

Inuit Language Loss in Nunavut: Analysis and Forecast

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Why Nunavut? “We were losing our language”

‘The whole reason why the land claims took place, because **we were losing our language**”

– Paul Quassa, 2003.

Nunavut homes are becoming more English

	2001	2006	2011
Number of homes where Inuktut is mostly spoken:	15,250 (57%)	15,695 (54%)	16,595 (52%)

English spoken mostly in the home has increased from **28.5% in 1991** to **46% in 2011**

How fast is Inuit language loss happening?

The number of Inuktitut mother tongue speakers has dropped from 88% in 1996 to 80% in 2011.

Use of Inuit Language in the home has dropped from 76% in 1996 to 61% in 2011.

Inuit home language loss = 12% (1996-2006)

- “The statistics clearly show Inuit language use and transmission is on a continuing decline. **Most troubling is that Inuit language use in the home dropped by 12% between 1996 and 2006.**”
 - -Sandra Inutiq, Nunavut Language Commissioner

How long will the Inuit Language last in Nunavut?

- If the home language loss rate is 12% per decade, and
- If 52% of Inuit spoke Inuktitut in the home in 2011
- **At this rate, by 2051, the Inuit language will be spoken at home by only 4% of Inuit in Nunavut**

Alternate loss rate (15% per 15 years)

- If the home language loss rate is 1% per year (15%, 1991-2006)
- And 52% of Inuit spoke Inuktitut in the home in 2011
- **At this rate, by 2061, the Inuit language will be spoken by only 2% of Inuit in Nunavut**

The Laws to protect Inuktut aren't working

- 2008: three GN laws were passed to protect Inuktut as the main language of instruction in the schools from K to 12, by 2019
- The Department of Education proposes to delete the 2019 deadline

The GN has not implemented Inuit language education

- In many schools, Inuit Language isn't even taught up to Grade 3.

There are supposed to be 85% Inuit teachers in the schools; but the Department of Education has not trained and hired them

How to measure the strength of a language? UNESCO 2015

SAFE

VULNERABLE/UNSAFE

DEFINITELY ENDANGERED

SEVERELY ENDANGERED

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

EXTINCT

Inuktut = Vulnerable/Unsafe

Inuinnaqtun = DEFINITELY ENDANGERED

Inuktut (elsewhere in Nunavut) = VULNERABLE/UNSAFE

What can NTI do?

- Dept of Education must deliver K-12 schooling in Inuktut in all 42 schools in Nunavut
- =85% Inuit teachers
- =100% Inuit curriculum all grades % subjects

What can NTI do?

- The federal government must contribute money to support Inuktut, the language of the majority of residents. Today, it directly supports the French language in Nunavut schools but not Inuktut.