

LAND, LANGUAGE, AND LEARNING: INUIT SHARE EXPERIENCES AND  
EXPECTATIONS OF SCHOOLING

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## ABSTRACT

For decades, many Inuit have expressed the need for schooling to reflect Inuit culture, language, values, and worldview. Significant strides have been made to create a school system responsive to Inuit culture and community needs, to increase opportunities for Inuit teachers, and promote Inuit knowledge and language. Despite considerable changes since the establishment of federal day schools across the Eastern Arctic, the imposed school system retains qualities of the southern Canadian model with Qallunaat (non-Inuit) comprising the majority of teaching staff.

This critical ethnography focuses on the shared experiences of schooling in Arctic Bay, Nunavut. Interviews with 24 Inuit, all of whom attended or still attend Inuujaq School, form the basis of this work. Prior teaching experience in the community, and elsewhere in Nunavut, contextualizes the research. My goal has been to come to better understandings of Inuit experiences of schooling, and the meanings Inuit attach to their experiences in the hopes that the insights offered may inform teaching practices and pedagogies and contribute to better support for Inuit students.

Drawing on Indigenous thought, more specifically *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, a holistic, diverse, and flexible theory of knowledge, grounded in Inuit culture and worldview, I explore some of the tensions and contradictions between Qallunaat teaching approaches and Inuit cultural values and educational practices through analysis of the narratives of Inuit students. I offer a historical overview of Inuit encounters with Qallunaat on Inuit lands, as well as an examination of the history of Inuit education and schooling in order to understand its influence on current schooling issues. Significantly, the interrelated themes of land, language, and learning emerged from Inuit narratives as critical pieces, central to Inuit experiences of schooling.

Qallunaat teachers who choose to work in Nunavut have a responsibility to respond to the needs and desires of Inuit students. This research asks how Qallunaat teachers might come to understand and engage with the knowledge embedded in Inuit experiences and perspectives of schooling to work in respectful ways and contribute positively to schooling in Inuit communities.

**DEDICATION**

*To the people of Arctic Bay who continue to show me the meaning and value of  
tunnganarniq.*

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## **Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit**

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is a holistic, diverse, and dynamic theory of knowledge which encompasses Inuit values, language, culture, and worldview. Although I resist presenting conceptions of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in any kind of fragmented way, I include the eight principles here as a very brief introduction to some of the values and concepts which continue to guide my work and my relationships. The following guiding principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit are integral to this work:

***Inuuqatigiitsiarniq:*** respecting others, relationships and caring for people

***Tunnganarniq:*** fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming, and inclusive

***Pijitsirniq:*** serving and providing for family and/or community

***Aajiiqatigiingniq:*** decision making through discussion and consensus

***Pilimmaksarniq:*** development of skills through observation, practice, effort, and action

***Piliriqatigiinni:*** working together for a common cause

***Qanuqtuurniq:*** being innovative and resourceful

***Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq:*** respect and care for the land, animals and the environment

*(Nunavut Education Act, 2008)*

I invite and encourage readers to consider the guiding principles as they explore Inuit narratives, experiences, and perspectives shared within this work, as these principles have sustained Inuit for generations and reveal values and practices foundational to Inuit culture. As further discussions are woven into the dissertation, readers may come to see how I engage with these concepts and recognize the ways in which the guiding principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, as well as my understandings of Inuit primary relationships, and natural, cultural, and communal laws have influenced my research methods, decisions, analysis, and interpretations as well as my interactions with people in the community. Additionally, readers may recognize the significant implications Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit has for teaching and learning in schools across Nunavut.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*We want you to come to know us... We see you when you come to our communities. Sometimes you even live among us, but you don't know us very well. The doors of the Inuit are always open to the Qallunaaq, but you don't come for tea very often.*

(Northern Quebec Inuit Association, 1974, p. 11)

Arrival and entrance into a new and unfamiliar context requires a willingness and openness to the possibilities one may encounter. One should approach carefully and respectfully negotiate the boundaries to move forward into another space. There is important and thoughtful work involved: the work of listening, watching, speaking with, and learning from others. The work may necessitate a shift in perspectives and assumptions. Tensions may arise. But if we are prepared to enter, to reposition ourselves, to accept responsibilities, and acknowledge that which we do not know, there is great potential for deepening understandings and strengthening relationships.

### **Schooling in Nunavut**

For decades, many Inuit have expressed the need for schooling to reflect Inuit culture, values, and worldview. Despite significant changes since the establishment of federal day schools across the Arctic, the imposed school system remains largely structured on southern Canadian schools and retains many of its qualities (Berger, 2007; Berger & Epp, 2007). Often these qualities are inconsistent with Inuit approaches. Moreover, the majority of teachers in

Nunavut remain *Qallunaat*<sup>1</sup> (non-Inuit) teachers, many of whom arrive in the North, myself included, with a limited understanding of Inuit values embedded in ways of life in northern communities.

I acknowledge the need for, and importance of, Inuit knowledge, language, and cultural practices taught by Inuit in Inuit ways. Article 23, a significant clause of the *Nunavut Agreement*,<sup>2</sup> sets the expectation for an increase in Inuit participation in employment in municipal, territorial, and federal governments (including education) at a level representative of the people of the territory. As outlined in the *Nunavut Agreement* in 1993, and again in Thomas Berger's 2006 Conciliator's Report, Inuit represent 85% of the population, thus, Inuit employment in the public service must be increased to match that figure. Although the Government of Nunavut has implemented employee training programs and increased job opportunities for Inuit, further investments are necessary (Hicks & White, 2015). The Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), representing Inuit of Nunavut and responsible for ensuring that the promises made under the *Nunavut Agreement* are carried out, argue that the government has not met its obligations and continue to call on the need for the Government of Nunavut to implement plans to recruit, educate, and hire Inuit teachers and Inuktitut-speaking language specialists, as

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this work I use *Qallunaat* (plural) *Qallunaaq* (singular), a term commonly used in the Baffin region of Nunavut to refer to people who are not Inuit, and variously translates as southerners, outsiders, Europeans, or English speakers. Several other spellings of the term exist, including *Qablunaat*, *Kablunait*, and *Kabloona*. The term is a descriptor and does not generally have any derogatory meaning. The origins of the word are unclear. One assertion is that it means "people who pamper their eyebrows" (Aodla Freeman, 2015, p. 7) or "men of heavy eyebrows" (Petroni, 1992, p. 57) as the Inuktitut word *qallu*, means eyebrow. This is presumably based on first observations by Inuit of European explorers or whalers. Karla Jessen Williamson (2000) describes the furrowed brows and frowns of explorers who lost their way and experienced enormous hardships in unfamiliar Arctic seas and lands. Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2015) explains that the term comes from "*qallunaq*, which describes the bones on which eyebrows sit, which protrude more on white people than Inuit" (p. 4). Aodla Freeman (2015) clarifies that "it does not mean 'white man' – there is no meaning in it at all pertaining to colour or white or man" (p. 86).

<sup>2</sup> The *Nunavut Agreement* was previously referred to as the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* (NLCA). However, it is not a land "claim" and the full title of the 1993 agreement is "Agreement Between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada" (NTI, 2016b).

required by Article 23 (T. Berger, 2006; NTI, 2016a; Pigott, 2016). Post-secondary initiatives and programs delivered across the Canadian Arctic have significantly increased, and recent research has shown that Inuit youth have expressed an interest in teaching (Berger, Inootik, Jones, & Kadjuk, 2017), yet barriers including expense, dislocation from community, and geographical access, remain ongoing concerns (Berger et al., 2017; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami [ITK], 2011).

In 2000, shortly after graduating with my education degree I took up a year-long position teaching Grade 7 in Nunavut. As a Qallunaaq woman from Ontario, I was unprepared for both the pedagogical and cultural challenges, yet I found myself embracing the experience, so much so that when the opportunity presented itself again, in 2007, I returned to teaching in Nunavut. After only two years of teaching, I developed research interests in issues surrounding Inuit experiences of schooling and began to confront and interrogate the reality of my implication in the ongoing colonial project in Nunavut.

Significant strides have been made in the last forty years to create a school system responsive to Inuit culture and community needs; to increase opportunities for Inuit teachers; and promote Indigenous knowledge and language (Aylward, 2010; Berger, 2008; McGregor, 2010; Nunavut Department of Education [NDE], 2007). In September 2008, Bill 21 was unanimously passed by the Nunavut Legislative Assembly and became the *Nunavut Education Act*. Mandated in the *Education Act* is the fundamental principle that Inuit societal values and *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* form the basis of schooling in Nunavut (2008). Following its inception, Inuit leaders, Elders,<sup>3</sup> politicians, educators, and associations have worked to develop a new vision for Inuit schooling in Canada.

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<sup>3</sup> I have chosen to capitalize the term “Elder(s)” in reference to Inuit cultural and spiritual leaders, to indicate honour or title. Lowercase is used when generally referring to an Inuk who is a senior or as cited in other works.

In 2011, Mary Simon, the head of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami's (ITK) National Committee on Education, and former ITK president, introduced the *First Canadians, Canadians First: National Strategy on Inuit Education 2011*, considered a blueprint for the desired school system in the Canadian Arctic. The strategy includes recommendations and educational goals to address the schooling challenges currently faced by Inuit. With a particular focus on effective bilingual education, the ultimate vision for Inuit education calls for a system of schooling grounded in Inuit language, societal values, knowledges, beliefs, and worldview (ITK, 2011). The release of this strategy, the efforts underway to implement its goals, as well as the ongoing development work of the Nunavut Department of Education (2007) (Aylward, 2010; McGregor, 2012a) highlights the desire and commitment to preserving and promoting Inuit language, knowledge, and culture in schools; creating an Inuit-centred school system; and incorporating Inuit perspectives in educational research.

Minutes after being sworn in as the territory's newly elected Premier in November 2013, Peter Taptuna declared education to be a major focus of his government. He claimed that education is key to making sure Nunavummiut<sup>4</sup> are the ones who will benefit from opportunities and jobs related to economic development (Weber, 2013). Just days after the Premier declared his government's intentions to prioritize the schooling system across the territory, Michael Ferguson, the Auditor General of Canada, released an education report outlining the perceived shortcomings of the Government of Nunavut's Department of Education in managing several aspects of implementation of the *Nunavut Education Act* (2008). Additionally, according to the report, the Department of Education is unlikely to meet the timeline of goals outlined in the Act (Auditor General of Canada, 2013). Although the report is damning, the Auditor General's office

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<sup>4</sup> Nunavummiut is the term used to describe the people inhabiting the territory of Nunavut.

did suggest that the magnitude of implementing the current *Education Act* in 2008 was underestimated.

An examination of recent literature focusing on the landscape of Inuit schooling in Nunavut reveals an unflattering portrait of the territory's school system. Attendance rates, student academic performance, educational outcomes, graduation numbers, teacher development and retention, Inuit language use, and the quality of Inuit language instruction have been flagged as significant concerns and remain under scrutiny (Hicks & White, 2015; ITK, 2011; Martin, 2017; Zerehi, 2016a). The profound impact of cultural oppression, assimilationist policies, and ongoing colonialism persists. Rapid sociocultural, political, and economic changes have serious implications for Inuit families and communities across Nunavut. Statistical reports addressing student attendance, performance, and outcomes reveal important educational patterns and concerns. Although worthy of investigation and analysis, that type of data is not directly examined in this dissertation. Rather, I have focused on the words of Inuit participants and the knowledge embedded in their perspectives and experiences of schooling.

The efforts of the Nunavut Department of Education (2007) as well as Inuit organizations including Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (2011) and the Amaujaq National Centre for Inuit Education (ITK, 2013) highlight the value placed on Inuit schooling and educational research. Joanne Tompkins, Fiona Walton, Alexander McAuley, Lynn Aylward, and Paul Berger are all researchers who have previous educational experience in Nunavut. Collectively, their research focuses on socio-cultural issues and consolidates around themes of language, culture, and equality in schools in Nunavut. Shelley Tulloch's work with Inuit organizations and communities provides insight into literacy, language planning, and sustaining bilingual education. Heather McGregor's (2010) research examines Inuit traditional education, the



development of schooling, and offers insight into the factors that have influenced the purpose and practice of schooling in the Canadian Arctic. Inuit leaders, educators, policymakers, scholars, and their Qallunaat colleagues are responding to current realities, and remain committed to positively shaping Inuit schooling and working to develop an Inuit-centred school system reflecting Inuit history, culture, knowledge, and worldview. Ongoing implementation of the *Nunavut Education Act* (2008), an ambitious undertaking from the outset, is a significant challenge necessitating considerable changes to the existing school system (McGregor, 2012a). Schooling policy change and reform are underway, although implementation of various strategies, recommendations, and curricular changes takes time. Although great progress has been made, a school system responsive to the needs and desires of students has not yet achieved its potential.

One of the ten recommendations contained in *First Canadians, Canadians First: The National Strategy on Inuit Education* (2011) is the need to address the comparatively small amount of research that examines Inuit perspectives on learning. As such, in February 2013, a Forum on Research in Inuit Education was held in Iqaluit with delegates from the Amaujaq National Centre for Inuit Education as well as representatives from the ArcticNet Scientific research community in attendance. A report, *Future Directions in Research in Inuit Education 2013* was the result. The report details Inuit perspectives of research, discussions of future directions in Inuit education research, and emphasizes the important role educational research can play in the decolonizing process. Highlighted in the report was the need for research on Inuit schooling to better incorporate Inuit perspectives (ITK, 2013; ITK, 2011).

This ethnography focuses on the shared experiences of schooling in Arctic Bay. Interviews with 24 Inuit, all of whom attended or still attend Inuujaq School, form the basis of

this work. My goal has been to come to better understandings of Inuit experiences of schooling, and the meanings Inuit attach to their experiences in the hopes that the insights offered may inform teaching practices and pedagogies and contribute to better support for Inuit students. Multiple perspectives are revealed through the narratives and experiences participants were willing to share, but also in the details of my interactions and relationships with people in the community as we constructed knowledge. Ethnographies can only be partial (Agar, 1980; Clifford, 1986), and this work represents particular people's perspectives and experiences of schooling in a particular community at a particular time. Moreover, research writing is an interpretive endeavour and the themes, meanings, observations, and understandings offered are filtered through my own subjectivities.

Drawing on *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*, I explore some of the tensions and contradictions between Qallunaat teaching approaches and Inuit cultural values and educational practices through analysis of the narratives of Inuit students.<sup>5</sup> The complex ways in which Qallunaat and Inuit knowledges and practices interweave in the contemporary North is also discussed. As Qallunaat play a central role in the histories, inception, development, and practices of schooling in the Canadian Arctic, an examination of our shared histories provides important context. The knowledge embedded in Inuit narratives of schooling offers insight into the complexities Inuit face in schools, with implications beyond the community. Significantly, the interrelated themes of land, language, and learning emerged as critical pieces, central to Inuit experiences of schooling.

This research is also informed by Susan D. Dion's work (2009), which calls for non-Aboriginal Canadians to listen, hear, and learn from Aboriginal peoples' stories and lived

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<sup>5</sup> While most participants were not enrolled in Inuujaq School at the time of interviewing, I occasionally use the term "students" in the context of research participants' experiences.

experiences as examples of strength and survival rather than responding with pity; and to provoke an investigation of our positions in relation to and in relationship with Aboriginal peoples. The need to do the work of “coming to know” (p. 32) requires that we learn to listen differently, “confront unsettling truths” (p. 169) and acknowledge our implication “in the history of a shared relationship” (p. 12). Engaging with Inuit narratives invokes an “entrusted responsibility” (p. 31) to respectfully hear, learn from, and share the complexities of experiences in authentic ways.

Inuit continue to take control of Inuit schooling, grounding curriculum, learning, and teaching in Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit. The Inuit experiences, understandings, and perspectives represented here provide richness and in-depth insight. Qallunaat teachers who choose to work in Nunavut have a responsibility to respond to the needs and desires of Inuit students. Mindful of the purpose of this work, I consider what it might mean for Qallunaat teachers to be open to learning in a new and unfamiliar context, to engage with new knowledge, to acknowledge the limits of understandings, to take up the challenges, and ultimately work in respectful ways and contribute positively to schooling in Inuit communities.

## The People and the Place



Figure 1: Welcome to Arctic Bay (*Ikpiarjuk*). Photo taken April 2017.<sup>6</sup>

Arctic Bay,<sup>7</sup> is a community nestled on a small bay located on northern Baffin Island in the Inuit territory of Nunavut. *Ikpiarjuk* is the Inuktitut name, often used by the local Inuit population. Although commonly understood to mean ‘the pocket’, referring to the high glaciated hills that surround the almost landlocked bay, *Ikpiarjuk* also means ‘a short trip over land’ so named because of the community’s proximity to Victor Bay, also known as *Pamiuja* (M. Allurut,

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<sup>6</sup> All the photographs contained in this dissertation are from my personal collection taken during my time as a teacher and years later, as a researcher in the community. Any photos of individuals have been included with permission.

