



**Inuktitut/Inuktut  
Language  
Framework –  
Inuuqatigiit Centre**

**History**

**Body  
language**

**Inuit traditions – baby language  
and development**

**Baby games and  
language play**

**Baby songs  
and play**

**Bilingualism and  
language awareness**

**Strengthening Inuktitut/Inuktut**

**Language training,  
guidance, and planning**

**Traditions and Language**

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# 1

## Introduction

**This is a language framework to help Inuuqatigiit Centre enrich, develop, and celebrate Inuktitut /Inuktuṭ.** It is a start and is a work-in-progress in helping to capture and suggest ways how the language can be further nurtured and supported to strengthen the children's mother tongue (and or "grandmother's tongue") and, culture. Language guidance through planning, programming, and providing supports such as resources and training are ways to nurture the language of the children. The Inuksugaq/Inuksuk is built with different rocks of which are different components of what is needed for a language framework. Although the Inuksuk is not "set in stone" because each piece is removeable if it breaks and, perhaps it may be replaced with not one but two rocks.

The framework contains information about Inuktitut spoken across Inuit Nunangat, language change, baby language, bilingualism and language loss, language strengthening and development. Language learning and teaching strategies are outlined including every-day vocabulary that can be taught and used at Inuuqatigiit. Some of the “traditional” knowledge used in this framework is reference information to show the cultural roots. As more Inuit researchers conduct their own research and gathering of knowledge, it will help to provide more extensive perspectives and help to inform work for others in the future. Due to cultural changes and different cultural customs impacting different areas and individuals, there is not a uniform perspective when such work is carried out and documented. The arctic is vast and the Inuit population is small that generalization is sometimes made of cultural customs and traditions. Although there are differences and variations there are commonalities and similarities across the circumpolar north.

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## 2

### History – Language and Cultural Change

**It is important to know the history and be aware of how Inuktitut has evolved and undergone loss of fluency by some speakers in such a short time since newcomers arrived in the arctic north.**

Before contact with outsiders, Inuktitut was learned in daily life in small family villages/camps. Mothers, grandmothers, and children spent more time together in their “camps”/villages while able-bodied men would often be out hunting. The language was very stable and did not change quickly. When there was marriage and union between groups of other dialects from further away, there was some spoken language change but often with individual or small groups of people.

The recent major language changes were because of newcomers who came in waves started arriving in the north introducing new tools, materials and their own ways. Initially it was with whalers mainly from the United States, England, Scotland and, explorers seeking the

Northwest Passage. Then came the fur traders and the missionaries and priests. Language started to become affected from the religious groups who influenced major social changes resulting in new spiritual beliefs, marriage and the customs that came with them.

## Schools:

Inuit were relocated into larger settlements in the 1950s and 1960s so their children could attend schools and learn English. Schools had the most impact on the culture and language. The ones who had schools built in their communities were no longer with their mothers, grandparents, siblings and fathers during the day. Other children were forcefully taken away from their families and sent away to Catholic residential schools such as Igluligaarjuk – Chesterfield Inlet most of the year.

Families who spoke different dialects from others started to change over time through their children. School policies not permitting children to speak their mother tongue affected the strength of the language. Some who were able to stay in their communities retained their mother tongue and cultural ways longer. More isolated communities and regions with less influence of English have stronger Inuktitut being spoken by young children even though their grandparents may have attended residential schools. Some children of Qallunaat and other newcomers early in the establishment of communities were able to learn to speak Inuktitut fluently from their peers. Intermarriage between an English only speaking parent and an Inuk parent in some communities may have been a factor in more English being spoken in some families. Since the 1970s as more Inuit travelled to obtain training or education, their children have been exposed to more English in larger communities such as Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet, and southern cities.

As less Inuktitut was being heard and spoken during the hours of a day for children it eventually led to loss of fluency and not speaking at all as time went on. Inuit started to enter the schools in the 1970s as classroom assistants and many went on to become teachers who have influenced it being spoken longer by young children. The various language situations have resulted in different language abilities and loss for the children who are now students today in childcare centres, schools, and educational centres.

## 2 History – Language and Cultural Change

Political changes in the areas of Inuit Nunangat have been influenced by Inuit land-claims organizations. Their major goals have been to strengthen the Inuktitut language and culture jurisdictionally at different levels of government. There are funding programs and grants made available by the Inuit organizations, Territorial and Federal Governments. More Inuit can have the opportunity to relearn or learn their “traditions” and language that they lost or almost lost. As Inuktitut is and cultural traditions are being revived, it then becomes a collective knowledge.

Language was learned in daily life with connection to a way of life and knowledge of hunting on the land, the sea, ice, animals, and environment. As observed and described by older Inuit including those who are now bilingual, there was what is now considered “traditional” knowledge and ways practiced and lived by Inuit. These are still part of a way of life for some Inuit. Much of it is becoming history and stories for many

Inuktitut across the Inuit Nunangat from Siberia to Greenland have the same roots with many similar words and affixes. “...all Inuit speakers, whether they live in northern Alaska, Canada, or Greenland, share a common means of communication, with some adjustments, can understand each other.” (Dorais, 2010). Some of the Inuktitut dialects have weakened as previously mentioned.

Some of the children at Inuuqatigiit will have parents who speak the same dialect. The Canadian Inuktitut /Inuktitut dialects with sub-dialects are many but are understandable. There is a description on the Pirurvik website that shows geographically of the general dialects - <https://tusaalanga.ca/index.php/about-Inuktitut>

Inuuqatigiit Centre works with Inuit parents, elders, and the Inuit community to create a setting for children that affirms their culture, language and heritage as they learn to make sense of the bigger world. Since culture and language are intertwined, the programming at Inuuqatigiit Centre is important. After all, some of the families do return to Inuit Nunangat and, children with a strong cultural base will have a stronger sense of Inuit identity.





