

Languages Commissioner of Nunavut

2001-2002 Annual Report

The Honourable Kevin O'Brien
Speaker of the House
Legislative Assembly
Iqaluit, Nunavut

Mr. Speaker:

Pursuant to Section 23 of the *Official Languages Act*, I hereby submit to the Legislative Assembly for consideration, the annual report of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut covering the period from April 1, 2001 to March 31, 2002.

Yours respectfully,

Eva Aariak
Languages Commissioner

Table of Contents

| | |
|----|--|
| 4 | Message from the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut |
| 5 | Roles and Responsibilities of the Languages Commissioner |
| 7 | The Review of the <i>Official Languages Act</i> |
| 15 | Other 2000-2001 Activities |
| 21 | Budget and Expenditures |
| 22 | 2002-2003 Workplan |

Message from the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut

It is a great pleasure to present my third Annual Report as Languages Commissioner of Nunavut. The release of my two previous reports provided an opportunity for the Members of the Legislative Assembly, the media and, above all, the public to focus on questions of language amidst all the other challenges facing the new territory. I hope that this report will continue that trend.

The *2000-2001 Annual Report* presented the findings of an investigation my office conducted into the use of language in the operations of the Government of Nunavut and its delivery of services to the public. These findings were well received by the Ajauqtiit Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly, as were my recommendations for the Government of Nunavut to fully implement the *Official Languages Act*, and its language goals in the *Bathurst Mandate*. It is clear that the Members of the Legislative Assembly share the concerns of Nunavut's communities for the long-term health of Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun while recognizing the need to respect the rights of the territory's other two languages French and English. To date, however, Nunavummiut have yet to see the good intentions and noble words expressed in the Legislative Assembly followed up with strong action by the government on language issues.

This past year did see the Legislative Assembly strike a Special Committee to review the *Official Languages Act* that Nunavut inherited from the Northwest Territories. The Committee is in the process of consulting with, and receiving input from, the public on what changes are needed to the legislation. The *Official Languages Act* will provide the legislative foundation that will ultimately shape the government's efforts to support and protect Nunavut's languages. The Office of the Languages Commissioner has dedicated considerable time and effort to researching the potential impact the Act will have on the language issues confronting the territory, and to preparing recommendations for the consideration of the Members of the Legislative Assembly. This annual report contains details of my office's contribution to the review process thus far.

In 2001-2002 I, once again, had the opportunity to visit communities throughout Nunavut, from Pangnirtung (Panniqtuuq) to Kugluktuk (Qurluqtuq). Everywhere I travelled, I heard the same desire expressed for the government to act decisively to slow and hopefully reverse the erosion of Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun. While it is important that legislation and policies to support language are developed with care, the need for action is becoming more and more urgent.

The past year has seen the issue of language moved to the front of Nunavut's political agenda. It is likely to stay there as discussions around the *Official Languages Act* and Nunavut's *Education Act* unfold over the next year. I look forward with great anticipation to continuing this discussion with the public and with Nunavut's leaders in the months to come.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Languages Commissioner

The Languages Commissioner is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly, appointed by Nunavut's elected representatives for a four year term. The Languages Commissioner has a number of responsibilities, which are detailed in the *Official Languages Act* and include:

a. The role of Ombudsman

The Languages Commissioner receives, investigates and reports on complaints from the public regarding violations of the language rights contained in the *Official Languages Act*. These include:

- The right to use any of the official languages in Nunavut's courts;
- The right to communicate with, and receive services from all head offices of Government of Nunavut (GN) organizations in English and French;
- The right to communicate with and receive services from any regional or community office of the GN in Inuktitut (Inuinnaqtun in the western Kitikmeot/Qitirmiut).
- The right to use any of the official languages in the Legislative Assembly;

If a member of the public feels that language rights contained in any piece of Nunavut legislation have been violated, they may launch a formal complaint with the Languages Commissioner. The Office of the Languages Commissioner will then investigate the complaint, and may make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly regarding any actions needed to correct the situation.

b. Monitoring

The Languages Commissioner and her staff monitor the Government of Nunavut's progress toward meeting its obligations to Nunavut's official languages under the following documents:

- The *Official Languages Act*
- The *Bathurst Mandate*, which commits the Government of Nunavut to
 - a) making Inuktitut its working language,
 - b) encouraging bilingualism in Inuktitut and English, and
 - c) respecting the needs and rights of French speakers.
- The *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA)*, which requires the Government of Nunavut to attaining a level of Inuit employment that is representative of the overall population of Nunavut. It is to achieve this partly by removing existing barriers to

Inuit employment. In negotiations with the Government of Canada regarding the implementation of the land claim, the Government of Nunavut has affirmed that the use of English as its working language constitutes a barrier to employment for the majority of Nunavummiut who speak Inuktitut as their first language.