<sup>7</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I use the English name of the community: Arctic Bay. Although I respect traditional Inuit names of places, I was advised by several community members to use the commonly used English name as I write in English and Arctic Bay is the registered name recognized by the territorial government. I was also reminded that “even Elders say Arctic Bay in reference to the place” (M. Allurut, personal communication, June 2017). Some Inuit communities are officially recognized by their Inuit names (Arviat, Pangnirtung, Iqaluit), some communities are in the process of officially changing back to Inuit names, and some communities use both Inuit and English names interchangeably (Alia, 2009). For consistency, I use registered or official place names, followed by other known names in parenthesis.

and M. Kalluk, personal communication, May 2017). Arctic Bay was given its English name in 1872 by William Adams, a Scottish captain of a whaling ship called *Arctic*, who passed through Admiralty Inlet into Adams Sound, and encountered the small bay (Innuksuk & Cowan, 1976; Rowley, 2005).



Figure 2: Arctic Bay and Uluksat Point. Photo taken October 2014.

The main landscape feature is the flat-topped King George V Mountain, known as *Iniksaaluk*, located approximately 1.5 km east of the hamlet. Local Inuit call the region *Tununirusiq* which means “the smaller place that is facing away from the sun” (M. Allurut, personal communication, June 2017), a “shaded or shadowy place” (Qikiqtani Inuit Association [QIA], 2013a, p. 22), in relation to the mountains and Uluksat peninsula that surround the area

and protect the mouth of the bay. The enumerated population is approximately 868, 96% of whom identify as Inuit (Statistics Canada, 2016) and the first language spoken is Inuktitut.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 3: King George V Mountain, known as *Iniksaaluk*. Photo taken February 2008.

Although whalers visited the area in the 1800s and 1900s, no whaling station was ever established in Arctic Bay. A Canadian government expeditionary ship, captained by Joseph-Elzear Bernier, also named *Arctic*, wintered in Arctic Bay in 1910-11 and conducted exploratory scientific work, engaging with Inuit who were then living in the bay (Eber, 1989; Pharand & Legault 1984; QIA, 2013a; Rowley, 2005). Captain Bernier, who made at least seven voyages to northern Arctic waters aboard the CGS *Arctic*, was “obsessed with claiming the Arctic for Canada before other nations could” (Pigott, 2011, p. 110). While there, the crew of the *Arctic* used stones to spell out the given community name on the hill overlooking the bay. It is still

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<sup>8</sup> Inuktitut is the term now commonly used in Canada to encompass both Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun. As Inuktitut is the language spoken by Inuit in Arctic Bay I use that term more often.



visible today. Stones were placed to form the letters N.W.T until after 1999 when the new territory name was added. On the adjacent hill, syllabics spelling out the community name were placed in stone by Boy Scouts in the 1970s (M. Allurut, personal communication, May 2017).



Figure 4: English name on Arctic Bay hills. Photo taken June 2017.



Figure 5: Syllabics of community name on Arctic Bay hills. Photo taken June 2015.



Figure 6: Inuit youth climbing the hills which bear the community name. Photo taken June 2015.

According to Kuppaq, an Elder from Arctic Bay, “there have always been people living here; it was one of the camps. People would come and stay for a while and then move on to another camp” (as cited in Innuksuk & Cowan, 1976, p. 53). However, for the most part, it remained a temporary camp until the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) established a post there in 1936. In fact, the first HBC trading post, named *Taqqik* (the moon) was set up in 1926 but closed the following year after those involved learned that Arctic Bay was within the boundaries of the Arctic Islands Game Preserve (Dawson, 1980; QIA, 2013a; Rowley, 2005). The preserve was created in 1926 to “protect the areas reserved as hunting and trapping preserves for the sole use of the Aboriginal population” (Cavell & Noakes, 2010, p. 243) and advance Canadian sovereignty. The HBC trading post reopened in 1936 when the federal government relaxed the game preserve restrictions (Innuksuk & Cowan, 1976; QIA, 2013a).





Figure 7: Start of winter season, Arctic Bay. Photo taken September 2014.

Between 1930 and 1960 semi-migratory camps followed the seasonal cycle of resources, including trips to caribou grounds in the summer. In 1936, the HBC moved several families to Arctic Bay following the closure of a post at Dundas Harbour (*Talluruti*) on Devon Island (*Tatluruitit*). Two years prior, with the support of the federal government, the HBC had relocated Inuit ‘volunteers’ from Pangnirtung, Cape Dorset (*Kinngait*), and Pond Inlet (*Mittimatalik*) to Devon Island with the intention of establishing a new trading post. Despite appeals to be sent home, Inuit from Cape Dorset and Pond Inlet were moved to Arctic Bay<sup>9</sup> (Marcus, 1995; McElroy, 2008; QIA, 2013a; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Throughout the 1950s, Inuit family groups lived in permanent camps in the area surrounding the present community of Arctic Bay due to favourable weather and hunting conditions near Admiralty Inlet. Arctic Bay remained, for the most part, an area primarily inhabited by a few Qallunaat including

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 2 for further discussion of the High Arctic relocations and the lasting impact on those involved.

representatives of the HBC, the Catholic missionaries, and employees of the weather station, which was constructed during World War II but closed in 1958. The RCMP Officer was based in Pond Inlet and made annual trips to Arctic Bay (Hinds, 1968).



Figure 8: The original Weather Station (built in the 1940s), which later became a RCMP detachment is one of the oldest buildings in Arctic Bay. Photo taken June 2017. Sadly, it was destroyed by fire in September 2017.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the federal government sought to bring modern services, such as education and health care, to Inuit in the region. Of course, schooling was also a way to assimilate Inuit to the southern Canadian society. The mid-late 1960s saw more Inuit migrate into the community to be near their children, who were enrolled in the federal day school.<sup>10</sup> Some Inuit had camps close enough to the community so that their children could walk to school daily, yet the pressure from federal government representatives to become permanent community residents remained strong. Health services were also offered, and a nursing station was developed in Arctic Bay in 1967. Prior to that, the RCMP, the HBC, and Eastern Arctic

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<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 6 for further discussion of the history of schooling in the Eastern Arctic.

patrols offered limited health services to Inuit. A newly built, modern Health Centre was officially opened in Arctic Bay in September 2017.



Figure 9: Arctic Bay Health Centre. Photo taken April 2017.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, both government representatives and Inuit who had settled in the community visited Inuit who still lived in their camps distant from Arctic Bay to compel them to move into the settlement and send their children to school. This pressure tactic proved effective and subsequently Arctic Bay's population grew rapidly (Douglas, 1994; QIA, 2013a). Unemployment, inadequate and insufficient housing, the loss of *qimmiit* (sled dogs), reliance on the HBC for trade goods, fuel, and other materials were among the challenges of settlement life (QIA, 2013a). In response, a Settlement Council was formed in 1967 to address some of the issues and consider solutions.

Beneath the surface of a ridge on Strathcona Sound lay rich deposits of zinc, lead, and silver. *Nanisivvik*<sup>11</sup> which means “a place to find” (M. Allurut, personal communication, June 2017), was established as a mine and townsite between 1974 and 1976. Although a prospector aboard Captain Bernier’s ship, *Arctic*, claimed to have ‘discovered’ minerals in the area as early as 1910, it was too difficult and costly to extract and ship the ore south (Harper, 1983). In 1954, two Qallunaat prospectors arrived to examine the site, hiring several Inuit from Arctic Bay to conduct mineral tests and assist with staking. A gravel highway was constructed in 1974, the longest one on Baffin Island, connecting Nanisivvik to Arctic Bay, just 32 km away. An airport offering jet service was also built in Nanisivvik. It remained the only airport in the area until a small airport was constructed near Arctic Bay in 2011.



Figure 10: Shoreline of Nanisivvik. Photo taken October 2014.

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<sup>11</sup> *Nanisivik* is generally spelled with only one ‘v’. However, according to M. Allurut (personal communication, June 2017), *vvik* means ‘the place’ so the more accurate way to spell *Nanisivvik* - ‘a place to find’ is with two Vs. This was confirmed by several others with whom I spoke (Fieldnotes June 2017, September 2017).



Despite the promise of 60% Inuit employment, in 1974 out of 100 workers on site, between 20 and 25 were Inuit (Indian and Northern Affairs, 1975). Although documentation produced by Indian and Northern Affairs (1975) suggests that “many talks have taken place with the people of Arctic Bay” (p. 5) and that the “people of Arctic Bay were told what was happening and why” (p. 9), the extensive research conducted as part of the Qikiqtani<sup>12</sup> Truth Commission reveals that Arctic Bay residents were disappointed with the lack of consultation. In fact, accounts of consultative efforts undertaken with the community reveal only superficial and symbolic involvement (Fieldnotes, May 2017; Gibson, 1978; QIA, 2013a).



Figure 11: Some of the last vestiges of the town of Nanisivik. Photo taken May 2008.

As is common with the presence of mines in northern communities, tensions exist between the benefits and drawbacks. The environmental, social, and economic impacts of

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<sup>12</sup> Qikiqtani is the organizational title used in reference to the Qikiqtaaluk or Baffin region, the eastern area of Nunavut (M. Allurut, personal communication, June 2017). It is the most populous region in Nunavut and includes the capital city, Iqaluit and 12 other hamlets.

resource development are widespread. The shipping of ore disrupted animal migration, ice conditions, and hunting practices (Fieldnotes, May 2017). Although facilities were built and more services available, most were established in the Nanisivvik townsite instead of Arctic Bay. Fortunately, given the proximity of the mine, Arctic Bay workers could travel to work, returning home at the end of each day. Greater personal income afforded by the mine meant higher standards of living including the ability to purchase new equipment and supplies to participate in the hunting economy. That said, the availability of alcohol at the Nanisivvik site had significant detrimental impacts on individuals and families in Arctic Bay (Brubacher & Associates, 2002; QIA, 2013a). Any benefits that did exist, disappeared after mine closure. Arctic Bay received hamlet status in 1976 to be better positioned to deal with the influences that the mine and related development were having on the community (QIA, 2013a).



Figure 12: Signposts in Nanisivvik showing directions to various cities and towns. Photo taken May 2008.

Some students from Arctic Bay also attended the Allurut School in Nanisivvik, named after Simeonie Allurut, a local carpenter who worked at the mine (M. Allurut, personal communication, May 2017). The Allurut School, which only offered English instruction, was highly regarded and several people spoke positively about the quality of education received here (Fieldnotes May 2015, June 2017; QIA, 2013a).

The Nanisivvik mine was operational for more than 25 years, closing in 2002. The decommissioning of the mine site and dismantling of the community took many years. Relics of the Nanisivvik townsite were still visible in 2007 but reclamation was completed by the end of 2008 (Midgley, 2015). Some houses were transported to Arctic Bay including a building which was later attached to the Anglican Church.

Now, construction is underway of an Arctic naval facility at Nanisivvik, expected to be completed in 2018. The deep-water refuelling station will serve the Navy and other government patrol ships and “protect Canadian sovereignty and interests in the north” (Government of Canada, 2015, para 2). With the development and operation of the North Baffin Mary River Project, one of the largest undeveloped iron ore projects in the world, the mining company Baffinland has a strong presence in Arctic Bay, currently training and employing residents. That said, the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (2017)<sup>13</sup> believe that Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation is falling short of its responsibilities as laid out in the Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement (Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation, 2012, Fieldnotes May 2014, May 2017; QIA, 2017).

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<sup>13</sup> The Qikiqtani Inuit Association represents Inuit of the Qikiqtani (Qikiqtaaluk or Baffin) region, protecting and promoting Inuit rights and values.

## The School



Figure 13: Inuujaq School, Arctic Bay. Photo taken May 2014.

Presently, Inuujaq School, the only school serving the community, is a large, low, green coloured building strategically positioned in the centre of the hamlet, dominating the vista of the community as one approaches from across the bay or by land. Named after one of the first residents of the community (Fieldnotes, May 2015), the current structure is the fourth building to house the school (Douglas, 1994). The K-12 school has an enrolment of approximately 235 students taught by eighteen teachers, eight of whom are Inuit. There are also three Inuit student support assistants working in the school. Although some schools in the territory have Learning Coaches who support literacy development, that position does not currently exist in Arctic Bay. Additionally, the roles of Vice-Principal and School Community Counsellor have remained vacant for some time. As with any school, there are fluctuations with Inuit and Qallunaat staffing as individuals move, take parental leaves, or pursue other employment or educational



opportunities. Securing substitute teaching positions remains difficult in the community (Fieldnotes, May 2017).



Figure 14: Inuujaq School (Coast Guard ship in background). Photo taken September 2014.

Inuktitut is generally the language of instruction at the primary levels as Inuit teachers teach students from kindergarten to Grade 4. Then, English typically becomes the language of instruction as Qallunaat teachers work with students from Grades 5-12. Inuit language and cultural teachers continue teaching students throughout their schooling, but courses are taught as discrete subjects. However, the last two years has seen an increase in Inuktitut language instruction to junior-intermediate students with Inuit teachers spending half days with Grade 5-8 classes (Fieldnotes, May 5, 2014).

The school itself is well-maintained with student artwork and high school graduation photos adorning the display cases in the hallways. A computer lab is available for class use and several classrooms have interactive smart boards. The breakfast program has operated for several

years and aims to provide healthy breakfast options, including cereal, fruit, and yogurt to students. A large well-resourced library is immediately visible upon entrance to the main doors of the school. The Ikpiarjuk Library had previously been considered a community library, open to members of the public. However, a recent decision to close its doors to the community due to security concerns, a lack of classroom space for the school, and perceived underuse has been a contentious issue in the community (Fieldnotes, May 6, 2014). Regular school assemblies are held to issue attendance awards and acknowledge student achievements. The school gymnasium hosts community feasts, sports practices, extra-curricular activities, and other local events.



Figure 15: School bus stop sign, Arctic Bay. Photo taken October 2014.

### **Reflexivity**

Reflexivity, critical self-awareness in the meaning-making process (Kovach, 2009; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) or the acknowledgement of a researcher's reasons for taking up the work

and relationship to the study is a critical component of ethnographies. Research is never neutral, and reflexivity suggests an “unavoidable implication” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 205) as our values, cultural perspectives, experiences, socio-historical backgrounds, personalities, and assumptions come to bear on our research (Agar, 1980; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

So, who am I to do this work (Agar, 1980)? During my time in the North, I immersed myself in community life, attended local feasts and events, and worked to develop relationships with individuals in the community. However, I often struggled with the suitability of my teaching there. I did not receive any professional orientation prior to teaching in either of the two Nunavut schools in which I taught, nor did I speak Inuktitut or have adequate experience in English as an additional language (EAL)<sup>14</sup> teaching. At times, I felt unqualified, ill-prepared, and ineffective. I observed fundamental contradictions between Qallunaat teaching approaches and my developing understandings of Inuit cultural values, educational practices and perspectives. I was also compelled to accept my lack of knowledge (Dion, 2007, 2009) of Inuit culture and values, the history of Inuit schooling, and Inuit-Qallunaat relations.

Part of what drives me to engage in this work is the realization that I am implicated, as a former teacher, in a school system that is not adequately responding to the strengths and needs of Inuit students. I came to think more critically about the role of the school in the community, its aims and practices, English as the language of instruction beyond Grade 4, and the fact that many teachers are Qallunaat, recruited from southern Canadian provinces. I am motivated to do this work because of the commitment I feel to the relationships between students and teacher, as well as the responsibility to contribute positively to schooling in Arctic Bay, and across Nunavut.

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<sup>14</sup> English as an additional language (EAL) is a contemporary term for English as a second language (ESL), reflecting the additive nature of learning another language.

Intellectual curiosity also drives me to do this work. My experiences as a teacher in the community, my complicity in a school system that is not effectively serving its students, as well as my lack of knowledge and feelings of discomfort while teaching in the community have been productive tensions in engaging with Inuit narratives and schooling experiences. It is my hope that the knowledge created with Inuit participants may prove useful to education scholars and teachers working in Nunavut.

### **A Note about Language and Terminology**

I have endeavoured to incorporate Inuktitut words and phrases throughout this dissertation. There are a range of Inuktitut dialects and Inuktitut words written in Roman Orthography are rendered in various spellings. As there is no standardized version of Inuktitut in Canada, I generally employ spellings typical of the Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin) region. Any errors in spellings, interpretations, or usage are entirely my own responsibility. I recognize that “the concepts which are self-evident in the indigenous language can never be captured by another language” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 158). Inuktitut is a complex, sophisticated language and its richness and essence cannot be fully translated in English. That said, my inclusion of Inuktitut words and the limited translations offered is my attempt at respectfully engaging with Inuit languages and knowledge to work towards better understandings.

