

# The Nunavut *Law* Program



**THE  
NUNAVUT LAW  
PROGRAM  
WON  
THE AIP  
\$140,000  
PRIZE  
IN 2019.**

**The Arctic Inspiration Prize** is the largest annual prize in Canada. It inspires, enables, and celebrates the achievements of the people of the North, recognizing diverse teams with innovative projects in the fields of education; health and wellbeing; culture, arts and language; science and traditional knowledge; climate change; food security; and the economy.

**Nominator:** Lorraine Thomas, Imaituk Inc.

**Team:** Stephen Mansell and Aaju Peter (Team Leaders), Robin Anawak, Samantha Barnes, Robert Comeau, Guy D'Argencourt, Marley Dunkers, Angnakuluk Friesen, Heather Heavin, Colin Mackay, Sandra Omik, Martin Phillipson, Doug Surtees, Lana Walker, Tracey Wray

This report was compiled and created by the **Qatalyst Research Group**, with the help of Adriana Kusugak, the project team, and AIP.

# The Nunavut Law Program

The Nunavut Law Program is a four-year, one-time program that offered Nunavut-based law education to Nunavummiut without them having to leave the territory. The program, which began in 2017, was run by the University of Saskatchewan Law Program but was delivered by Nunavut Arctic College in Iqaluit. It was the first such program in Nunavut since 2005. Being a four year as opposed to a typical three years, the program was able to incorporate a lot of traditional Inuit law.

The AIP funding was requested to help students participate in experiential and cultural activities, which are key in helping them obtain their law degree and increase their ability to meet the legal needs of the North.

25

## Students enrolled in the program

19

Students were  
Nunavut Inuit







Students at the First Year Welcoming Ceremony  
with Program Director Stephen Mansell (far right) and College of Law Dean Martin Phillipson (far left)



## **Legal Landscape Before the Nunavut Law Program**

Before the launch of the program, Nunavut had only 75 resident lawyers, the majority of whom came from outside the territory. This meant that many Nunavummiut had to rely on legal representation from lawyers who were unfamiliar with Inuit culture, traditions, and the everyday realities of life in the North. Language barriers and cultural disconnects often made legal representation inaccessible for many Inuit residents.

The Nunavut Law Program has created opportunities for local students to pursue legal education without leaving the territory, ensuring that more Inuit lawyers are available to represent their communities.

[illegible][illegible]



# Supporting Students Success

The funding helped students get through difficult times or deal with life circumstances that could prevent them from continuing with their education. For example, helping students resolve issues at home so that they could continue to be present and focused on their classes.

One-on-one support and tutoring was also provided to help students when they struggled with course work.





[illegible][illegible]

Law school isn't this unattainable thing.  
It happened here in Iqaluit.  
It's not a shot in the dark.

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Robert Comeau, Student



# Overcoming Barriers to Remote Learning

When the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education worldwide, Nunavut students faced unique challenges. Internet access in Iqaluit is expensive, unreliable, and limited, making the transition to online learning especially difficult. Many students lacked access to the necessary technology to continue their studies remotely.

The funding helped students overcome these barriers by providing laptops, Wi-Fi USBs, and internet top-up packages, ensuring that they could remain engaged with their coursework.



I never imagined going to law school, other than my mom saying you should be a lawyer because you like to negotiate everything. And to be able to go to law school in my own community, that is something I never imagined would happen.

[illegible]

Inuk student **Robert Comeau** in the boardroom of the Wiyasiwewin Mikiwahp Native Law Centre.  
(Photo: James Shewaga)





# Talking Circle Moot

Mooting is an opportunity for students from different law schools to compete in a mock court of appeal. The Kawaskimhon moot was held in Iqaluit, Nunavut on March 12-13, 2021. The Kawaskimhon (Cree for “speaking with knowledge”) stands apart from other moots in that it is not actually competitive, but rather draws on Indigenous customs of consensus-building alongside provincial, federal and international law.

The 2021 problem posed by the University of Saskatchewan dealt with a land title issue that asked teams to create legislation to be relied upon by a fictional Métis Nation to deal with the effects of COVID-19. Teams were assigned to represent the various parties involved including federal and provincial governments, the Métis Nation, the RCMP, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, and the Métis National Council.



The Kawaskimhon “Talking Circle Moot” logo was designed by Queen’s Arts and Science staff member Sarah Chapman.



# Talking Circle Moot



The Kawaskimhon moot in Iqaluit, Nunavut on March 12-13, 2021



# Supporting Each Other

Being a small cohort, the students were very supportive of each other. In one instance, a student stopped the class to explain a legal term to another student in Inuktitut, and then translate the conversation back to the professor in English.

Another student admitted that they were contemplating quitting the program, but did not want to disappoint others.

“

We're family now.

Δεῦτε ἄλληλους ὡς ὅτι ὁ ἕνα ἑαυτὸν ὡς ὁ ἕνα ἑαυτὸν

Students







# Participating in Cultural Events

The program provided students with strong foundation in Inuit traditional law. For example, the program rented out the space and invited Elders to talk about traditional law and practices.

