

# Parents as First Teachers

A resource booklet about providing for a healthy family  
based on Inunnguiniq teachings

## In this issue:

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- ❖ Networks of Support
- ❖ How Children Learn
- ❖ Teach & Guide Your Child
- ❖ How You Can Support Learning
- ❖ Children Needing Special Support





# How Was This Resource Developed?

This series of resources is designed to help parents and families find strength in these roles according to Inuit teachings outlined in *inunnguiniq* – making capable human beings. To find other resources in this series, see the back cover.

Many people contributed to the content of this resource, primarily Elders. They shared their stories and experiences as

well as the teachings and practices of ancestors that ground this information in *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*. The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health ([nccih.ca](http://nccih.ca)) and the Aqqiumavvik Society ([aqqiumavvik.com](http://aqqiumavvik.com)) would like to thank the following people for their contributions to this resource, especially the Elders who live on through their wise words.

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First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness



National Collaborating Centre  
for Indigenous Health



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QAUJIGIARTIIT



Margaret & Wallace McCain  
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The Early Years  
A Martin Family Initiative

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# Introduction

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*Inunnguiniq is leading a child from birth to adulthood – showing and teaching them to be a better person in their everyday life. A child would be taught how to treat others – not only the family members but everyone around them, how to have a good relationship with others and a good attitude toward every situation. They would be shown the right way to live while growing up.*

*-Jose Angutinngurniq*



*This is the way I seem to understand Inunnguiniq – it is when a person is capable to look after themselves. They are now able to make a living by following the teachings of their parents. They are able to contribute and serve their family and community. They can share with others and think carefully before doing something. People will know that they can take care of themselves out on the land. They can do things by practicing the things they have learnt. Inuit would know just by watching if the young person is ready to be on their own – making their own decisions. They are now a capable person. Children were made in this way by actually doing things. I'm thankful to my parents. They are long gone now, but they prepared my path in life.*

*Mark Kalluak*

# Inunnguiniq



For generations, Inuit have used the process of *inunnguiniq* to ensure successful futures for their children. There is much value in using *inunnguiniq* today, and Elders are working diligently to try to revive the teachings to support effective parenting. *Inunnguiniq* is a very intentional process that begins even before pregnancy when adolescents were being prepared for parenthood. During pregnancy, there was much support and also strong teachings set out for both the pregnant woman and the father. Parents continued to be supported by family members and others so that children were raised in a strong environment of close relations. In this booklet, we will share some of the information central to *inunnguiniq* and much advice from Elders. As a parent, you are the most important person in your child's life and you will set your child on their path forward. In taking on this important responsibility, you are not alone; there is knowledge that has been trusted and true that is still available to you.

*A parent would have to be a good example in order to give something useful to their children. A mother is responsible to raise her child in the right way. If she was not a good example, then she would be responsible for passing on something that was not acceptable. If we as parents are doing our best to live right and follow the good advice of our parents, then we can pass those good things to our children and they would become better people. Our children are watching us and learning things in their everyday lives. We, as parents, have to be good examples to our children if we want to see them successful in life.*

*-Atuat Akittirq*

# Networks of Support



Children grow up surrounded by people, places and events that shape their daily lives and future prospects. With love and care, children survive and thrive in many very different environments. Inuit are careful to establish a supportive network of relationships for each child that results in a strengthened sense of connection, belonging and protection.



*I drew this other image about a young couple with children and the grandparents above them, seemingly overseeing the young family. This is based on my own perspective of what I understand and believe. It is what we were taught to believe as we were growing. We were taught to respect our Elders. The Elders taught us about being children, how to treat each other, how to be a father, how to be a mother, all along teaching us to eventually replace them in their roles. They prepared us. This image represents their experience, knowledge and wisdom, knowing they have faced difficulties in life and overcome through perseverance. They show us how to avoid certain difficulties when we can prevent them from happening through being prepared and thinking ahead. They show us how to face difficulties through continually seeking solutions, working together, and never giving up in the face of adversity. They show us how to build respectful relationships and networks of support that will sustain us throughout our lives and assist us when we are in need.*

*-Mark Kalluak*



### *Relationships and supports:*

- ❖ There are several layers of relationship developed for the child. Inuit ensure that every child is centred in supportive networks of relationship.
- ❖ Children are cared for by parents (mom and dad), aunts and uncles, grandparents, each with a very specific role to play in the child's life.
- ❖ Children are supported through kinship ties to extended family and community members.
- ❖ Children are supported/connected through their namesake to a whole set of avvaq family connections and Elders who may have participated in the birth, given the child a blessing, or are in close family connection.
- ❖ Children are supported by significant others such as a *sanaji* relationship or various *piqatigiit* relationships.
- ❖ Through these relationships, children are being prepared for the future, for their roles as parents and providers.





