

*Exploring the Concepts of Traditional Inuit Leadership and
Effective School Leadership in Nunavut (Canada)*

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to document how a group of educators living in Inuit communities across Nunavut (Canada) describes both traditional Inuit leadership and effective school leadership. The data for this qualitative study were 24 semi-structured interviews, involving 14 teachers, vice-principals, and principals from Nunavut. Findings revealed that traditional Inuit leadership was about promoting the personal leadership skills, interests, and/or abilities of each community member, and it often involved Elders who fostered the linguistic, social, cultural, and spiritual wellness of students and school staff. Participants depicted the effective school leader as someone who promotes teamwork. Effective school leadership was community- and people-focused. The findings of this study align with an Inuit worldview that places great value on relationships and the concept of holism.

Keywords: Inuit tradition, Inuit leadership, school leadership

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Introduction

During the past half century, the traits associated with being an effective school leader have changed. For example, during the 1960s, the school principal often embodied authoritarian traits, emphasizing *his* power in making decisions and determining school goals (Northouse, 2012). Adaptations to this style of leadership emerged in the 1970s and early 1980s, when principals began to personify situational leadership—they needed to adapt their action based on the context at hand (Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Zigarmi, 1985). During the mid-1980s to 1990s, educational laws in North America and Europe emphasized the delivery of a quality public education for all students regardless of race, gender, or economic situation (Conger, 2010). In turn, effective leaders became transformational leaders, fostering strong relationships with and among staff. By the turn of the 21st century, accountability, technology, and data-driven decision-making influenced the culture of schools (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Accordingly, effective leadership was about dealing with change on a restricted budget with limited resources. When reviewing current literature on effective school leadership, countless more concepts emerge. For example, a successful school principal is an instructional leader (Fullan, 2014; Robinson, 2011), uses participatory decision-making (Kaner, 2014), and promotes the concept of leadership as a living system (Mitchell & Sackney, 2013).

The above overview represents a chronological display of popular concepts associated with effective school leadership. When reviewing this information and other published literature, one aspect given limited attention is a description of effective leadership via an Aboriginal perspective. Herein, we stipulate the term *Aboriginal* refers to the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples in Canada. The Canadian *Constitution Act, 1982* recognizes these three groups as the First Peoples of Canada who, for millennia, inhabited geographical regions across the nation.¹ To help address the scholarly void pertaining to the lack of research about Aboriginal leadership, the purpose of this paper is to document how a group of educators living in Inuit communities across Nunavut (Canada) describes traditional Inuit leadership and effective school leadership.

Before articulating details of the study, it is helpful to provide information pertaining to Nunavut's history, its Inuit population, and its geographical location. Archeologists believe that about 10,000 years ago, bands of Siberian nomadic hunters crossed the Bering Strait (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada [INAC], 2005). Then about 4,000 years ago, these hunters traveled to what is now Northern Canada, and they became the first Inuit people of Canada (INAC, 2005). Fast-forwarding thousands of years, the most recent Canadian Census documented that 59,445 people in Canada self-identify as Inuit (Statistics Canada, 2013). This amount represents 0.2% of Canada's overall population (Statistics Canada, 2013). About half of total

¹ A term often associated with Aboriginal is Indigenous. Indigenous is a phrase commonly found within international discourse, discussions, and protocol agreements (McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004).

Inuit populace of Canada (i.e., 27,070 people) lives in Nunavut (Statistics Canada, 2013), which, in 1999, became Canada's third territory. Nunavut is located in the Eastern Canadian Arctic, and it represents almost one-fifth of Canada's entire land mass (INAC, 2005). This large territory is divided into three regions: Qikiqtaaluk (aka, Baffin Island), Kivalliq (aka, Keewatin District), and Kitikmeot (aka, Central Arctic). In Inuktitut (the Inuit language), the word *Inuit* means "the people."

