



**Official Submission to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage  
Re: Bill C-10, An Act to Amend the Broadcasting Act**

**By:**

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and Managing Director, Uvagut TV**

**and**

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**March 18, 2021**

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of Uvagut TV we would like to thank you for the work of the committee in listening to industry experts and carefully reviewing Bill C-10.

Uvagut TV supports modernizing the Broadcasting Act to support Canada's cultural sovereignty, distinct identities and language-protection objectives, particularly as these serve to reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen Canada's Indigenous languages.

We recognize the fundamental role of the Broadcasting Act in regulating broadcasting issues to ensure the funding of Canadian content, its access and discoverability, and the protection of minority-language rights.

We would like to offer a few comments with regard to the specific provisions in C-10 concerning Indigenous language production and Indigenous language broadcasting and underscore the need for clear directives to the CRTC to ensure the protection of Indigenous-language production and broadcasting, as distinct from Indigenous content.

First, a bit of background on our organization. Uvagut TV launched on January 18, 2021 as an exempt-discretionary service.<sup>1</sup> We broadcast 100% Inuit content – over 90% in Inuktitut (one of the official languages of Nunavut and the NWT) and 60% with English subtitles.

The service is currently available to over 610,000 subscribers across Canada via Shaw Satellite Direct and a number of cable operators serving smaller arctic communities.

The channel is owned and operated by Nunavut Independent Television Network (NITV), an Inuit owned and controlled non-profit registered in Igloolik and founded in 1991. Over the past thirty years, the principals behind Uvagut TV have played a significant role in the production and distribution of world-renowned Inuit language content (e.g. feature films like *Atanarjuat The Fast Runner*; *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*; *One Day in the Life of Noah Piugattuk*) and innovative Inuktitut broadcasting and public access initiatives in low-bandwidth northern communities.

Canada's broadcast landscape includes over 750 television services, yet Uvagut TV is just the nation's second Indigenous broadcast service.

Uvagut TV is Canada's only national Indigenous-language television service. Canada's first Indigenous broadcast service APTN is licensed as a "national English- and French- language discretionary service" (CRTC 2018-340)<sup>2</sup> broadcasting 80% in English and French. Uvagut TV's 24/7 Inuktitut schedule has increased Indigenous-language TV programming currently available to Canadians by 500% – a statistic which reveals just how badly Indigenous Canadians are currently served in terms of access to television content in their own languages, despite policy recommendations dating back to the 1980s that identify Indigenous language broadcasting as an urgent need and underline its connection to language and cultural preservation.

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<sup>1</sup> [Nunavut television network launches Inuit-language channel.](#) CBC News. January 19, 2021

<sup>2</sup> [Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2018-340.](#) August 31, 2018.

Uvagut TV supports the proposed amendments in Bill C-10 which set out specific provisions to support Indigenous language programming and Indigenous language broadcast undertakings - specifically:

- 3(1)(d)(iii.1) – which states that the broadcasting system shall provide opportunities to Indigenous persons to produce programming in Indigenous languages, French or English, and to carry on broadcasting undertakings;
- 3(1)(o) which provides that programming that reflects the Indigenous cultures of Canada and programming that is in Indigenous languages should be provided within the Canadian broadcasting system, including by programming undertakings that are carried on by Indigenous persons. [Note that we recommend the term “programming undertaking” be replaced by “broadcast undertaking” to ensure the inclusion/discoverability of these services in online broadcast undertakings]
- the amendment to section 5(2) – which provides that regulatory policy should take into account the different characteristics of English, French and Indigenous language broadcasting and the different conditions under which broadcasting undertakings that provide English, French or Indigenous language programming operate.

We would like to take this opportunity to underline for the committee the interconnection between *Indigenous language programming production* and *Indigenous language broadcasting*, how the former cannot succeed without the latter and the importance of dedicated resources and effective policy frameworks to back up these policy goals.

Almost 40 years ago in 1982, Rosemarie Kuptana gave what is known as the “neutron bomb” speech before the CRTC.<sup>3</sup> Kuptana described the arrival of southern mainstream media in Inuit communities as “the bomb that kills the people, but leaves the buildings standing” – because of the corrosive impact of that media on Inuit language and culture.

One year later in 1983, the federal government announced the establishment of its Northern Broadcasting Policy which included five policy principles. The third stated that “Northern native people should have fair access to Northern broadcasting distribution systems to maintain and develop their cultures and languages.”<sup>4</sup> Those policy principles were not backed up by effective tools and not much has changed in terms of access to Indigenous language content:

In 1983, CBC North offered 5 hours of Inuktitut television programming a week across the Arctic. Today CBC North offers 30 minutes on weekdays or 2.5 hours per week.

APTN’s Northern service currently offers 5 hours of Inuktitut language programming a week – the same amount CBC offered in 1983. APTN’s National HD service offers one-half hour per week in Inuktitut.

In other words, while the number of available television services has exploded exponentially, the

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<sup>3</sup> [Neutron Bomb Speech](#): Inuit Broadcasting Corporation Presentation to the CRTC on Cable Tiering and Universal Pay, 1982

<sup>4</sup> [Public Notice CRTC 1985-274](#)

amount of Indigenous *language* content has remained stagnant in the ensuing 40 years. And the impact of the flood of southern media in English and French has had very much the impact on Inuit language and culture that Kuptana and others predicted it would.

Why is this the case, despite policy goals over 40 years that have consistently underlined the importance of and inherent rights of Indigenous peoples to broadcast media in their own languages?

Within Canada's television broadcasting sector, broadcast licenses 'trigger' leveraged financing for content producers within a system that has been structured to support expression in English and French. Without dedicated Indigenous *language* broadcasters to trigger the financing, creation of and dissemination of *Indigenous language* production, Indigenous language production is consistently marginalized or excluded from national funding envelopes typically divided 65% English and 35% French.