## Beginning Well

For the people who were following certain rules from the birth (taboos), they would really try to follow them knowing that if they didn't, something might happen to them in their lives. This was a kind of belief that would keep them from doing something wrong or breaking the rules

(*inunguqsagtausimajut*). Being present at someone's birth (*arnaliaq, angusiaq*) was very important in the past. The one who was present at a birth of a child would have something to say to the child. This would be something that the child would have to do while growing up, or a wish for the life of the child. It might be from an Elder who would then support the child on this path (*sananiraqtaujuq*).



***As young girls, we helped our mothers – carrying babies, chewing walrus hide for kamiit, and working around the house. We were always being trained for our future. An expectant mother had steps to follow in order to have a healthy pregnancy – things like watching herself, taking care of herself with movement and exercise. During pregnancy, you have to move the baby around so the delivery will be smoother. A baby who has not been shifted in the womb will go through stress during birth and the placenta might stick to the wall of the womb. Newborns were cuddled next to their mother's bare skin so that the baby would not have another sibling right away. When we breastfed our babies, this helped prevent having another baby right away; the bottle-fed babies were quicker to get younger siblings. Babies breastfed by their mothers have healthier teeth and ears, have less illness, and are less hyperactive overall.***

-Rhoda Karetak



## Teaching to the Heart

Parents are the first teachers of their baby. *Inunnguiniq* is about teaching from the heart to the heart of a child. Elders say that the heart is the centre of the person where the strong attitudes, good character, and ethical sense of belief is established. This will serve the child through life, impacting thoughts, feelings, decisions and setting a moral compass. If we neglect to teach to the heart of a child, the heart will fill up with things that will become difficulties later in life. This is the key responsibility of a parent.

## Parents should remember:

- ❖ We teach by example, so we need to model the behaviours/attitudes we want to see in our child.
- ❖ When we have a child, our focus shifts to becoming a parent first, with a responsibility to make a capable human being.
- ❖ Parenting well is our sacred responsibility.



# How Children Learn

*Children who have learnt how to work together and work hard learn that work ethic from their parents. The other way children learn how to work cooperatively is by playing house or camping. Young girls carried around rocks like they were babies and everyone used their imagination to create a mini-community, surviving out on the land. This way of playing for small children created collaborative working relationships.*

*As children, we would learn by doing things. Boys would have a small dog team using a small qamutiq (sled) and puppies or a dog. Usually a dog was old and no longer needed for everyday use. We would play nakataq (throwing stones at a target), sliding, and making small igluit. The learning would begin playfully. The girls would learn to be homemakers by helping mother do chores. They would learn to care for babies by carrying dolls or puppies on their backs using an amautik (traditional coat made to carry babies). They would play house neatly outside by placing objects (igliruujarniq) like pretty stones, etc. They are ungatinguaqtut – imitating mother at home sewing scraps of material, left over skins. Learning occurred through playing together. I can remember that we boys were not allowed to join the girls when they were playing house. They said we were too rough and only would get in their way. The girls would play with great care and patience. The children were to do different things, constantly using their hands and to learn by playing.*

*-Donald Uluadluak*

The capacity of a young child to learn is enormous. Babies are born already having learned to recognize voices, songs and stories they heard in the womb. Every sound, experience, touch and observation provide rich learning opportunities. Here are some things to consider in supporting your child's learning.

## *Children model what they see/hear:*

A child models behaviour long after the people are gone. Be very careful what examples you set for your child.

- ❖ A child who is loved will develop a sense of trust and connection and will become a loving and secure person.
- ❖ Create opportunities for your child to experience learning through every sense – touch, sight, hearing, tasting, smelling.



