

There is a 2 word motto in the gaming industry that you'll hear repeated as often as you see southern Canadians complaining about the cold this winter. "Fail Fast" is not just great alliteration, but great advice for anyone in the gaming industry. It's easy to get wrapped up in a project and lose sight of the fact that what you're working on, isn't working. For Indie teams more than anyone, it's important to figure out as soon as you can what works and what doesn't and to not be afraid to drop what doesn't and move on. Pinnguaq has recently had to do this very thing.

For the past 4 months, while the focus has been on finalizing the recently released "[Singuistics: Learn Inuktitut Through Music](#)", we've also been plugging away on a game based on the myth of "Qalupalik". Gaming is our first passion and the chance to try our hand at bringing Inuit culture and myth to the gaming world was and still is, too good to pass up. As we finalized Singuistics, downtime was spent developing Qalupalik. With Singuistics out and our focus able to turn 100% to the game we've made the decision to "fail fast" and refocus our energy. Qalupalik has a lot of potential but the fact is that it is too big of a project for a three/four man team with only one full time employee. The game got too big and too ambitious and before we had the chance to become invested in a project that would take us years to complete, we're shelving Qalupalik for now and refocusing.

Was the four months wasted? Far from it. We now have a prototype developed for a new game that we're really excited about and will begin sharing over the next month or so. In the development process the goal was to first and foremost make Qalupalik "fun". We created five different demos to try out different mechanics and physics in the game to figure out which was the most fun. This helped us both in realizing that Qalupalik just wasn't quite what we had pictured in our heads and also helped us stumble across a mechanic and game idea that, while it doesn't work for Qalupalik is going to work great on the next game we're focusing on.

As a post mortem for a game that barely got off the ground (or in this case, the ice), Qalupalik is a multiplayer game based on the Inuit myth of the Qalupalik. The player chooses either the "human" side or the "Qalupalik" side and they set off navigating the treacherous ice of a Nunavut landscape attempting to avoid/destroy each other in a quest to achieve their goals. Here is a quick, six second "Vine" video of the game in action;

<https://vine.co/v/hxYv6e3qDjT>

The following realities hit us as development went on and they've been fantastic learning experiences that I'm glad we didn't take years to figure out.

1. Our "environment" was limited and ultimately interesting only to a point. Nunavut is a beautiful place, but as a setting for a video game it can grow stale fast. This is a challenge we have many ideas to deal with moving forward, but in the development of Qalupalik it became clear that the "ice and snow" environment, while great.. Would not lend itself to a lot of variety.

2. Making a full fledged 3D multiplayer game as a four person Indie team is not an advisable first game project. Even if the game had been without flaw, the amount of work we were gearing ourselves up for was fit for a team of 10-20 people, not a small team of developers working on their first project.
3. Failure is the greatest teacher. Everything we did on this project was worth the time and effort put in. Not only did we develop the mechanics and ideas for the game we're now focused on, but each day of development was a lesson in game development, programming in Unity and the challenges of developing a game from Nunavut.

I can't emphasize that last point enough. We've learned so much in the last four months and are so much better for it. Qalupalik had the potential, and may still one day be, a great game. But we're even more excited about the project we've now turned our attention to. More details will come in the weeks to come, but in brief we've focused on a game that will explore Inuit culture through the art that this territory is so famous for. It is a doable project for a small team, it is unique, exciting and would have been impossible without the risks and failures we had with Qalupalik.