Throughout this work, I use the term *education* to refer to all forms of teaching and learning throughout one’s life in any context, including acquiring knowledge and skills from parents and/or experiences. Whereas I use the term *schooling* when referring to the teaching and learning that occurs in an educational institution or formal classroom setting. The term *traditional* is also referenced throughout. Rather than implying something old, unchanging, static, or existing as some relic of the past, not serving ‘real’ life (Brody, 1988), I understand the

term traditional to mean the practices, ways of thinking, behaving, or doing something that has been used by a particular group of people since time immemorial, a sense of accumulated history. Further, I distinguish the term traditional from the word *conventional* which I understand as an acceptance of certain practices or something that is common, typical, or widely practiced (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

I appreciate that language is complex, fluid, and holds contested assumptions and implications. I employ the terms *Aboriginal* and *Indigenous* at different points in this work. Without the intent to collapse difference or imply a common reality, I have used the term *Aboriginal* or *Aboriginal peoples* when referencing the Indigenous peoples of the land now known as Canada, including Inuit, First Nations, and Métis peoples. *Inuit* is the collective ethnonym of Indigenous peoples of northern Russia, Alaska, Greenland, and Canada (including Labrador) (Doherty & Doherty, 2008; Stern, 2004). Historically, the term *Eskimo*, which has various possible meanings (Patrick, 2003; Stern, 2004), was the name given to Arctic peoples. I use the term *Eskimo* only when quoting historical documents. In 1977,<sup>15</sup> the term *Inuit* became the official and preferred term by those to whom it refers (Stern, 2004). The singular form of Inuit is *Inuk*. Although Inuit of the circumpolar region are interconnected with shared histories, languages, and cultural practices, there is diversity among Inuit groups across the Arctic and numerous region-specific or local designations are used. Without undermining the distinctive linguistic and cultural ways of various Inuit groups, for the purposes of this dissertation, I employ the term *Inuit* primarily in reference to Aboriginal peoples of Nunavut.

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<sup>15</sup> 1977 marked the inauguration of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) as Inuit representatives from Arctic Canada, Alaska, and Greenland (representatives from the Chukotka region in Siberia joined later) met to discuss common visions and common concerns affecting Arctic peoples and homelands (Inuit Circumpolar Council of Canada, 2016).

The etymology of the word *Indigenous* tells us that the term has Latin roots from *indigenus* which means “born in a country, native” and from *indigena* which means “sprung from the land” (Harper, 2014). I acknowledge that for some, the use of the term Indigenous is problematic as it appears to generalize the identity or collectivize the experiences of distinct populations (Pewewardy, 2000; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Furthermore, some view the term as distinguishing between particular groups of people in comparison or in contrast to settlers who later came to the lands (Maybury-Lewis, 1997) thus seemingly defining people in relation to their colonizers (Kesler, 2009). I recognize that language evolves, and meanings are contested and reconstituted to reflect changing attitudes and views. Without any intent to generalize identities, I use the word *Indigenous* to encompass a variety of Indigenous peoples and cultures around the world, while acknowledging both shared commonalities and diversity of languages, culture, beliefs, and histories.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework that is brought into an ethnographic study can enrich the transformative potential of the work. We often rely on theory to understand or illuminate a social phenomenon, or use theory “as a way to think differently” (Haig-Brown, 2008, p. 259) about issues or concerns. Indigenous thought, both nationally and internationally, is a growing body of knowledge and field of inquiry (Absolon, 2011; Battiste, 2010; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Indigenous thought is deeply rooted within Indigenous worldviews, beliefs, traditions, and cultures and located within a culturally contextual site. Kovach (2009) reminds us that “Indigenous knowledges can never be standardized, for they are in relation to place and person” (p. 56). As Indigenous knowledges come from “lived, experiential, and enacted knowledge” (Absolon, 2011, p. 31), they are specific to individuals, unique to particular cultures and

societies, and vary in local contexts. Emanating from the mind, body, heart, soul, and Spirit (Absolon, 2011; Jessen Williamson, 2006, 2011), Indigenous knowledges exist in experiences, values, dreams, teachings, skills, ceremonies, stories, songs, and are born of relational knowing (Absolon, 2011; Arnakak, 2000; Ermine, 1999; Kovach, 2009).

Indigenous thought is “earth-centred” (Absolon, 2011, p. 31), deriving from the teachings of the land, and based on reciprocal spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional relationships with land, as “we all live in relation to land” (Haig-Brown, 2008b, p. 12; Absolon, 2010; Arnakak, 2000; Battiste, 2010; Jessen Williamson, 2000, 2011; Kovach, 2009; Laugrand & Oosten, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Indigenous thought is contemporary knowledge, incorporating traditional knowledges, experiences, and values of the past which remain profoundly valuable to the present and future (Absolon, 2011; Arnakak, 2002). Additionally, I understand Indigenous thought as holistic in terms of the interrelatedness of knowledge - between the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical realms (Archibald, 2008).

Although Indigenous groups all over the world broadly share common understandings of interconnectedness, respect for land and all animate and inanimate creatures, and recognition of knowledge as something sacred, relational, and shared (Absolon, 2011; Battiste, 2010; Kovach, 2009; Steinhauer, 2002; Wilson, 2008), there is great diversity among and between Indigenous peoples and the specific manifestations of their beliefs, values, and knowledge. In acknowledgment of that diversity, it is appropriate in the context of this research to draw on an Inuit theory of knowledge. As this research explores the space where Qallunaat knowledge and approaches to teaching and learning come into relation with Inuit students’ knowledge and practices, the theory driving this study is *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*.

## **Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit**

*Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, often abbreviated as ‘IQ’, is an epistemology which encompasses Inuit values, knowledge, language, and worldview. Certainly, it is much more complex than the brief definition offered. In fact, the act of defining IQ is particularly challenging as it “encompasses different ideas to different people” (Arnakak, 2002, p. 33). I offer an overview of the history of the term’s inception, several explanations and definitions of the term, as well as articulations of my understandings of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and what it means to my study.

I recognize that many non-Indigenous scholars may resist taking up Indigenous thought and admittedly, I continue to confront my own apprehensions about engaging with an Indigenous theory as a non-Indigenous person. Engaging with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit carries with it significant responsibility to ensure approaches are respectful and ethical. I remember the words of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) appalled by the actions of non-Indigenous researchers who “desire, extract and claim ownership to our ways of knowing” (p. 1). I accept that appropriation is a very real problem and I acknowledge that as a Euro-Canadian white woman I can never understand the experience of being Inuit, regardless of how long I live in Nunavut or how much I strive to learn.

The suitability of doing this work but also relying on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit to frame the research presents complexities and tensions. Allegations of cultural appropriation, incomplete understandings, misuse of ideology, misinterpretations, or abstraction of theory into compartmentalized details are very real concerns. I recognize the significant cultural and linguistic limitations in understanding the depth and richness of IQ and applying meanings to this work without a strong foundation in Inuktitut. Certainly, cultural understandings, worldview, and



experiences underpin Inuit language (Tagalik, 2010a). That said, I am committed to ensuring respect, relationality, and reciprocity form the foundation of my research (Steinhauer, 2002) and continue to work to form respectful connections with the concepts of which I am learning. Ultimately, I believe there is a responsibility to listen, to be prepared to learn, to “engage with the knowledge” (Haig-Brown, 2008b, p. 10) and to consider the ways in which it might take on meaning and inform work. Additionally, I recall reading the words of Inuk Elder Joanase Benjamin Arreak who claimed, “We have to expose Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit to Qallunaat – and of course, to youth – so we can live well together” (as cited in Niutaq Cultural Institute, 2011, p. 113).

Inuit Elders continue to call on the need for governmental departments, organizations, and schooling to be grounded in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit to ensure that programs, procedures, and policies appropriately serve Nunavummiut but also to address the profound disruptions in the transfer of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a result of contact, colonization, processes of assimilation, and forced relocations (Arnakak, 2002; Tagalik, 2010a). Engaging with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a theory to frame and guide this research is a way of valuing and promoting traditional Inuit knowledge. According to Alaskan scholars Barnhardt & Kawagley (2005), non-Indigenous people “need to recognize the co-existence of multiple worldviews and knowledge systems, and find ways to understand and relate to the world in its multiple dimensions and varied perspectives” (p. 9). Moreover, the wisdom embedded in Indigenous knowledge “offers lessons that can benefit everyone, from educator to scientist” (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005, p. 9). As this work involves Inuit perspectives and experiences of schooling, engaging with a theory grounded in Inuit knowledge, values, practices, and beliefs is imperative in coming to better understandings and demonstrating respect for Inuit and their communities.

One of the general principles outlined in the *Future Directions in Research in Inuit Education Report* (ITK, 2013) includes the recommendation that educational research in Inuit Nunangat<sup>16</sup> “demonstrate respect for, and validation of Inuit-specific concepts like Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in designing research projects, including the research methodologies used for the research project, and in the research findings” (p. 10). Also outlined in the report are concerns that in the past, some research has acknowledged Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in superficial ways and undervalued its richness and complexity (ITK, 2013). Respecting the views of Inuit with whom I choose to do this work, and giving precedence to a dynamic theory which reflects Inuit knowledge and culture are necessary steps to take in the quest to come to better understandings. I offer detailed discussions of my understandings of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and the ways in which it informed this work in my relationships, chosen research methods, analysis, and interpretations.

On April 1, 1999, Canada’s Inuit territory of Nunavut, which in Inuktitut means “our land”, was established as the result of more than 25 years of Inuit struggle for political recognition within the federation of Canada. A comprehensive *Nunavut Agreement*, signed in 1993, the largest Aboriginal land claim settlement in Canadian history in terms of financial compensation and land, led to the agreement to establish the territory of Nunavut (Arnakak, 2002; Government of Canada, 1993). The conceptualization of the term *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* emerged following the *Nunavut Agreement* to guide the formation and actions of the Government of Nunavut. In its endeavour and commitment to promote, strengthen, and preserve

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<sup>16</sup> Generally, “Inuit nunangat” refers to Inuit homelands. I understand Inuit Nunangat (capitalized) as the geo-political reference to the four Inuit regions or territories in Canada, including Nunatsiavut, Nunavut, Nunavik, and the Inuvialuit region of the Northwest Territories, where Inuit have lived for thousands of years. Whereas the Canadian Inuktitut term, nunangat (lower case) refers to the “land, water, and ice” of Arctic regions, integral to Inuit culture and ways of life (ITK, 2009).

Inuit language and culture, the Government of Nunavut formally pledged to incorporate Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles into all procedures, policies, programs, and services (Arnakak, 2002; Stevenson, 2006).

The morphemes or elements of the term are loosely translated as *qauji* – to know or knowledge, *maja* – have it already, it exists, *tuqa* – long time or old, and *ngit* – (third person plural) they, them or their (K. Attagutsiak, personal communication, December 2014). Translated as “that which are long known by Inuit”, reflects the concept of traditional Inuit knowledge. Yet Jaypeetee Arnakak (2002) asserts that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit includes “not only Inuit traditional knowledge, but also the contemporary values of Nunavut’s communities” (p. 34). The richness of the epistemology and deep wisdom embedded in concepts and principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit cannot be easily defined and resists being confined to Western theories of knowledge and the English language. In fact, definitions of the term put forth have been resisted, contested, re-evaluated, dismissed, and re-defined. Tester and Irniq (2008) argue that “IQ, and especially the processes of defining and using it, can be seen as exercises in struggle and resistance: attempts to protect and develop Inuit culture” (p. 58). Although Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit has been equated with Traditional Ecological Knowledge, it goes beyond that, confronting relationships and values in relation to modern social processes and constructions (Arnakak, 2002; Henderson, 2007; Tester & Irniq, 2008).

Working Groups have been established to advise the territorial government, ensuring policy and programs are grounded in Inuit values. Interestingly, in a workshop in 1999, Elders refused to develop an itemized, checklist-inspired definition of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, presumably unwilling to subscribe to Western reductionist approaches (Henderson, 2007). Initially, four moral principles (outlined below), based on the fundamentals of Inuit family

relationships, were established to guide policy and frame Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit but the framework has since been expanded. Ultimately, the list of principles is modelled on values that guided Inuit society in the past, but they have been tailored to suit Inuit living in a modern Nunavut (Laugrand & Oosten, 2009). Like most theory, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is a living theory which occupies an everyday reality in Inuit life (Wenzel, 2004).

In respecting Inuit oral traditions, I have had insightful conversations with Inuit teachers and friends, as well as research participants in an endeavour to come to deeper understandings of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. As Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is a relational approach and knowledge is not given objectively, I have worked to develop relationships and interacted with Inuit in the school, community, and on the land, listening carefully and observing closely. Although I recognize that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is embedded in practice and a “living technology” (Arnakak, 2000, para 6), Inuit efforts to record and preserve IQ are realized in several written documents. I continue to read widely and critically various texts including academic articles, government documents, political speeches, as well as anthologies of Inuit oral histories and interviews. Certainly, condensing the complexities of a philosophy and ways of knowing and living into an easily digestible description is incongruous with the very notion and intent of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. Joe Karetak and Frank Tester (2017) recognize the difficulty of writing about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit given Inuit oral traditions. Moreover, by documenting IQ, there is potential for it to be seen as a codified set of values and principles rather than a dynamic “way of thinking and doing based in beliefs, experience, and wisdom” (p. 19). While I resist abstracting in any way, in the interest of offering some clarity, I have selected a range of explanations and definitions which inform my study.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is not a new concept or paradigm, however the expression has a recent history. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a term, developed in the 1990s as Inuit moved to supplant the modern conception of ‘Inuit traditional knowledge’, articulating a revision that the valuable cultural knowledge of the past should be protected and passed on to younger generations as it remains valuable and relevant today. Moreover, Inuit rejected the implication that modernization signified an acceptance of Qallunaat ideology and practices (Arnakak, 2002; Laugrand & Oosten, 2009; Tester & Irniq, 2008).

At a meeting of the Nunavut Social Development Council in 1998, which drew Elders from across the territory, one of the first definitions of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit was expressed as encompassing “all aspects of traditional Inuit culture including values, world-view, language, social organization, knowledge, life skills, perceptions, and expectations” (Nunavut Social Development Council, 1998; Lévesque, 2014; Tester & Irniq, 2008). According to Paul Okalik, former Premier of Nunavut, “Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit refers to a way of viewing the world...it is an approach that defines Inuit” (Okalik, 2001). Inuit Elders, Evaloardjuk, Irniq, Puqiqnak, and Serkoak (2004), part of a group guiding the creation of an anthology of stories, define Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as “knowledge that has been passed on to us by our ancestors, things we have always known, things crucial to our survival – patience and resourcefulness” (as cited in Bennett & Rowley, 2004, p. xxi). Karetak and Tester (2017) describe Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as “more than a philosophy. It is an ethical framework and detailed plan for having a good life. It is a way of thinking, connecting all aspects of life in a coherent way” (p. 3). Many efforts to articulate an explanation of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit include references to respect for the land, as “IQ has its origins in a profound and intimate relationship with all of nature” (Karetak & Tester, 2017, p. 6). Moreover, the knowledge and values of Inuit are embedded in a traditional hunting culture which

has always adapted itself to a changing environment (Laugrand & Oosten, 2009). Although numerous articulations exist, what emerges is the sense that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is a holistic, diverse, and flexible theory of knowledge. Additionally, it has a grounding in Inuit language, beliefs, and values, and emphasizes the depth and richness of Inuit culture.

In a commentary published in *Nunatsiaq News*, the territorial newspaper, Jaypeetee Arnakak (2000) who has worked to formalize principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, described it as a “binding force for a people” (para. 1), yet “IQ was never written down” (para. 1). Further, in addition to Inuit traditional knowledge, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is “profound, enriching and alive” (para. 5), possesses a temporal scope, and is intended to incorporate current modern values of Inuit communities across Nunavut. It is not a set or finite body of knowledge. Rather, Arnakak (2000) describes it as a “living technology...a means of rationalizing thought and action, a means of organizing tasks and resources, means of organizing family and society into coherent wholes” (para. 6). According to Arnakak (2000), traditional knowledge, “describes only one half of it” (para. 4) as Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is also importantly, about process. IQ is actually about “healthy, sustainable communities”, including school communities, “reclaiming their rights to a say in the governance of their lives using principles and values they regard as integral to who and what they are” (Arnakak, 2000, para. 4).