- The *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which guarantees that the English and French speaking minorities in Nunavut have the right to have their children educated in their languages.

c. Advisory role of the Languages Commissioner

The Office of the Languages Commissioner is the only institution in Nunavut dedicated entirely to language issues. Through on-going contacts with communities throughout the territory, research activities, and policy work, the Office is able to provide the Members of the Legislative Assembly and the GN with comprehensive recommendations on the best responses to language issues facing the territory.

d. Language Promotion

The Languages Commissioner has an important role in bringing language issues to the public's attention and in participating in language promotion activities throughout Nunavut. The Languages Commissioner fulfills this duty by:

- Consulting with communities about the language issues they face;
- Attending language events organized by communities;
- Participating in the organization of the annual *Inuktitut Uquttin* (Inuktitut Language Week);
- Maintaining a website with information about Nunavut's languages, language rights and the role of her office;
- Participating in interviews with the media; and
- Addressing conferences on various language issues.

Special Report:

The Review of the *Official Languages Act*

Of all of Canada's provinces and territories, none faces greater challenges in the area of official languages than Nunavut. The new territory is the only jurisdiction in the country where the majority of people speak an Aboriginal language as their mother tongue. Many Inuit are deeply concerned about the long-term survival of their language and are anxious to see it achieve a status equal to Nunavut's other two languages: English and French. Nunavut's French and English minorities, meanwhile, have a number of language rights protected in various pieces of territorial and federal legislation. Despite this, many of these rights exist on paper only as the Government of Nunavut (GN) still lacks a plan for implementing these rights through effective services in all of the official languages.

The *Official Languages Act* is, perhaps, the most important document in shaping the GN's response to three language groups with varying needs and aspirations. It is clear that the existing legislation inherited from the Northwest Territories (NWT) does not reflect the language situation in Nunavut, nor the demands being placed on the territorial government. In accordance with Section 29 of the Act, the Legislative Assembly has struck a Special Committee to review the provisions of the existing legislation, its implementation and its effectiveness. Section 29 also requires the Languages Commissioner to assist the Legislative Assembly in the review process.

About the existing *Official Languages Act*

The *Official Languages Act* that Nunavut inherited from the Northwest Territories was originally passed in 1984. Under pressure from the federal government, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) agreed to guarantee the equality of English and French as the two official languages of the territory. In writing the Act, the GNWT also recognized six Aboriginal languages spoken in the Northwest Territories: Inuktitut (including Inuinnaqtun), Chipewyan, Cree, Dogrib, Gwich'in and Slavey. Although this made them the first Aboriginal languages to be recognized in Canadian law, under the *Official Languages Act* they had a lower status than English and French. The rights given to speakers of Aboriginal languages were limited to the Legislative Assembly and were not even included in the Act itself, but instead were written in a set of accompanying regulations.

In 1990, the *Official Languages Act* was amended to make the Aboriginal languages full official languages of the NWT. This did not mean, however that Aboriginal languages were given a status equal to that of English and French. The present *Official Languages Act*, in many of its provisions, continues to give one set of rights to English

and French speakers and another weaker set of rights to speakers of Aboriginal languages. The preamble, for example, states that the purpose of the Act is “to establish English and French as Official languages of the Territories having equality of status and equal rights and privileges as Official Languages.” For Aboriginal languages, the preamble simply says that they should, “be given recognition in law.” The principle of equality for Aboriginal languages, therefore, is not affirmed in the legislation.

The existing *Official Languages Act* served the needs of the Northwest Territories with eight official languages, six being Aboriginal languages spoken only in certain parts of the territory. English, in effect, is the common language for all of the NWT’s language groups, and is the only language of work in the NWT’s public service.

