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HISTORY OF NUNAVUT'S LANGUAGE LAWS **Official Languages Act and the Inuit Language Protection Act** **- Chronology of Events -**

1999, April 1st

Nunavut adopts the NWT's Official Languages Act.

- The Official Languages Act (OLA) recognizes *Cree, Chipewyan, Dogrib, Gwich'in, Inuktitut, North Slavey and South Slavey, French and English* as the Official Languages of Nunavut.
- The Government of Nunavut, its boards and agencies, the courts, and the Legislative Assembly are expected to provide services in an official language where there is a significant demand.
- The preamble of OLA states it is established to ensure equality between French and English, and that Aboriginal languages will be given "recognition".

1999, November

- Eva Aariak starts her role as the first Languages Commissioner of Nunavut

2000, October 30th

- OLA is amended to allow for an Acting Languages Commissioner. (Had Eva already left?)
- In accordance with Section 29 of OLA, the Legislative Assembly struck a Special Committee to review the provisions of the existing legislation, its implementation and its effectiveness. The same section also requires the Languages Commissioner to assist the Legislative Assembly in the review process.

2001, May

- The Languages Commissioner travels to Greenland to learn more about its language institutions and see how Greenlanders have managed to stop the decline of Kalaallisut.
- OLC releases an *Overview of Current Language Initiatives in Greenland* in preparation for the review of OLA.

2000-2001 Annual Report

- The Languages Commissioner recommends a working group of senior officials to develop a comprehensive language strategy that aims at:

making Inuktitut the working language as promised in the Bathurst Mandate, and how to improve delivery of services in the official languages.

- The Languages Commissioner also recommends the creation of a Language Commission that would standardize the use of Inuktitut in the government.

2002, January, 18th

- The Office of Languages Commissioner releases a report to the Special Committee of the Legislative Assembly reviewing OLA entitled *Recommendations regarding changes to the Official Languages Act*. Some recommendations included:
 - The need for two language acts:
 - A new OLA that eliminates all irrelevant aboriginal languages in Nunavut, and creates equal status to all official languages including: Inuit, French and English.
 - Another act that takes special measures to protect and strengthen the Inuit Language.

2003, December

- A special Committee to review OLA in the legislative assembly releases their final report. The report includes:
 - Written submissions by OLC, AFN, NTI, Nunavut Literacy council and the public).
 - It states Federal Minister Sheila Copps had attended the roundtable meeting in June 2001.

Key recommendations:

- A new OLA be created that recognizes the equal status of Inuit, French and English languages
- An authority be created to standardize terminology in Inuktitut
- Create an Inuktitut language protection act (later "Inuit language" is used).
- Create a Minister to promote, enhance vitality of Official languages, and be responsible for implementing the language acts
- A review be done in 5 years on the effectiveness of the act(s)

2004

- The Languages Commissioner and some of her staff travel to Quebec City to meet with the Office de la langue française and Ministre de la Culture at des Communications to research models for an Inuit Language authority.
- The Office of the Languages Commissioner develops a discussion paper on different models of language authorities, and there are discussion panels on the subject.
- The Language Legislation Steering Committee is created to provide advise on the language acts. The members include the Office of the

Languages Commissioner, Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

2005, January

- The Office of the Languages Commissioner's commissioned work *Preserving Inuit Dialects in Nunavut* by Shelley Tulloch is released.
 - The paper looks at what best measures should be taken for a preservation of language.
 - This paper is instrumental in Office Languages Commissioner's recommendations on drafting of Inuit Language Protection Act.

March 2007

Bills 6&7 Official Languages Act & Inuit Language Protection Act Bills are tabled; regional consultations take place the following month.

June 2007

Bills 6&7 are introduced to first and second reading in the Nunavut legislative assembly.

September 4, 2007 Submission to Ajauqtiit committee by Office of Languages Commissioner on recommended changes to Bills 6&7.

June 4, 2008

Official Languages Act gets passed in the Nunavut legislature. It needs parliamentary concurrence because of the diminishment of Slavey and Dene languages.

September 18, 2008

Inuit Language Protection Act gets passed in the Nunavut legislature. It comes into force the following day.

June 1, 2009

Parliament concurs with Nunavut OLA, it goes to Senate, June 4th, the senate refers it to the legal and constitutional affairs committee. It receives Parliamentary concurrence June 11th, 2009.