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Leaders & Learners NEWSLETTER

The official newsletter of the Canadian Association of School System Administrators

Greetings from the President



Dr. Clint Moroziuk
CASSA/ACGCS President

One Month In: Finding Our Rhythm

We are one month into the school year, and if your school division is anything like ours, the frantic energy of September has settled into something steadier. The new backpacks are broken in, the first-day nerves have eased, and classrooms are finding their rhythm. This is often the moment when the real work of the year begins.

October asks something different of us than September did. The excitement of new beginnings gives way to the quieter, sustained effort of building relationships, refining routines, and responding to whatever the year has already started to reveal... like a challenging class dynamic, a staffing gap (does anyone have those, or is it just us?), a family that needs extra support. This is the unglamorous, essential work of system leadership, and it deserves just as much recognition as the anticipation and excitement of a fresh start.

Late September also brought us the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a moment for reflection that many of our systems carried thoughtfully into classrooms across the country. As we move into October and Thanksgiving, I hope we can hold onto that spirit of reflection and gratitude: for the educators who show up every day, for the families who trust us with their children, and for the colleagues across this country who share in this work.

I encourage you, in this more rhythmically-grounded month, to check in... not just on your systems, but on your people, and on yourself. Leadership can be isolating, and October is a good time to reconnect with a colleague, ask how they're really doing, and offer the same to someone who might need it.

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Thank you for the work you're doing, one month in and every month after. Wishing you a grounded and wonderful October.

Dr. Clint Moroziuk
CASSA/ACGCS

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Servant Leadership, an Introduction



Reg Klassen
CASSA/ACGCS New Executive Director

In my Masters, much of my study was on unpacking a leadership philosophy articulated by Robert K. Greenleaf called Servant Leadership. This leadership philosophy turned traditional power structures upside down by placing leaders in service to others. At its core, servant leadership begins with a genuine desire to help, followed by a conscious choice to lead in a way that elevates others.

Greenleaf argued that the best test of leadership is whether those being led become "healthier, wiser, freer, and more autonomous."[1] In practice, this means servant leaders listen deeply, empathize sincerely, and prioritize the well-being of their communities.

My focus on servant leadership was to help guide the senior administration team and Board of Trustees to respond differently to those we led and worked with. We needed to get our authority and traditional power philosophy out of the way and make room for serving first. I believed this approach would foster greater trust, strengthen relationships, and encourage more collaboration, because people would feel valued and respected.

In today's world, servant leadership has become more relevant. Organizations face rapid change, diverse teams, and increasing expectations for ethical behavior. Servant leadership responds by creating cultures of openness, empowerment, and shared purpose. This style of leadership encourages innovation by giving people the freedom to contribute ideas and the support to act on them. They build resilience by cultivating strong, connected teams.

Ultimately, I needed to convince those around me that servant leadership was not a technique but a mindset. It challenged us to ask: How can we help others succeed? Adopting this posture, I was sure we would inspire loyalty, unlock potential, and create lasting impact. Servant leadership reminded us to serve first – and lead second, no easy shift.

Reg Klassen
CASSA/ACGCS

REFERENCE:

1. Greenleaf, R. K. (1991). The Servant as Leader. Indianapolis, IN, USA: The Robert K. Greenleaf Center.

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Going Forward Together:

How the Only Inuit-led School Board in Quebec Embraced the Spirit of Sivumuattiit to Develop Its 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, Part 1

By Tara Wittchen, Contributing Writer

From 2024 to 2025, Kativik Ilisarniliriniq, or the School Board of Nunavik, led a deeply collaborative and inclusive process to develop its five-year strategic plan. Consultation sessions were held with students, staff, commissioners, and community members throughout the region. It was the first time in the board's 50-year history that a process like this has been used to guide its strategic plan.

From the outset and through each of the process's four phases – Listening, Visioning, Action Planning, and Decision and Closing – this new approach was designed to reflect the insights, hopes, and priorities of all participants.

In any school board, there can be tension caused by perceived and real power imbalances between head office administration and frontline school staff, students, or community members. In Nunavik, there are also long-lasting effects of colonization on nearly every aspect of society, including language and education.

Key to the spirit of unity and shared purpose that guided the strategic planning process is the term *Sivumuattiit,* which means "people moving together" in Inuktitut.

Ninety per cent of the population in Nunavik speaks Inuktitut. The Inuit language and culture were prioritized



throughout this process, including having the consultation activities led by an Inuk. The intentional and frequent use of the Inuit language – and not always with simultaneous translation into English or French – meant the voices, values, and hopes of the Nunavimmiut, or Nunavik's Inuit people, could be authentically reflected in the strategic plan.

The result, a document called *Sivumuattiit: Going Forward Together, Kativik Ilisarniliriniq's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan*, collects the input of nearly a thousand people from across Nunavik. The five-year strategic plan, approved by the board's Council of Commissioners in July 2025, is built around three guiding pillars:

1. Nikisuittuq: A shared vision of student success, emphasizing cultural identity, resilience, and community contribution.
2. Sivumut: The strategic priorities and actions that will guide the organization through 2030.
3. Pinasugutitaarqamiit: How the organization's people will work together to implement the plan.