In his role with the Nunavut Social Development Council, Arnakak (2000, 2002) worked closely with a Working Group in 1998-1999 to define guiding principles, create conceptual frameworks, and develop a functional definition of Inuit Qaujimanituqangit. Although commonly known as Qaujimajatuqangit, the Sustainable Development IQ Working Group decided to use Qaujimanituqangit instead because – *niq* reflects the concept in the abstract whereas *-jaq* reflects the passive (Arnakak, 2002). The Working Group included territorial

government representatives, members of Inuit associations, as well as delegates from all communities across the territory, many of whom were Elders, as their memories and knowledge are the primary sources guiding the work (Martin, 2009). Moreover, the knowledge and hunting practices vary from the south to the north and traditional knowledge is different inland as opposed to coastal communities. Thus, while there are guiding principles and general commonalities, there is great diversity amongst Inuit. As part of the Working Group's efforts, they defined Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as "the past, present and future knowledge, experience and values of Inuit society" (Arnakak, 2002, p. 25).

Later that year, the Government of Nunavut published *The Bathurst Mandate* (1999), a statement of priorities and four key goals for the vision of Nunavut in 2020, which committed to ensuring Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit was the primary philosophical tenet of the Government of Nunavut (Wenzel, 2004). In addition to the four goals, an *Inuit Qaujimajatuqanginnut (IQ) Task Force* was implemented to make recommendations and advance the ambitions of *The Bathurst Mandate*. Inuit Qaujimajatuqanginnut was the term employed by the IQ Task Force as it refers to 'moving toward understanding IQ' (Tester & Irniq, 2008). The creation of the territory of Nunavut, and accordingly, the goal of creating a representative government reflecting Inuit traditions, culture, and spirituality stemmed from desires and needs to protect and preserve Inuit rights, language, and culture (Arnakak, 2002). Significantly, Inuit have their own decision-making practices and have always governed themselves in accordance with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. However, developing an institutional design, effectively from scratch, presented considerable opportunities and challenges (Hicks & White, 2015). Ultimately, for pragmatic reasons, the organizational structure of the government of Nunavut developed from the model of the Government of the Northwest Territories. The intention remains to work

towards transforming the “borrowed model” into an Inuit system of government (IQ Task Force, 2002).

*The First Annual Report of the Inuit Qaujimajatuqanginnut (IQ) Task Force* (IQ Task Force, 2002) outlines findings and provides recommendations to the Government to meet the goals of *The Bathurst Mandate*. In the report, the IQ Task Force commends government departments for striving to incorporate Inuit culture and language activities into their daily operations, yet found that many lack the understandings and resources necessary to facilitate significant and meaningful integration. The fundamental problem recognized by the IQ Task Force was the incorporation of Inuit culture into the Nunavut government rather than the government integrating itself into Inuit culture.

As Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is more complex, extensive, and fluid than the system of government, the IQ Task Force recommends the need to work towards incorporating the government into Inuit culture. In fact, the report highlights the statement in *The Bathurst Mandate* which confirms that “Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit will provide the context in which we develop an open, responsive, and accountable government” (IQ Task Force, 2002; Government of Nunavut, 1999, p. 5). As the risk of abstracting, simplifying, fragmenting, or underestimating the diversity and richness of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit becomes much greater as principles are removed from their cultural context (2002), the IQ Task Force put forth a recommendation that the four basic relationships which define Inuit culture be the starting point for Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. The four primary Inuit relationships include, relationship of a people with their land, and by extension to their culture; relationship with one’s family; relationship with self or inner spirit; and relationship with community or social grouping (IQ Task Force, 2002; Martin, 2012; van Dam, 2008; Timpson 2009). The four primary relationships “create the



context for the culture. They are the “glue” that holds the culture and the IQ principles together” (IQ Task Force, 2002).<sup>17</sup>

The follow-up to *The Bathurst Mandate*, was *Pinasuaqtavut 2004-2009*, the government’s second mandate in which members reconfirmed their commitment and set objectives for the next term. It was the *Pinasuaqtavut 2004-2009* document which formulated guiding principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit which would become central to the policy of the Government of Nunavut (Timpson, 2009; van Dam, 2008). Arnakak (2000) asserts the guiding principles as operative procedures for developing policy and programs based on the traditional Inuit family model. Additionally, the guiding principles are used as planning tools in organizational development and are a means of actualizing political and social aspirations of Nunavummiut. The Department of Education continues to move towards Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit with the publication of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Education Framework for Nunavut Curriculum* (Nunavut Department of Education [NDE], 2007), which states that educators are expected “to develop an understanding of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit...and deliver instruction that reflects Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit” (p. 3); and the adoption of the *Nunavut Education Act* (2008), which calls on the public education system to be “based on Inuit societal values and the principles and concepts of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (p. 2). The guiding principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, which apply under the *Education Act* (2008) are listed below:

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<sup>17</sup> It is worth noting that following the release of the First Annual Report, IQ Task Force members were not reappointed (Tester & Irniq, 2008). Rather, governmentally-dependent advisory groups such as *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Katimajit* (IQK) (the Inuit traditional knowledge committee that meets) and *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangitta Isumaksaqsiuqtingit* (Inuit traditional knowledge thinkers) provide input to the Government of Nunavut on culturally relevant services and programs. Government departmental IQ Coordinators formed a group called *Tuttarviit Committee* who work to develop an overall IQ strategic plan and serve as liaisons between government departments and IQK. See also Tester & Irniq (2008) and Lévesque (2014).

***Inuuqatigiitsiarniq***: respecting others, relationships and caring for people

***Tunnganarniq***: fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming and inclusive

***Pijitsirniq***: serving and providing for family and/or community

***Aajiiqatigiingniq***: decision making through discussion and consensus

***Pilimmaksarniq***: development of skills through practice, effort, and action

***Piliriqatigiinni***: working together for a common cause

***Qanuqtuurniq***: being innovative and resourceful

***Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq***: respect and care for the land, animals and the environment

As a former teacher in Nunavut and as this research focuses on Inuit experiences of schooling, I draw on the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles specific to the *Education Framework for Nunavut Curriculum* (NDE, 2007) and those laid out in the *Nunavut Education Act* (2008).

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a theory of knowledge has been outlined as a set of practical, oral, spiritual and intellectual intergenerational teachings about human social experiences, environmental knowledge, and the interrelationships of environmental elements. It is also an inclusive, dynamic, and cumulative approach to teaching and learning through observing, practicing, and experience. Accordingly, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is a concept comprising the same values that underpin traditional Inuit family, kinship, and community, in relation to the land. The Inuit kinship structure is also the means of passing on values, knowledge, and skills from one generation to another (Arnakak, 2000).

Inuit *maligait* are best described by Elders as natural laws which respect one's place in the environment, society, and the universe. According to Jackie Price (2008), *maligait* means "things that had to be done" and point to the interconnectedness in the world and "the spiritual network of relationships that guides Inuit existence" (p. 131), including Inuit, the land, weather and animals. The *maligait* (natural laws) govern how one connects to other people and the physical and metaphysical environment (NDE, 2007). Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit posters presenting

visual representations and descriptions of principles, natural laws of relationships, values, and attitudes can be seen in classrooms and corridors throughout schools in Nunavut. Moreover, as Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is the foundation of schooling, the curriculum of Nunavut is conceived as four strands each of which is related to IQ, and the eight guiding principles are affirmed as the cross-curricular learning competencies for students (McGregor, 2012a; NDE, 2007).

Frank Tester and Peter Irniq (2008) argue that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit moves beyond encompassing knowledge of the past, environmental knowledge, or a development agenda. Rather, they argue that “advocating IQ can be a political act, advancing a social and cultural agenda that attempts to counter, or at least buffer, the totalizing agenda of a colonizing culture” (p. 51). Further, IQ can be a spiritual and intellectual home, a place from which Elders and youth alike can practice resistance through skills, stories, music, art, and numerous other forms of practice (Tester & Irniq, 2008). Certainly, a deeper understanding of Inuit socio-cultural history is essential to facilitating a conception of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. Arguably, the use of the term Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as opposed to traditional knowledge or Indigenous epistemology underscores the primacy of engaging with a theory of knowledge geographically-situated, and firmly positioned in Inuit culture, values, and worldview (McGregor, 2013).

I understand Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit juxtaposes a holistic, open, diverse, flexible, and dynamic theory of knowledge which encompasses persisting Inuit cultural practices, teachings, attitudes, social processes, perspectives, skills, and values that have sustained Inuit for thousands of years. Significantly, the interconnectedness of the mind, body, and spirit form the framework of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. Inuit worldviews are shaped by the intimate knowledge accumulated

through observations and experiences, from the land or from spiritual teachings.<sup>18</sup> Principles and beliefs evolving from those experiences have developed over time, and are passed down from one generation to another. Peter Kulchyski (2005) claims Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is written everywhere: “the syllabic writing of elders, the inscriptions on the landscape on the body, the material structure of communities incarnated in architectures and gestures...” (p. 263).

Although I recognize Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a living set of teachings, values, processes, and practices which are related to the present and necessary to respond to contemporary issues, there are documented guiding principles. The guiding principles embedded in IQ are the foundations and expectations of social development and social interactions. As a relational perspective is integral to Inuit knowledge, the guiding principles represent societal values and point to responsibilities and approaches for interacting with people, land, animals, and other living and non-living forms (Arnakak, 2000, 2002; Bennett & Rowley, 2004; Laugrand & Oosten, 2009; Tagalik, 2010a, 2015; Tester & Irniq, 2008). Referenced throughout, the guiding principles continue to inform my work and my relationships. That said, as a Qallunaaq, I recognize the cultural and linguistic limitations of my understandings of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. Certainly, Inuit values and beliefs are evident in the narratives of Inuit participants. Additionally, I share several personal reflections, experiences, observations, and moments in which I recognize and consider the principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in practice.<sup>19</sup> I have included discussions of the ways in which Qallunaaq teachers may engage with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit guiding principles to improve teaching practices and honour Inuit knowledge and values.

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<sup>18</sup> I am at the beginning stage of understanding the depth of Inuit spirituality. Although I respect Inuit spiritual beliefs, and continue to learn, I do not feel that I am in a position to fully address the complexities of Inuit spirituality in this dissertation.

<sup>19</sup> The personal reflections are marked by a slight change in line spacing to distinguish from the main body of text.

## **Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a Space or Context of Learning**

In addition to recognizing Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a way of viewing the world, I also understand Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a space or context for learning, exploring, reciprocal discussion, and collaboration. Tester and Irniq's (2008) articulation aligns with conceptions of Inuit theory with which I am working. Accordingly, they argue that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit should be recognized as a foundation, "a space, a context within which respectful dialogue, discussion, questioning, and listening can take place" (p. 58). I consider IQ a space which invites and explores questions of knowledge, engagement with knowledge, and enactment of knowledge. This notion of IQ as a space or context of learning and exploring is evident in the ways in which Inuit Elders, leaders, and organizations continue to gather to articulate, develop, debate, share, and work to advance understandings of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Arnakak, 2000, 2002; Bennett & Rowley, 2004; Oosten & Laugrand, 1999, 2007; Oosten, Laugrand, & Suvaksuiq, 2010). In *The Bathurst Mandate*, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit was identified as a context within which an open, responsive, and accountable government and education system are developed (Government of Nunavut, 1999). I also conceptualize Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a lived space between people, the land, ideas, memories, experiences, and values. This space of engagement involves an iterative process of accumulating knowledge, sharing experiences, and exploring histories.

## **Working Towards Tukisiumaniq**

As Qallunaat teachers are living and working on Inuit lands, and expected to deliver educational programming that reflects Inuit perspectives, they are invariably implicated in the space or context of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. That is not to suggest an awareness or full appreciation of the complexities of IQ, rather that depends on one's sensibilities, openness, and

willingness to learn. As a context within which reciprocal dialogue and questioning can take place, one's interactions in the space determines the nature of learning. In accepting this premise, Qallunaat teachers should come to better understandings of Inuit socio-cultural histories and Inuit-Qallunaat relations. For Qallunaat, negotiating the space of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is challenging work. It requires self-consciously engaging in activities, building relationships, interacting with Inuit, respectfully listening, watching, learning with and from Inuit. Ultimately it requires working towards *tukisiumaniq*, building understanding, having an open mind to understanding, and making meaning (J. Attagutsiak, personal communication September 2017; Tagalik, 2010b). There is potential for misinterpretations, feelings of discomfort, apprehension, or uncertainty in the process of learning and developing *tukisiumaniq*. However, as Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is also a space or context for learning which promotes and fosters *tukisiumaniq*, misapprehensions or feelings of discomfort can be productive in provoking deeper investigations of the self, and of the self in relationship with Inuit (Dion, 2009). As Qallunaat teachers work towards *tukisiumaniq* in order to effectively negotiate the space or context of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, applying developing understandings to teaching practices offers great potential for educational pedagogical transformation within Nunavut.

One of my first experiences on the land was an overnight camping trip with students. Two local Inuit guides accompanied our class, leading the excursion and teaching camping, hunting and fishing practices. We planned to hunt seal and ptarmigan, jig for *ikaluk* (Arctic char), and play Inuit games on the ice. We travelled to our camp site by skidoos hauling *qamutiks* (wooden sleds) which held the students and our gear.

Our class camping trip had a profound impact on me. The glimpse into Inuit ways of living on the land, fishing, hunting, and camping, as well as the opportunity to see students engaged and working collaboratively outside the classroom was a remarkable learning

experience. While the experience of the camping trip was rich and valuable, there were moments that were challenging, unsettling, and uncomfortable. I was the only Qallunaaq, thus the only first language English speaker. I spent a lot of time silently watching, listening, observing, and trying to understand what was happening and how I might be helpful. I felt naïve, uncomfortable, and vulnerable, relying on the students in my Grade 7 class to interpret, explain, and teach me the intricacies of hunting, fishing, and being on the land. The admission of my lack of knowledge and my reliance on students was particularly difficult given my position as a teacher, a role that often assumes leadership, specialist knowledge, and responsibility.

Frequently, experience comes before any understanding. I came to recognize that there was something quite productive in those silent moments, those moments of discomfort. I started to consider the relationship between the discomfort I felt on the land and the students' experiences in my classroom. I realized that I needed to be open to learning in an unfamiliar context, to closely observe, learn from, and really listen to interactions and the ways in which people spoke. Endeavouring to engage with Inuit ways of knowing, being, and doing carries with it significant responsibility to ensure approaches are respectful but it is essential to come to better understandings. It is important to accept the moments which may be challenging, unsettling, or uncomfortable but recognize that learning may happen in those moments of discomfort. Perhaps there was a need to be willing to be uncomfortable in order to work through understandings of myself in relation to and in relationship with Inuit (Dion, 2009). If Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is a space, a context that compels an invitation to listen (Dion, 2009), engage with, and learn from Inuit to come to better understandings, perhaps moments of discomfort are essential to working towards tukisiumaniq.

Given the holistic and relational perspective of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, relationships between people are an integral part of this research framework. I offer a discussion of the ways

in which I have engaged with understandings of Inuit values and guiding principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and explore how particular concepts and principles have informed this work. My understandings of the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principle of *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* continues to influence my relationships, my sense of responsibility, research choices, research methods, analysis and interpretations, and interactions in the community. Though I offer a brief summary here, further elaboration of the specific ways in which I worked to practice *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* throughout all phases of the research process can be found in Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology.

*Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* is the concept of respecting and caring for others and building positive relationships. Practicing *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* involves considering relationships with people, demonstrating a caring attitude, and respecting and accepting the ideas and contributions of other people. Some of the ways in which the principle of *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* informs this work include the building and maintaining of relationships, the clarification of intentions and motivations for the research, ensuring participant consent, and following up with participants and community members at all stages of the research. Additionally, learning histories, accepting invitations, seeking permission to attend meetings, sharing food, and arranging for Inuktitut interpreters during presentations are among the ways in which I have tried to be respectful and build relationships. I have endeavoured to learn from people and understand who they are, their family connections, traditional naming, and where they come from.

*Pilimmaksarniq* (learning) and *Piliriqatigiingniq* (cooperation) are principles integral to my research. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit insists on the primacy of collaboration to develop mutual understandings and recognizes the cumulative approach to learning (Arnakak, 2000). The knowledge gathered, created, and shared through observations, experiences, and conversations



with Inuit, as well as the learning which comes from living in Nunavut with Inuit contributes to a better awareness and deeper understandings. Although these concepts are both practical and ethical obligations, they are principles inherent to Inuit. Moreover, the principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit point to responsibilities and expectations of social interactions (Arnakak, 2002).

