



Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2019 Budget

By Qaggiavuut!



List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the federal government, to address the fact that Nunavut is the only province/territory in Canada without a performing arts centre, invest \$30 million over two years for the first Nunavut Performance & Cultural Learning Hub, to be known as Qaggiq.

Recommendation 2: That the government, to give Nunavut at least a limited performing arts space to strengthen and embrace Inuit arts and culture, invest \$15 million for Qaggiq Theatre & Small Rehearsal Space.

Recommendation 3: That the government, as a start in dealing with the lack of a performing arts space in Nunavut, provide \$10 million for a no-frills Qaggiq limited to construction of a black-box theatre.



Introduction

Through the federal government, Canadians are committed to a wide-ranging, good-faith effort to turn the page on the past and pursue a genuine reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. But one glaring shortcoming continues year after year. Some may call it a human rights issue, others may think of it as a matter of fairness. But it is without doubt a lost opportunity to address the cultural, economic and youth issues affecting the Inuit of Nunavut with the positive, proven results arising from full recognition and investment in a peoples' traditional and contemporary art including their music, dance and stories.

Nunavut only territory/province without performing arts space

Despite the richness of the Inuit artistic heritage, Nunavut is the only territory/province in Canada without a performing arts space.

Qaggiavuut, a not-for-profit based in Iqaluit, is committed to the construction of the first Nunavut Performance & Cultural Learning Hub to be known as Qaggiq. That's an Inuit term describing a magnificent iglu where people gather to strengthen culture and celebrate life in song and story.

Qaggiavuut works to build wellness, culture and Inuit language sustainability in Nunavut by supporting Inuit performing artists with training and opportunities to strengthen and expand the reach of their creative efforts. Qaggiavuut has provided training and performing arts programming to over 300 Inuit performing artists and to over 5,000 Nunavut children and youth.

Leading the campaign to raise funds and build supportive partnerships for the construction of the hub is part of Qaggiavuut's dedication to strengthening and advocating for Nunavut's artists.

Lack of cultural arts centre urgent issue

The hub—where legends, music, theatre, drum and dance performances will be created and presented—is crucial to maintaining Inuit culture and language and to empowering Inuit, especially youth, through artistic expression. Facing urgent issues, we at Qaggiavuut hope to remedy this lack of a cultural arts centre in Nunavut as soon as possible, with the aim of beginning the construction process in 2019.

At a time when the federal government is committed to protecting and bolstering Indigenous cultures and when suicide among Indigenous youth has reached a crisis, it is nearly impossible to overestimate the importance of moving ahead with Qaggiq.

As a cultural hub, Qaggiq will draw Inuit artists from across Canada to collaborate, train, teach and present their works in a modern, digital environment. It would also return to Arctic communities strengthened artists, technicians and artistic performances. Children and youth from all Nunavut communities would participate in Inuit performing arts programming at Qaggiq, both live and through broadcasts of performances and master classes.



Strengthening Indigenous culture by creating a dynamic, technologically innovative cultural hub in Iqaluit would enable Canada's Arctic to take a leadership role in the circumpolar world.

Most importantly, Qaggiq's programs would tackle the root causes of widespread personal isolation by improving training and addressing the lack of performing arts infrastructure. To do so, the Qaggiq Hub would provide a strategic plan to train Inuit artists and technicians for employment in the performing arts, all levels of education and in the cultural tourism sector. Research conducted throughout the world indicates that regular exposure to the performing arts is a key to building resiliency and a sense of belonging, identity and life meaning.

The communities to be targeted would be those with the highest youth suicide rates, an epidemic caused, at least in part, by a loss of belonging and a paucity of hope.

Rather than Qaggiavuut being forced to use occasionally available high school gyms or set up its equipment every day after the luncheon dishes are cleared away in a soup kitchen, a modern hub would provide a badly-needed, dedicated space to deliver programming and performances.

Partnering with federal government to provide Inuit with better opportunities to develop heritage

Since 2008, Qaggiavuut has been the voice for Nunavut's performing artists with a focus on meeting their needs through professional arts training, collaborative opportunities and professional performance production. Projects undertaken this past year alone include artist skills development; artist promotion & marketing; connecting artists to economic and artistic opportunities; performance art programming for children and youth; preserving and maintaining the Inuit performing arts at risk; and creating new performance work and cultural exports.

We are very much hoping to partner with the federal government to provide Inuit with better opportunities to develop and strengthen their cultural heritage and address the unfortunate legacy that has left Nunavut without a performing arts centre. At a moment when the federal government is committed to moving beyond the negative aftermath of colonialism, a place to honour Inuit performing artists is essential to tell the Canadian story.

And, with widespread concern about youth suicide in the North, the need for a performing arts hub takes on even more relevance. The values of arts in providing youth a sense of belonging and identity are well known. The arts can prevent suicide, strengthen mental health and give youth pride and confidence.



Government should invest in Qaggiq

Recommendation 1: That the federal government provide \$30 million over two years for the first Nunavut Performance & Cultural Learning Hub.