Literature Review: Inuit Culture and Leadership

The Inuit culture is reliant upon the ever-giving bounty of the land. To Inuit, the land infers all of nature—the earth, water, ice, wind, sky, plants, and animals (Nunavut Department of Education, 2007). Kuniliusie (2015) stated that the Inuit respect for the land is "immeasurable" (p. 58). Pirjuaq (as cited by Putulik, 2015) explained that the traditional Inuit lifestyle were reflective of the four seasons. For example, in the winter, the Inuit traveled by dog teams and tradition boats (*umiaq*); in the summer, the kayak (*qajaq*) was used (Kuniliusie, 2015; Ittusardjuat, 2015). In the fall, caribou offered food, clothing, and tools, and seals provided oil (i.e., rendered seal fat) to cook food and heat the living space (Ittusardjuat, 2015). Gender roles or "gender balance" (Kuniliusie, 2015, p. 59) were stark, important features of the Inuit way of life. The men hunted caribou, seal, migratory birds, and other regional animals; the women cooked, sewed, and cared for the children (Ittusardjuat, 2015; Pitsiulak, 2015). In general, Inuit values involved sharing food, sharing possessions, caring for family, and cooperating with each other (Ittusardjuat, 2015; Kuniliusie, 2015). Owljoot (2008) indicated that, from the most part, the Inuit continue to live according to traditional values. They cherish the time spent on the land, enjoy eating country foods, and appreciate time spent with family, friends, and relatives.

With regard to Inuit culture, Elders played and continue to play an important role. Arnaquq (2015) stated that traditional Inuit camp leaders were reliable, hospitable, and fair in their daily dealings and treatment of other people. Kuniluisie (2015) explained that these decision-makers commonly represented males, who demonstrated leadership via their wisdom and knowledge. Because many people within the camp lived in such an honorable fashion, there was more than just one leader or Elder in the camp. Leon (2012) described Elders as leaders, consultants, and teachers. They are historians, philosophers, professors, and knowledge keepers of tradition and heritage (Owljoot, 2008), traits which align with many of the features of effective Aboriginal leadership.

Although each Aboriginal group in Canada (e.g., First Nations, Metis, and Inuit) expresses its culture in unique ways, simultaneously, Aboriginal peoples throughout Canada and North America hold a similar worldview. A worldview is lens or filter through which one perceives and interprets the world (Preston & Green, in press). In two simple words, the Aboriginal worldview is one of *interconnected wholeness*, or, as succinctly stated by Atleo (2004), "Everything is one" (p. xi). Relationships,

spirituality, and the expression of traditional values are at the heart of an Aboriginal worldview.

Many authors reveal that there are also fundamental features imbued within an Aboriginal style of leadership. For example, Deloria (1994) indicated that, among American Indian² tribes, leadership was based on relationships and kinship responsibilities; leaders were chosen via their service to the community. Leon (2012) believed that strong Aboriginal leadership is dependent on four key points—interaction with the land, promotion of language and culture, promotion of family, and community service. Other authors describe how Aboriginal leadership is akin to transformative leadership, which is rooted in collective values and co-determined outcomes aimed at social equality and change, when needed (Benham & Murakami, 2013; Leon, 2012). Aboriginal leadership is about attending to the community's needs, above individual needs (Julien, Wright, & Zinni, 2010). Other authors expound that solid Aboriginal leadership tactics is about using consensus as a form of decision-making (Bennett & Rowley, 2004), promoting harmonious relationships (King, 2008), and incorporating spirituality into one's beliefs and actions (Felicity, 1999). Gardner (2012) and Pidgeon (2012) epitomized Aboriginal leadership through four words: relevance, responsibility, respect, and reciprocity. An overarching feature of Aboriginal leadership is that it is related to the concept of holism—the belief that all things are related, and one's actions are connected to living and non-living things everywhere.

Research Methodology, Participants, and Data Analysis

This research assumes a qualitative methodology, because we view the data as being situational, dynamic, social, and person-specific. In other words, this qualitative research reflects how people construct meaning from individualized life experiences (Patton, 2015). Our research involved conducting 24 semi-structured individual interviews with 14 educators living in Nunavut, Canada. Participants represented teachers, vice-principals, and principals; at the time of data collection, they possessed five years to a lifetime of experience living and/or teaching in Nunavut.

To find participants, we used purposeful sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2015). First, we sent invitations to principals of all schools located in Nunavut. One of the researchers also sent additional invitations to Nunavut vice-principals she personally knew. She also sent invitations to Nunavut teachers whom aspired to assume educational leadership positions, a point reflected by the fact that these teachers were enrolled in a Masters of Education in Leadership program. In turn, 14 participants volunteered for the study; eight were principals, two were vice-principals, and four were teachers. Four participants were Inuit and 10 were non-

² Although the word “Indian” is not a term that is politically correct within Canada, within the United States, it is a phrase that is sometimes used to describe the Indigenous peoples of that country.

Inuit. Originally, we planned to interview each participant two times; however, due to time and geographical restraints, some participants were interviewed once. In the end, nine participants were interviewed two times, and five participants were interviewed one time. Eight of these participants were female, and six participants were male. Nine interviews were conducted in person and 15 interviews were conducted over the phone. Please see Table 1 for an overview of participant details.