### 3

## Inuit Traditions – Baby Language and Talk

**Each language including Inuktitut has a structure, patterns of sounds, meanings and every culture has their communication styles.** Some of them are similar across cultural groups. Language is not just verbal sounds and spoken words. Babies anywhere in the world learn to talk from their mothers, families, and children. There are stages of learning language. Inuit traditionally had child specific language and words. This is changing as the culture and language changes.

Aupilaarjuk, a late elder, referred to in Janet McGrath's work, "...in our childhood there were vocabularies that were child oriented. These were words to start a child on language and develop an ear for it." (McGrath, 2018, p. 141). Naqi Ekho also referred to children's language development, "We use different language with children because they are still developing. When we talk to them, we shouldn't use complicated language. When they say something or they start asking

### 3 Inuit Traditions – Baby Language and Talk

what things are, that's when you start teaching them language." Uqsuralik Ottokie then added to this conversation by saying, "We never corrected them. They developed naturally, without ever being corrected. We would only teach them if we noted there was something they were having difficulty with. We were never taught through instruction. It was only through observing and listening that we learned." (Ekho, Ottokie. 2000, p. 38-29).

#### Aqausiq

Individual baby specific song or chant. Traditionally, each baby would get a word, little saying, or chant sung to them. This is called an "aqausiq" that shows love and attention. As the child gets a bit older, it would eventually stop being sung but if remembered, it would be sung affectionately. This is still practiced in south Baffin, and it might still be continued in other areas of Inuit Nunangat. A baby learns when it is sung that it is their connection. "My children recognized their aqausiq when their grandparents, aunts and uncles sang it to them. So did my younger siblings to their songs when they were young. I still hear families aqaaq their babies and children today. I saw a friend of mine greet a younger woman from her community this winter and start singing the woman's aqausiq that my friend and her family had sung to her when they would take care of her and her brother as babies when the parents went hunting." (author) This young woman started dancing her baby dance. It was funny and a joy to see this connection. Other cultures have some unique family customs with affectionate terms and words for their young. This was part of socialization and relationships with family.

**Aqaqtuq** – S/he sings or chants to a baby.

**Aqarniq** – The notion or act of singing or chanting to a baby.

**Aqausiq** – A short song or chant made up for a baby. It can be an expression or a couple of short sentences. The meaning of the song would be specific to the baby and might be a reference to the namesake or anything significant that may have happened, or it may be just a string of words with love and affection.

**Baby words** – There are words that are used with babies that they often learn first as concepts and words. They are often learned at the first stage of learning to understand direct communication and language.

These are a few examples from south Baffin and there will often be similar or different words in other dialects:

Adult Word/Phrase	Baby Word – Nutaraqsiut	Definition
amaarluk, amaaqtaugit <i>let me amaaq you</i>	<b>amaaq</b>	carry in an amauti
amaamattuq amaamauti (bottle)	<b>amaamak</b>	to nurse a baby with milk
niqi	<b>apaapa(k)</b>	food
nirigiit	<b>apaapagiiit</b>	do you want some food
anijuq	<b>ittaaq</b>	to go outside
piunngittuq, piunngittualuk	<b>aaraaluk</b>	bad or something not good to put in the mouth
aannirnaqtuq kappianaqtuq	<b>a'aaraaluk</b>	something to be fearful of due to danger / dangerous
ikkiirnaqtuq	<b>ikkii, ikkiiraaluk</b>	cold / it is cold
qupirruq	<b>naannaq, naannaruluk</b>	little bug or something that crawls
aannittaruaravit – ijukkattaruaravit –	<b>ajaittaruaravit</b> (ajai is often just used with very young children)	you might get hurt you might fall and get hurt / it is dangerous height, could fall from
tuttu, nattiq, mitiq (uumajuq)	<b>uquuquk</b>	animal – caribou, seal, duck, etc.
Sininnaqsijuq, sinigasualirit	<b>tutaaq</b>	to go to sleep, sleeptime
Haahaarumaviit – do you need to pee	<b>Haa haa</b>	to pee, urinate

### 3 Inuit Traditions – Baby Language and Talk

The vocabulary was and is often learned as their first words for various concepts. They are easier to pronounce and recognize for a child. As the baby grows and is learning language, these baby words are often worded with names or action words (nouns and verbs) with regular additional affixes – parts of words and phrases.

What mothers and family members will often do is start to include regular language with the baby talk to help them start using regular language. Apaapa-gumajuq (baby language for food, she wants food) which are: niri-jumajuq (regular word niri-, nirijumajuq, she wants to eat). They start to speak more in sentences to the young child. This is speaking with a normal talking tone often with no push to have the child repeat what is said. The child starts to distinguish the meanings over time. The baby words are used less and less. Usually, a mother will say both one after the other to help the young child learn the correct word or phrase and then repeat the baby version and then say it correctly again but without pushing the child to say it: “Apaapagiit, nirijumaviit, apaapagiit. Aak, nirijumavit” while handing the food to her.

“We would use baby language, apaapa for food, for example. We would teach them how to eat and identify food. If they urinated you would always, ‘Haa, haa.’ In the old days we didn’t have diapers.”  
(Uqsuralik, 2000)

Babies and toddlers start to repeat sounds as they hear spoken language every day as young as several months old. The pattern of sounds and words start to become recognizable. It is also when they hear familiar voices singing or chanting same songs or aqausiit. Mothers, aunts, grandmothers, children, fathers, and others talk, sing, chant, and hum to babies. Mothers and families who are more talkative and talk to babies will provide a more language rich environment that they can learn from.