This past July, Kaudjak Padlayat, Kativik Ilisarniliriniq's strategic coordinator, and Denis Daigle, its director of administrative services, led a session at the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) conference in Saskatoon about their experiences co-leading the process to develop *Sivumuattiit: Going Forward Together*. Here we share part one of our conversation with Kaudjak and Denis. It has been edited for clarity and length.

The name of the strategic plan is very symbolic. Where did the idea for the name Sivumuattiit come from?

Kaudjak Padlayat: Sivumuattiit came from ourselves – me and Denis – along with the consulting firm that helped us create this great strategic plan.

Denis Daigle: Once we got the go-ahead from our Council of Commissioners to embark on this adventure, we tried to find a term that would speak to Inuit first and give a clear idea of what we were trying to achieve. I think it was Kaudjak who suggested the word Sivumuattiit.

Kaudjak: Sivumuattiit was the name best suited for this new strategic plan. This is something that has never been done

About Kativik Ilisarniliriniq

Since June 1978, Kativik Ilisarniliriniq, or the School Board of Nunavik, has been the exclusive provider of educational services to the people of Nunavik.

The board was created after the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) came into effect in November 1975. The agreement is the first modern-day Indigenous Title treaty in Canada, negotiated after lengthy court proceedings by the Cree and Inuit to oppose the massive James Bay Hydroelectric Project announced – without prior consultation – by Quebec in 1970.

The JBNQA established Inuit ownership of land in the Arctic regions of Quebec. It protects the traditional rights of Nunavik's Inuit, or Nunavimmiut, and lays the groundwork for respectful relations between the Inuit and the governments of Quebec and Canada. It covers topics such as hunting, fishing, trapping, public administration, economic development, health, and education. It also sets forth a path for a school system designed by and for Nunavimmiut, deeply rooted in Inuit cultural and linguistic traditions and realities.

Kativik Ilisarniliriniq is governed by Quebec's Education Act for Cree, Inuit and Naskapi Native Persons. (The province's Education Act applies to all non-Indigenous school service centres in Quebec.) The board is authorized to develop and deliver educational programs and services designed to protect and promote the Inuit language, culture, and way of life.

Its highest authority is the Council of Commissioners, made up of 14 elected representatives who serve a three-year mandate. Each commissioner represents one of the 14 communities in Nunavik. The council also includes one appointed representative of the Kativik Regional Government.

Administrative offices are in both Kuujjuaq and the Montreal area. Of the board's over 1,250 employees, 90 per cent are based in Nunavik. Over 3,500 students attend its 18 primary and secondary schools, with instruction in Inuktitut as the first language and English and French as second languages. Six adult education centres offer general education, vocational training, and non-certificate courses.

Kativik Ilisarniliriniq also has a cultural education initiative for adult learners called the Ilurqusitigut Program. It provides hands-on activities, intergenerational teaching, and local collaboration in workshops on qajaq (kayak) making, musk ox wool spinning, jewelry making, fish skin tanning, parka making, and kamik (traditional soft boots made of animal hides) making.

Key to the spirit of unity and shared purposed that guided the strategic planning process is the term Sivumuattiit, which means "people moving together" in Inuktitut.

before. I felt we needed a title that would be moving and be understood by everybody.

Why was it important to go in this direction at this time?

Kaudjak: There's never been any consulting done when a strategic plan was going to be worked on. This was something that we felt could get the best result, make sure everybody understood our goal, and that we all were on one path.

Denis: The way strategic plans are done in the province of Quebec follows a very structured process. All school boards must have a student engagement plan toward success. Kativik Ilisarniliriniq is not under the same public school law so we don't have to do that, but we saw as an organization the value of having a plan to work toward student success.

When I was hired as director of administrative services, one of the main files that our director general gave to me was to come up with a new kind of strategic plan. Once Kaudjak joined the team and we decided to work on this together, we were tasked with evaluating what the results of the 2016-2023 strategic plan were.

Because I had participated at that time as an administrator and then analyzing that first plan to see if it had provided positive results or not, I saw that if we were going to redo a strategic plan, we needed to approach it very differently. We needed to get as many people as possible involved. Yes, administrators, who were involved in the first process, but also teachers, our professionals, our support staff, members of the community, students, people from the Montreal office, people from our office in Kuujjuaq.

We wanted to figure out a way to go out and listen to our staff instead of the school board identifying issues and then trying to face the challenges and make them better, which is how it was done the first time. We wanted to flip it on its head and start from the ground up, from the people who work daily with students instead of administrators.







That involves a lot of levels of work, and not just administrative or project management tasks. There's a lot of relationship building and trying to encourage people to come together. You're asking people for their time and their expertise or experience. How did you prepare for that kind of request, to make sure people understood you valued their input and respect what they contribute?

Denis: We deliberately kept everything a big secret until we were actually there in person welcoming people to the consulting activities. We did not provide people with any prior information apart from, "Hey, we're coming to you and inviting you to come and share." That's the only information we ever gave, because Kaudjak and I represent the school board. When we go into schools, for example, that comes with positive reactions sometimes, negative reactions other times, which is normal. We wanted to stay away from it being an official school board visit.