Implementation of the Act continues to be an issue even today, more than 15 years after it was first passed. In 1997, the GNWT unveiled Official Language policies and guidelines to direct its departments in implementing the Act and delivering language services to the public. Even with these documents in place, the full implementation of the Act remains unrealized in both the NWT and Nunavut. This is true even for French services, which are supported through millions of dollars in funding provided by the federal government. The dismal level of French services in the NWT has led to a lawsuit filed in 2000 by the *Fédération Franco-TéNOise* against the Governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories, as well as the NWT Languages Commissioner.

The need for a new approach in Nunavut

The language issues facing Nunavut are vastly different than those in the NWT and require a different approach from government. Instead of six Aboriginal languages, Nunavut has one, with two official forms – Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun. Given that the majority of people in Nunavut speak an Aboriginal language, it is no longer acceptable for Inuktitut to have a lower official status under language legislation than English and French. Despite the strength of Inuktitut relative to other Aboriginal languages in Canada, there is widespread concern that the language is eroding, especially among younger generations. There are calls from communities across Nunavut for the GN to take action in protecting Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun.

At the same time, the need for the GN to safeguard the existing language rights of the territory’s English and French minorities is clear. The *Nunavut Act*, which sets out the powers of the territorial government, prohibits the GN from diminishing any existing language rights without the approval of the federal Parliament. The legal action of the NWT francophone association, meanwhile, demonstrates the need for an effective plan to implement fully the rights of all language groups included in legislation.

The Languages Commissioner's role in the review process

The Languages Commissioner has played the following roles in the review process thus far:

Research into language laws in Canada and around the World

The Office of the Languages Commissioner conducted a detailed study of the language laws of the Governments of Canada, Québec and New Brunswick, as well as those of a number of governments internationally including Estonia, Finland, New Zealand and two regions of Spain. This added to research the Office of the Languages Commissioner had already conducted into language legislation in Greenland.

Through this research, the Office has compiled a wealth of information on measures governments around the world have taken to protect vulnerable languages. The study revealed a number of areas not covered in Nunavut's present *Official Languages Act* that could be included in future language legislation, including:

- The working language of government;
- Languages used by the private sector;
- Languages used in services that are essential to public health and safety;
- The languages used to teach children in school;
- The languages used on public signs and advertising.

Many governments have also established language authorities that are responsible for developing new terminology for words borrowed from other languages and to make decisions about how a particular language should be used in official documents.

The results of this research were presented to the Special Committee in January 2002 and are available to the public on the Languages Commissioner's website at: www.langcom.nu.ca/english/ourwork.

The Languages Commissioner's recommendations

Based on the above research, and information gathered during visits to communities, the Languages Commissioner developed the following recommendations that are designed to ensure the full equality of Nunavut's languages:

- a. The Dene and Cree languages should be removed as official languages of Nunavut;
- b. The *Official Languages Act* should require that acts, records and journals produced by the Legislative Assembly be printed and published in Inuktitut and that the Inuktitut version be authoritative.

- c. It should be required under the *Official Languages Act* that all statements made by or before Members of the Legislative Assembly be reported in the language in which they were made. Currently, anything said in the Legislative Assembly in Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun is recorded in the Hansard based on how it is rendered in English by an interpreter. This is leading to situations where the words of MLA's in Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun are misrepresented in the public record.
- d. The *Official Languages Act* should require that public notices be issued in Inuktitut as well as French and English.
- e. Courts should be required to issue decisions in Inuktitut when dealing with a matter of public importance or when part of the proceedings takes place in Inuktitut.
- f. The public should have the right to be served by head offices of the Government of Nunavut in the official language of their choice. These offices, in turn, should be required under the Act to train existing staff, or hire new staff to be able to serve the public in all official languages.
- g. The Act should require that acts and regulations be published in Inuktitut and that the Inuktitut version be authoritative.