## 4

### Facial Expressions, Silence and Body Language

**Inuit were often more attuned to reading facial expressions and body language in the past.** All cultures and peoples express emotions with their faces. Some of the gestures and expressions are similar but some are quite different. Culturally, there was less direct eye contact especially between men and women. Inuit would often be characterized as being quiet by Qallunaat newcomers. Individuals who were very verbal and louder were known as “nillirajuktuq” – very verbal and talkative. The opposite behaviour was, “nillirajuittuq” – not very talkative and quiet.

**Yes, No** – There are two basic facial expressions used to say yes or no. This too is disappearing among youth and especially those who are living away from Inuit Nunangat. To say yes, Inuit raise their eyebrows and scrunch the nose quickly to say no. An example of this would be if two people are physically far apart but if someone asks if they want

## 4 Facial Expressions, Silence and Body Language

sugar in their tea, a quick raise of the eyebrows or scrunch of the nose is used to answer. A baby quickly learns this as part of their language if this is used from the beginning. They start to know when a parent is saying no with the face at the same time as they say it. If a child is about to take a sharp object, the father may gently say, “aagga / aakka” with the facial expression. It then gets familiar for the child even if someone answers no without the spoken word. Both yes and no - are not learned at the same time. When they are learned in natural everyday communication, it becomes part of their communication.

The other natural expressions mothers and others make to communicate different moods and situations are universal. Widened eyes indicate surprise or if done with an open mouth might show concern or fear telling a child that something is dangerous. A face that shows warmth and love are eyes partially closed with a little smile. Perhaps a gentle voice almost with a long, “mmmmM” and a quick stop at the end will accompany the interaction. Body language can be more noticeable if the children start to learn to read facial expressions.

**Silence** – Silence is also part of the language and communication. When children learn to stay still during a seal hunt in a canoe or when a caribou is spotted on a hill, they know it is important to be quiet. They also learn to listen when someone else is talking when they are asked or told to by a parent. A story being told or a book being read will help a child learn to listen and pay attention. They learn ideas and thinking at “story time”. Language is more than spoken words, it is listening, and it is also silence or body language. A gentle voiced mother or educator will also help children be gentle and learn that loudness is often not necessary. Being silent and learning to observe is an important skill.



## 5

### Traditional Baby Games and “inuruqsainiq” – “inunnguiniq” Raising Children

**Finger play, body language and games were used to learn the concept of communication and language.** Humans want to naturally interact and communicate. They helped their babies learn to communicate by playing with them. This is part of “inuruqsainiq” or “inunnguiniq” – raising children (piruqsainiq) and being conscious of their behaviours and socialization skill development. The various dialects will have their versions of these words.

When a baby is sitting up a bit more and more aware of facial expressions and making sounds, and moving their hands to their mouth there are mouth games to do with them gently. This helps babies become more aware of their “vocal tract” – parts of the body that are used to communicate through words, sounds, facial and body expressions.

## 5 Traditional baby games and “inuruqsainiq” – “inunnguiniq” raising children

Recognizable words add to the baby's vocabulary that is growing day by day. The little games and movements that go with the chants or songs were to help the babies develop their physical, muscles which include both gross and fine motor control and the brain development. In speech therapy, you help individuals learn to articulate “correct” sounds used in a language. This is helping a baby develop speaking and communicating abilities – sounds and audio, mouth and lips, tongue and voice, air and movement of air through the mouth and nose. It is helping them to learn to recognize individual and sets of different sounds by memory and familiarity. Learning to communicate intentionally is a natural human process. An educator who is informed can guide, support and nurture the development.

Inuit mothers and grandmothers with their families have over time, accumulated customs and traditions to help their babies, children and youth. These are a few songs, chants, and games that are common across some areas. There will be some differences. Some of the younger parents may not be familiar with some of these older traditions. Not everything is captured here. Inuuqatigiit Centre will acquire and document more as other parents and Inuit share their versions.

- a. Common across all cultures is to make babies smile by making faces at or with them. The **apaa/abaa** one is to say that to a baby, widen your eyes and stretch out your face as you say it. Sometimes you make your eyes widen is to put your fingers under them and open them further and say, apaa or abaa.
- b. The “**uubba-paa**” **mouth game** is done by the lower lip and saying “ubbapaa” on your own mouth. Then the person does it to the baby gently. The baby becomes more aware of their lips and making sounds as well as she learns to recognize the “ubba-paa” word. This play is also a way to distract a crying baby.
- c. **Lip and mouth games:** Another mouth game is done by keeping the mouth open and bumping the hand on the mouth gently as you make an “uuu” sound. This is done with a baby.

Another game is to place your finger against the lips and gently flip the finger up and down on the baby's mouth, then yours doing the same thing. Over time as a baby becomes more conscious of their mouth and hand movements and getting control, they start to mimic the finger and mouth play.



- d. **Tagvakuluuk:** Another game is a “peekaboo” game, you hold the baby up close to you and put her on your lap facing you. Put your chin on her head and have her feel your chin as you say, “nau, nau”, “name of baby”, “nau, nau, nauli” name of baby and then push her back gently with your hands on her back and head and say, “tagvakuluuk!” as you hold your face against hers. This tends to make the baby smile and laugh.

“nau, nau”, baby’s name

where, where is,

“nau, nau”, baby’s name

where, where is,

“tagvakuluuk!”

Here s/he is!

- e. **Aatiiq:** The baby is taught to recognize the word “aatiiq” and the mother says, “aatiiqtuapik” – let me see you do “aatiiq” and the mother nods her head. The baby learns to mimic the head movement and the word, “aatiiq”. Eventually he learns to aatiiq.
- f. **Iliqisimaaq:** Another version of moving the head is, “iliqisimaaq”. The mother says, “iliqisimaaqtuapik”, shake your head side to side to teach the baby to move his head back and forth sideways. Some families started saying, nuunuuqtuapik – doing the “no no”. The baby learns to recognize the word. This helped babies start to develop language by teaching them familiar words and sounds with movements.
- g. **Uqaapingaaq:** Another one is the “uqaapingaaq” which means “stick your tongue out”. Naukuluk uqakulunga? Where is the little tongue? Getting the baby to be more aware of his tongue, you stick your tongue out and say, uqaapinga or uqakulunga. The baby will often try to mimic you as you stick your tongue out.
- h. **Pangalittuapik:** Teaching a baby the meaning of, “pangaliittuapik”, take their hand say the word. While doing this, stretch out your own hand to mimic an animal running. When an animal runs, it is “pangalittuq”. When a person runs, it is “ullaktuq”. Teaching in this fashion helps babies to become aware of hand gestures and can associate language with movement.