Table 1
Participant Description

Pseudonym	Position	Gender	# of Interviews	Inuit / Non-Inuit
Becky	Principal	F	2	Inuit
Lucas	Principal	M	2	Inuit
Isabel	Principal	M	2	Non-Inuit
Evelyn	Principal	M	2	Non-Inuit
Jack	Principal	F	2	Non-Inuit
Neil	Principal	M	2	Non-Inuit
Chloe	Principal	F	1	Non-Inuit
Anna	Principal	F	1	Non-Inuit
Henry	Vice-Principal	M	1	Non-Inuit
Owen	Vice-Principal	M	1	Non-Inuit
Amelia	Teacher	F	1	Inuit
Kylie	Teacher	F	2	Inuit
Grace	Teacher	F	2	Non-Inuit
Steve	Teacher	M	2	Non-Inuit

Griffiee (2005) reminded researchers that raw data, such as interview transcripts, do not by themselves reveal meaning; rather, transcripts must be interpreted. In an effort to create meaning, the researchers read each participant's interview in its entirety, gaining familiarity with its overall content. Each interview was reread, but more systematically, to create categories of key ideas, phrases, commonalities, differences, and patterns embedded in the transcripts (Stake 2005). At this point, we read and reread the information and converged the multiple categorical themes into larger theme(s) in response to the research purpose (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Researcher Identity

To promote the transparency of this research, we present our identity. Two of the five authors were not Aboriginal (i.e., Jane Preston and Tim Claypool); however, one of these researchers experienced in-depth Medicine Wheel teachings and many Aboriginal sacred ceremonies (e.g., sweats, smudging, etc.) prior to conducting this research. Brenda Green (Wahpeton Dakota First Nation, Saskatchewan) was the research collaborator for the study. She offered the research team the knowledge, experience, and personal connections with Aboriginal principals and communities, increasing the trustworthiness and dissemination of the study. As well, Jill Martin (Listigouche First Nation, Quebec) and William Rowluck (Lytton First Nation, British

Columbia) were Aboriginal graduate students who provided their Aboriginal knowledge and academic skills during most stages of the research. Aligned with Aboriginal methodologies, during data analysis, we consulted an Aboriginal Elder who helped the researchers understand fundamental aspects of an Aboriginal worldview.

Thematic Findings

In addressing the purpose of this study, we describe both traditional forms of Inuit leadership and effective aspects of school leadership. We found that both descriptions of leadership were based on promoting rich relationships and communal wellness.

Traditional Inuit Leadership

With regard to traditional Inuit leadership, at its core, participants believed this concept was about fostering healthy communities by promoting the personal leadership skills, interests, and/or abilities of each community member. Participants explained that traditional Inuit leadership was embodied through Elders and the way they fostered the linguistic, social, and spiritual wellness of student and school staff. Elder leadership was also about the oral and physical dissemination of knowledge and culture. It embodied patience and promoted skill development of others. Below, these findings are explicated.

A Sense of Community. When asking participants to describe Inuit leadership, most responses were imbued with the concept of community or a sense of collectiveness. Kylie described this Inuit leadership as “communal.” Isabel indicated, “When it comes to Inuit leadership, it’s not one person. It’s people.” She explained that Inuit people tend to recognize the strengths of each individual person and call upon that person to lead when his/her specific skill is in need:

You want to encourage people to take leadership roles, but you have to do it in a respectful way and in a manner that you offer a safe accepting environment. You really have to work in that relationship and that avenue to really open it up, so somebody wants to come forward.

Evelyn had a similar depiction of Inuit leadership. She said, “Inuit leadership is about having the person who has the skill in a certain area step forward ... So it’s a more fluid type of leadership. It depends on the need at the moment.” Steve believed that traditional Inuit leadership was about recognizing that, “Everyone in the community has an obligation to be a leader.” In essence, Inuit leadership was something that came from within each person in the community, and the sum of these individual forms of leadership created a well-led community.

Becky added to the discussion by explaining that each member of a community has a responsibility to recognize the leadership potential and skills of fellow community members. She explained that the same hold true in a school context, where teacher are responsible for spotting the leadership potential of students. To further explain her point, she provided an example:

I listen to these Grade 12s talking about, for example . . . why it is important for our seals to be sold and what it means for the community. Then I watch them do the presentations. I see such great leaders not just in education, but in the areas of wildlife, in different areas. You know who is going to be a mother. You can almost see them what their future will be.