Implementation

Ensuring the equality of Nunavut's official languages lies not only in the writing of legislation, but also in its full implementation. The Languages Commissioner recommends building greater accountability into this process by including in the *Official Languages Act* the following new provisions:

- Cabinet should be responsible for appointing a Minister to oversee the implementation of the *Official Languages Act*; and
- Each Minister should be responsible for submitting a report once per year on the delivery of language services within the department for which he or she is responsible;

An Inuktitut Protection Act

While giving Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun equal status and rights under the *Official Languages Act* is an important in terms of the operation of government, it will not have a big impact on the lives of most Nunavummiut. The real struggle to make Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun a healthy and equal language will take place, not in the Legislative Assembly, but in the streets, homes, schools and workplaces of Nunavut's communities. The Languages Commissioner is calling on the Government of Nunavut to put in place

legislation that will address the language issues people face on a daily basis. Because Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun has been marginalized for such a long period of time, the Languages Commissioner believes a new act, focused entirely on this language is needed to ensure it achieves full equality with English and French. She has recommended, therefore, that an *Inuktitut Protection Act*, be developed to complement the *Official Languages Act*. The purpose of the Act would be as follows:

- to protect, promote and increase the use of Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun by all Nunavummiut;
- to ensure that Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun speakers are not discriminated against in terms of opportunities for employment, education in their mother tongue, or in receiving services from government or private businesses.
- to promote and increase the use of Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun in government administration, education, and the private sector;
- to ensure that all Nunavummiut have the ability to strengthen their Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun skills.

It must be stressed that, unlike language legislation in Québec which seeks to limit the use of languages other than French, the *Inuktitut Protection Act* would be designed to raise Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun to a level of equality with Nunavut's other official languages. The provisions of the *Inuktitut Protection Act* would not diminish in any way the existing rights of English and French speakers.

The areas the Languages Commissioner believes should be addressed by the legislation and her specific recommendations are as follows:

Language of Work

Recent research has indentified a link between the language used in the workplace and the loss of Aboriginal languages in the home. One researcher has argued that:

Change in the structure of work has a direct bearing on the lives and thoughts of the parents of young children. Their goal is to prepare their children for life. As it becomes increasingly necessary for community members to work at jobs that require the use of English, this results in revised perceptions on the part of parents regarding what training their children need in order to survive. So they talk to them in the national language instead of the indigenous language, and the children grow up as first-language speakers of English.¹

There can be no doubt that Inuit who wish to obtain employment or advance their careers within the government must speak some English. Indeed, the Languages Commissioner's 2001 study of language use within the GN's public service revealed that

¹ Scott Palmer. (1997). "Language of Work: The Critical Link Between Economic Change and Language Shift" in *Teaching Indigenous Languages*. (Flagstaff Arizona: Northern Arizona University), p. 263

even people who are more comfortable speaking Inuktitut automatically switch to English in work settings.²

This has important implications for the Government of Nunavut as it decentralizes positions to smaller communities. If English continues to dominate as the language of work within the public service, there is the risk that the decline of Inuktitut in Nunavut's larger centres will spread to communities where it is still healthy. On the other hand, if the GN, as Nunavut's largest employer, ensures that Inuktitut plays a central role in its operations, it will provide a strong incentive for all Nunavummiut to develop their skills in this language.

Nunavut's leaders have recognized the importance of this issue and have included in the *Bathurst Mandate* the commitment to make Inuktitut the working language of the GN by the year 2020. It is crucial that the GN begin working now toward the achievement of this goal.

The official language acts of Canada, New Brunswick and Québec all contain detailed provisions regarding the languages of work in the public service. The federal *Official Languages Act*, for example, guarantees that government employees have the right to choose whether they work in English or in French. It also puts the onus on government departments to make sure that their employees are able to work in either language. Based on the examples of language laws in other Canadian jurisdictions, the Languages Commissioner has recommended that an *Inuktitut Protection Act* include:

- The requirement that each GN department take active measures to ensure its employees are able to work in Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun, and encourage, or in some cases, require its employees to use Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun on the job.
- The requirement that the Minister of Human Resources take measures to guarantee that:
 - (a) Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun speaking employees of the Legislative Assembly and Government of Nunavut have access to on-going language enhancement and literacy training, and
 - (b) non-Inuktitut speaking employees have access to on-going second language training.
- The requirement that each GN department establish Inuktitut language committees
 - (a) to assist the institution concerned in improving the quality of the written and spoken Inuktitut used in its workplaces; and
 - (b) to identify deficiencies in terms of Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun terminology and problematical terms and expressions in its designated field.

² See the *Languages Commissioner of Nunavut 2000-2001 Annual Report*, page 16

The Languages Commissioner has also recommended that an Inuktitut Language Authority be established to develop and approve new Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun terminology for use by the government. A detailed feasibility study on this topic will be released in the winter of 2003.