## 6

### Traditional Baby Songs, Chants and Play

**Songs play an important role with all age groups. Songs and chants specific to babies and young children were rich in language, meaning, tradition and love.** They told stories that helped children learn of their traditions. It was the women within the community who sang to the children throughout the day as generally, the men would be gone, hunting and fishing.

#### Qianak song:

This is a very old traditional children's song which comes from a legend about two little girls who became seabirds called, "pitsiulaaq", the red webbed foot guillemots. They were caring for babies and carrying them in amautis of their mothers. The babies started to cry because they wanted to go to their mother. The two girls who became pitsiulaaq sang it to the babies to reassure them.

Anaanaaviit saniani  
Ijiruguniguuq ailaarmaatit,  
Qianak

when he hides beside your mother  
he will come to get you  
stop crying

Ataataaviit saniani  
Ijiruguniguuq ailaarmaatit,  
Qianak

when he hides beside your father  
he will come to get you  
stop crying

**“Pauqtunga”** – Babies were not just sung to but learned to move their limbs as they were held. An example is, “pauqtunga” – while I was in the qajaq (kayak). A baby sits on someone’s lap, and as the song is sung, their arms are held out as if to paddle a qajaq, This was often sung to male babies who would one day be using the qajaq for hunting and transportation.

**Finger or thumb** – Take the finger or thumb of the baby and say, “nauk kulluqutiapiga” (where is my little thumb? *Nauli tikiqutiapiga?* - Where is my little index finger? *Qitiqtiqutiapiga / qitiqtiq* - Middle, *mikiliraqutiapiga / mikiliraq* - ring, *iqiqaqutiapiga / iqiqaq* - little finger, *nauli aggaqutiapikka?* – aggat, where is my little hand?) The focus is usually on one finger, so it does not get confusing.

Other family members or friends of the family may connect with baby directly and may be helping the baby to associate words with their interactions. This is called, **nilliujjurarniq** – in south Baffin Inuktitut, it means to acknowledge just through words or a saying. Adults were often loving and affectionate towards their relative’s children. For a baby, it would be often a connection with a kiss. Sometimes it is because the baby is named after someone and the relative is connected to that namesake. Nilliujjurarniq is being social, welcoming and acknowledging their **inuuqatiit** – fellow people. Inuuqatigiit means “people together”.

**“Najangajangaa”** – If a young toddler or child was whining and crying, sometimes someone would take her little bare foot and stretch out the toes with the fingers, get one toe, wiggle it and chant a little song,

## 6 Traditional Baby Songs, Chants and Play

“Mary, *qiatta-niar-ma-ngaaq, naja-nga-ja-ngaa*”. The person would try to distract the child to make her laugh. The song meant, “let us see if Mary is going to cry, let me wiggle this.” *Najangaqtuq* means, to wobble the head (especially when nodding off and falling asleep from being so sleepy). If a toe was wobbling or wiggling, it represented a nodding head and crying child.



**Nauli** – where is body/head part? As the baby starts to make out words more and more, you can play word games using the head or body parts but work up to more as they learn the words. “Nauli niaquq? Naukulugli iji? Nautaima putugukulunga?”

<b>niaquq</b>	head	<b>nujait</b>	hair
<b>iji</b>	eye	<b>isigait</b>	feet
<b>siuti</b>	ear	<b>putuguq</b>	toe
<b>qaniq</b>	mouth	<b>qalasiq</b>	belly button
<b>qingaq</b>	nose	<b>uluq</b>	cheek

There are “traditional” children’s songs and chants that are common across Inuit Nunangat. Some are embedded in legends and stories. There are some specific songs that go with games that were played traditionally. The language and content of the songs were based on Inuit way of life, so they are connected to the land, sea, animals, hunting, clothing, and tools.

**Saimmaqsauti** – chants and songs were also a way to pass the time or distract a child from whining, crying or being fussy. Babies and children were indirectly discouraged from whining all the time. Disciplining too harshly and directly were also discouraged. They are too young to understand and can instead learn negative behaviours from the harsh and direct discipline.

Traditional children's songs and chants (older kids):

- A short song about a small bird and its family was common in south Baffin called, "qupanuaraapik". A *nesting mother bird went to her nest, as she went in, she tripped and her husband cried out, and her little babies bumped their heads*. There is a rhythm and emphasis on the syllables of the words:

Qupanuara**a**apik, ullusaqtura**a**apik  
Ulluriarminug**g**uuq isiriar**m**ig**g**uuq,  
Napikanngu**a**p**i**ppuq!  
Uiraapi**a**g**u**uq qiasinngu**a**p**i**ppuq!  
Qiturn**g**aapingig**g**uuq avaallagutin**g**uap**i**ppuuk!

