

Report: Assessing the impact of First Nations and Inuit child care initiative across Inuit Nunangat ^[1]

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Source: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

Format: Report

Publication Date: 31 Jul 2014

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Description:

In preparation for the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) successor strategy and the First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI) post-2015, the Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group (IECDWG) and ITK undertook a research project to assess the impact of the First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI) across Inuit Nunangat.

The research and report is now complete. The results of the research found that overall FNICCI has been vital to child care programs across Inuit Nunangat and has positively contributed to families, communities and Regional economies. The key message is that renewal of the FNICCI funding agreements is imperative for the continuation of licensed child care programs for Inuit communities in Canada.

Further, a number of specific recommendations were identified in the report including the need for increased funding in order to address the following areas:

- Pay parity between early childhood educators and teachers,
- Ongoing training and professional development,
- Infrastructure support for new buildings and renovations,
- Increasing demand for child care spaces in each Region,
- Strengthening of Inuit early childhood development programs rooted in Inuit culture, language, worldview and knowledge.

Executive Summary:

In preparation for the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) successor strategy and the First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI) post-2015, ITK and the Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group identified the need to assess the impact of FNICCI funding on early childhood development programs in each of the Inuit Regions. This report reviews the impacts of FNICCI funding, highlights gaps in Inuit early childhood development funding, and proposes recommendations for future regional and national child care policy considerations in Inuit Nunangat.

The FNICCI was established through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) to address the child care needs of Inuit and First Nations communities. The FNICCI is important because:

- It funded the construction of child care centres between 1995-1998. Whereas there were 8 centres operating in Inuit Regions in 1995, there are 59 FNICCI-funded child care centres operating across Inuit Nunangat today;
- It has created opportunities for many Inuit parents to participate in the labour force;
- FNICCI funding is injected back into local economies in the form of wages and salaries. For example, over \$3 million was paid out in 2013 across Inuit Nunangat using FNICCI dollars;
- Each Region in Inuit Nunangat uses FNICCI dollars in specific and creative ways. Without this funding, wage subsidies for Inuit child care workers, child care subsidies for working parents, and annual operating budgets would cease to exist;
- FNICCI set out to design a framework where Inuit sustained full ownership of early childhood programming rooted in Inuit knowledge, cultures, languages, and the involvement of Elders.

The First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative has been vital to child care programs across Inuit Nunangat. However, key messages shared by Inuit Regions in regards to early childhood development programs have stressed the need for increased funding in order to address the following areas: pay parity between early childhood educators and teachers, ongoing training and professional development,

infrastructure, increasing demand for child care spaces in each Region, and the strengthening of Inuit early childhood development programs rooted in Inuit culture, language, worldview and knowledge. Guaranteeing the right of Inuit children to child care grounded in the language, culture, values, and traditions of their families and communities requires a funding framework, indexed to the rising cost of living, that encourages, sustains, and supports Inuit ownership of early childhood development programs. This includes Inuit determined linguistic and cultural priorities, Inuit defined policies and practices, and the creation of Inuit-specific training curriculum for workers in the Inuit early childhood sector.

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