### *A child's job is to play:*

- ❖ Play enables a child to practice, explore and make sense of how things work.
- ❖ Imagination and creativity are developed through play, often play that does not involve using expensive toys.
- ❖ Trying new things is safe in play. Learning is more effective when it occurs through trial and error, exploring how things work or don't work.
- ❖ Physical play is very important to building connections between body, mind and the world around us. Children develop strength, accuracy, flexibility and endurance through play.

### *Managing feelings:*

- ❖ Feeling control over emotions will promote learning. Inuit taught very young children to begin to manage emotions and relationships carefully. Learning the proper terms for how you are feeling was a start, but also understanding what brought those feelings on and then challenging a child to manage negative feelings in positive ways.
- ❖ Displaying anger was not acceptable behaviour. Children were taught to channel anger into positive responses that could resolve conflict, to forgive rather than seek revenge, and to avoid situations where negative feelings could run high.

### *Structure & Routines:*

- ❖ Developing good habits is a core principle of *inunnguiniq*. This was accomplished through establishing routines for children very early in life – waking up early and observing the day, dressing for the weather, doing chores and helping others, eating together, story time, bedtime. A child develops a sense of security when there are reliable structures in place and expectations are clearly understood.

### *Respectful Relationships:*

- ❖ Being in respectful relationships with the environment and with other people is central to Inuit ways of being. Children need to understand their connections to others and to the natural world and appreciate how to respond well to these relationships.
- ❖ *Pijitsirniq* is an expectation for all Inuit. By being able to serve, care for, and contribute to the support of others, a child develops a sense of purpose and responsibility. It also provides rich learning opportunities as a child engages with those around them.

# Stress and the Developing Child

Children may experience stress in many aspects of their lives. The main sources of stress for children include:

- ❖ being in an environment that makes them feel unsafe or unsupported
- ❖ being exposed to unpredictable behaviours and emotions such as anger or abuse
- ❖ feeling like they are not able to meet the expectations of adults in their lives
- ❖ feeling there are too many things they just can't control

Inuit practices of wrapping every child in a network of supportive relationships can reduce these stresses. However, since the Inuit system of *inunnguiniq* supports the belief that the only thing we really can control is ourselves, it is important to build children's capacity to deal with stresses in their lives and help them find balance, harmony and happiness in difficult situations. You can do this by:

- ❖ closely observing your child and responding to their concerns or fears
- ❖ creating a safe, warm and loving environment
- ❖ opening talking about difficult situations and sharing ways to cope with these
- ❖ helping your child learn to control their own emotions and responses in situations which they cannot otherwise control
- ❖ reaffirming love, acceptance and support

Too much stress has a very negative effect on a person's health and well-being. As parents, we need to be especially sensitive to the kinds of stresses our child may be experiencing. Inuit were careful to emphasize that a child should be raised in a calm, harmonious, atmosphere and that this would ensure a happy and confident disposition. Raised voices and arguing around a child was avoided. Setting expectations that are beyond a child's ability was also warned against since this would set a child up for failure rather than success. A child who grows up in a very stressful situation will be in danger of becoming the hardened rock-like child who becomes closed down to relationships and always expects the worst results.

A child who is resilient is one who is well supported through even the most stressful situations and can endure hardships with hope and confidence because they know they have the support and love of those around them. A key goal in life is the ability to overcome obstacles. This is developed in close, supportive and loving relationships.

Being in harmony and continually promoting harmony within the group was a cultural expectation. Children were specifically taught to seek solutions when faced with obstacles, to never demonstrate anger, to avoid conflicts and always restore good relationships.



*We have always heard that a person who strives for happiness, even when it doesn't seem attainable, will always reach that goal sooner or later. Likewise, a person who gave up would always reap what he sowed. My mother would tell me that I would not have harmony all day so to be prepared for problems. I was to do my best to have peace within myself despite any circumstances.*

**-Jerome Tattuine**





*My uncles also used to admonish and discipline me, but they did it with such love that it immediately made you want to obey them. If you discipline harshly, the child will be resistant and will not want to listen or be able to listen because they are already too upset. Even discipline can be administered in a calm way that builds connection and confidence and promotes harmony within the family. There were always some situations that lead to anger. This anger would be diffused so that harmony was restored.*

***-Joannasie Muckpa***



# Teach & Guide Your Child

*We need to watch out for who is teaching our children while they are young because that is the time when they will remember something for the rest of their lives. It was parents' responsibility to teach their young.*