- Juggling songs: there are various versions "quluppaajusii" depending on dialects. The original meaning of the song refers to a sealskin boot, kamik.
- String game songs: Pititsimaa string game where a tied string is put around a foot and is twisted as the song is sung and then reloop the string the other way and finish the song. The aim of the twisting and untwisting while the song is sung is to get the string perfectly untwisted as you finish the song. The name of the song is based on a bow and arrow. A version of this song on a CD and a children's songbook is available from Pirurvik Centre in Iqaluit.
- Hide and Seek song: Inuit children traditionally played a hide and seek game while singing a song. This was a common game played in south Baffin and Nunavik. It may have been played in other areas of Inuit Nunangat. The children would all be in a circle with their arms interlinked across the next child's shoulders and then huddled over as they sang the song. One child would run and hide during the song and after it was finished, the ones who sang would search for the child. If there were a lot of children, there would be two teams. The kids who were born in the spring and summer would be in one group while the others who were born in the fall and winter, would be the other group. If the children wanted the game to be shorter, they would sing a shortened version of "uquutaa" song.



# 7

## Development of Talk

**When a child is first learning to talk, there is more mimicking of what he has heard and hearing from others.** The words and phrases are often learned as one whole meaning. The baby words will be part of his first vocabulary as these are often used with toddlers. As they learn to associate talking with communication and labelling their loved ones, they start to recognize the “names” which are often kinship terms used for them. *Anaana*, *ataata* and others of their immediate families or relationships by namesakes they may have.

Babies start to associate the *amauti* for going outside and recognizing the word, “*amaaq-*” –to be carried in the *amauti*. The parent or relatives who *amaaq* the baby will often say the word every time they pick up the baby and carry them in it.

From 12-18 months, when the baby is learning to sound out words, the beginnings of names or words will often be missing such as, “*naana* for

anaana (mother), taata for ataata (father), *paapa for apaapa* (baby word for food), *maaqa for amaaqa* (to carry a baby in the amauti), *taa for ittaaqa* (baby word for outside). *Igvit* or *ivvit* might be said as “viit or bit” which means you. The child will eventually learn to say the whole word or phrase as they learn to make out all the sounds and syllables of the words. The sounds that are made further in the mouth and back of the mouth with the tongue are often easier for the toddlers as they learn to manipulate their tongues and connect the sounds in their brains. Some sounds are easier to make for some babies at first.

Mothers and those closest to the baby will often be the ones who “understand” the developing language of the child when they utter sounds. Being affectionate and kissing the child will reinforce the beginnings of communication and language development.

The meanings of the words and language start to make sense for the baby in the context of everyday activities which usually exist in their small world; eating, nursing or drinking milk, immediate family members names, yes, no, locative words – *una* (this), *taanna* (that one), requests or demands – *qaiguk/qailik* – give it to me, *ingillutit* – sit down, *aqqarit* – get down from there, *tuutaa* - baby word for sleep.

If the mother or caregiver(s) talk more to the baby every day, it makes it easier for the child to learn to talk. If they do not hear Inuktitut being spoken in natural every day speech (talk), then they won't be learning it. The child learns to pick out sound and word patterns, the meanings behind them as well as grammar and rules of the language.

## Sound substitutions or replacements

As a child learns to speak Inuktitut, their mouths, tongues, hearing and voices learn to make the sounds correctly and make associations with the meanings or intent of the communication. At first, the child may naturally substitute some sounds with similar ones. Examples of sound substitutions may include: *apaapa* – *abaaba*, *amaama* – *abaaba*, *anaana* – *adaada* or vice versa. Some of the individual sounds are naturally made by using ones that are made with the nasal passage open such as, *ni*, *nu*, *na* but these same sounds when made without

## 7 Development of Talk

the air going through the nose, will become di, du, da. When the child learns to intentionally make an “n” or “t” sound, it is then pronounced as intended. Their little brains and “vocal tract” – sound making system: lips, tongue, air, voice and muscles start to come together to help them to learn to talk.

It takes awhile for the children to learn to differentiate the sounds and say them “correctly”. These are examples of sounds often substituted for one to the other or vice versa by babies and young children. They are not corrected directly.

p ↔ b ↔ m

apaapa might be said as  
abaaba or amaama

ng ↔ n

pinga might be pronounced as  
pina or anga might be said as ana.

q ↔ k

uququ might be  
said as ukuuku

t ↔ d

ittaa might be said as iddaa

& ↔ s ↔ th

Pisuk&uni might be said  
as pisuthuni

v ↔ f

g ↔ r

anaanaga / ataataga might be  
said as anaanara or ataatara

Young children when they are learning will often leave out syllables or parts of words and sentences. In Inuktitut, these are examples of words that are commonly said by developing speakers. Some syllables or



sounds are left out or substituted with other sounds instead. Over time, as they become more fluent, the children will correct themselves.

Full kinship term	Child's pronunciation with part of syllable missing	English translation
ataata	<b>taata</b>	father
anaana	<b>naana</b>	Mother
ataatatsiaq	<b>ataasia</b>	Grandfather
Tu	<b>ittu</b>	grandfather (other dialects)
angiju (angaju)	<b>aaju</b>	older sibling
anaanatsiaq ataatatsiaq	<b>tsia</b> (ending only)	grandmother grandfather
angijuapik	<b>aapik</b>	older sibling
angakuluk	<b>ngakuu or ana for anga</b>	uncle (mother's brother)
najakuluk anikuluk	<b>kuluk or kuku</b> ending pronounced by child	sister of brother brother of girl

## Kutaktuq – not fluent (yet)

Children who start to talk and can sound out most of the sounds of Inuktitut, they may still incorrectly substitute a sound for a particular sound. This is called, *kutaktuq* – not speaking fluently yet because they are still learning to speak and understand the patterns of sounds, words, and sentences.

There is substitution of sounds, using uncommon word or suffix/affix patterns. Some syllables from a word might be left out if there are several syllables in a name or word. These are examples of kinship terms or names learned whole by a child with common mispronunciation in the first column. In south Baffin the *-aapik* or (*-raapik*) and *-kuluk* affixes are usually put on the end of a kinship term for aunts, uncles, younger or older siblings or the affixes to indicate younger, older, taller or smaller (*-kutaak*, *-ralaaq* or *-laaq*) if there are several aunts and uncles.