As Indigenous scholars call on researchers in the academy to recognize the legitimacy and power of Indigenous intellectual paradigms, methodologies, and practices (Absolon, 2011; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008), I endeavour to take seriously Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as an intellectual tradition and theoretical framework. I feel as a Qallunaaq researcher and former teacher in Nunavut, I have a responsibility to work towards developing tukisiumaniq. Perhaps engaging with Inuit theory may make a difference in my relationships with Inuit. The insights into Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit offer possibilities in coming to understand the complexities and tensions between the existing school system and the Inuit students who inhabit its structure.

### **Research Questions and Outline of Dissertation**

This research poses the following questions: What are Inuit stories, experiences, and perspectives of schooling in Arctic Bay? How do the narratives of experiences contribute to understandings of Inuit experiences of schooling? What knowledge is embedded in Inuit perspectives and schooling experiences? What can teachers, particularly Qallunaaq teachers who work in schools across Nunavut, learn from that knowledge? What is required of Qallunaaq teachers who wish to apply the learning in their teaching practices? And how might Qallunaaq teachers begin to respond to the calls of Inuit participants in order to make positive contributions to schooling in Nunavut?

I have organized this research into five chapters aside from the introduction and conclusion. Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of Inuit encounters with Qallunaat on Inuit lands, some of the processes of colonization, and the ways in which Inuit have resisted imposed social changes. Chapter 3 outlines my methods and methodology, describing my approaches, community contexts, and the ways in which I attempted to demonstrate and engage with the concept of *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* (respect) in my relationships, research questions and chosen methodology. Chapters 4-6 are organized around central themes of Land (Chapter 4), Language (Chapter 5) and Learning (Chapter 6) with substantial focus on the words of Inuit participants. Rather than delineating firm boundaries around each theme, there is merely a shift in emphasis of topic, in acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of Land, Language, and Learning and the significance of each in relation to Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit. The conclusion includes some compelling statements by Inuit participants, directed at present and future Qallunaat teachers who live and work in their community. I discuss the significance and implications of these statements, and offer suggestions for future development.

## CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

*A lot of people tell me that we must forget the past, and instead look to the future. To me it would be a mistake to completely ignore the past because the past determines the present and the present determines what will be in the future.*

(John Amagoalik, 1977, p. 53)

Inuit across the Eastern Arctic have undergone rapid, profound, and often traumatic change since first recorded contact with Qallunaat. As “Ethnographies have always been written in the context of historic change” (Marcus, 1986, p. 165), a historical analysis of Inuit encounters with Qallunaat from the arrival of early explorers extending to the creation of Nunavut in the late twentieth century is useful in highlighting some of the significant cultural and socio-economic changes imposed upon Inuit. Additionally, exploring histories of interactions between Inuit and Qallunaat on Inuit lands provides an important foundation for analyzing ethnographic interviews and observations. Of course, as cultures are dynamic, it is important to recognize and consider the realities of change, the variation within cultures, and the ways in which people resist and respond to changes. Certainly, change was not uniform among Inuit across the Arctic as contact with Qallunaat occurred in different locations at different times in different ways (Crandall, 2000). Although Inuit have experienced and continue to experience tremendous change transforming Inuit lands, traditions, settlement, and education, Inuit have always found ways to counteract the numerous interferences and assert their own cultural and political changes while preserving the continuity of Inuit cultural traditions.

Exploring events of the past and present and offering some historical context provides insight into the processes of colonization of Inuit and their homelands. I take seriously the appeals of Canada's Aboriginal peoples to know Aboriginal peoples' stories, to acknowledge the histories of reprehensible treatment, to consider what happened, why it happened, and how people continue to be affected. For Canadians, learning about our shared history "requires recognition of implication in the relationship" (Dion, 2009, p. 58) between ourselves and Aboriginal peoples. I have aimed to include an overview of historical encounters between Inuit and Qallunaat to contextualize the presentation of research findings. In light of my focus on fieldwork in Arctic Bay and my interest in contemporary experiences and perspectives of schooling, I have chosen to work with secondary sources in exploring some of the history of encounters between Inuit and Qallunaat, although conversations with Inuit have also informed this work. Through centuries of colonial encounters on Inuit lands, Inuit and Qallunaat became entangled in a shared history, albeit a rich and often troubled history. Although it is a shared history, texts examining colonial encounters on Inuit lands are frequently written by Qallunaat, and often strongly adhere to Qallunaat perspectives. I have made every effort to include primary sources and privilege Inuit perspectives found in Inuit writings, testimonies, archival documents, reports, political speeches, and collections of Inuit oral history to the greatest extent possible.

I recognize that the Inuit historical tradition is an oral tradition, shaped by stories and accounts, passing knowledge from generation to generation (Nappaaluk, 2014; Niutaq Cultural Institute, 2007; Tookoome, 1999). Although Inuit treatment of history is generally non-linear in nature, in my construction of a historical overview, I have aimed to show the trajectory of encounters between Inuit and Qallunaat to highlight the growing intrusion of Qallunaat. Though temporal in arrangement, events intertwine and overlap weaving together episodes, experiences,

and histories. The organization of historical pieces offered is meant to reveal the succession of intrusions and the ways in which Inuit have resisted imposed changes.

Explorers, whalers, traders, missionaries, police, and government officials have focused their attention on Inuit lands, resources, traditions, languages, and beliefs for centuries. Yet, Qallunaat outsiders continue to rely heavily on Inuit knowledges, experiences, and expertise and arguably, would not survive the Arctic environment otherwise. Qallunaat who venture onto Inuit lands are diverse, and assimilative acts unfold on multiple levels, changing over time. The processes of colonization including the development of trade relations with Europeans, exploitation of Inuit lands and resources, conversion to Christianity, forced relocations, and paternalistic government intervention, have profoundly affected Inuit activity, settlement, health, hunting practices, economies, spiritual practices, and social organization. That said, Inuit are not passive recipients of social changes. I attempt to show the ways in which Inuit implicitly and explicitly resist the various Qallunaat interventions as demonstrated in part by their continued subsistence hunting, their resistance of some Christian practices, their decisions to remain in outpost camps on the land, their response to ongoing governmental paternalism, and the subsequent land claims negotiations and realization of Nunavut. Coming to deeper understandings of our shared history, a complex history of contact, colonization, and resistance, in which Qallunaat are invariably implicated, is important to appreciate the present situation (Dion, 2009).

Delving into histories of Inuit encounters with Qallunaat promotes an examination of the connections between aspects of society and culture such as economics, religion, politics, and language. Certainly, across the area now known as Nunavut, even across Baffin Island known to Inuit as Qikiqtaaluk, which means big island, Qallunaat and Inuit interactions and experiences of

colonialism varied. I have focused primarily on activities which occurred in the Eastern Arctic, affecting Inuit of Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin Island), as Arctic Bay is in that region. The details of contact between Inuit and Qallunaat offered below is not meant to be a comprehensive account, nor are people confined to the past. Rather the context which I have provided is an introduction to the complex relationships between Inuit and Qallunaat, and helps to set the stage for an examination of Inuit experiences of education and schooling.

### **Defining Colonialism**

Before forging ahead, it seems appropriate to offer some of my understandings of the term *colonialism*. Defining colonialism is a complex task for several reasons, including the difficulty of differentiating between the terms imperialism and colonialism; the diverse range of experiences of colonialism across the world; and the challenges of representing both the colonizer and colonized accurately and sensitively. While it is generally agreed that colonialism is a form of domination (Kirkness, 1999; Page & Sonnenburg, 2003; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), the colonized community and culture is frequently underrepresented, and reference to the “encounter between peoples” (Loomba, 1998, p. 1) is often absent from definitions. I draw on Ania Loomba’s (1998) discussion of colonialism in which she acknowledges the variety of colonial processes and practices, yet asserts that colonialism altered economies, involved “the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods” (p. 2), and perhaps most significantly, “locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationships in human history” (p. 2). The colonization of Inuit of the Eastern Arctic, distinctive in that it occurred much later and over a shorter period compared to southern Canada, fits within this articulation.

In applying Loomba's (1998) definition of colonization, the presence and actions of whalers and traders throughout Arctic regions profoundly altered the traditional Inuit hunting and harvesting economy. Despite Inuit land use and occupation of Inuit nunangat since time immemorial, the Canadian government asserted sovereignty claims to Arctic islands which ultimately led to federal administration of Inuit affairs. Centralization forced mass uprooting and migration into permanent settlements, disrupting hunting practices and social organization, resulting in many Inuit families becoming subject to a social services scheme unfamiliar to their cultural practices (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). The federal government's interventionist steps to assimilate Inuit into mainstream Canadian society greatly affected Inuit lives, particularly in uprooting children to attend residential<sup>20</sup> schools and forcing relocations to permanent settlements which separated Inuit from their means of subsistence and their spiritual home – the land (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Undoubtedly, the ongoing colonial project in the Eastern Arctic continues to undermine Inuit education, hunting practices, family relations, and attempts to erode Inuit traditional practices.

Throughout this chapter, I use the term *encounter* to reference the social, face to face meeting or exchange between peoples, particularly Inuit and Qallunaat on Inuit lands. Of course, for Inuit the meetings were primarily unsolicited and often unexpected. These interactive spaces of contact involving Inuit and intruding Qallunaat outsiders had profound transformative impacts on Inuit economies and social organization. One contemporary definition of the English verb *encounter* is “to unexpectedly meet or be faced with” (Stevenson & Waite, 2011, p. 470). The French word *rencontrer* means ‘to meet’ and the Late Latin *incontra* means ‘in front of’.

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<sup>20</sup> I use the term residential school to refer to a variety of institutions including boarding schools, homes for students, hostels, billets, residential schools or a combination of any of the above (Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2013; Stout & Kipling, 2003).

However, the etymology of the English word *encounter* as well as the Old French word *en contre* contain the root word *contra*, the Latin word for ‘against’. The reference to ‘against’ points to resistance, opposition, or being confronted. The Middle English meaning of *encounter* suggests ‘meeting as an adversary’ (Harper, 2017). Though I use the term *encounter* to represent the complex intercultural meetings or exchanges between Inuit and the Qallunaat strangers who encroached upon their Arctic homeland, I also recognize the undercurrent of opposition or conflict contained within the meaning of the term *encounter*. Furthermore, I acknowledge Inuit resistance to Qallunaat who challenged their culture, traditions, and ways of life.

### **Inuit: People of the Arctic**

Inuit, meaning “the people” or “human beings” (Jessen Williamson, 2000), have occupied Arctic regions since time immemorial.<sup>21</sup> Inuit Nunangat is the official term used to name four regions and territories (Nunavut, Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, and Inuvialuit) comprising Inuit homelands in the country now known as Canada. Inuit nunangat is a Canadian Inuktitut term that refers to the “land, water and ice” of the Arctic regions which is vital to Inuit culture and ways of life (ITK, 2009). Hugh Brody (2000) defines Inuit nunangat as “the people’s land”, and explains that it extends beyond physical geography but represents an ideal as land is foundational to Inuit culture and “to change or abandon such a place, according to this world view, would be dangerous and foolish” (p. 15).

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<sup>21</sup> People have inhabited Arctic regions for thousands of years. While history is complex and there are differing accounts and unanswered questions, archaeologists and anthropologists have identified pre-Dorset, Dorset, and Thule cultures as ancestors of Inuit. Rather than divide the past from the present, Inuit generally avoid terms such as “prehistory”. Moreover, Inuit use the term *Sivullirmiut*, meaning the first people, to identify their earliest ancestors instead of the terms employed by southern archaeologists. Elders in Arctic Bay share stories, passed down through generations, of the *Tuniit* who lived in the High Arctic (Innuksuk & Cowan, 1976; ITK, 1999). Although this history is important in understanding origins and history of Inuit culture, it is beyond the scope of this work.



Traditionally, Inuit are nomadic hunters and gatherers (ITK, 1999) and “learn[ed] everything from the land” (Tookoom, 1999, p. 12). Moving seasonally from one camp to another, hunting and following the rhythm of caribou and other animals, Inuit adapt to the Arctic environment. In summer months, many Inuit enjoy berry-picking, fishing, and collecting duck or geese eggs. Subsistence hunting continues to be important in the lives of many Inuit. Inuit have effective ways of educating children, customs which serve to maintain harmony within families, communities, and the spirit world, and a diverse theory of knowledge. Inuktitut, an Inuit language which means “in the manner of an Inuk” (Brody, 2000, p. 317) is a complex and rich language expressing Inuit knowledge and understanding. Innovation is evident in the production of beautiful and functional *amautis* (baby-carrying parkas) and *kamik* (boot or plural form *kamiit*) as well as useful tools such as the *ulu* (all-purpose knife traditionally used by women). Inuit have always been self-sufficient and self-governing, responding and adapting to their social and physical environment. Although the arrival of Qallunaat on Inuit lands decidedly altered Inuit social and natural environments, there is great continuity of Inuit cultural traditions in many Inuit communities.

## **Encounters with Qallunaat**

### **First Contact**

Contact and interactions between Norse and Indigenous peoples in Northern Newfoundland are believed to have occurred around 1000AD. More recently, Canadian archaeologist Dr. Patricia Sutherland presented findings suggesting a Norse presence on Baffin Island and trade with local Indigenous peoples in the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries (Wright, 2014).<sup>22</sup> Although Inuit in the Eastern Arctic may have had other periodic encounters with strangers

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<sup>22</sup> For further discussion of contact between Norse and Inuit or their predecessors, see also McGhee (1984).

including explorers or fishermen over the next 500 years, the first recorded explorer to reach Baffin Island (Qikiqtaaluk) was British Naval Officer and adventurer, Martin Frobisher.

In search of the Northwest Passage, Frobisher encountered Inuit in 1576 on the southeast coast of Baffin Island, later renaming the large inlet Frobisher Bay. The capital city of the territory now known as Nunavut was also called Frobisher Bay although is now commonly known by its Inuit name, Iqaluit (Delgado 2009; Hamilton, 1994; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004). Frobisher and the crew traded with Inuit who provided fish and seal. Inuit seemed familiar with the ship and apparently ready to trade, suggesting that they had encountered Europeans before (Delgado, 2009; McGhee, 2006). Dionyse Settle, who accompanied Frobisher, noted that Inuit initiated the exchange suggesting their familiarity with trade dealings. Settle believed that Inuit had traded “with...other people adjoining<sup>23</sup>, or not farre distant from their Countries” (Settle, 1577 as cited in Trivellato, Halevi & Antunes, 2014). Following the voyage of Frobisher, it is likely Inuit had contact with other European explorers in search of the Northwest Passage, including Davis, Hudson, and Baffin (Delgado, 2009), all of whom ‘generously’ renamed Canadian Arctic geographic features after themselves.

In addition to explorers, Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) vessels made annual supply voyages to posts in Hudson’s Bay and along the coast of Baffin Island (Barr, 1994). While some trading occurred, contact between Inuit and European explorers was “sporadic and irregular” (Ross, 1975, p. 135). Compared to most other Aboriginal peoples in Canada, Inuit were among the last to come into sustained contact with Europeans. The early encounters between Inuit and outsiders were short-term, relatively isolated, limited to small groups of Inuit, and believed to be relatively inconsequential in terms of impact upon Inuit culture (ITK, 1999; Mancini Billson &

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<sup>23</sup> The original text was written in 1577, during the Early Modern English period (Nevalainen, 2006). Today we recognize the spelling of the words as “adjoining” and “far”.

Mancini, 2007; Stern, 2010; Tompkins, 1998). Hamilton (1994) argues that Inuit were “almost untouched by Europeans” (p. 13) prior to the arrival of whalers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Inuit oral history confirms this notion as Apphia Agalakti Awa learns from ancestors that “Before the whalers, there were no Qallunaat men up here” (as cited in Wachowich, Awa, Katsak & Katsak, 1999, p. 118).

### **Whalers**

Following the depletion of resources in the Atlantic in the early 1700s, whalers sought out new hunting waters in Davis Strait along the coast of Greenland. Eventually, British, Dutch and later American whalers migrated to the west side and along the Baffin region, seeking the valuable bowhead whale oil, relying heavily on the knowledge, skills, and generosity of Inuit hunters and their families. Scottish whaling crews actively exploited waters in the northern regions (Matthiasson, 1992). Initially, encounters between Qallunaat whalers and Inuit were sporadic due to the limited number of vessels and short whaling season (Crandall, 2000). However, the practice of wintering in the mid 1800s created a mutual dependency and Inuit quickly became “necessary partners” (Eber, 2008, p. 32), whether equal or not. To extend the whale harvest season, whalers anchored vessels near the harbour in early fall, taking up the anchor once the surrounding waters had frozen. Ice held the ship in place and although the crew remained on the vessel in early wintering endeavours, whalers later established temporary land stations on shore to process the whales (Eber, 1989; McElroy, 2008; Power, 1971).