*-Jose Angutinngurniq*



*Culture and language are inseparable. We cannot only know culture and we cannot only know the language – they have to go together. Though the Inuktitut language can have dialectal differences, with patience we can be understood. What is most important is maintaining our ways of communicating with each other.*

*Let's look at the animals, for instance. A caribou will never change into a wolf and a wolf will not change into something else either. We are just like that. We can only be Inuit. When we try to live another way, our body and our spirit become unbalanced. I believe we must not lose our language, as I have witnessed and seen many languages and cultures lost. They didn't see it coming; it just happened to them. They started thinking language was not necessary or they were made to be ashamed of their own language but realized too late how important it is to our own strength of life. Knowing your language and culture truly affects ones' life. I think it is the way we will find our happiness, and with strength in language, our descendants will be able to live healthy, productive lives.*

*-Mark Kalluak*



## Setting Expectations

Inuit built discipline for successful living into everyday activities. It was a constant process. Seldom did discipline have to be administered as such because the expectations for behavior were so clearly understood. By developing these from very early on, the need for negative forms of discipline were greatly reduced. It is always easier to set out expectations for children and to help them meet those than to constantly discipline them for not behaving as we would want them to.

Character is developed over time as part of a process. The activities that we begin with to develop *pijitsirarniq* might look unrelated, but it is because we begin with activities that are at the outside edge of the development phase. As children become skilled, and as attitude and character develop, the activities become more and more directly related to the core value. For this reason, it is important for parents to pay attention to how to develop.



*Inuit have a way of teaching a child just learning to speak, teaching the sounds first with playful words: for food it was 'apaapak,' for going out 'ittaa,' for urinating 'haa haa,' for moving your fingers 'putujaq,' and for shaking your head 'iliqitamaaq.' These are words that mothers use only with their babies. Once they could make the sounds, language learning became very sophisticated with very specific terms being used. When my children mispronounce words, it is because of me that they are mispronouncing words! We are the ones who can teach them how to speak proper Inuktitut; while we are still around, we have to make a point of teaching them. When we go, we take our language with us. If we don't make an effort to put our language in writing and record it, it will just die.*

*-Donald Uluadluak*





*We also watched that little girl helping others doing little things. This is how we learnt to do things. We need to teach children to do the same. All that adults had to do was point to something to indicate to the little girl that she was to help, and the little girl was able to understand right away. That is all about helping each other.*

*-Atuat Akittingq*

## Teaching Pijitsirniq

- ❖ Don't allow children to lie around. Encourage them to contribute to the family by giving them chores.
- ❖ Expect that children do their chores very well and always try their best.
- ❖ Expect children to notice when something needs to be done and to act without being asked.
- ❖ Expect children to do even boring or messy chores. Praise them for being willing to do every job well.
- ❖ Provide opportunities for children to show respect/love for others.
- ❖ Give children responsibilities, especially for caring for others.
- ❖ Remind children that by doing these chores well, they show love and respect for others and will be recognized in their lives for being good people.
- ❖ They should do their chores without expecting recognition or rewards. This is *pijitsirniq* – developing the heart of a helper.

*Children have always been expected to serve other people with a willing attitude. Serving/pijitsirniq means to do something for other people. This is something that was taught to children at the time of their growing up, as it is said to be beneficial to our lives if we serve others. Inuit have always been encouraged to be good servants to others. For example, some Inuit had selfish concerns, while some lived with an attitude of helping their neighbour. Serving a neighbour meant offering something for them to use. These people had a vision for the future, where benefit may not come immediately but rather in the future. An ongoing genuine concern for other people had been a way of life from long ago. Serving others means to lead others with a vision that will benefit your fellowman, putting aside one's own interests for the sake of helping.*

*-Louis Angalik*



## Cultural Values & Beliefs

When Inuit speak of teaching to the heart, they are referring to building a strong character for a child. They say that the mind will search out knowledge, but the heart needs to be intentionally filled with the proper attitudes to use that knowledge well. Inuit say that we can make 3 kinds of children. A fragile egg type child is one who has been over-protected, coddled and rescued from ever experiencing the consequences of his actions. They will always be reliant on others to intervene in life for them. A rock like child is one who has been too harshly disciplined, abused or who has had expectations set that are too high so that they are continually met with failure and criticism. Our responsibility as parents is to make a capable human being who can contribute to the well-being of others with positive attitudes and competence. Both a fragile egg and a hardened rock will become dangerous to society because they require constant intervention.