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Examples of words that are kutaktuq – not fluently pronounced:

Correct word	incorrectly said	Substitution of sound by child
qalasira	Kalasila	“q” is sometimes said as a “k”
arnaq	annaq	“r n” become “n n”
pinnguaqtuq	pinnguattuq	“q t” become “t t”
qarliikka	qalliikka	“r l” sounds become the same “l l”
Anaanaga	Anaanara	“g” sound becomes “r”

The affixes or parts of words in the phrase or sentences are put in a particular order. The root or base of the word is in the beginning and if it is a verbal phrase, the pronoun ending is at the end. The “tense” or time affixes are in between them. There are other affixes that can be added. Nouns become verbs and then can become nouns again with affixes that change them. We are looking at the basic nouns and verb phrases in this framework.

As a child learns how words are put together and the affixes that get attached to them to add extra meaning or put into sentences to express ideas and to communicate with others, they will sometimes put them in a “wrong” order. Affixes are parts of words with separate meanings inside a long word/sentence.

Correct order of affixes	Pronouns mispronounced	Affixes mixed by child
Pinngua-ruma-qqau-juq (he wanted to play)	Pinngua-qqau-guma-juq	-ruma- and -qqau-
Kataksimavallaijuq (it might have fallen)	Katak-pallai-simajuq	-sima- and -vallai-

The affix word order in phrases and words are put in a particular order (the sentences, phrases or words become very long). However, in a sentence with several words, the order is not critical in Inuktitut. There will be some situations when the order of the separate words will be important. Here are examples of sentences with 4 words and the meaning does not change:

ilinniarvingmi takulauqtakka <i>Sarakkut</i> pinnguaqtillugit	I saw Sarah and the others at the school playing (yesterday)
takulauqtakka ilinniarvingmi pinnguaqtillugit <i>Sarakkut</i>	
<i>Sarakkut</i> takulauqtakka ilinniarvingmi pinnguaqtillugit	
pinnguaqtillugit <i>Sarakkut</i> ilinniarvingmi takulauqtakka	

### Phrases and affix order

The long words with the individual affixes within it, however, must be in a particular order:

<b>niuvi/riAQ/sima/vallai/qqau/juq</b> shopping/ went to/ he/ state of/ perhaps/ earlier/ he	nalliutimmat paninga
niuviq- is the root – to purchase, shop -riAQ- is an affix – is an affix – went to -sima- is an affix – in state of -vallai- is an affix – perhaps, may have -qqau- is an affix – tense (time of earlier) -juq is a pronoun ending attached to verbs	Nalliuti- -mmat

- **Maatusi niuviriaqsimavallaiqqaujuq nalliutimmat paninga.**
- I think Maatusi went shopping earlier because it is his daughter's birthday.

Children who are becoming more fluent learn to put “tense”/time affixes in the right order and affixes that describe or add extra meaning to the noun or verb. Children learn to find differences in verb or noun

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endings in a word or phrase. The sound and word making rules of Inuktitut are very different from English. They cannot be compared because they have different rules in how words and sentences are formed and said. Inuktitut has different sounds from English as well so they cannot be compared in how a child may be learning language.

### Other descriptions of language fluency:

**Uqamminiq / Uqqiniq:** A child who is very verbal and articulate for their age is referred to as “uqamminiq” in the North Baffin dialect and “uqqiniq” in south Baffin.

**Iqaqtuq:** someone who has lost fluency of a language, dialect or only learning as an older speaker is called “iqaqtuq”. A person who has been away from their community and stayed in the south for a long time and not spoken Inuktitut daily might become “iqaqtuq” and have to think through what word to use and how to say what they are thinking. As Inuktitut is spoken more frequently, the fluency will return. It is the same for anyone anywhere in the world who has not spoken their language for a while. This word is also used with lack of ease of movement physically. It might be due to lack of practice with something that makes someone also move more slowly.



# 8

## Language Awareness and Two Languages – Bilingualism

**A child from any culture anywhere in the world learning to speak will pretend to talk with gibberish and mix of sounds.** They will even use intonations. They will say words they are learning out loud to their toys, and dolls or figures. Some children will be more vocal, others very quiet but at times they will become frustrated because they can't express their thoughts yet. When they are hearing two languages as they are developing language skills, they might get confused and not speak. For a child to learn to speak, they must hear a language regularly in order to become familiar with sounds and words.

Children should learn language in a natural way as much as possible and not be forced to speak it in a negative manner. A parent, relative or educator needs to be patient, supportive and encouraging by creating a language rich environment. Parents can become more aware of how children learn language and help to encourage their babies and children. Inuuqatigiit Centre works with parents to help their children become aware of their mother tongue and culture. Books, songs, media, activities, events also reflect the culture of the children. This is also affirming for them as they learn to identify the bigger world with their own.

At the Inuuqatigiit Centre, language guidance and helping it to develop will include planning, programming and providing training for educators.

## Strengthening Inuktitut

**When there is a dominant language in the community other than the mother tongue, when more of the children start to speak it, it is pervasive – all over.** The English spoken and heard on TV shows, video games, shows on the iPad or YouTube are more than the home language (particularly Inuktitut) and the language being used to communicate between family members on a daily basis is English, it will lessen or subtract Inuktitut from a child's language use. This prevents Inuktitut from having the opportunity to grow and develop in all ways – expressing emotion, ideas, thinking in the language and putting thinking to action and creating. This is how languages weaken and a speaker loses their fluency and ability to speak without realizing. When the children stop using it and stop speaking it, it is hard to revive it. It must start from the babies and children with the parents and community to pass it on to them.

**Hearing and speaking Inuktitut:** A child learns to speak their mind, actions and feelings from hearing and using the language every day. They can only learn the grammar and rules of a language if they use it. Inuktitut is not just about a "traditional" custom, story, or activity. It is living life, singing songs, hearing stories, expressing thoughts and sharing memories. It is learning the action words and sentences of the ideas behind these experiences.