At such times, contact increased as Inuit gathered at the shores where whalers typically wintered and thus, Inuit became enmeshed in the daily activities of whalers, participating in hunting activities, providing labour and their knowledge of the land and sea mammals (Crandall, 2000; Eber, 1989; Wachowich et al., 1999). The winter was particularly difficult, and whalers

depended on Inuit to provide country food and “make caribou clothing” (Apphia Agalakti Awa as cited in Wachowich et al., 1999, p. 120) to survive the unfamiliar Arctic environment.

Additionally, it was Inuit who often hunted the whales. Certainly, whalers benefited from Inuit knowledge, survival skills, and labour. Accounts of the time reveal that most whalers who had long-term relationships with Inuit valued their knowledge and respected Inuit practices, beliefs, and social arrangements (Eber, 1989; Fossett, 2001). Whalers recruited Inuit hunters to work in the shore camps, harvesting and processing whales. Inuit were generally paid in trade goods including rifles, ammunition, food, and southern material items.

Some Inuit recognized and seized opportunities to influence commercial whalers, persuading captains to focus whaling activities in waters near their camps. In other cases, Inuit resourcefully negotiated with whalers to establish “more permanent and predictable” (p. 168) relations in the face of resource shortages, fluctuations in animal populations, and variable weather (Fossett, 2001). Although the whalers offered trade and employment to both men and women, the social disruptions as well as the tremendous strain on Arctic resources had devastating consequences for Inuit (Crandall, 2000; Eber, 1989; Stern, 2010). Exposure to European diseases including smallpox, measles, tuberculosis, and polio, as well as the introduction of alcohol and tobacco led to tragic results. Liaisons between male whalers and Inuit women inevitably resulted in children who were typically in the care of their mother’s families with minimal, if any paternal support (Eber, 1989; Fossett, 2001; Hamilton, 1994; Mancini Billson & Mancini, 2007; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004; Wachowich et al., 1999).

Although Qallunaat whalers sailed in waters of present day Nunavut before the 1800s, it was during this time that the activities of commercial whalers had a significant impact on Inuit ways of life, leading to substantial changes in Inuit communities across the Arctic. Certainly,

there are regional differences in the frequency and duration of encounters and acculturative experiences given the immensity of the Arctic and the diversity of Inuit. Although the fur-traders are often recognized as having profound influences on Inuit ways of life, Inuit contact with whalers, both direct and indirect, affected Inuit settlement patterns, material culture, trade practices, hunting, and introduced European diseases to Inuit which had catastrophic effects (Eber, 1989; Hamilton, 1994; Matthiasson, 1992; Power, 1971; Wachowich et al., 1999).

Inuit settlement patterns altered with the arrival of whalers. While Inuit previously lived in temporary, small, scattered camps following the seasonal patterns of animals, the influx of whalers saw Inuit settle around shore camps and whaling stations to provide labour or fresh meat for the whalers, receiving southern goods in return. Although Inuit have always held and continue to hold well-developed and extensive trading networks, the trade goods including rifles and metal tools proffered by whalers eventually overshadowed Inuit items made from bone, soapstone, and skins (Stern, 2010). In addition to a growing dependency on such goods, trade affected hunting practices. Hunting is traditionally a cohesive, collective endeavour as many Inuit hunters cooperate to stalk and harvest animals, yet rifles do not require the same hunting collaboration (Crandall, 2000; Eber, 1989; Power, 1971).

The whaling period weakened after the 1880s, as the bowhead whale had been hunted to near extinction and fewer vessels wintered. That said, there were Qallunaat whalers in the Canadian Eastern Arctic for over a hundred years (Eber, 1989). Commercial hunting of whales continued until the 1920s, after which the demand for baleen, oil, and other whale products decreased, the whale population was depleted, and thus the whaling industry in the area declined significantly (Eber, 2008; Fossett, 2001; Mancini Billson & Mancini, 2007; McGregor 2010; Tompkins, 1998). Although the zealous commercial whaling industry threatened the whale

population and impacted Inuit whaling practices, whaling from an Inuit perspective has been ongoing since time immemorial and although heavily regulated, continues today.

### **Ethnographers**

Interests in Inuit and their ways of life also attracted anthropologists, adventurers, and ethnographers to the Arctic. Although early explorers, whaling ship captains, and missionaries recorded descriptions of interactions and assumptions, ethnographic scholarly writing began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the most prominent early researchers conducting fieldwork in the Eastern Arctic include Franz Boas, Knud Rasmussen, and missionary Edmund James Peck. Collectively, their ethnographic writings detail the Arctic environment, and the everyday life, practices, and beliefs of Inuit with whom they interacted and observed. Boas, Rasmussen<sup>24</sup>, and Peck learned Inuit languages and paid close attention to Inuit words, stories, and songs. Diamond Jenness, a somewhat controversial figure with assimilationist views, published detailed studies of Inuit in the Central Arctic following his experiences of living, learning, hunting, and travelling with an Inuit family (Boas & Müller-Wille, 1998; Mitchell, 2014; Peck, Oosten, Trudel, & Laugrand, 2006; Petrone, 1992; Rasmussen 1908/2012; Richling, 2014; Stern, 2004).

Although researchers produced rich, insightful and descriptive works, as with all ethnographies there were inaccuracies, distorted representations, omissions, incomplete understandings, and cultural assumptions (Searles, 2006; Stern, 2004). Furthermore, initial ethnographies were primarily written by men who generally did not feature women's experiences and activities. Early Inuit ethnographies were written in the context of tremendous social change related to external influences. However, representations of Inuit culture, customs, and beliefs often assumed an isolated, unchanging, traditional past (Boas, 1998; Hulan, 2014; Stern, 2004).

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<sup>24</sup> Knud Rasmussen was born in Greenland and fluent in Kalaallisut (Greenlandic language, a dialect within the Inuit language) (Bown, 2015).

Despite the vast ethnographic knowledge, Inuit did not have access to most of the material produced. Inuit recognize and resent the fact that they were studied, described, recorded, and often romanticized without any interest or benefit for Inuit. Moreover, Inuit ways of life, relationships, traditions, and practices were represented in terms of Qallunaat understandings (Laugrand & Oosten, 2002).

Some of the most significant changes to Inuit life happened during the period from the early 1920s to 1940s as “the three southern institutions” (Brody, 1991, p. 27) of fur traders, missionaries, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police spread throughout the Canadian Arctic. Although whalers interacted with Inuit socially and economically and significantly impacted Inuit ways of life, they always returned to their home ports (Matthiasson, 1992). Unlike the whalers, the intention of the traders, missionaries, and RCMP was to stay in the Arctic on a permanent basis (Hicks & White, 2000; Matthiasson, 1992). As the demand for whale products declined, traders in pursuit of animal skins and Arctic fox furs soon filled the perceived gap in the Inuit economy. Thus, Inuit whalers now trapped fur-bearing animals, binding the Inuit economy to the trade of pelts.

### **Traders**

The traders, sometimes repurposed whalers (Damas, 2002; Eber, 2008; Wachowich et al. 1999) but later representatives of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), came to the Arctic seeking profit, responding to the European market demand for luxurious furs (Hamilton & Rosing, 2008). Trading companies such as the North West Company, Baffin Trading Company, and Revillion Frères, a French company which HBC eventually procured, were operating in the North at various times. That said, the Hudson’s Bay Company held the monopoly in the Eastern Arctic, erecting posts throughout the region to trade white fox furs with Inuit (Dawson, 1980; Hamilton

& Rosing, 2008; McElroy, 2008; Power, 1971). In Arctic Bay, a HBC trading post was opened in 1926 and again in 1936 (Dawson, 1980; Rowley, 2005). The fur trade in the Eastern Arctic ultimately created an economy of dependency (Brody, 1987) as the appeal of southern items and new equipment spurred Inuit hunters to focus their energies on the valuable fox furs.

Like the whalers who came before them, Qallunaat traders had to learn from Inuit to survive the Arctic environment. Often, traders employed an Inuit family to assist with the operations of the post. The principles of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit include mutual respect, interdependency, balance, and the importance of family. Traditionally, Inuit believe men and women are equal partners, each respected for their mastery and knowledge. Although the division of labour during this time was often along gendered lines as women completed domestic chores and men hunted, survival is a mutual responsibility (Arnakak, 2000; Jessen Williamson, 2006; Mancini Billson & Mancini, 2007). Women generally worked as cooks, housekeepers, and seamstresses for the traders while men packed skins, unloaded items from the sealift, and performed odd jobs around the post (Henderson, 2007; Matthiasson, 1992). Sexual liaisons between Inuit women and HBC traders were commonplace. Tragically, some of the liaisons resulted in experiences of sexual abuse, non-consensual or forced sexual relations and exploitation (Mancini Billson & Mancini, 2007; Matthiasson, 1992; Nappaluk, 2014).

The HBC, whose supply vessels had charted Arctic waters in the Hudson strait along Baffin Island coast since 1670 (Barr, 1994), had already established trade with First Nations peoples in other parts of the country prior to moving north to tap Arctic fur resources (Dawson, 1980). According to Apphia Agalakti Awa, an Inuk Elder, “the most important things to buy, in order, were ammunition, tobacco, flour, sugar, and tea” (as cited in Wachowich et al., 1999, p. 123). Regular access to such supplies as well as rifles, new equipment, and hunting tools led to



an economy based on trade (Hamilton & Rosing, 2008). Although some assert that the economy shifted from a subsistence base during this period, today Inuit across the Arctic regions continue to participate in subsistence harvesting for social, cultural, and economic reasons (Nappaaluk, 2014; Stern, 2010). In some cases, traders introduced a credit and debt system to Inuit hunters, providing goods as needed and later applying the value of the pelts amassed to the hunter's debt (McElroy, 2008). Unfortunately, the extension of credit was entirely at the discretion of the HBC trader, often corresponding with the rise and fall of the fur market (Brody, 1991). Apphia Agalakti Awa describes her experience with traders at the post: "They never told us how much all the foxes were worth. They just counted them and pressed some buttons...they thought we didn't know the value of money. The trader would just measure out supplies and give them to us" (as cited in Wachowich et al., 1999, p. 123).

Traders, depending on Inuit for profit, encouraged hunters to dedicate less time to hunting animals that offered a supply of food and instead to focus on hunting animals that had valuable skins in a southern market (Brody, 1991; Hamilton & Rosing, 2008). In Eastern Baffin Island, sealskins were traded more often than the Arctic fox albeit fetching a lower return (Damas, 2002). This shift in hunting practices often resulted in hunger among Inuit hunters and their families and increased reliance on foods available from the HBC to supplement their diet (Brody, 1991). Tragic stories of Inuit dying of starvation are, unfortunately, not rare (Brody, 1991; Fossett, 2001; Oosten et al., 2010; Tookoome, 1999).

Angulalik, later baptized with the Christian name Stephen, an Inuk from the Kitikmeot region was a successful fur trader and businessman from the 1920s to the 1950s. Angulalik got his start in the fur trade working with Hugh Clarke, a HBC trading post manager, and eventually became an independent trader, challenging the HBC's fur trade monopoly. Although the Arctic

Islands Game Preserve required that the post at which he had been working in Kuugjuaq be closed in 1928, Angulalik defied the order and continued to trade in the area. Often considered “the first Inuit business tycoon” (Eber, 2014, p. 47) Angulalik was revered as a skilled hunter, trader, leader, and successful business owner (Keith, 2004; Kulchyski & Tester, 2008).

Like the whaling period, the trading period was fleeting. By the late 1930s, resources had depleted as animal cycles fluctuate, and the market had collapsed due to weakened demand. Just as the whalers who came before them, the intrusion of traders created social changes in Inuit ways of life. Inuit subsistence became irrevocably bound to outside economies and southern goods. The presence and activities of the HBC altered and accelerated Inuit settlement and nomadic patterns as hunters began to temporarily settle and hunt near trading posts.

Additionally, further shifts in hunting practices, due in part to the reliance on new equipment and rifles were results of the relationships between Inuit and the HBC (Brody, 1991; Crandall, 2000; Damas, 2002; Matthiasson, 1992).

### **Missionaries**

The arrival of the early Anglican and Catholic missionaries brought much more than Christianity to the North (Alia, 2009; Power, 1971). The condemnation of social and cultural customs such as cohabitation without formal marriage, plural marriages, drum dancing, hunting on Sundays, the advent of Christian names, as well as the denunciation of shamanistic practices attended the ideological motives and actions of missionaries. According to Inuk Elder Mini Aodla Freeman, “there were so many things we did that the missionaries did not like. I don’t know if they ever stopped to look at our old religion” (as cited in Petrone, 1992, p. 239). While focused on the introduction of Christianity and the suppression and criticism of Inuit spiritual beliefs and long-established customs, missionaries ostensibly had altruistic intentions and

brought a syllabic writing system, offered basic instruction in literacy and mathematics, and often tried to alleviate suffering from disease and famine (Alia, 2009; Brody, 1991; Damas, 2002; McElroy, 2008; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004).

The whaling and fur trade endeavours led the way for missionaries, who often established new mission posts following the opening of HBC trading posts across Canadian Arctic regions (Remie, 1998). In fact, Reverend Edmund James Peck led one of the earliest missions at a whaling station on Blacklead Island, near Pangnirtung in 1894. Reverend Peck, who became known to Inuit as ‘Uqammaq,’ the one who talks well, was an Anglican missionary who had previously established missions at HBC posts in Northern Quebec and South Baffin Island. Reverend Peck is often credited with developing and teaching the syllabic system to Inuit. He was interested in Inuit oral traditions and learned a great deal from Inuit, gathering stories and accounts of shamanistic practices. He prepared ethnographic notes on Inuit daily life and shamanistic beliefs with Inuit working with him (Osborne, 2013; Peck et al., 2006). Although Reverend Peck studied Inuktitut and translated the New Testament, missionary James Evans initiated the syllabic system in his work with Ojibwe and Cree Nations. Missionaries John Hordon and E.A Watkins later adapted Evans’ work to Inuktitut (Patrick, 2003; Peck et al., 2006). Peck’s strategy of insisting “Inuit learn to read syllabics in order to keep contact with the Scriptures” (Dorais, 1990, p. 228) was effective in spreading the Gospel as Inuit taught each other, thus extending Christian messages even further (Patrick, 2003; Peck et al., 2006; Stern, 2010). Missionaries often combined literacy education with the spreading of Christianity among Inuit. This type of education was erratic as Inuit were nomadic, staying in camps temporarily. Moreover, subject matter was limited as reading was taught using the Bible (Bonesteel, 2006).

The evolution of Christianity in the Arctic regions was a long and complicated process although the adoption of some Christian beliefs happened quickly. According to Brody (1991), Inuit acceptance and reception of missionaries in the 1920s and 30s was in part due to their poor physical health at the time. The whaling and trading enterprises had taken a toll on the health of Inuit across Arctic regions. Outbreaks of foreign diseases against which Inuit had limited immunity, such as tuberculosis, smallpox and measles, assaulted Inuit since the time of first encounters, continuing into the twentieth century (McGregor, 2010; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004; Stern, 2010; Wachowich et al., 1999). Inuit highly regarded the health care assistance provided by Christian missionaries, many of whom had medical backgrounds (Peck et al., 2006; Stern, 2010). That said, missionaries' responses to health crises, at which times Inuit were at their most vulnerable, seemed to abet the goal of spreading Christianity (Stern, 2010).

By the 1950s, most Inuit on Baffin Island had accepted Christian teachings in some form. Despite the widespread success of Christianity across the North, many Inuit resisted and opposed Christian practices, especially well-established leaders (Alia, 2009; McElroy, 2008; Patrick, 2003). Additionally, although Christian missionaries condemned some Inuit cultural practices and cosmological beliefs including shamanism, it is perhaps not surprising that Inuit beliefs merged with some forms of Christianity. For example, Inuit continue to observe animistic cosmology and shamanistic traditions (Brody, 1987, 1991; Laugrand & Oosten, 2010; McElroy, 2008; McGregor, 2010; Stern, 2010).<sup>25</sup> Although there were some expressions of opposition, "Inuit greatly respected the teachings of the early missionaries" (Mancini Billson & Mancini, 2007, p.13) valuing the role they played and their religious principles (ITK, 1999). A Roman

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<sup>25</sup> For a detailed discussion of the complex changes of Inuit religious practices and beliefs, see Laugrand & Oosten (2010) who have worked extensively with Inuit Elders.