Becky continued by saying that not only do educators need to recognize leadership potential in their students, the youth should be able to recognize leadership within each other. On the topic of student leadership, Becky said, “It’s very important that the older students see the younger children and that the younger children see the older ones.” In turn, promoting the leadership potential within a community is about observing and calling upon the gifts that are housed within every member of the community.

Elder Leadership: Social and Spiritual. When referring to traditional Inuit leadership, many participants referred to Elders. Steve identified Elders as leaders who provided direction for families and direction for the community. However, he specified:

[Elder leadership is] not a mayor, it’s not a president, or anything like that. It is more of a collective group of Elders who have that respect of the youth, and it is not about ruling with an iron fist. It’s just the way they go about living their daily lives. It’s more about how to conduct themselves and what their expectations are for the community.

Participants believed that Elders fostered the social and spiritual wellness of youth. Evelyn spoke about the calming, peaceful presence of Elders. She explained, in her school, Elders helped students who were aggressive and/or fighting or bickering with other students. She explained how the leadership of Elders often brought peace to such a situation:

Then the children who were involved came. It would be sort of like a restitution circle led by the Elder. I always found those kinds of things beautiful. The Elder would know the families, and you could see the dispute dissolve. The Elder would say, “You know, I think you guys are related. You shouldn’t be fighting. You shouldn’t ostracize this person.”

Becky also referred to how Elder leadership addressed the social and spiritual needs of some students. She said often teachers cannot spend quality time with students who have specialized social needs; however, when these students “spend an hour with the Elder making little carvings or making little mitts, and they talk to the children about social issues,” many of the spiritual needs of these students are met. Becky believed that time spent with the Elders is a great resource for students. In Grace’s school, “The kids go up to the Elder’s room ... and they have been beading, sewing, and doing traditional stuff.” Grace believed time students spending time with Elder was a way of teaching and retaining Inuit culture. In all these examples, Elder leadership addressed the linguistic, social, cultural, and/or spiritual domains of the student. Kylie believed that such school leadership is in great need. She also said that she was empathetic to the workload of some of the Elders, because “a lot of these Elders are supporting a lot of children.”

Elder Leadership: Dissemination of Knowledge, Language, and Culture. Another feature of Elder leadership is the oral dissemination of knowledge and the Inuktitut language. Anna recognized the important role that Elders play in her school when she said, “We invite in the Elders, and we do all sorts of activities in Inuktitut.” She also said, “[Elders] come and teach us drumming.” Jack viewed Elders as knowledge holder: “There were no written things, nothing, no library. Since every Elder was the library, everything was orally transmitted to the generations. So it is like if an Elder dies in Nunavut, that means a library is burned.” Neil talked about cultural days at his school, which involved Elders disseminating their knowledge and wisdom. Neil said the Elders help supervise students and only speak to students in Inuktitut. Elders explain how the Inuit survived throughout the seasons, how to make an igloo, and other culture aspects of existence with the land.

The knowledge and wisdom embodied within Elders was not just available to students. Many participants explained that their own teacher, vice-principal, or principal professional development sometimes involved spending time with Elders. For example, Henry said, “We go on day trips as a staff and have an Elder teach us.” Owen said that, with the help of Elders, he went out on the land, learned to build traditional igloos, and learned about skinning animals. Lucas believed the leadership offered by Elders is invaluable and said, “I would like an Elder in each school as a resource person, advisor, and instructor to assist teachers. Elders are walking encyclopedias.”

Elder Leadership: Patience and Skill Development. A final feature of Elder leadership was about being a patient teacher, who promotes the development of skills within students. Becky indicated that Elders stress the virtue of “*Pilimmaksarniq*—it’s the development of skills through effort, practice, and action. There’s a huge stress in this for Inuit. That’s why we are very keen on observation and most of the things we do is through observation.” Isabel explained this concept further:

Around here there is a lot of this attitude when you are younger, you don't do everything right away. You watch, you observe, and, when you are ready, then you do it. So, there is a timespan or progression of "I've seen it. I've seen it. I've seen it." Now I am going to try to do it. Now, I am good at it. So, it depends on where you grew up. It depends on if you are male or female. It depends on a lot of things.

Evelyn described the common features of Inuit learning and skill-building and said:

It's not the traditional way of learning. You watch, and you watch, and you watch, and then once you know how to do it, then you do it. So that's why I think it's important to be patient and let the learning unfold as it will or as it should and just encourage, that's the core of me I think.

