

# Iqaluit's only Inuktitut daycare closes temporarily due to staff shortage <sup>[1]</sup>

Parents will get certified to watch the kids in the short term

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

Iqaluit's only Inuktitut daycare is temporarily closed and administrators say there aren't enough staff members to open.

Right now, Tumikuluit only has two staff — a manager and a cook — but there aren't any teachers. It needs four teachers to reach full capacity.

When fully staffed, Tumikuluit can host 20 children, though it is rarely fully staffed.

Celina Kalluk, Tumikuluit's executive director, is one of the two staff. She says staff are often hired away for better paying jobs that come with housing, as Inuktitut-speaking staff are in high demand.

On Wednesday last week when it was forced to close, there were 16 kids enrolled.

Kalluk says the daycare is calling on the parents of those kids in the short term. It's working to get criminal record checks for the parents so they can watch children at the daycare.

She said parents are looking into how they can rotate taking time off work to spend a day a week at Tumikuluit.

Tumikuluit's board president Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory says there needs to be more support from the government of Nunavut for all daycares in the territory.

"We realize the crisis that we are facing, in terms of staffing, has nothing to do with the daycare itself. It has nothing to do with the staff. It is a systemic problem, where all the daycares are expected to operate in their own bubble as not-for-profit societies," Williamson Bathory said.

As the only Inuktitut daycare, Kalluk says they should be "swimming in funds," but the daycare receives no additional support for teaching Inuktitut.

The territorial government gives some funding to all daycares, Kalluk said, but as a not-for-profit daycare most of Tumikuluit's funding comes from parents' fees. Inuit who send their kids to daycare can get help with those fees from the Qikiqtani Inuit Association and the Kakivak Association.

## Nunavut-wide daycare changes needed

"Nobody is going to do the hard work for us, we have to do it, said Williamson Bathory.

"We have dug in and we are going to keep our daycare open, by our own means, but we are demanding that the government of Nunavut have a look at the entire daycare system so we can become a sustainable community."

Tumikuluit expects to be able to open this Friday and next Tuesday, said Kalluk, because it has people scheduled to cover. But other than those two days, Kalluk doesn't know when the daycare will open next.

She says the lack of consistency is hard on the kids, as this isn't the first time the daycare, which opened in 2007, has had to close.

In the past to deal with a shortage of staff, Tumikuluit has also tried "first come, first served" policies for parents, and rotating days with two groups of children.

Williamson Bathory said she would like to see daycare in general recognized as part of a child's education and valued accordingly.

"For Nunavut, for us as parents, for us as a community, Inuktitut is a very important value," Williamson Bathory said. "If we want people speaking Inuktitut in the next 20 years, it has to happen in the foundational years."

**Region:** Nunavut <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** staffing <sup>[4]</sup>

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/19/09/iqaluit%E2%80%99s-only-inuktitut-daycare-closes-temporarily-due-staff>

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