Catholic Mission, which offered rudimentary education to local Inuit children, was established in Arctic Bay in 1937 (QIA, 2013a).<sup>26</sup>

### **Sovereignty and Law and Order**

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)<sup>27</sup> had established a limited presence in a few settlements on northern Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin Island) in the early 1920s, usually in association with existing HBC posts, to assist the government in securing Canadian sovereignty in the North. Although Inuit have occupied Arctic lands since time immemorial, governed themselves according to the principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, and arguably exercised sovereignty through responsible stewardship, the federal government has taken their “sovereignty” of the Canadian Arctic islands for granted.

Expeditions led by foreign explorers had mapped out several Arctic islands; British, Dutch, and American whalers had been openly hunting and harvesting in Arctic waters for decades; and traders had established posts, moving freely in the Eastern Arctic since their arrival. Yet it wasn't until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that the federal government had concerns over sovereignty and moved to strengthen its title to the Arctic islands and its control over Arctic waters (Delgado, 2003; Duffy, 1988; Matthiasson, 1992; Pharand & Legault, 1984). Additionally, missionaries had raised concerns about the impact the depraved actions of whalers and traders were having on Inuit. By 1903, a handful of Mounted Police detachments were established at posts on the northern shores of Hudson Bay and in the Eastern Arctic with the

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<sup>26</sup> For further discussion of missionaries' role in education, please see Chapter 6 which outlines Inuit experiences of education and learning.

<sup>27</sup> The Royal Canadian Mounted Police has undergone several name changes since its inception. The North-West Mounted Police were formed in 1873 and so named for the original mandate to police the North-West Territories. In 1904, King Edward VII added “Royal” to the name acknowledging contributions to the Anglo-South Africa War. In 1919-20, the Royal North-West Mounted Police merged with the Dominion Police (the primary police force for the region east of Manitoba) to become a national police force and was renamed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Baker, 1998).

mandate of collecting customs fees from American whalers, stopping the sale of alcohol to Inuit, and ultimately, asserting Canadian sovereignty claims to the region (Delgado, 2003; Duffy, 1988; Pigott, 2011).

In 1904, Captain Joseph Elzear Bernier, under the command of Major John Douglas Moodie of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, sailed north to “show the flag” (Delgado, 2003, p. 11). Moodie, accompanied by ten Police officers and Inspector Pelletier, was charged with the duty to “explore and patrol” northern waters and “administer and enforce the laws of Canada therein” (Fred White memo to Major Moodie, 1904 as cited in Osborne, 2013, p. 183). For the next couple of decades, throughout and following World War I, the Police actively patrolled Arctic islands, seas, and Inuit. As the primary government agents in the North, the intention of the RCMP patrol was to function as visible evidence of Canada’s title to Northern regions (Dyck & Waldram, 1993; McElroy, 2008).

The RCMP were administrators, often acting as the link between Inuit and the Department of the Interior. In fact, the RCMP were likely the first contact many Inuit had with the government. With their arrival, traders, whalers, and Inuit were confronted with regulations as police collected taxes and patrolled Inuit settlements (Crowe, 1991; Delgado, 2003; Duffy, 1988; Eber, 1989; Kulchyski & Tester, 2008; Matthiasson, 1992). Realizing the value of qimmiit (sled dogs) from Inuit, RCMP officers often travelled by sled dog teams to patrol and deliver services across Arctic regions. Many Inuit were hired to assist the local detachments, later designated as Special Constables. Without knowledge of the region and its resources, Qallunaat RCMP officers relied on Inuit to hunt to provide food for dog teams, accompany the dog sled patrol to guide during the dark season, act as interpreters, and even make sealskin dog harnesses and straps (Dick, 2001; QIA, 2013d; Valaskakis, 2005).

Starting in 1922, the Canadian government established the Eastern Arctic Patrol, an annual joint expedition between RCMP and Canada's Department of the Interior. In another move to assert sovereignty over northern regions and protect Canada's interest in the Arctic, the government established and maintained additional police posts. Furthermore, government business such as managing post offices, recording statistics, collecting customs and taxes, as well as taking censuses was conducted on the voyages. RCMP officers, scholars, scientists, administrative and medical representatives were often on board (Duffy, 1988). Some medical attention was provided during these patrols and the ship occasionally transported Inuit to hospitals in southern parts of Canada (Anderson & Bonesteel, 2010). Attagutsiak from Arctic Bay was taken to a hospital in Montreal in 1955 and did not return home for a full year (Innuksuk & Cowan, 1976).

Acting as liaisons for the government, RCMP officers were responsible for observing, monitoring, and reporting on activities in the Eastern Arctic and on the social, physical, and economic state of Inuit. RCMP reports, which were sent to Ottawa, detailed the plight of Inuit and often criticized the greed of traders and their insidious practices. Unfortunately, there was limited response from the government (Duffy, 1988; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Voyages of the Eastern Arctic Patrol continued annually until at least 1944 and had extensive social and political effects on Inuit. The government of Canada's desire to claim sovereignty ultimately led to federal administration of Inuit affairs (Duffy, 1988; Osborne, 2013; Pharand & Legault, 1984; Purich, 1992).

### **The Federal Government**

As previously mentioned, the fallout from the commercial activities of whalers and traders in Arctic regions was immense. Federal responsibility and Inuit status had not been

clearly defined. Moreover, most government officials had limited understandings of Inuit culture and ways of life. As such, despite the apparent need for relief measures, the Canadian government, HBC fur traders, and missionaries engaged in disputes over who would assume financial responsibility for Inuit social assistance (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994).

In 1924, an amendment to the *Indian Act* was put forth that the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs would also have charge of Inuit affairs. Questions of Inuit status, Aboriginal rights, government interference, and government responsibility were the focus of great debate in Parliament. The bill eventually passed, placing Inuit affairs under the jurisdiction of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs. However, it was made clear that Inuit were not Indians and therefore not subject to the *Indian Act*. In 1927, Inuit Affairs was transferred to the Commissioner of Northwest Territories, transferred back to the Department of Interior in 1928 and in 1930 the amendment to the *Indian Act* repealed (Anderson & Bonesteel, 2010; Duffy, 1988; Purich, 1992; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). In 1939, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in *Re: Eskimo* that Inuit were Indians under Canada's constitutional framework and as such, the federal government was legally responsible for Inuit. As Canadian legal scholar Constance Backhouse (1999) pointed out, while the Supreme court is sanctioned to hear all 'interested parties' unfortunately, "no one seems to have thought that representatives of the Inuit or First Nations communities constituted 'interested parties'" (p. 35).

One of the most significant administrative endeavours undertaken by the federal government was the implementation of disk numbers or the "Eskimo Identification" system for Inuit, which became federal policy in 1941 (Anderson & Bonesteel, 2010; Dyck & Waldram, 1993; Purich, 1992). A paternalistic effort to identify and keep track of Inuit, disk numbers carried information about each individual and their place of residence. Often called *ujamiit* in



Inuktitut, which means necklace, the disks were issued to Inuit across the twelve districts of the Arctic to be worn around the neck.<sup>28</sup> In fact, the 1945 Family Allowance Act of Canada defined an Eskimo as “one to whom an identification disk has been issued” (Smith, 1993, p. 59).

Arguably, the number system was in direct contradiction to Inuit naming practices which reflect personal kinship ties, acknowledge respect and relationships, and nurture closeness (Owlijoot & Flaherty, 2013). Certainly, some Inuit resent the use of numbers replacing names as the primary means of identification, particularly as Inuit were the only Aboriginal peoples to be identified in this way. Although the government-enforced Eskimo Identification system has been characterized as degrading or dehumanizing, some Inuit are proud of their numbers, believing the disk number to be an important part of Inuit identity (K. Attagutsiak, personal communication, June 2017; Nungak, 2000).

People are actually proud of having numbers. When I wear my disk number, I’m proud of it because I have a number, I’m unique....

My mother [Qaapik Attagutsiak, 97-year-old resident of Arctic Bay] said getting the disk was not a bad thing - it’s part of becoming a Canadian. It’s something that will help us, in the future to identify us, for us to be part of historical data of Canada.

(K. Attagutsiak, personal communication, June 2017)

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<sup>28</sup> The numbered disks were often referred to as E-disks or E-numbers in part because each disk is stamped with “Eskimo Identification Canada” and Eskimo was the term commonly used at the time. However, the letter E stamped on some disks which precedes the identification number is used to signify an Inuk from the Eastern Arctic whereas the letter W indicates a person from the West (Alia, 2009; Henderson, 2007; McElroy, 2008).



Figure 16: E-disk belonging to a member of the Qamanirq family in Arctic Bay.

Photo taken with permission December 2014.

RCMP, health professionals, educators, and government officials used the numbers in place of Inuit names to administer services and enumerate Inuit. Mini Aodla Freeman, an Inuk from Cape Hope Island in James Bay, Nunavut remembers the RCMP visiting:

when the yearly ship arrived, they visited individual homes either to count the household inhabitants to see how many of us were left or how many of us were born. Mind you, they never called us by our names, instead they always wanted to see our disc-numbers. I know now, the RCMP were doing Inuit statistics, gave our family allowances and registering births. (as cited in Petrone, 1988, p. 240-241)

Traditionally, Inuit do not have surnames and naming customs were unfamiliar to southern government representatives. As such, officials struggled to identify Inuit and were seemingly

incapable or unwilling to learn Inuktitut names (Alia, 2009; Dunning, 2012; Henderson, 2007; Nungak, 2000; Wachowich et al., 1999). Various other modes of identification were proposed, including a controversial suggestion to fingerprint Inuit, but the disk number system remained in effect until the 1970s. The federal government initiated a program in the late 1960s known as Project Surname.<sup>29</sup> The program assumed a non-Inuit approach to naming, assigning surnames to Inuit to replace the personal disk numbers. Inuk leader Abe Okpik travelled throughout the Arctic directing the name assignment, assisting Inuit with name selection, and registering Inuit surnames. According to Kataisee Attagutsiak from Arctic Bay:

Inuit naming is very, very important. It impacts on a person's identity. When they were given surnames, that's when they started realizing that there's a whole different culture of how a family should carry one name. A family name. They realized that we do need to be part of a whole Canada. That was just the beginning of how Inuit started integrating themselves as Canadian citizens.

(personal communication, June 2017)

While some applauded the replacement of disk numbers, others condemned the project which did not fully recognize or respect Inuit cultural naming practices. Although the controversial reidentification program was established to “make Inuit like all other Canadians” (Alia, 2009, p. 44) and irrevocably altered Inuit naming, Inuit continue to practice and use traditional names (Alia, 2009; Owljoot & Flaherty, 2013).

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<sup>29</sup> See also Alia (2009) and Owljoot & Flaherty (2013) for further discussion of Project Surname, the importance of names in Inuit culture, and contemporary perspectives on naming in Nunavut.

The presence and activities of agents of change including whalers, missionaries, police officers, and traders had increasingly complex yet gradual effects on material culture, social organization, and Inuit hunting economies. The period following World War II and the start of the Cold War shifted to a period of rapid and profound cultural change for Inuit. Increasingly pervasive government intervention in Inuit daily lives created unnecessary adversity, disconnections, and suffering. Arctic Canada was strategically important for defence reasons and many Northern defence projects, including the construction of the Distant Early Warning Line, were carried out by Americans. In an effort to assert Arctic sovereignty, the Canadian government increased the number of military personnel, as well as civilian construction and service workers, who were sent north to construct air bases and other defence projects (Anderson & Bonesteel, 2010; Duffy, 1988; Purich, 1992). Of course, the American and southern Canadian presence in the Canadian Arctic intensified Inuit contact with Qallunaat. The newly focused attention on the Arctic uncovered stories of the Canadian government's perceived neglect of Inuit including lack of formal schooling for Inuit, exploitation by traders, inadequate medical attention, and poor living conditions. Images of starving Inuit prompted calls for health care, social services, and schooling to be provided for Inuit, as they were for all other Canadians (Duffy, 1988; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004; Stern, 2010; Tompkins, 1998).

### **Permanent settlements.**

During the period from 1945-1970, intervention from the Canadian government saw Inuit from hundreds of scattered outpost camps move into small settlements across the Eastern Arctic. At the time, the Canadian government felt that concentration of Inuit families would allow more effective administration of, and access to services (Purich, 1992). Additionally, the propelling of Inuit into settlements allowed the Canadian government to assert Canadian sovereignty in the

Arctic (Bonesteel, 2010; Mancini Billson & Mancini, 2007). Ultimately, the government compelled Inuit to settle in permanent communities in an attempt to administer and assimilate Inuit according to Qallunaat ideas about community, schooling, relationships, and work (McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994).

Inuit settlements, often missions or trading posts, had been established long before the federal government pushed to concentrate the Inuit population. There are several reasons for the concentration. The impact of the fur-trade created imbalances in hunting practices and varying degrees of dependency upon the trading posts. In many cases the income from hunting would not cover the cost of goods (Brody, 1991). In the wake of the continuing collapse of the fur trade in the 1940s, Inuit lost their main source of earned income subsequently becoming reliant on relief measures, which had previously been allocated on an ad hoc basis by HBC post managers. Later, RCMP and some HBC officials administered family allowances and old age pensions (Hinds, 1968). As such, Inuit were persuaded to remain close to the established settlements to receive benefits to which they were entitled as all other Canadian citizens in 1945 (Brody, 1991; Duffy, 1988; Marcus, 1995; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). The greater density of hunters concentrated in communities altered traditional hunting practices and threatened wildlife populations (Wenzel, 2000).

Church missions also advocated the move to permanent settlements around the missions, usually near HBC trading posts, where Qallunaat missionaries could preach and teach Inuit children. In the Eastern Arctic, prior to the 1950s, missionaries had established limited formal education. Life in settlements saw the rupture of families as children were sent away to residential schools.<sup>30</sup> The first residential school for Inuit in the Eastern Arctic opened in 1951

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<sup>30</sup> A detailed history of Inuit education and Inuit experiences of schooling, including experiences of residential schooling and the enduring impact is offered in Chapter 6.

in Chesterfield Inlet.<sup>31</sup> In 1955, the federal government assumed responsibility for all schooling. As more and more Inuit families moved into permanent settlements, Inuit children were required to attend residential schools or federal hostels to receive a formal education. Hostels were similar to residential schools but smaller and thus, more efficiently managed than larger residential schools. Both hostels and residential schooling often required children to travel great distances to attend school. In some cases, children were separated from their families for long periods of time. Some Inuit families, whose camps were in close proximity to the schools, decided to move to those communities to be closer to their children. Missionaries provided most educational services during this time, although the federal government was responsible for funding and regulation (Bonesteel, 2006; Douglas, 1994; Duffy, 1988; Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC], 2015a).

The establishment of federal day schools beginning in the mid-1950s saw many Inuit families move into settlements as the federal government informed families living in camps that their children ought to be in school (McGregor, 2010). Inuk Elder and hunter Tookoome (1999) who “stayed on the land longer than the rest” (p. 51) describes his experience:

I did not want to live like the Kabloonaq [Qallunaat]. I wanted to be free and live as my people always did before...A social worker landed by RCMP plane near our igloos and came out to tell us that we must go to the settlements like all the others and that the children must go to school. The Inuit were no longer supposed to live on the land.... Still my wife and I decided not to go. (p. 51)

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<sup>31</sup> Mission and residential schools across the Yukon, Labrador and Western Northwest Territories date back to the 1800s. However, I have focused my attention on Inuit experiences in the Eastern Arctic in what is now known as Nunavut.

Although European explorers and whalers brought tuberculosis (TB) to the Canadian Arctic as early as the 1800s, by the late 1930s and 1940s, tuberculosis affected an extensive number of Inuit. It was not until after World War II, the Canadian government responded to the epidemic and sent Inuit with active TB to southern hospitals or sanatoriums, often separated from family for years at a time. This continued into the 1960s (Duffy, 1988; Møller, 2010; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). In 1943 there were only two hospitals in the Eastern Arctic at Chesterfield Inlet (*Igluligaarjuk*) and Pangnirtung, both of which are in the southern region. It was not until the 1960s, the federal government initiated the development of nursing stations in every Inuit community settlement (Purich, 1992). Of course, the establishment of northern nursing stations and health programs during this period to address disease and health issues also attracted Inuit to settlements.

A tragic story that received recent attention following an investigation from 2006-2010 is the allegations of mass slaughter of qimmiit, Inuit sled dogs, carried out by RCMP and other authorities in settlements from the mid-1950s onwards. In 2006, the RCMP released a report maintaining the allegations of mass dog slaughter were misleading. The RCMP report acknowledged the killing of qimmiit, yet it denied a systematic dog slaughter and exonerated its members of criminal wrongdoing. According to the RCMP report, some dogs were lawfully destroyed in the interest of public health and safety, to enforce dog ordinances, to control canine diseases, or at the request of dog owners (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2006; Watt-Cloutier, 2015). Perhaps most interesting is the assertion by retired officers that their relationships with Inuit were harmonious and as such, any allegations of dog killings are “totally unrealistic” (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2005, p. 16).