Participants explained that Elder's role model such patience and provide safe opportunities for students to observe, observe, practice, and perfect.

Effective School Leadership

With regard to effective school leadership, at its core, participants depicted an effective school leader as someone who promoted collaborative efforts of staff and students. Like traditional Inuit leadership, school leadership was community- and people-focused. Details about these findings follow.

Teamwork: When asking Nunavut educators to describe features of strong school leadership within a Nunavut context, the topic of cooperation and teamwork surfaced. Amelia said, "In the institutional sense, I would say it [effective leadership] is someone who makes an effort with the team to complete a task ... Good educational leadership, it's teamwork [and] collaboration." As a school principal, Evelyn valued the importance of collaboration among staff. She explained that early in the year, she would organize professional development sessions aimed at establishing and supporting relationships among staff members. She referred to this professional development as "team building." Becky explained how she tried to promote a team spirit among her staff. She said, "So I try to include the whole staff to help each other. I will just say, 'Who has good material on flowers, because our theme is flowers. Who would like to share it? Thank you so much.'" Lucas promoted teamwork and a sense of community among the staff by bringing food to the staff room, therein promoting socializing among staff. On this point he said, "I would bring in country food anytime I could to encourage staff so they are happy at the workplace."

Chloe described effective leadership as a type of shared leadership or teamwork where she, as the principal, invited staff to experience leadership by encouraging them to lead various projects associated with the school. Henry's description of effective

school leadership was similar. He said that an effective school leader empowers his/her staff members by being their advocate and support. Henry said, “If someone wants to run with something, we really support that and say go for it.”

People- and Community-Focused. The participants’ perceptions about effective school leadership aligned with similar comments they relayed about traditional Inuit leadership. For example, as indicated above, Inuit leadership was about recognizing and calling upon the specialized leadership skills of individual people. With regard to school leadership, Isabel said, “Everyone plays a part in the leadership of the school.” Isabel also explained that effective school leadership was knowing when to call on which person. On this point, she said:

It’s [effective school leadership] about knowing you staff and knowing the level to which they might be comfortable doing something they have to lead. You had to set it up in a way that is inviting and so that people want to take that leadership role. But it’s something you have work at with your staff. It is not something that can develop overnight. It goes back to the whole relationship thing again.

Isabel explained that calling upon the leadership skills of other simultaneously had potential to enrich relationships with these people.

Other participants believed that, as the school leader, effective school leadership was about being a positive role model, through one’s acts and attitude, for the entire school community. Evelyn said, “I tried to work alongside them, and I wouldn’t ask them to do anything that I wasn’t ready to do myself. Leading by example is important.” Lucas said, “The most effective tool that I have is to model my positive attitude throughout the day to all who come through the school doors. Positive attitude is contagious.” For Neil, it was important that he was a friendly person, so that teachers felt comfortable approaching him if something was upsetting them.

The responses of many participants addressed the idea that effective school leadership is about establishing effective relationships within the entire school community. For example, Jack described his style of leadership as “democratic,” whereby he invited the staff in the decision-making process. Other teacher participants explained how his/her leadership in the classroom was associated to the concept of community. Owen stated, “We’re all in the community together, and when someone has success, we all have it together. When someone is hurting, we all hurt together.” Kylie explained, if a teacher wants to be an effective leader in the school, he/she needs to foster a sense of community. To do so, the teacher has “to know the kids—all the kids [in the school] —not just your classroom kids” (Kylie). For Grace, part of being an effective teacher leader was helping to ensure that everyone in the school is working together. She added, “There is not society on the face of the earth that would ever survive if we didn’t work together.” For Steve, strong teacher leadership was

about building relationships and trust among students and parents. He said, “If you are unable to build a strong relationship with the student and parent ... it is going to be very difficult for an educator to get concepts and educate them in a meaningful way.”

Discussion: Inuit Worldview Aligns with Features of Strong Leadership

Theoretical features of this research are promoted through a discussion about how the Inuit worldview aligns with aspects of effective leadership. An Inuit worldview incorporates the idea that life revolves around the outdoors (*sila*) or the spirit of nature (National Committee on Inuit Education, 2011). Every living thing, including animals, has a spirit; everything is alive, everything is equal, and the land is sacred (Simpson, 2000). A prosperous, fulfilled life involves promoting strong relationships with all things, with all spirits. For the Inuit, these relationships are maintained by observing four core laws: working for the common good, being respectful of all living things, maintaining harmony, and continually preparing for a better future (Nunavut Department of Education, 2007).