Lastly, the Languages Commissioner has also recommended that the right to work in Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun be extended to the private sector through the following measures:

- Giving all Nunavummiut the right to carry out the duties assigned to them by their employers in Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun; and
- Prohibiting employers from dismissing, laying off, demoting or transferring a member of his staff because that person speaks only Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun.

Language of Education

Currently, most students in Nunavut only have access to education in which Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun is the language of instruction during the first years of elementary school. It will be impossible for the Government of Nunavut to make Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun its working language unless instruction in this language is extended to the secondary school level. The most effective means of ensuring this happens is to guarantee Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun speaking parents the right to have their children education in their language.

Language education rights were included in Section 23 of Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and have proven very effective in guaranteeing the provision of education in English and French throughout the country. Unfortunately, because Inuktitut is not recognized as an official language of Canada, it is given no protection in the *Charter*. Education, however, is an area under the exclusive control of the territorial government, and it is within the power of the GN to extend the language education rights English and French speakers enjoy to speakers of Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun.

In order to ensure the full equality of Nunavut's official languages, the Languages Commissioner strongly believes the right of Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun speaking parents to have their children educated in their language must be written into law, and should be included in an *Inuktitut Protection Act*.

Visibility in the Community

One of the most effective means of promoting a language is by ensuring that it is visible in the streets and public spaces of a community. If people constantly see their

language as they go about their lives, it re-enforces the position of that language in their society.

While most government and business institutions respect the fact that Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun is the largest language group in the communities in which they work, some have attempted to cut costs by putting up signs in English only. The Languages Commissioner believes, therefore, that the *Inuktitut Protection Act* should include:

- A requirement that government and businesses include Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun in addition to any other languages on any signs they put up inside or outside their buildings;
- The requirement that the Department of Community Government and Transportation ensure that all road signs in Nunavut be in Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun in addition to any other languages;

Language of Business

Most businesses in Nunavut recognize the importance of being able to communicate in Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun in order to attract customers. Unfortunately there are examples where this is not the case, or where businesses make only token efforts. The Languages Commissioner, therefore, recommends that the *Inuktitut Protection Act* do the following:

- Give Nunavummiut the right to communicate with and receive services from any business in Nunavut in Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun;
- Require businesses to print notices and bills sent to members of the public in Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun, in addition to any other languages;
- Require businesses to include Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun when making loudspeaker announcements directed at the public, in addition to any other languages; and
- Require that pharmacies have the ability to provide information on the medications they dispense to the public both verbally and in writing in Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun.

Implementation of Act

As with the *Official Languages Act*, implementation is the key to the success of the *Inuktitut Protection Act*. The Languages Commissioner recommends that any new language act do the following:

- Give the Languages Commissioner the power to investigate complaints from the public on any rights contained in an *Inuktitut Protection Act*; and
- Require Cabinet to appoint a Minister responsible for the implementation of the Act.

All of the above recommendations were presented to the Special Committee reviewing the *Official Languages Act* at a roundtable of language stakeholders held in Iqaluit on January 18, 2002. The full text of the Languages Commissioner's recommendations are available on our website at www.langcom.nu.ca/english/ourwork

Community Consultations

The Languages Commissioner has also participated in the Special Committee's public consultations in communities throughout Nunavut. These meetings are valuable opportunities for the public to speak directly to Nunavut's leaders about the language issues they face and the role law-makers can play in supporting the development and equal status of Nunavut's official languages. The consultations are continuing during the present fiscal year and will be reported on by the Special Committee once it completes this work.

The Office of the Languages Commissioner's 2001-2002 Activities

Development of Complaints Procedures

The Office of the Languages Commissioner has developed procedures that will assist the staff at the office in carrying out investigations. The procedures are designed to ensure that the Office of the Languages Commissioner treats both persons who lodge complaints and persons or institutions against whom complaints are made, in a manner that is as fair as possible. The Languages Commissioner has finalized these procedures, which her staff is using in current investigations.

Complaints

In 2001-2002 the Office of the Languages Commissioner handled three complaints. One involved an individual's inability to get information in Inuktitut about the process for applying for a grant to start a business. As the process involved the Baffin Business Development Centre, the Department of Education and the federal government, the complainant was unsure where to get the information he needed in Inuktitut. The Office of the Languages Commissioner contacted the various agencies in question and was able to direct the complainant to the Government of Nunavut personnel in his community who had the information he was looking for in Inuktitut.

