

## **\*(INUIT) CULTURAL TRANSITION; RE-SETTING A TRANSITION PATH**

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### **SUMMARY**

Our (Inuit) basic-needs-gap is the largest in Canada and growing every year: highest suicide rate, high school dropout rate and when our students do graduate they are ill-prepared for post secondary/college/university pursuits, face food insecurity and a housing shortage, these all contribute to the crisis our people are in.

Combine this with the challenge of placing more Inuit in leadership roles within our Government; where we should have been by now, if given the opportunity we would be working from a (contemporary) culturally informed and equipped place and able to address the crisis' from this cultural place, however we are looking at a gap that isn't shrinking, instead it keeps growing. I believe we can get ahead of this.

### **Re-setting the path of Inuit (contemporary) culture transition by tracing, documenting and incorporating the emotional intelligence of our ancestors.**

I believe we are "stuck" in a cycle, held in a position so that we cannot move, in a state of suspended anticipation but I believe that we can get ahead of it. To do this we have to trace the disconnects with the objective of understanding the emotional effects of these disconnects, in documenting these emotional disconnects, we will also be doing the reverse, we will be documenting the emotional intelligence of our elders and ancestors and what will also happen, we will come to understand better the emotional intelligence of Inuit of those early times and more importantly we can begin to re-connect with those areas of our Inuit specific emotional intelligence and these missing pieces can begin to form the basis of who we were/are and we can apply this new information into our (contemporary) cultural fabric so that we may better contribute to our current contemporary Inuit selves in our Government/communities/lives.

We begin by tracing and understanding the disconnects that most affected us and that date back to the years when Inuit were **forcibly** being placed in permanent settlements, we do this by reviewing and understanding the policies and the people/agents/leaders who imposed such change on our ancestors and documenting the effects of the methods that were used because I believe they set the tone of the Government today. We need to understand where our ancestors were emotionally and culturally and how this affected their ability to truly participate in this (non) transition. The objective is not to blame rather to understand as much of our past as we can. We must inform ourselves to re-set the path that we should have been set on in those days.

## Focus on two time periods for our review and information gathering

In the two periods; particularly in the colonization period and but also in the early Nunavut days there were opportunities to share and listen to each other as equal partners, not just politically but also gathering cultural emotional intelligence.

The two opportunities where there could have been two paths: 1) geared towards running the government efficiently while developing, documenting and initiating the emotional intelligence of the Inuit and; 2) how to maintain this in our new Inuit Nunangat. We can still do this by understanding that we could find solutions which will help guide us from the cycle we are currently stuck in and set the terms of this path from traditional Inuit ways to the contemporary Inuk living and then we can begin to contribute in a healthier more effective way in our contemporary (northern) communities.

## Example of a dis-connect (a disconnect of our Inuit emotional intelligence)

e·mo·tion·al in·tel·li·gence

*noun*

1. the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.  
"emotional intelligence is the key to both personal and professional success"

An example of an effect of this non transition period is that those who ***imposed*** the settlements policy did so without true consultation or effort to truly understand and determine the level of abilities of the Inuit of that time, the effect was (and this effect has generational compounded implications) and the true point of this example is this, the lack of a "relationship" and communication between the government agents and the Inuit of that time? It placed us (Inuit) in a position of emotionally deferring to those in authority who made promises, ie. That life would be better.

To understand this, it is important to understand the state of mind of the Inuit of that time in order to get a truth, we all know that (we) Inuit of that time were an incredibly resourceful, highly functioning, socially engaged people (relative to that time) exhibiting emotional intelligence and proving they/we were capable of participation and meaningful contribution in that early conversation and relationship development, instead, and evidenced by the state of the current relationship, there seems to be a prevailing air of "ilira" or emotionally deferring to the "others", to the ones who ***seemed "more learned"***. This emotional disconnect I believe was caused (maybe in part) by the method the Government of that time chose to use as a way to "seduce" the Inuit into permanent settlements, ie. the Government introduced the welfare system, this set a tone for the relationship that left us in a state of suspended anticipation.

The critical work that now needs to be done is to trace the emotional effects of this state of suspended anticipation or waiting on our emotional wellbeing. In other words, we need to trace the generation trauma of being inferior to build the recovery bridges.

By generational trauma, I refer to such things as the systematic shooting of dog teams, the experimenting on Inuit, using the welfare system as a way to bring us into our permanent settlements, the implications here and the undertone in the relationship since is that we (\*\*generational implications need to be traced), beginning with our ancestors were inferior, the value of what the “others” deemed valid in terms of transitioning us (which was to not transition us) vs. the value if what our ancestors could have contributed (given the opportunity) drew a clear line in terms of emotional transition, we (generational impact/we buy into this narrative) now follow the narrative that our ancestors weren’t able to truly transition when in fact we were never given a chance.

### **A culture specific approach to re-setting the path; navigate vs. coasting**

In order to meaningfully re-set a path, we must first identify and understand the effects of as many of these emotional disconnects as we can. Again, the objective being to understand our selves in Inuit Nunangat and how we are currently navigating this new world and how we can better navigate vs. coasting.

Whatever the intentions were of those from the early years, although we need to “map” out the disconnects from their time, the goal here is to re-place the steps they imposed with ones we can apply in our path towards a healthier self governing model, belonging to our Nunavut.

This will begin with the following three steps:

1. Identify the methods used in placing us in our current settlements:
  - ie. How was the welfare system “sold” to our people, were they told this system was representative of a “struggling” class and that it was a supplemental income or were they told simply that the welfare system was something the government was giving/making available to the Inuit of that time, if this latter, the perception then being that the Government would have all of the solutions, this seems to be the prevailing state in our communities today, the Government will fix it.
2. Identify the (possible) emotional implications of these methods:
  - a. **From our ancestors’ perspective**; placed in a state or a path of suspended anticipation, waiting for “the solution”, the key word being “waiting”, they have been waiting now for up to three generations, how has this emotional state impacted them and the following generations?
  - b. **From the colonizer perspective**; I have to believe they knew exactly what they were doing, this method (welfare

system) was part of the strategy and in this they are complicit in the effects of this approach and this truth needs to be said/voiced so that we can begin to acknowledge and know we were fine as (possible) contributors of that early conversation, that our voice was a good and valid voice, that we are/were more than merely barbaric smiling eskimos.

3. Anticipate and adapt current approaches on engagement from the above collected information.

1. We cannot know for certain where our ancestors were emotionally during this period and so therefore we cannot know how they could truly contribute but I believe DNA has memory, I believe we are close enough to those ancestors still in terms of who we are at our emotional intelligence and cultural core and that we can (when we fill in the dis-connects) anticipate what they would have done given the opportunity; we must write this and in the writing of it, we may begin to adapt how we approach our life goals in our contemporary Inuit Nunangat and develop more effective ways of being in our Nunavut.

Exhibit: *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*

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Initials

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