Speaking Inuktitut everyday in every way will allow children to become more comfortable and **confident with their language:**

- a) Talk about everyday things – getting on the bus to get to the centre, seeing a big airplane, going skating during the weekend, enjoying a birthday cake or ice-cream, going boating on a lake, visiting grandma and other activities they enjoy. The language cannot be learned if it is not used. It has to be about everyday things. The names of new things the children are learning get

added to their vocabulary and what happened, who saw what, where something went, what might happen and so on.

- b) **A natural language learning setting** will allow children to experience and explore the language at their own pace. There is repetition and hearing the words used in different situations will make the ideas and learned words, action words, how the sounds change when parts of words are different (descriptive affixes: small, big, huge, teeny and affixes that get added to action/verbs: long, suddenly, slowly, repeatedly, etc.

The children learn to use the “right” ending to indicate his or hers (my). The sound of the noun/name can either end in vowels: i, u, a or the consonants: k, q which then dictates what ending will be used -ga or -ra and, or -ikka/-ukka/-akka or -kka if it's plural depending on how many there are that is being talked about.

The language setting is so different now such as the second language; English or other languages, the grammatical ending is learned with the help of language “lessons” in school. Trying to instruct a very young child and showing him in early childhood is not helpful because they are only learning and developing their language. It is important to use the “right” endings in context and for them to hear the similar wordings as much as possible naturally so they start to decipher it themselves. Some children are very quick in picking up a language and some are slower or in between. These are examples of possessive noun endings (that mean my...) **-ga** or **-ra** and, or **-ikka/-ukka/-akka** or **-kka** if it's plural.

person, place, object	My – affix ending:	Expression, phrase
anaana (mother)	anaana-ga	anaanaga
ataata (father)	ataata-ga	ataataga
kamik (boot)	kami-ga	kamiga
qarliik (pants)	qarlii-kka	qarliikka
qungasiruaq (scarf)	qungasiru-ra	qungasirura
niaquq (head)	niaqu-ra	niaqura
ulu (ulu)	ulu-ga	uluga
kullu (thumb)	kullu-ga	kulluga

## 9 Strengthening Inuktitut

Grammar: The rest of the grammar of Inuktitut will be learned when children are immersed in the spoken language every day. This is the case with any other language. Inuktitut grammar is very different and seemingly complex from English and children do learn it, naturally. It can be systematically analyzed and taught in school but if it is done with learning and teaching techniques that include more natural methods, it can be reinforced in a supportive environment. This includes storytelling, singing songs, telling personal events stories at circle time, playing games and writing.

To learn more about general Inuktitut/Inuktut language there is information online that can be accessed.

- The Pirurvik language centre in Iqaluit's website offers some information on Inuktut/Inuktitut and it's publications – <https://tusaalanga.ca/>
- The Inuit Uqausinginnik Taiguusiliuqtiit in Iqaluit also has online publications that can be downloaded. <https://www.taiguusiliuqtiit.ca/en>

Comparing languages to the children as they get ready for school from the Inuuqatigiit Centre will help them to learn to differentiate languages they are hearing and using. Singing versions of a song is one way to do this more naturally rather than only focusing on single words.

Inuktitut	English
Nauli kullu (tikiq, qitiqti, mikiliraq, iqiqaq, hand)	"Where is Thumbkin"
Ulluq ulluq ulluriaq	Twinkle Twinkle Little Star
Niaquq Tui	Head and Shoulders
Nukakuluk sinippit	Are you Sleeping

### Dialectal:

Some children may be more aware of other dialects. By saying different word versions of the same concept such as pisuttuni – pisuk&uni, qitiqtiq – qitiq&iq which have sound differences.



There are word differences and affix differences as well. Comparing with older children is easier than it is with younger children. It can become confusing for smaller children if they hear too many versions. It is important for an educator to be aware that something might be said differently by another speaker who is from another area of Inuit Nunangat. These are examples of words:

1. Jaika, atigi, japa: jacket
2. Silapaak, qarlialuuk: windpants
3. Surusiq – nutaraq – kakkalaaq: child
4. Amiaruti – minguaruti: crayon
5. Baasi – basi: bus
6. Nunasiuti – nunakkuurut: car

At Inuuqatigiit Centre, the educators should agree to a dialect that will be used. If there is more than one dialect being spoken, it can become confusing for the children.

## Reading and writing in Inuktut/Inuktitut

Use the roman orthography in labels around the Inuuqatigiit Centre and some syllabics. Since the alphabet is used in English, using the roman orthography in Inuktitut will help the children to bridge into learning to read in English. Syllabics can be used occasionally. Inuktitut/Inuktut in Nunavut and Nunavik use syllabics and roman orthography is used more in the higher grades. In the Kitikmeot region the Inuinnaqtun dialect, they use the roman orthography. The writing system in Nunavut uses both which is why it is called a dual writing system – dual means two and both are interchangeable. It is easy to learn, and it just needs memorizing and practice for someone to become used to either writing system.



# 10

## Culture, Traditions and Language

**Inuuqatigiit Centre aims to reconnect the children with the older generation and also their historical roots.** The Inuruqsainiq/ Inunnguiniq aspect of raising children is to ensure the behavioural and social expectations are built into a childcare setting. Inuuqatigiit means – people together and its meaning signifies “inclusiveness”, togetherness. Individuality has been dominant in the Western society particularly in urban settings. The Western culture has evolved too and the lifestyles with large populations living in large towns or cities separated families from the older generation. A sense of community has lessened which changed the “inuuqatigiinni” – sense of community. This is also evident in Inuit Nunangat.