The students also had an opportunity to enjoy traditional food while discussing cases and participate in other cultural activities which helped them be in touch with their culture and values, and increased their motivation and self-esteem.



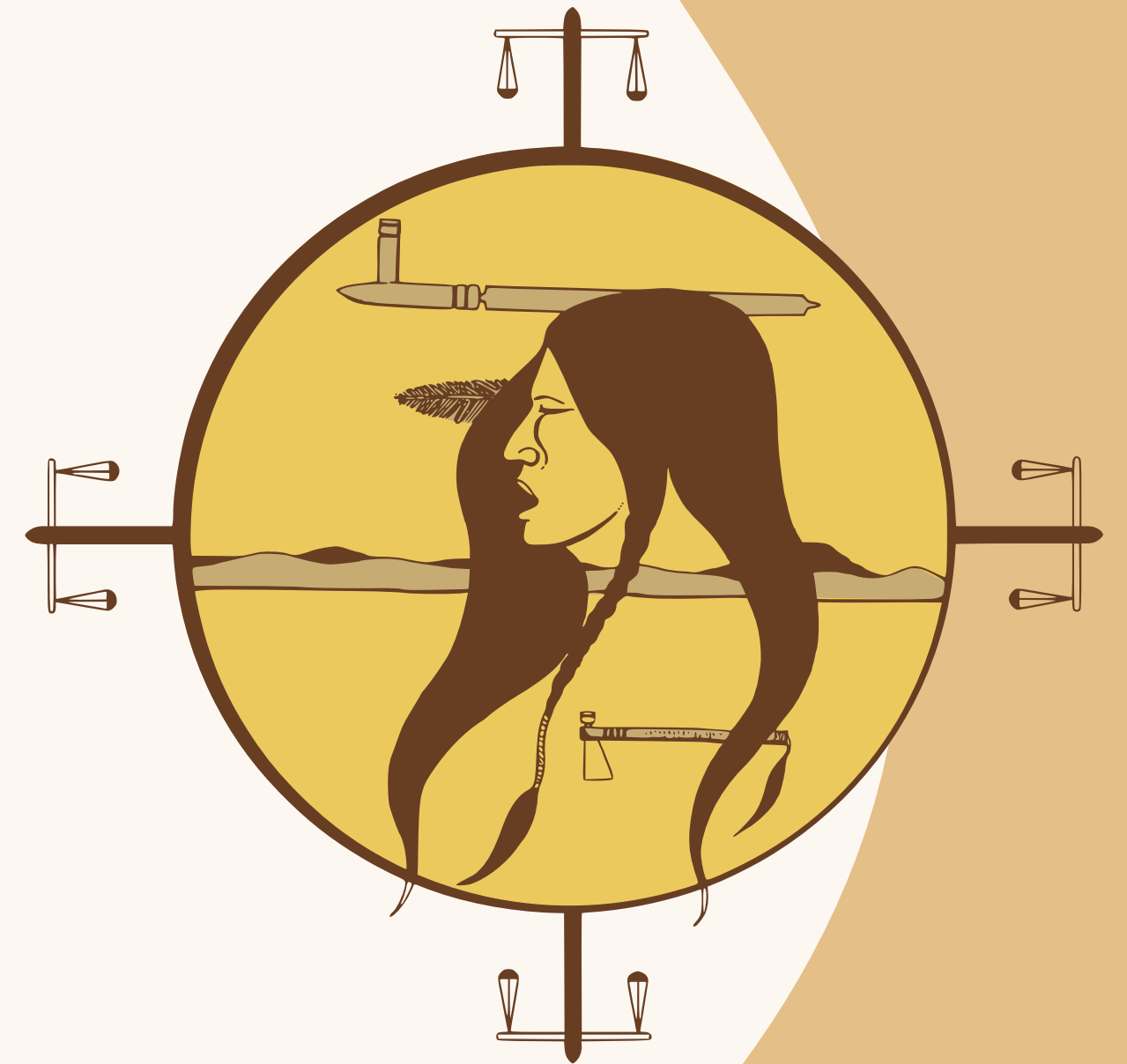


# Increased Access to Justice for Nunavummiut

The Nunavut Law Program has produced a new generation of Inuit lawyers who are transforming the legal landscape of the territory. **22 of 25 students enrolled in the program graduated**, and 16 of those are Inuit, most of whom remain in Nunavut. This makes a big difference in Nunavut's legal landscape, which is dominated by lawyers from southern Canada.

Of these graduates, 13 have been called to the bar and are now practicing as lawyers, while others have taken on senior positions in government. They are a great example and a role model for others who may aspire to study law.

The project significantly increased the Inuit lawyers in the territory and marks a significant step toward improving access to justice for Nunavummiut.





Until now, if you needed a lawyer in Nunavut, you most likely needed to hire someone from Toronto or Ottawa.

Now there will be lawyers living in the territory—  
lawyers who speak Inuktitut.

[illegible]

Professor Glen Luther