navigation Tools: Incorporating Inuit Perspectives and Values in Workplace Learning*. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2023.

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