The two other complaints involved decisions by the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth regarding proposals under the Canada-Nunavut Co-operation Agreement for French and Inuit Languages. Because these complaints did not involve the violation of any rights under the *Official Languages Act*, the Languages Commissioner chose not to investigate them.

Low Numbers

One of the most significant reasons for the low number of complaints handled by the Office of the Languages Commissioner is the fact that many Inuit are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the formal complaints process. The word *unnirluk*, which is generally used to translate the English “complaint” has negative connotations, and is something many adults were discouraged from doing as children. At a recent workshop regarding the development of a human rights act for Nunavut, an alternate term, *uqarvik*, was proposed. This word involves the idea of talking in order to work out a problem, and more accurately describes the work of this office in playing an intermediary role between the government and the public it serves.

Speakers of Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun have never had an easy time getting services in their language from the territorial government. Those who cannot speak English often rely on family, friends and neighbours who do to help them get the services they need from the government. Because they have been doing this for so long, many are surprised to find they have a right to services in their language.

It is clear that if the Office of the Languages Commissioner is to be more effective in defending the language rights of Nunavummiut, the public needs to be informed, not only about the role of the Languages Commissioner, but also about the language rights they enjoy. Current staffing levels at the Office of the Languages Commissioner have not allowed for the development of an effective communications strategy. The Languages Commissioner hopes to create a new position for a Communications Officer in her office for this purpose. The duties of such this position would include:

- Developing an information campaign involving various media to inform the public about language rights and the Languages Commissioner and her roles and responsibilities;
- Assisting the Languages Commissioner in her meetings with the public during visits to communities;
- Developing more effective campaigns aimed at promoting the use of Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun in Nunavut;
- Overseeing the writing and production of the Languages Commissioner’s annual reports, and the maintenance of the Office’s website.

Inquiries

Every day, the Office of the Languages Commissioner handles several inquiries related to language issues in Nunavut. The vast majority of these are received by telephone.

Again, due to the small number of staff at the office, recording and tracking all inquiries is beyond its present capabilities.

In the past year, the Office did develop a database in order to track the written inquiries it receives. In 2001-2002, the Languages Commissioner received 16 written inquiries involving the following topics:

- the Languages Commissioner's recommended changes to the *Official Languages Act*;
- the role of the Languages Commissioner in Nunavut;
- the Government of Nunavut's language promotion activities;
- the correct spelling of community names;
- the Inuktitut way of saying various English and French expressions;
- the number of people who speak Inuktitut in Nunavut;
- syllabic fonts; and
- activities during *Inuktitut Uqauṭṭin* (language week).

Community Visits

In keeping with her commitment to visit all three regions of Nunavut at least once per year, the Languages Commissioner travelled to the following communities in 2000-2001.

Pangnirtung (Panniqtuuq) May 2001

The Languages Commissioner travelled to Panniqtuuq to take part in the Peter Gzowski Golf Tournament for Literacy. As part of the event, the Languages Commissioner visited each of Panniqtuuq's schools to talk to students about literacy. While in the community, the Languages Commissioner also visited the Hamlet office to deliver information about her mandate and the work of her office.

Cambridge Bay (Iqaluktuuttiaq) (December 2001)

As part of her first official visit to the Kitikmeot (Qitirmiut) region, the Languages Commissioner travelled to Cambridge Bay to learn more about the language issues and concerns of this Inuinnaqtun speaking community. While there she met with officials from the Kitikmeot Inuit Association, including Charlie Evalik (President), and Paul Emingak (Communications Co-ordinator), who indicated that many of the documents the GN sends to the Kitikmeot region are in English and syllabics only. They emphasized that information sent to Cambridge Bay and Kugluktuk should be written in Inuinnaqtun in roman orthography. The Languages Commissioner also met with Johnny Kootook the Regional Youth Co-ordinator. He indicated that most youth from Inuinnaqtun speaking communities speak English most or all of the time. However, he noted a strong desire among youth generally to learn the Inuinnaqtun language.

The Languages Commissioner also took the opportunity to discuss language issues with staff at Cambridge Bay's schools and at its Hamlet office.