### *Through inunnguiniq, this can be avoided in the following ways:*

- ❖ Surround your child with healthy love – love that is balanced with strong expectations for becoming a good person.

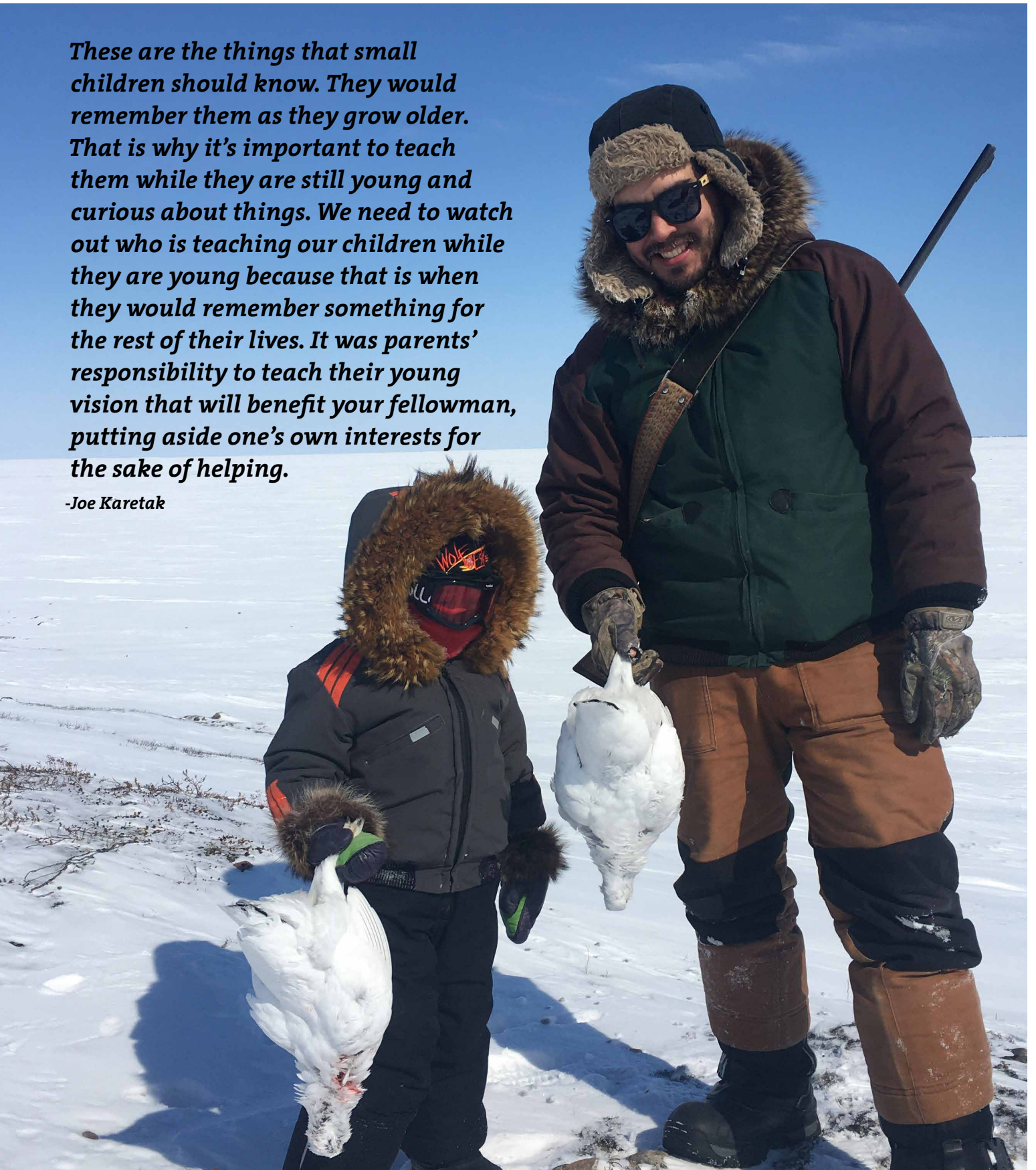
- ❖ Handle problems by turning them into learning situations. Don't solve difficulties for your child but challenge them to think of best options in dealing with the difficulty. Inuit say we should always "cause thought" in a child. A child who complains that another child hurt or teased them would be asked, "What did you do to cause this?" or "What should you have said to prevent this?"
- ❖ Teach emotions and the correct terms for these. Use them when they come up and talk about the things that may cause these emotions. Model good responses when you have these emotions. Have your child think about ways to respond when feelings run high.
- ❖ When a child is upset, calm them down and comfort them. Sing a favourite song or aqaaq them, be close and listen, soothe them and then discuss when the child is able to think again.
- ❖ Always communicate openly, discussing life issues with your child and suggesting strategies for seeking a good way through difficulties. Help your child look for root causes of behaviours. Expect your child to negotiate life by exploring options and choosing good alternatives.
- ❖ Train a child to make plans and think things through carefully in order to get the best results. Planning and preparing is an Inuit *maligarjuaq*.
- ❖ There will always be consequences for actions. Your child must learn this with your protection. The child also has to learn how to rectify a poor decision and how to take responsibility for an action gone wrong.