We sent out individual invitations to every single person saying what date we'll be there and invited them to come out and share, see what it's about, and discuss student success but we didn't say what we were going to do as activities.

People were not always super excited to participate at the beginning of the day but by the end, everybody was smiling and happy. We got a lot of extremely positive feedback thanking us for coming and for this experience.

Kaudjak: There were a lot of misconceptions of what we were coming to the community for. Not being informed ahead of time, you could see the nervousness of the staff, probably thinking that we're going to come in and tell them what to do and how to do it, which was not the case at all. We had a lot of eye-opening moments with the staff once they understood what we really came into the community for.

In the end, when people recognized that we were doing something for their community, for their school, for their students, that was a great experience.

What would you say was great for you in your experiences during the consultation events?

Kaudjak: The great part was that I was able to speak my own language and bring the message in their own language, which they understand most. The relationship building really took place when I spoke to the people.

Denis: Everything was designed to do things differently. There were no computers, no PowerPoint presentations. Nobody was sitting around a conference table. Right from the get-go, people would enter the room and be surrounded by a lot of information on the wall, everything hand drawn or printed.

There was a big circle at the centre of the room and people would gather around that circle. That is a concept that we used throughout the whole consultation process: to bring people together.

What you have been doing in this process, it's not just administrative work or work required by legislation but a culturally powerful moment. For Quebec, for Canada, but especially for the people of Nunavik themselves, to be not just a part of but leading the way.

Denis: We had moments during that year of consultation where I noticed how it can be hard to explain when you haven't lived through it.

I'll give you a concrete example. Through the consultations, one of the questions we ask is "What is the vision of student success for the people of Nunavik and for our staff?" After many consultations, we arrived with the final version of what the shared vision of student success is, and we presented it to our administrators.

One of our school principals started crying. She raised her hand to speak to the group – we were in a huge room with 120 administrators – and she said that she was very emotional but that it was positive. She wished that her grandmother could have seen this. It spoke that much to her. We had a few very powerful moments like that during the activities.

Kaudjak: Because a lot of the participants were Inuit, we understood each other more than if we were trying to translate into another language. We blended together. We had the same understanding, we had the same vision of what we're trying to achieve with their help, with their words, and their knowledge.

Having any kind of gathering when it's done for you in your language, it becomes a lot more meaningful. You have more to contribute of your knowledge. ○

In the next part of this series, we'll learn more about the vital role that Inuit cultural pride, community wellbeing, and knowledge played in this process; details of the 2025-2030 strategic plan; and responses to the plan.

Where is Nunavik?

Nunavik, which means "great land" or "the place where we live" in Inuktitut, is located above the 55th parallel in the northernmost region of Quebec. Bordered by Hudson Bay, Hudson Strait, Ungava Bay, and Labrador, it makes up over one-third of Quebec's land mass.

Nunavik is one of four regions making up Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland in Canada.

Nunavik has 14 communities:

1. Akulivik
2. Aupaluk
3. Inukjuak
4. Ivujivik
5. Kangiqsualujjuaq
6. Kangiqsujuaq
7. Kangirsuk
8. Kuujjuaq
9. Kuujjuaraapik
10. Puvirnituq
11. Quaqtaq
12. Salluit
13. Tasiujaq
14. Umiujaq

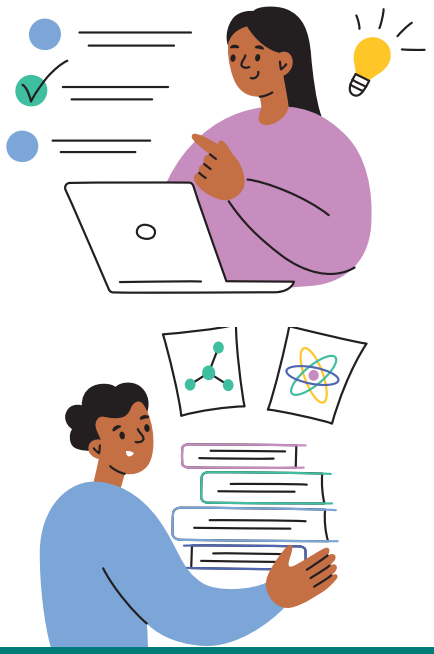
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We would like to share stories about how your schools, districts, and community partners are supporting each student through programs, partnerships, and professional development pertaining to that theme. Articles may highlight new technologies, curricula, PD opportunities, outdoor learning lessons, Reconciliation, learning for new Canadians, recovery learning after the pandemic, etc.

The Summer 2027 edition will be mailed to readers across Canada in July 2027.

- Proposals are due January 18, 2027
- Final deadline is in May 2027
- If your abstract is chosen, you will be given a word count to stick to.



Please submit article proposals to Jenna Collignon, editor, at jcollignon@matrixgroupinc.net and Reg Klassen, Executive Director, at reg_klassen@cassa-acgcs.ca.

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