Kugluktuk (Qurluqtuq) December 2001

In Kugluktuk, the Languages Commissioner met with staff of the Government of Nunavut's Language Bureau. She was surprised to find that in the GN building in which the Language Bureau is housed, most signs are in English and Syllabics rather than in roman orthography. This was of serious concern to her as it sends a message to the entire community that the GN does not take the Inuinnaqtun language seriously.

The Languages Commissioner also met with member of the community at the Elders' home. The Elders expressed their worries regarding the long-term survival of Inuinnaqtun given that almost all young people in the community speak English as a first language. She also heard the Elders' views on the contentious issue of writing

systems. Although the Languages Commissioner strongly supports the use of ICI standardized writing systems, she heard and understood that many Inuinnaqtun speakers prefer the older way of writing the language.

The Languages Commissioner also addressed adult education students at Nunavut Arctic College's Learning Centre. She explained the role of her office and discussed various language issues. Students, generally, had concerns about the future of Inuinnaqtun and the fact that the Government of Nunavut is not addressing the unique needs of this language group.

The Languages Commissioner also met with staff at Kugluktuk's schools, who teach Inuinnaqtun to young people, using the ICI standardized writing system.

Rankin Inlet (Kangiqtiniq) December 2001

The Languages Commissioner attended and made a presentation to a meeting of the Department of Education's Early Childhood and School Services Elders Advisory Group. This committee consists of Elders who advise the Department of Education on language and cultural matters. Among the issues discussed at the meeting was the importance of sharing traditional stories and legends as part of promoting the Inuktitut language. Those at the meeting talked extensively about how the spoken language plays a fundamental role in passing along Inuit history from one generation to the next.

Conferences

Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Conference, Flagstaff Arizona, June 2001

The Languages Commissioner took part in this conference that brought together representatives of Aboriginal language communities from Canada, the United States and many countries around the world. Delegates shared ideas about strategies and projects to ensure the survival of endangered languages. The importance of directly involving entire communities in planning and delivering language revitalization projects was stressed in almost every presentation. Delegates from many communities commented on the enviable position Inuktitut enjoys with a large base of young speakers, and the use of the language in government and the media.

Terminology Workshop/Conference, Iqaluit, October 2001

The GN's Department of Culture, Language Elders and Youth held a workshop that brought together interpreters and translators from across Nunavut to discuss issues they face in their work, especially the use of new terminology introduced into the Inuktitut language. The Languages Commissioner addressed the group and stressed that the need of a permanent body in Nunavut to approve and/or develop new words introduced into the language. The group then broke into groups based on Nunavut's different dialects to develop standardized common terminology. A report on the results of the workshop is pending from the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth.

Place Names Workshop, Iqaluit, February 2002

The Inuit Heritage Trust held a workshop on the issues that arise in researching, documenting and officializing place names in Nunavut. The workshop was attended by the Languages Commissioner, Peter Irniq, the Commissioner of Nunavut, and representatives of land claim organizations and the federal and territorial governments. The Languages Commissioner made a presentation at the workshop, stressing the need to use ICI standardized writing systems for syllabics and roman orthography when recording Inuktitut place names in order to ensure that the correct pronunciation is reflected in the spelling and preserved for future generations.

A number of recommendations were made on what should be included in the Government of Nunavut's place names policy being developed by the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth. These included:

- Place names that exist only in the spoken language of Inuit should be raised to the level of official place names in Nunavut;
- The spelling of Inuktitut place names should reflect the local dialect;

- Place names on maps should be in syllabics where this is the writing system that is used by the local population;
- Place names should be spelled in ICI standardized writing systems both for syllabics and roman orthography. Field workers who work with elders to record place names should be skilled in the ICI writing systems for roman orthography and syllabics;
- Generic terms for words like “lake”, “river”, island, etc. should be avoided. In many instances the Inuktitut name for places contains this information already. For example saying adding the word “island” to Qikiqtarjuaq is redundant.

The Workshop also recommended that a Technical Place Names Committee be established to oversee place names research in Nunavut. This committee would be made up of the various agencies that are involved in researching, recording and officializing place names. The role of the committee would include:

- Putting Inuit in charge of place names research in Nunavut;
- Overseeing the collection of information;
- Ensuring that place names information gets back to communities;
- Teaching young people the traditional names of places; and
- Pressuring the federal government to support the production of maps with traditional Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun names.

