

Nuiyak School, Sanikiluaq, Nunavut

Jurisdiction: Nunavut

Contact: Trudy Pettigrew

Level: K-12

Theme: Curriculum/materials

Description of Practice:

Nuiyak School offers a regular K-12 school program similar to all of our schools in Nunavut but also offers many hands-on programs such as media and technology, construction, taxidermy and extra curricular activities. They host the community museum and promote an environment within the school that is relaxed and supportive to students. They have a high respect for Inuit culture and language and this is visible throughout the school. Specific activities include renovating and constructing a duplex, doing taxidermy work, making polar bear rugs and full sized wolves and foxes, designing jewelry in wax and having them cast into sterling silver, screen printing garments, creating object boxes for mounting cultural objects and doing archaeological castings of significant Inuit prehistoric artifacts.

Background:

Second language students face a difficult challenge learning English while being immersed in an Inuit culture that is still heavily dependent on living off the land. This presents the school with major challenges in producing a higher graduation rate.

Construction is one activity that occurs every year in the community however it is dominated by southern workers; local people have few training opportunities. By introducing construction skills into the school, students are being exposed to a trade and an interest in pursuing work in construction. They are also creating more housing units in the town.

The school has partnered with a non-profit society, Najuqsivik. This society formed in 1998 is able to access funding sources which are outside the reach of a school and able to partner with various governmental departments. The Najuqsivik Society board members receive no honoraria. There has been a core of members since 1998. They propose new programs and evaluate proposals in their monthly meetings. Major new projects are presented at their annual meetings in May and include community discussion.

Nuiyak School was recognized in early 2007 as one of 10 schools across Canada that is bridging the education gap in our schools for aboriginal youth. This recognition was given by the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education in a report entitled *Sharing Our Success*.

Development:

Taxidermy is a self-sufficient project that Najuqsivik developed through the Department of Education, Career Development offices. Non-students on income support were trained in the process (Sivuniksiilirniq program). Several senior students also were trained through the project. This resulted in several of the adults acting as instructors for other students and the process has extended into larger animals.

The construction trades program has been supported with partnerships with Nunavut Housing Corporation, Kakivak, Department of Education Qikiqtani Career and Early Childhood Services office, Department of Economic Development, Qammaq Housing Association, Najugsivik and Nuiyak School.

Evidence:

It might be unusual to have a school partnering with various governmental and non-governmental agencies using a non-profit society as the conduit for helping the community and at the same time benefiting the school. But the school could not see any other ways of increasing our effectiveness without partners. Fortunately, all of the partners were glad to support the community and indirectly the students in the school.

Najugsivik also operates a 24/7 Sanikiluaq Community Television station. This allows them to describe programs to the entire community. It is also an excellent venue for allowing elders to reach every house in the community and allows students to operate a TV station.

Over the years, the school has amassed equipment which is necessary to run programs. The screen printing is an example. The school has dedicated space in an art portable and has a 6 colour printer, flash cure unit, UV photo exposure unit and conveyer belt dryer. Students are able to integrate this process into their studies, such as the Inuktitut teacher having the students make t-shirts with Inuktitut personal names of their family. Students produce t-shirts for various events and they receive remuneration for their work.

The program administrator advises that: "It would be great to say that our programs produce a higher graduation rate, but it has not succeeded in this area. We have highlighted Inuit culture and produced students with skills in various areas, such as construction, but it has not translated into academic success. Success may come by marrying academics with cultural activities, breaking down existing walls, but our program is not developed."

Adaptability:

It is very important that educators talk to various government departments. This may only result in success if the educators are part of a non-profit group, since government is not designed to 'feed itself' internally. But an NGO is a different matter. They have found that people in government are extremely enthusiastic to support community program and are happy working with an NGO. But, the NGO and school should have a 'track record' of efficiently producing results. Having long time educators in the community with contacts in various agencies is also beneficial.

Further information:

The website, www.najugsivik.com can give some snapshots of some of the programs. The latest publication: *Sharing Our Success*, published by the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, also gives a more complete description of the program.