# How You Can Support Learning

*These are the things that small children should know. They would remember them as they grow older. That is why it's important to teach them while they are still young and curious about things. We need to watch out who is teaching our children while they are young because that is when they would remember something for the rest of their lives. It was parents' responsibility to teach their young vision that will benefit your fellowman, putting aside one's own interests for the sake of helping.*

*-Joe Karetak*





*People have to treat children as human beings because they too have a mind of their own that is constantly working. Their minds start growing from the time they are children. How to handle emergency situation issues and how to survive on the land has to be taught. If we ask our young people to hurry when they are doing a task and they have the audacity to say, “Just a minute”, they are doing this because we have not taught them otherwise. When I was young, we did not have the power to say “just a moment” – this was unheard of. We had to do the task at the moment it was requested. Expectations for children were made very clear.*

**-Joe Karetak**

## **Setting Clear Expectations**

Children need structure and predictability. They also need clear expectations set out for them. It is the parents’ and grandparents’ role to continually build the heart of a child by outlining the expectations for respectful living, for ethical behaviour, for compassionate responses, for becoming capable, and for contributing to social well-being. These expectations are repeatedly shared through statements such as “So that you will never be in want, always share what you have with others;” “In order to live untroubled, never gossip;” “If you expect life to be fair, you will never know happiness.”

Parents need to be very clear about rules for behaviour. A child is expected to take on chores to contribute to the family. Children are expected to continually try and never give up at learning new things or trying to accomplish a new task. They are expected to observe others at work and then work things out for themselves. These expectations help build a sense of accomplishment and capacity.

## **Creating a Rich Learning Environment**

Exposure to many different experiences and activities is part of developing opportunities for learning. Children are curious about many different things. Inuit say the real learning (that lasts) occurs through actually doing things – it is experiential. Make sure that you involve your child in as many varied experiences as possible and take note of those activities that spark their interests.

## **Becoming Capable**

Building ability comes with practice. Inuit were required to gain mastery of many things in order to survive. Every person was expected to become very skilled at something in order to contribute that expertise to supporting others. Children need lots of opportunities and encouragement to practice. As a child becomes skilled at something, move the bar a little higher by making the challenge more difficult.



*As a small child, I used to hunt birds with a rock. I became quite accurate. I think my family was getting tired of eating all my birds. My father gave me a spear and told me that now I could only hunt birds with the spear. It was a few years before we were eating small birds again.*

**-Joe Karetak**

# Children Needing Special Support

## *Inunnguiniq Guiding Principles*

According to *inunnguiniq*, every child is welcomed and every child has a unique contribution to make to society. It is the role of the family and community to help set each child on a path for successful living that helps them to reach this potential. This role is outlined in the *inunnguiniq* principles.

These include:

- ❖ Every child will develop habits for living a good life.
- ❖ Every child will rise above hardships by continually seeking solutions.
- ❖ Every child will be heart-centred with a strong moral character.
- ❖ Every child will show compassion, serve others and build strong relationships.
- ❖ Every child is unique and valued as an individual.
- ❖ Every child is continually developing, continually improving as they develop capability.

With these principles in mind, as parents we need to closely observe our children so that we can nurture and support their individual development in ways that enable them to be successful in every possible way.



## *The Role of Aajiiqatigiingniq*

Each child has a unique contribution to make. The community helps to provide this for the child.

