Solving "Shall I compare thee to an Inuktitut Month?"

A student who participated in OzCLO in 2023, James Brew from the Sydney Grammar School, has created a very neat problem which requires us to work out the correspondences between symbols used to write the same word sounds in our Latin derived alphabetical script and in the Inuktitut syllabic script (or abugida).

*Some of our best problems have been contributed by past competitors in our sister Olympiads, so keep them coming.*

One of the first questions that we must address in a script problem like this is the directionality of the Inuktitut script. Is it left-to-right or right-to-left or even variable? (Some scripts are top-to-bottom or vice-versa, or both.) Luckily for us there is enough evidence to be confident of the answer.

Having decided on the directionality we now start to look for symbol correspondences. We notice that both March and May end in /t/ which corresponds to a unique symbol in Inuktitut. (Note that this word also gives us additional evidence, as does the first /t/ in March.) Now we know the final symbol for /t/ at the end of April and June. We can also work out how to write the first syllable of April. November gives us the /ta/ symbol that appears at the start of January. Word final /k/ is easily deduced as is /ka/ in November. The same goes for /vi/ (and for /v/+/vi/+/k/.

March also shows us the Inuktitut correspondences with /na/ /si/ and /a/

An additional observation is that a syllable with a long vowel (written as a doubled vowel in the Latin Alphabet) is marked by a dot over the Inuktitut syllabic symbol. A long consonant (written as a doubled letter in the Latin Alphabet) is represented by a superscripted final consonant form followed by the syllabic form whose orientation is determined by the vowel quality (/a/, /i/ or /u/).

With this information we can complete the first task.

With the additional knowledge gained in Task 1, we can complete Task 2 fairly easily.

Can you also write *Nunavik* in the Inuktitut script? (Too easy).