Quite recently, Inuit Elders have added details supportive of the four fundamental laws of relationships. Through a 2007 document entitled, “Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ): Educational Framework for Nunavut Curriculum” (Nunavut Department of Education, 2007), Elders articulated beliefs, values, skills, and knowledge that are components of a traditional and modern Inuit way of life. Elders advised that these IQ principles be incorporated into every school, classroom, and lesson. These eight concepts include: showing respect for others, being welcoming, developing collaborative relationships, promoting environmental stewardship, developing knowledge and skill acquisition, being resourceful, promoting consensus decision-making, and serving others. An overview of these IQ principles is highlighted in Table 2.

Table 2
Eight Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ) Principles

Principal	Meaning
Inuuqatigiitsiarniq	• showing respect and caring for others
Tunnganarniq	• being welcoming, open, and inclusive
Piliriqatigiigni	• developing collaborative relationships to work together for a common purpose
Avatimik Kamattiarniq	• promoting environmental stewardship
Pilimmaksarniq	• knowledge and skill acquisition
Qanuqtuurunnarniq	• being resourceful to solve problems
Aajiqatigiiniq	• consensus decision-making
Pijitsimiq	• serving

Source: Nunavut Department of Education, 2007

With regard to the findings of this research, both the Inuit laws of relationships and the IQ principles align, for the most part, with how participants described traditional Inuit leadership and effective school leadership. Participants explained that traditional Inuit leadership was about welcoming, inviting, respecting, and using the skills of community members to address the needs of the community. This finding, in itself overlaps with essence of all eight IQ principals, as IQ principles, especially Tunnganarniq (welcoming), Piliriqatigiigniq (collaborative relationships), Pilimmaksarniq (knowledge and skill acquisition) and Pijitsirniq (serving). Traditional Elder leadership embodied social and spiritual relationships with youth. In other words, traditional leadership is about embodying a mutual caring, respectful attitude (Inuuqatigiitsiarniq—respect) between Elders and youth (Piliriqatigiigniq—collaborative relationships). Elder leadership was also about disseminating knowledge, language, and culture and promoting patience and skill development in others (Pilimmaksarniq—skill and knowledge acquisition). As well, all of the aspects that participants perceived as traditional Inuit leadership align with how the Inuit worldview places on relationships, maintaining harmony, and continually preparing for a better future.

With regard to identified traits of effective school leadership, participants explained that teamwork, a focus on promoting and using the skills of people, and a focus on promoting community wellbeing were important. This finding relates to the Inuit/Aboriginal idea that everything is connected. This interconnectedness is, essentially, the Aboriginal concept of holism. Holism is a notion that whole of anything is greater than the sum of its parts. This point infers that the individual pieces of any system, organization, or—in the case of this study—a school community, neither can exist nor be fully understood unless each piece is related to the functioning of the entire structure. This living environment remains healthy via its web of relations, a concept that aligns with the Inuit culture and its laws of relationships. Participants also believed that effective school leadership was about promoting the forte of each individual in the school, whether it be principal, teacher, or students. Participants believed effective leadership was about working as a team, where the leader was a role model for the team. The findings indicates that an effective school leader is a servant leader, which essentially Pijitsirniq. As well, an effective school leader promoted rich relationships among all members of the school community. This idea mirrors, the concept of Piliriqatigiigniq—developing collaborative relationships for a common purpose. In sum, the participants descriptions of traditional Inuit leadership and effective school leadership fully align with an Inuit worldview and the IQ principals.

Closing Remarks

Across Canada, the high school completion rate is approximately 52% for First Nations students (Richards, 2008) and 46% for Nunavut students (Nunatsiaq News,

2012), compared to 82% for non-Aboriginal students (Richards, 2008). These low Aboriginal graduation rates show change is required. Achieving equitable levels of educational success will increase the social wellbeing and economic welfare of Aboriginal peoples. Past research supports a solid supposition that a principal's leadership skill and acumen are key mechanisms to improve student performance (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004); however, there is a stark absence of research about effective school leadership practices imbued with an Aboriginal/Inuit worldview. Herein, we addressed that void and described effective leadership practices via an Inuit worldview. In promulgating our results, we hope to inform and influence school leaders about a type of leadership that focuses on relationships and the concept of holism. We believe leaders who embody at least some aspects of this Inuit style of leadership will support the academic success and wellbeing of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. In turn, this research promotes provincial governments, territorial governments, and the Council of Ministers, Canada's (2010) mandate to narrow the educational gap currently existing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. It also is a key to enriching the wellness of any school community.

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