Qaggiavuut has undertaken architectural and business planning in preparation for construction of a Nunavut Performance & Cultural Learning Hub. We are recommending that the federal government invest \$30 million over two years toward construction costs of \$63.6 million as estimated in the up-to-date business plan prepared by Colliers International.

Qaggiavuut has demonstrated its ability to develop and sustain a wide range of programming and training despite having to rent operating space. The construction of a multi-use, modern performing arts centre would bring stable support for these efforts and provide significant benefits through improving the creativity and competitiveness of Inuit artists and performers, generating economic benefits, amplifying job-ready skills training and education and addressing social issues such as youth alienation and suicide.

This step-in support of Inuit culture is long overdue in a territory where Inuit make up approximately 80 per cent of the population (and a city, Iqaluit with 60 per cent Inuit). In its report, Colliers said promoting Inuit art and culture through an arts hub could pay dividends for the economy and tourism as well as fulfilling the key function of strengthening Inuit culture.

“It is only natural that a facility like Qaggiq is more relevant to the community and addresses the needs of its socio-cultural objectives,” the Colliers study says. “Cultural assets like Qaggiq could play a key role in Iqaluit’s future development, strengthening the city’s position as the circumpolar capital for Inuit cultural knowledge, creative entrepreneurship, and innovation which normally makes way for more commercial opportunities with a greater local participation.”

Additionally, the study notes that “a strong cultural centre like Qaggiq in a vibrant downtown setting is of paramount importance to create the conditions that can attract investment, ideas and talent which will eventually nurture, support and retain businesses and population in the city. This requires, however, “positioning arts and culture as one of its high value industries and making a series of investments, including promoting the importance of arts and culture as an economic driver, and advocating for improved cultural awareness locally and nationally.”

Qaggiavuut’s initiatives as well as research by other similar organizations have highlighted a wide variety of personal and community benefits from arts engagement, including personal well-being, improvements because of arts education and better community vitality, Colliers concluded.

Concerning suicide in particular, it is important to note that the recent report from the House Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, “Breaking Point,” makes direct links between the development of Indigenous language and cultural programs and suicide prevention.



Building on success

Overall, the Qaggiq Hub would assist Qaggiavuut's efforts to continue its wide set of initiatives, including these accomplishments:

- 300 Nunavut performing artists have received professional and arts management tools.
- 65+ performing artists in Nunavut received direct employment as a result of participating in Qaggiavuut's training.
- 5,000 Nunavut children and youth received Inuit performing arts programming.
- 24 Inuit youth were trained in technical skills of the performing arts (video, lighting, sound, digital design) and five plans to study and train in the coming year in post-secondary programs.
- 25 Inuit adults were trained and mentored in technical skills including video editing, camera operation, digital design, projection, lighting, live sound, music recording, stage management, directing.
- 17 elders earned incomes as resource creators and teacher/facilitators.
- 20 videos of traditional songs and stories were filmed and produced in Inuktitut as teaching resources for years to come in the Inuit performing arts.
- The pisiit (traditional songs) are seeing a revitalization due to our work and Qaggiavuut plans to continue to broaden its reach by creating a Nunavut Pisiit Project in the coming year.

The possibilities are open-ended. For instance, on a recent trade mission to China with then-Canadian Heritage Minister Mélanie Joly, now Minister of Tourism, there was interest in staging the highly successful *Kiviuq Returns* there, showing the interest in Inuit cultural performances to be exported abroad. The number of successful works we could create and showcase internationally is limitless if we had a world-class venue to train, perform and create.

Interim rehearsal space needed

Recommendation 2: That the government invest \$15 million for Qaggiq Theatre & Small Rehearsal Space.

While this would not provide the dynamic boost to Inuit culture and arts of a full-scale, multi-use performance hub, it would be a useful step in the process of helping to expand Qaggiavuut's ability to build artistic and cultural capacity in Nunavut.

It would be a move in the right direction in Qaggiavuut's efforts to support Arctic communities by enabling Inuit artistic and technical training and by promoting the performance and exhibition of new works. It would also provide dedicated space that would alleviate the uncertainty of having to always find or rent space for the society's training and performance activities.



Improving relations with Indigenous people

Recommendation 3: That the government invest \$10 million for a no-frills Qaggiq limited to construction of a black-box theatre.

Building a black-box theatre—a simple indoor performance space with plain black walls and a level floor, typically designed to provide flexibility in the configuration of the stage and the audience seating with basic lighting and sound built in—will contribute to the recognition of the need to take extra steps to strengthen Inuit arts and culture. Such assistance on an expanded basis, when it becomes possible, would be highly valuable as part of the federal government’s commitment to improve relations with Indigenous people, promote competitiveness and economic opportunity in remote regions, contribute to stronger communities and address glaring issues of health and well-being, particularly the troubling rates of youth suicide in the North.

Conclusion

Thank you for this opportunity to take part in the consultations in advance of Budget 2019. We believe the merits of federal funding to build the first Nunavut Performance & Cultural Learning Hub are compelling. It should be a matter of fairness and national pride to ensure that our artists, our children and youth have the same access to established arts institutions as those in the South in order to face a hopeful future. Without the arts, and a space to perform, train and create new work, Indigenous languages and culture are at risk of being lost.