*There was a young man who was seen in the camp every day with a shovel and pana in his hands. We all looked forward to him coming because he would shovel out the doors of the igluit and chink and smooth the sides of the iglu. He was a great help to everyone. I never realized until much later in life that he did not have the capacity to hunt like other men. He had a role that was perfectly suited to his capability and he was highly valued for the way he served our community.*

*-Donald Uluadluak*



*I remember as a child running around, enjoying good health, and playing with my friends. My parents had secured a sanajii for me so that I would develop expertise as a hunter to support my family's future. One morning, I woke up with limp arms, caused by the "muscle robbing disease" called polio. My parents reluctantly agreed that I should leave home for the hospital in the hope I could be healed. When I returned four years later, they realized that I would need to be helped to chart a different future. I was not entirely aware of the deliberations that took place. The family and camp came together to aajiiqatigiingniq to plan for that future. It was decided that I should go to the mission station to continue to learn English and become an intermediary for my people with the Qallunaat. Every child was supported to have the best possible future.*

**-Mark Kalluak**



## *Inuglugijaituq*

*Inuglugijaituq* outlines how every child is supported within the family and community. It is expected that although each child is unique and progresses at their own capacity, every child has capacity for *ilippallianginnarniq* (continuous learning), *pivallianginnarniq* (continuous progress), and *sivuniksamut ilinniarniq* (the ability to learn for their future). If your child needs support to accomplish this, you are not

alone. Seek out the people in your life who can help offer this support. The cultural practice of engaging a *sanajii* can work today as well. Often an Elder will have the care and patience to assist your child in their development. It may take a child longer, but with love and persistence, you can overcome incredible obstacles together. At the very heart of care is that every child needs love, acceptance, understanding, nurturing, respect, and a place to thrive.

*Though you have five fingers on your hand, each is different. Each finger has a different purpose and ability. Some fingers operate very precisely, while others are more for balance and support. They complement each other. Our children are as different from each other as our fingers, but we use each of our fingers to work together to complete the tasks we need to do. Although each child is a unique person, we can build a child's strengths so they contribute equally.*



**-Rhoda Karetak**

# What You Can Do

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Children were expected to be children. They were loved and encouraged to play and explore. Children need to develop their ideas about the world through play. They should not be overburdened with chores, but they should not be allowed to sit in front of the TV all day. They need to interact with their environment and with other people, and learn to be helpful whenever they can be.

Children need to participate and contribute to the family. This builds their sense of belonging. Children were given chores from a very early age based on how capable they were to contribute. These chores became their responsibility to do without being asked. We all notice and applaud their efforts to help the family.

Good habits are usually formed early and last through life. Make expectations clear to your children. They need to get up quickly, look at the day, and think about what they will be doing. They need to learn to respond quickly and show respect and kindness to others, including animals. This is how children develop into capable people.

## Meeting Needs

A child needs to understand love and comfort from the first day of life. As parents, we do this by cherishing our child and responding to baby's needs. This creates a sense of trust, security and attachment. Throughout life, our child needs to know that we are there to support and care for them. This continues as we spend time together, show interest in all aspects of the child's life, and expose them to a variety of experiences that provide many learning opportunities for *pilimmaksarniq*, *qanuqtururniq*, and becoming heart-centred *inunnguisimajau*.



## Setting a Path

Every child is set on a path in life. This path comes from the names given to a child, the blessing given at birth, and the people in the life of the child who will share their skills, knowledge and abilities to give the child a future. As your child grows, they will indicate what interests them and where their aptitudes lie. As a parent, it is our job to carefully observe and notice these things and then respond by providing exposure, supports, and learning opportunities to match those interests and aptitudes. If a child shows an interest in a skill that we do not have, we can invite a *sanajii* to take a special interest in training the child in these things. Children can rely on supports beyond the family through Inuit networks of relationship.





## Helping Kids Succeed

When families spent a lot of time together and lived closely together on the land, it was easier to know and support each other well. Now children spend a lot of time away from their parents. Here are some ways that as parents and grandparents, we can make sure we remain supportive and involved in the lives of our children.