The socialization aspect of inuuqatigiingniq begins with babies. It is the start of learning how to live, thrive and survive. The language comes with all of that. There are now examples of writings and documents that refer to “inunnguiniq” or “inuruqsainiq” which has helped to focus on the knowledge and cultural ways of Inuit about raising children that has been continued and passed on. Inuuqatigiit Centre will continue to find additional ways to support learning of Inuktitut and Inuit cultural ways with knowledgeable Inuit, elders, and other childcare centres of Inuit Nunangat.

The babies and children learned to talk through cultural ways; eating food obtained from hunting, seeing seals, birds, caribou, and fish on the kitchen floors or near tents on shores, being butchered or prepared. Mothers, aunts, and grandmothers sewing parkas, fur mitts or amautiit. These are customs and activities that are still lived in Inuit Nunangat but due to the cultural changes Inuit now live like Qallunaat and others with many new materials, technology, and customs. Inuit have many new Inuktitut words, adaptation of meanings for existing Inuktitut vocabulary, expressions and borrowed words mostly from English with adaptations of some of the sounds to follow the sound system of Inuktitut.

Children learned kinship names and terminology following traditions using this language. These are still practised in Inuit Nunangat today and is strong in some areas and families. There are traditional beliefs around the names and namesakes. As the children grow older, they eventually learn the kinship connections not just through direct family and relatives but also through namesakes and their families. Being adopted adds another depth and layers to relationships as there are the adoptive relationships and the biological relationships. Learning the kinship terms enable the children and youth to learn and maintain their genealogical history. They will have a deeper understanding as they have babies and pass on the naming customs. There are current existing material on kinships and naming published by different people and organizations. Nunavut Arctic College and Government of Nunavut as well as non-Inuit who have done research.

These are now abstract and “history” for some Inuit as they do not experience or practice them anymore. Helping children to express their likes and dislikes as well as learn to understand the likes and dislikes of others, allows children to recognize and understand differences. Inuuqatigiit is respectful and help to celebrate the unique qualities of the children.

Wearing an amauti made by Inuit to carry the babies is an everyday experience for children as they live it. Seeing and hearing an elder talk in Inuktitut is not only teaching the children the language but if they hear the adults, youth and babies, it becomes second nature to them. An elder may not be directly teaching the child if she is at Inuuqatigiit sewing listening to the radio, it is in the background of the child's

# 10 Culture, Traditions and Language

experiential memory. A child learns to respect an elder or another person by observing regional exchanges. Creating a learning environment that reflects the culture of a people is at first challenging because it might not have been done before in a childcare centre.

## Communication through Relationships with family and others – *ilagiingniq, inuuqatigiingniq*

Children learn by example. They learn to socialize and relate to their families, relatives and others which is part of “*inuruqsainiq*” – “*inunnguiniq*” /being brought up and raised, or *inuuqatigiinnirmik ilippalliajuq* – he is learning to be with and relate to others. The way children are brought up is in the context of relationships with others. The other word is *Inuruqsajauniq* – “*inunnguqsajauniq*” or “*piruqsajauniq*” – to be raised, brought up.

To respect others was learned through family and social customs and expectations. The role of elders and parents was to maintain positive relationships to ensure a fulfilling and sustainable life. Inuit learned to adapt to their environment and climate conditions. They were expected to respect and value life. These values and respect included parents, elders, animals, the land, sea and sky. The language connected to all was not abstract ideas just through spoken words but also through lived experiences which included daily life, spiritual beliefs and traditions.

Today, the language spoken is connected to another way of life. The language has adapted but the words for relationships, kinship, family and customs are still the same with some differences. There needs to be an effort to pass on Inuktitut socialization customs and language that have been taken for granted. When there are two cultures in a community and the Qallunaatit or Western ways are dominant, it can easily overpower or overwhelm the other.

- *Inuuqatigiit* means relationship with people and *inuuqatigiitsiarniq* means “positive/harmonious relationships” through socialization. Children will learn the values of building positive relationships from seeing how adults behave with others. Setting expectations of how to and not to behave is done with direct guidance and positive discipline.

- Ilagiingniq- family relationships, *ilagiitsiarniq* – positive family relationships were learned through advice from the parents, elders and advisors. They provide guidance to the children, youth and adults.

These are a few examples of creating Inuktitut – Inuit language and cultural settings:

- Women making kamiik or mitts at Inuuqatigiit in the “background” creates a setting for the children to learn to relate to adults and elders while hearing them speak Inuktitut. They do not have to be instructing the children directly.
- A person making a qamutinnuaq – toy qamutiik sled for sliding at Inuuqatigiit play area outside. This is to create a “background” of memories for the children.
- Have the “radio” on with Inuktitut in the background. (recordings – with Inuktitut songs playing in between)
- Woman making stew/ uujuq – fish, caribou or bird.
- Making Bannock – palaugaaq in small groups of 4. Talking in Inuktitut at the same time to encourage the language learning in a natural every day activity.
- Showing Isuma TV or Inuit Broadcasting Corporation programs in the background during play time to encourage background memories of Inuit, speaking Inuktitut, carrying out their daily activities.
- Playing Inuktitut songs softly in the background during specific times of the day.
- Providing “amautinnguat” – little girl’s amautis for play time, dress up.
- Inviting elders regularly to have tea and palaugaaq with the children during snack time. Get the children to take turns helping the elders with their coats, boots, etc. This helps the children to learn to relate to older people and become inuuqatigiit (socialization) with them. Not having grandparents or elders around might be a reality for many living in the south. Language is learned in the context of adults, older people and elders. This is part of building relationships with older people and others.

## Vocabulary and Everyday Words at Inuuqatigiit Centre :

1. Body Parts
2. Clothing
3. Colours
4. Family
5. Food and eating
6. Seasons, weather
7. Special days and holidays
8. Shapes and sizes
9. Toys
10. Transportation
11. Animals



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