That overriding logic means the Indigenous *language* component gets stripped out even in the case of APTN which broadcasts 80% in English and French with 10.7% of CPEs going to Indigenous *language* content.<sup>5</sup>

The CMF Indigenous Fund was originally established as a language fund<sup>6</sup>, but those linguistic provisions have been steadily eroded. Now with only a 20% Indigenous language requirement, its \$8 million annual budget is oversubscribed, under resourced and mainly supports English-French language productions.<sup>7</sup> Those who wish to work in Indigenous languages are largely left to the margins – accessing funding through Northern Aboriginal Broadcasting (NAB), a PCH administered production fund (despite its name, NAB does not support broadcasting) for northern producers working in Indigenous languages.<sup>8</sup> NAB is excluded from Canada's professional television ecosystem that enables producers to use a broadcast license to leverage additional financing. As a result, NAB-funded producers work with substandard budgets, with limited access to audiences, no protection of priceless archives and no ladder for skilled producers to enter the professional national system. NAB funded production organizations operate in 2021 at the same levels or even behind where they were in the 1980s.

There is much that needs to be corrected in Canada's production and broadcast ecosystem (starting with the deficiencies already noted in NAB and CMF) to address the systemic sidelining of Indigenous-language production.

Bill C-10 is an opportunity to put in place one piece of this puzzle – dedicated structural support for Indigenous language broadcasting which can be both a financial-trigger for and disseminator of Indigenous-language production which in turn enables Canada to deliver on key elements of its national identity including commitments to Indigenous language revitalization. Without guaranteeing at least one Indigenous-language broadcaster in Canada, Indigenous-language production will never grow beyond the structurally imposed limits we see today.

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<sup>5</sup> 2018-19 Fiscal year.

<sup>6</sup> CMF 2010-2011 Annual Report – [Aboriginal Program](#). Note the description: "The Aboriginal Program is designed to support Aboriginal-language independent production in Canada."

<sup>7</sup> [CMF Indigenous Program Guidelines 2020 -21](#). Note the description in section 2.1: "The Indigenous Program...supports the growth of Indigenous production."

<sup>8</sup> [Northern Aboriginal Broadcasting](#) – Indigenous Languages and Cultures Program

In 2019, Parliament passed the Indigenous languages Act which recognized “...the urgent need to support the efforts of Indigenous peoples to reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen [Indigenous languages]”. The preamble to the act outlines Canada’s commitment to implement the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People which affirms (Article 16) that “Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages.” The preamble further states that “the recognition and implementation of rights related to Indigenous languages are at the core of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and are fundamental to shaping the country.” It also outlines that “Indigenous-language media...are essential to regain and maintain fluency in those languages.”<sup>9</sup>

We know from the examples of Greenland and New Zealand that targeted legislation supporting Indigenous languages including Indigenous-language broadcasters has significant impact on language revitalization.<sup>10</sup> Language is the seat of culture – it holds a way of seeing, being and belonging in the world that holds immense collective value and is irreplaceable.

In conclusion, Uvagut TV is encouraged by and supports the proposed amendments in Bill C-10 which set out specific provisions to support Indigenous language programming and Indigenous language broadcast undertakings.

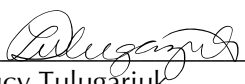
Based on the historical record summarized above, we strongly urge that these amendments be supported by specific direction to the CRTC and that distinctions between Indigenous-language production, Indigenous-language broadcasting and Indigenous content are clearly maintained in order to ensure that words translate into concrete and tangible results.

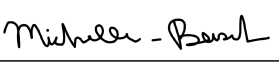
With regards to 3(1)(o) we recommend the term “programming undertaking” be replaced by “broadcast undertaking” to ensure the inclusion/discoverability of these services in online broadcast undertakings.

We recommend – as APTN, the ISO and other interveners have also done – that C-10 adopt a clear definition of “Indigenous” that includes Inuit, First Nations and Métis.

We would welcome the opportunity to speak directly to the committee to further elaborate on the points summarized in this letter.

Best regards,

  
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<sup>9</sup> [Indigenous Languages Act](#). S.C. 2019, c.23. Assented to 2019-06-21

<sup>10</sup> [Impact of Māori Television on the Māori Language](#)

## About Uvagut TV & NITV

**Uvagut TV**, Canada's first 24/7 Inuktitut television channel, launched on Jan 18, 2021, broadcasting 168 hours of Inuktitut programming every week, including 5 hours of daily Inuktitut children's programming to viewers across Inuit Nunangat and throughout Canada. The channel features Inuit-language Inuit-produced programming by Isuma, Kingulliit, Arnait Video, Artcirc, Taqqut, NITV and other independent Inuit producers; and by Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC), Inuvialuit Communications Society (ICS) and other media organizations.

**Uvagut TV** is available nationally to 610,000 Shaw Direct satellite subscribers, Arctic Co-op's Cable subscribers in Nunavut and NWT and FCNQ subscribers in Nunavik. Viewers around the world can stream the service online 24/7 at [www.uvagut.tv](http://www.uvagut.tv)

**Uvagut TV** is owned and operated by Nunavut Independent Television Network (NITV), an Inuit non-profit founded in 1991 in Igloolik as a training centre for Inuit community filmmaking. NITV is dedicated to the enhancement and preservation of Inuktitut and Inuit culture through the creation and exhibition of Inuit video art, linking Nunavut communities through Internet television channels, local access internet-TV, media training and digital literacy initiatives, the production and distribution of Inuktitut video and film — and now broadcast television.