- ❖ Children feel secure when they know they are loved. Tell them and show your love for them often.
- ❖ Children need to play and explore freely but safely.
- ❖ Children also feel secure when they have routines and know what to expect. Establish routines that your family can rely on.
- ❖ They need to interact with their environment and with other people. Create a sense of connectedness through respectful relationships.
- ❖ Children need to develop their perceptions of the world through play.
- ❖ Spending time with family is very important. It builds security, trust and memories. Inuit always spent a lot of time in family activities. Find time to be together as a family.
- ❖ Good habits are usually formed early and last through life.
- ❖ Make expectations known to children and support them to meet those expectations.
- ❖ Continually and closely observe your child's development and be ready to respond to all the teachable moments in their life.
- ❖ Allow your child to make decisions, but also allow them to understand the consequences of those decisions.

## Causing Thought

One of the most important things a parent can do is to help their child develop the ability for "deep thinking" *qanuqtururangniq*. This begins very early in life as we encourage a baby to learn on his own. Struggling causes thinking, and a child will begin to build strategies that become stored in their brain for future use. These are called thinking pathways. It is important to create as many thinking pathways as possible early in life.

## Self-reliance & Resilience

Becoming self-reliant is part of becoming capable. Every child was expected to develop in this way. Giving up in the face of difficulties was not an option. Waiting to be rescued by others was strongly discouraged because you were a person who would then always cause worry to others. Children who grow up without resilience will give up easily and lose hope quickly. They lack the determination of attitude and the kind of strong thinking required to live well. Children should always be prepared to face difficulties and be challenged to think of options and make good choices at every level of learning.



*Qanuqtuurniq is for now and for the future. If we always tell youth what to do, they do not learn to figure things out for themselves. In the past, even little babies were challenged to reach for things or to figure out ways of getting something beyond their reach to begin to develop this ability very early in life. In qanuqtuurniq, there is iliaqtut and iliangttuq (positive and negative). Iliangituq is naalaqqitniq (not listening/obeying) and this makes a person's life short. Also, suvuliqsuqtuq is making a character to have a good future.*

-Atuat Akittingq

*The eagle has a nest that was high and carefully constructed for comfort and safety for the fledglings. However, the mother pokes them to awaken their senses when she wants them to leave the nest. Character development is not always comfortable.*

*-Rhoda Karetak*



*It comes back to the two-fold life. If we don't pay attention to what fills the heart in every child, it can fill up with what is useless and lead to an unfortunate life. The two systems of heart and mind are needed to ikajuqtigiik (help each other) so that the child's heart is filled with the essential teachings. When the heart is filled with the proper values, attitudes and beliefs, the thought that comes from the heart will be strong.*

*-Louis Angalik*

# How You Can Learn More

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Inuit society established very strong networks of support to meet needs in times of difficulty. Nurture the kinship networks, the *avaq* connections, and the extended family who are available to you.

Look for the places in your community where there may be other help available: Mom's and Tots programs, library times, parenting workshops, drop-in activities, sewing circles. Unfortunately, there are not a lot of formal resources in communities, but you may be able to work with another family for mutual support or seek support through early years programs.

An Inuit core, *maligajuat*, is continually planning and preparing for the future. This is your responsibility to make the best plans for your child. Today you bring all your resources, ideas, feelings, experiences and connections to this task. You have skills, strengths and supports to be the best parent for your child. Inuit always relied on the family and community to raise a child. Remember, this is not something you have to do alone.

If you are having difficulty finding resources in any of these areas and would like more information, please look at the following websites:

## **Pirurvik Centre**

[www.pirurvik.ca](http://www.pirurvik.ca)

## **National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health**

[www.nccih.ca](http://www.nccih.ca)

## **Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families**

[www.inuuqatigiit.ca](http://www.inuuqatigiit.ca)

## **Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre**

[www.qhrc.ca](http://www.qhrc.ca)

## **Tungasuvvingat Inuit**

[www.tungasuvvingatinuit.ca](http://www.tungasuvvingatinuit.ca)

## **Aqqiumavvik Society**

[www.aqqiumavvik.com](http://www.aqqiumavvik.com)

## **Mamisarvik Healing Centre**

[www.tungasuvvingatinuit.ca](http://www.tungasuvvingatinuit.ca)

The booklets in this series include:



## Family Connections



## Growing Up Healthy



## Fatherhood is Forever



## Parents as First Teachers

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 Ces livrets sont aussi disponibles en français sur [ccnsa.ca](http://ccnsa.ca).

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