

Title

Decolonizing cyberspace: One year later

Authors/Institution

Alexander McAuley
University of PEI

E-mail address

amcauley@upe.ca

Statement of the issue/problem

In 2006, in collaboration with the Government of Nunavut and St. Francis Xavier University, the University of PEI created the Nunavut Master of Education (MEd) program to support Inuit educational leaders who will contribute to the ongoing development of an Inuit education system in Canada's newest territory. Deeper understanding of the issues affecting the development of that education system is intrinsic to the success of the program, as are the high-level skills necessary to successfully negotiate the intersection of Inuit and non-Inuit cultures to act on that understanding. Knowledge-building principles and knowledge-building technology (Knowledge Forum) have been selected for their potential to address these two issues. The challenges are twofold: first, how can knowledge-building principles and technologies contribute to the design of a graduate education program that will meet the unique needs of educators in Nunavut and, second, to what extent is that design successful? Intrinsic to both challenges is the extent to which collaboration among students and instructors extends between courses.

How your research will address the issue/problem

Drawing from a design research paradigm, this project documents the effort to construct an asynchronous online environment using Knowledge Forum to enable participants in the Nunavut MEd program to share and build on each other's experiences and expertise to address the challenges they face as educational leaders. The design of the program's Knowledge Forum environment invites participants to draw upon, adapt, and improve ideas from successive courses as they proceed through the program.

The goal

The goal of this research is to determine the extent to which knowledge-building principles and technologies can contribute to the development of an MEd program that addresses the needs of an Inuit educational leadership cohort in Nunavut.

What you have learned/progress to date

Two courses of the 10-course Nunavut MEd program have been completed, the second of the two conducted completely online with Knowledge Forum as the primary medium of collaboration, secondary support provided through real-time teleconferences and Skype (voice over Internet or VOIP) connections. Despite significant challenges from a number of perspectives, participants' responses have been positive.

Major project goals: what do you hope to achieve/accomplish?

Through this project we hope to contribute to

1. the growth of a cohort of Inuit educational leaders who understand their roles and the potential of knowledge building in the development of education in Nunavut;
2. a deeper understanding of the intersection of knowledge building and multiple cultures.