Office of the Languages Commissioner
 Budget and Expenditures
From April 1, 2001 to March 31, 2002

Budget and Expenditures
 April 1, 2001 - March 31, 2002

| | Allocation | Expenditures | Balance | Allocation 2002-2003 |
|------------------------------|------------|--------------|---------|-------------------------|
| Permanent Salaries | 270,000 | 276,789 | -6789 | 320,000 |
| Casual Wages | 0 | | | 0 |
| Travel & Transportation | 50,000 | 29,569 | 20,431 | 50,000 |
| Materials & Supplies | 10,000 | 40,820 | -30,820 | 30,000 |
| Purchased Services | 25,000 | 10,868 | 14,132 | 10,000 |
| Utilities | | 1,242 | -1,242 | 0 |
| Contract Services | 35,000 | 73,811 | -38,811 | 60,000 |
| Fees and Payments | 7,000 | 1892 | 5108 | 5,000 |
| Other Expenses | 43,000 | 4,012 | 38,988 | 15,000 |
| Tangible Assets | 0 | 1,150 | -1,150 | 0 |
| Computer Hardware & Software | 0 | 12,690 | -12,690 | 0 |
| Total | 440,000 | 452,843 | -12,843 | 490,000 |

2002-2003 Workplan

Development of Nunavut's *Education Act*

The role of schools in developing the language skills of young people is fundamentally important to the long-term health and status of Nunavut's languages. The Government of Nunavut's proposed Education Act, *Bill 1*, was tabled in the Legislative Assembly in April 2002. The Office of the Languages Commissioner is in the process of reviewing *Bill 1* and developing comments and recommendations for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Health and Education.

Expected outcomes:

- A better understanding among Nunavut's leaders and the public of how the proposed education will impact language education in Nunavut's schools.
- The Languages Commissioner will determine if *Bill 1* meets the Government of Nunavut's obligations to its French and English minorities, whose right to education in their languages is guaranteed in Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Review of the *Official Languages Act*

The Languages Commissioner will be participating in consultations with the public regarding Nunavut's *Official Languages Act*. She will be travelling with the Special Committee reviewing the Act to communities in the Qikiqtani, Kivalliq and Kitikmeot (Qitirmiut) regions.

Expected outcomes:

- Public feedback regarding Languages Commissioner's recommendations;
- A clearer understanding of the language issues facing communities, especially those of where Inuinnaqtun is spoken.

Inuktitut Language Authority

In her last annual report, the Languages Commissioner recommended the establishment of an Inuktitut language authority to make decisions about new words being introduced into the Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun language. After considering this recommendation, the Ajauqtiit Standing Committee agreed with the concept but requested that the Languages Commissioner provide the committee with more detailed information on possible administrative arrangements and cost projections.

In order to compile this information, the Office of the Languages Commissioner hired two consultants to research the functioning of Quebec's *Office de la langue française*,

the largest language authority in North America, as well as the linguistic issues that arise when governments attempt to manage the development of languages.

Expected outcome:

- A detailed study on the concept of an Inuktitut Language Authority that will allow Members of the Legislative Assembly to make an informed decision about establishing such a body in Nunavut.

Improvements to Website

The Office of the Languages Commissioner is updating the information on its website, and redesigning the site to make it more user-friendly. New pages with information on each of Nunavut's official languages will be included. Once this work is complete, the Office will produce the website in CD-Rom format to be sent to communities with poor internet service.

Expected outcomes:

- Better understanding throughout Nunavut about language rights;
- Promotion of the Office of the Languages Commissioner and its role.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

That the Government of Nunavut take immediate steps to ensure that signs it puts up inside and outside its offices in Cambridge Bay (Iqaluktuuttiaq) and Kugluktuk (Qurluqtuq) are written in Inuinnaqtun using roman orthography (*qaliujaaqpait*).

Additional Recommendations

The Languages Commissioner's remaining recommendations regarding improvements to Nunavut's language legislation are detailed on pages 7 to 14 of this report. These recommendations have been referred to the Special Committee reviewing the *Official Languages Act*. The Special Committee is expected to issue a report on all the recommendations it has received from communities and language stakeholders in Nunavut in the spring of 2003.