The Qikiqtani Inuit Association rejected the report and established the Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC) to conduct an extensive inquiry examining changes Qikiqtani Inuit experienced between 1950-1970. The QTC, the first Canadian Inuit-funded and Inuit-led initiative to explore Inuit experiences of the period, was responsible for collecting Inuit oral testimonies and examining archival records including RCMP reports, documents, and correspondence. Inuit testimony reveals horrific accounts of the destruction of dogs. The QTC found that while RCMP were perhaps following animal control laws, many Inuit were not consulted, not informed of the reasons qimmiit were killed, nor were they offered alternatives. Moreover, many Inuit felt the cull was needless and damaging, believing that the qimmiit killings were another way of forcing Inuit to remain in settlements. Without a means of transportation to return to outpost camps or travel on the land to hunt, Inuit livelihoods and hunting practices were significantly affected. The loss of qimmiit had an immense impact on Inuit culture, health, identity as hunters, and wellbeing (QIA, 2013b and 2013f; Watt-Cloutier, 2015).

Throughout the 1960s, more and more Inuit family groupings began to settle into communities and were promised jobs, food, low-cost housing, and other government support. In some cases, families chose to move into settlements because access to family allowance benefits was contingent upon their children attending school (Douglas, 1994; Stacey-Moore & Thompson-Cooper, 2009; Tookoome, 1999). Inuk hunter Tookoome (1999) remembers: “They said they would not let us have family allowance payments. This was the only money we had except for what we got for trapping – we needed that money to buy supplies” (p. 51). Trading incentives, government subsidies, proximity to the store and church, as well as access to services including housing, education, and health care attracted Inuit to transition from camp life to



permanent settlements, profoundly affecting Inuit families. While Inuit generally welcomed social, educational, and medical development, government intrusion in their lives became increasingly pervasive (Brody, 1991; McGregor, 2010; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004). Although there were undeniable instances of forced relocations (Marcus, 1995; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994), arguably the move to settlements out of economic need, access to healthcare, and the promise of a better life is a form of coercion born out of historical relations.

There were numerous reasons and pressures drawing Inuit into permanent settlements and compelling Inuit to stay, yet one of the most enduring consequences of the move was the new, sustained, and often complex relationship to Qallunaat and their southern institutions and conventions. Many Inuit perceive status differences as Qallunaat, for the most part, are representatives of institutional systems imposed upon the Inuit and often hold positions of authority as government administrators, RCMP officers, teachers, missionaries, or store managers while Inuit are frequently left with menial jobs (Brody, 1991; Stern, 2010; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004). Inuit recognize that the move to settlements, which altered their economic situation, social life, traditional education, and hunting practices, meant that they were “living under the jurisdiction of Qallunaat institutions” (Douglas, 1994, p. 159).

### **The “Eskimo Problem”.**

In 1952, the publication of two books: *People of the Deer* by Canadian author Farley Mowat and *The Face of the Arctic* by German-born Canadian photographer/author Richard Harrington, ignited controversy and stirred the sensibilities of southern Canadians, Americans, and people across the world (Marcus, 1995). Both publications exposed Inuit hardships, including deprivation and starvation, and presented perspectives on Inuit lives in the Canadian Arctic. Mowat’s (1952/2005) book condemned “the Old Empires of the North – the missions, the

RCMP, the trading companies, and the federal government” (p. 10) for interference in Inuit ways of life and the subsequent neglect. The photographs in Harrington’s book, taken over the course of five journeys through the Canadian Arctic, revealed Inuit living in desperate conditions and implied government abandonment (Harrington, 1952/1954; Marcus 1995). Although the authenticity of Mowat’s book was questioned<sup>32</sup> and his credibility attacked,<sup>33</sup> the public response to *People of the Deer* and *The Face of the Arctic* was so overwhelming, the federal government was obligated to at least appear to be striving to address problems affecting Canadian Inuit such as starvation, illness, and poverty (Marcus, 1995). Mounting pressure for the government to respond to the social and economic concerns in the North led to the organization of a Conference on Eskimo Affairs.

Henry Larsen, a senior official in the RCMP responsible for several detachments across Arctic regions, proposed the idea for a meeting to bring together different agencies in the North in 1951 (Delgado, 2003; Marcus, 1995). That same year, frustrated by the government’s inaction, Larsen also recommended a Royal Commission to investigate the government’s treatment of Inuit (Marcus, 1995). Larson wrote numerous reports for his superiors which detailed the “appalling” living conditions of Inuit, health concerns, and the economic situation. Larson was sharp in his criticism of the government’s laissez faire approach to Inuit affairs including the absence of protection of the Inuit economy. Larsen blamed traders, missionaries, and other Qallunaat in the North for their exploitation of Inuit (Marcus, 1995; McGrath, 2006; Tester &

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<sup>32</sup> In the forward to the 1974 edition, Mowat acknowledged that he did not have access to documentary evidence to support his narrative (Mowat, 2005).

<sup>33</sup> In an effort to discredit his work, government officials claimed that Mowat wrote factual inaccuracies and had limited contact with Inuit. Moreover, the federal government alleged that Mowat conjured the Ihalmiut band of Inuit with whom he lived, to attack government administration. Research confirms the Ihalmiut did, in fact, exist. Much of the criticism emerged in a review of the book printed in HBC’s journal, *The Beaver*. Mowat seemingly wrote a detailed response to the various charges but *The Beaver* refused to print it (Brody, 1987; Marcus, 1995).

Kulchyski, 1994). Although Larsen's reports and suggestions came prior to Mowat and Harrington's publications, they were not public.

In May 1952, the Commissioner of NWT, the Minister of the Department of Resources and Development, as well as government department officials and agencies including RCMP, Catholic and Anglican Churches, and the HBC, attended a Conference on Eskimo Affairs (Clancy, 1987; Duffy, 1988; Grant, 1991; Marcus, 1995; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1994). Inuit representation, however, was missing (Damas, 1993; Marcus, 1995; McGrath, 2006; Wright, 2014). In response to the question of Inuit absence, J.C. Cunningham, Acting Director of the Northern Administration and Lands Branch, claimed that "it was felt that few, if any, of them have yet reached the stage where they could take a responsible part in such discussion" (National Archives of Canada, 1952 as cited in Damas, 1993, p. 20).

The primary focus of the conference was to promote cooperation and discussion between various agencies working in the North. Cunningham described it as "an informal gathering of those people who...from their experience.... could contribute something towards the solution of Eskimo problems" (National Archives of Canada, 1952 as cited in Duffy, 1988, p. 147). The "Eskimo Problem" was defined at the Conference as having three elements: "an unstable economy, poor health, and a growing dependence on government benefits" (Marcus, 1995, p. 26). Various concerns were raised at the conference including the urgent need for improved health services, the poorly developed school curriculum, employment practices, increased relief payments and the effects of aid, and the instability of the fur trade which could no longer fully support Inuit (Clancy, 1987; Damas, 2002; Duffy, 1988; Grant, 1991; Marcus 1995). Although no formal policy emerged from the conference, a special Committee on Eskimo Affairs<sup>34</sup>,

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<sup>34</sup> A special sub-committee on Eskimo Education was also established at that time (Duffy, 1988).

consisting of various representatives of Northern agencies who had an interest in the Arctic and Inuit wellbeing, was established to review Northern policy and development. Inuit did not appear before the committee until 1959 (Clancy, 1987; Henderson, 2007; Marcus, 1995).

The Committee wanted to assist Inuit to live off the land and “continue to follow their traditional way of life as hunters” (RCAP, 1994, p. 74; Damas, 2002; Gombay, 2010; Henderson, 2007; Marcus, 1995) but their primary objective was to facilitate the relocation of Inuit, preferably within the North, to find employment (Damas, 2002; Henderson, 2007). Government officials had considered Inuit relocations long before the Conference on Eskimo Affairs, but it was at the Conference and the subsequent meetings of the Eskimo Affairs Committee, that one of the most controversial and harmful Northern initiatives would be discussed, developed, and ultimately put into effect (Damas, 1993; Duffy, 1988; Grant, 1991; RCAP, 1994).

### **High Arctic relocations.**

Between 1953 and 1955, several Inuit families<sup>35</sup>, as part of a “pioneer experiment” (RCAP, 1994, p. 86) were relocated from Inukjuak, Northern Quebec and Pond Inlet (*Mittimatalik*), a Northern community in what is now known as Nunavut, to Ellesmere Island, and to Resolute Bay (*Qausuittuq*) and Grise Fiord (*Aujuittuq*) on Cornwallis Island in the Canadian High Arctic (Marcus, 1995; McGrath, 2006; RCAP, 1994; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994; Watt-Cloutier, 2015). Sadly, this was not the first occasion of Inuit relocations.

In 1934, the Hudson’s Bay Company<sup>36</sup>, with the support of the federal government,

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<sup>35</sup> Reports claim that 7 families were initially relocated from Inukjuak and 3 from Pond Inlet. Additional families were sent to the settlement, eventually bringing the total number of families relocated to 17 (Grant, 1991; Marcus, 1995; RCAP, 1994).

<sup>36</sup> The Hudson’s Bay Company had been involved in ‘voluntarily’ relocating Inuit by ship to new hunting and trapping areas since the 1920s. Some Inuit were relocated to Southampton Island from Chesterfield Inlet and Cape Dorset in 1925. Additional relocation efforts by HBC, in a move to disperse Inuit hunters, occurred in 1936, 1937, and 1947. For detailed discussion of motivations, histories, experiences, and aftermath of the High Arctic Relocations, please see Marcus (1995).

relocated a group of Inuit ‘volunteers’ from Cape Dorset (*Kinngait*), Pangnirtung, and Pond Inlet (Mittimatalik) to Dundas Harbour on Devon Island in the High Arctic with the intention of establishing a new trading post and ensuring adequate labour to hunt animals for trade (Marcus, 1995; McElroy, 2008; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Extreme weather, poor ice conditions which hampered hunting, isolation, not to mention displacement from familiar lands and relations, were some of the hardships Inuit experienced. The post closed two years later but despite appeals to be sent home, families were relocated to Arctic Bay, Fort Ross, and Taloyoak resulting in permanent dislocation (Dick, 2001; Marcus, 1995).

The High Arctic Relocations of 1953 – 1955 have been the subject of intense criticism and debate, and the reasons for the “experiment” have been hotly contested. One of the key factors driving the relocations was the administration’s belief that the moves would address Inuit economic problems (Damas, 2002; RCAP, 1994; Marcus, 1995). The instability of the fur trade meant that as fur prices declined, government-issued relief measures and family allowances, which were necessary for survival, increased. Apart from the cost to the government, there were growing concerns over Inuit dependency on relief (Marcus, 1995; RCAP, 1994; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Seemingly, the government did not understand or consider the cyclical fluctuations of animal populations which gave rise to periodic reliance on relief. Moreover, there was a failure on the part of the government to acknowledge the root causes of this reliance. Ultimately, the actions of whalers, traders, as well as government settlement policies and interventions, altered economies and instigated the need for Inuit dependency on relief measures. Inuit receiving high levels of social assistance were among the very people “targeted for relocation experiments in 1953” (Marcus, 1995, p. 42) and identified as requiring “rehabilitation” (p. 43) because of their perceived reliance on trade goods and relief measures.

In partial response to economic concerns, Inuit were relocated from supposed areas of “overpopulation in relation to available resources” (RCAP, 1994, p. 137) to remote Northern areas with good resource potential (Damas, 2002; Marcus, 1995; Sandlos, 2007; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). The often-referenced justification for the relocations alludes to the number of hunters exceeding available game as a food source. However, it is indicative of the government’s economic goals to control rising costs of support by moving Inuit away from earned income at trade posts. Thus, the relocations forced Inuit to return to focusing entirely on subsistence hunting with no government obligations (RCAP, 1994). As part of the relocation plan, the government relied heavily on the RCMP to open detachments in the High Arctic and be responsible for administering Inuit.

Rather than being told the true intentions of the relocation, most families were promised a “better life” in lands where game was plentiful. Many Inuit claim they were “human flag poles”<sup>37</sup> and that the forced relocations were motivated by the sole purpose of strengthening Canadian sovereignty over the northern islands (Marcus, 1995; RCAP, 1994; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Although the government has “never formally conceded that sovereignty was the reason” (Marcus, 1995, p. 50) for the relocations, numerous government documents and correspondence during the early 1950s suggest this was the case (Marcus, 1995; RCAP, 1994; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Decades later, although not explicitly referencing the High Arctic relocations, the introduction to the *Nunavut Agreement* (1993) includes the following statement: “AND IN RECOGNITION of the contributions of Inuit to Canada’s history, identity and sovereignty in the Arctic” (p. 1-2).

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<sup>37</sup> The term has been used publicly by Inuit leaders, politicians, and those whose families were relocated including John Amagoalik (as cited in Wright, 2014, p. 166), Mary Simon (as cited in Simon, 2012), and Lucie Idlout (as cited in Friesen, 2014).

Inuk leader John Amagoalik, often considered the ‘Father of Nunavut’ (Alia, 2009; Watt-Cloutier, 2015; Wright, 2014) was five years old when he and his family were relocated from Inukjuak to the High Arctic. He remembers:

The first vivid memories I have are when the policemen from the RCMP came to our small hunting camp with a request, a proposal, for my parents. I remember them coming back more than once. When a policeman visited your camp, it was something you remembered in those days. I was five years old. It was a big event, so I remember it very clearly. My parents talked about the RCMP officers’ request after they had left....

The initial reaction of my parents was, no, they didn’t want to move. This was their ancestral homeland, this was what they knew, and this was where their families were from...They weren’t told exactly where they would be going, but they were told it would be a better place than where they were living then. My parents didn’t want to move. The RCMP officers came back again and again....

The RCMP officers described this new place in very glowing terms. They told my parents that there would be a lot more animals, that we would have the opportunity to catch a lot of foxes and seals and to make money. They even said there would be more opportunities for employment if we desired...The RCMP officers.... promised that we could return after two years if we didn’t like the place, and that we would all stay together.

(Amagoalik, 2007, p. 18-19)

Tragically, relocated Inuit families experienced adversity in the form of hunger, cold, longer periods of darkness or light, extreme isolation, and loss in an unfamiliar, remote region.

They were provided with limited equipment and received only nominal family allowances which were of little benefit because the post's stores were inadequately stocked with goods. Although promised they would not be separated and could return home after two years, families were divided and "put ashore" at different locations, and assistance for returning home was not made available until 1988<sup>38</sup>, more than 30 years later (Marcus, 1995; RCAP, 1994; Wright, 2014).

In 1994, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) reported that "the relocation was not voluntary. It proceeded without free and informed consent...The relocation was an ill-conceived solution that was inhuman in its design and in its effects" (p. 173). A trust fund was later established to compensate surviving members of relocated families. In 2010, the Canadian government offered an official apology to the relocated families for the cruel treatment and suffering (Dodds & Nuttall, 2015; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010; Wright, 2014). Like the concentration of Inuit into permanent settlements, the High Arctic Relocations of 1953-55 disrupted Inuit family relations, their knowledge and sense of a particular place, and undermined Inuit relationships with land.

### **Resource development.**

In an effort to modify and stimulate the economic base, the federal government considered resource development projects and programs in the Eastern Arctic. Following the construction of roads, airports, and other defence projects in the 1940s, the Canadian Arctic saw the arrival of Qallunaat geologists and prospectors interested in resource development and extraction. Although exploration and small-scale commercial extraction had been happening in

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<sup>38</sup> Some families had returned to Inukjuak in the 1970s and early 1980s at their own expense. Families sought compensation and in 1988, the government did offer some financial reimbursement those who had previously returned (McElroy, 2008; RCAP, 1994).



the North for decades (McGhee, 2006; QIA, 2013e), by the mid-1950s, large-scale mining projects were operating across Arctic regions.

In 1958, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker's announced his 'Northern Vision'. Diefenbaker's intention was "to open that northland for development" (para 2) and "to develop those vast hidden resources that the last few years have revealed" (para 6). His announcement was a major push to exploit the natural resource potential of the Canadian Arctic and stimulate mining activity. Resource development projects continued to sweep through the Arctic in the 1960s despite Inuit concerns regarding lack of consultations, sustainability, and resource exploitation (Bonesteel, 2006; Purich, 1992; QIA, 2013e). The federal government's intention with mining development was to "provide employment for the native people" (Indian and Northern Affairs, 1975, p. 7), yet very few Inuit were employed in mines as jobs were often seasonal, required English language skills and specialized training, and were located away from communities and families. Despite Diefenbaker's assurances that natural resource development would benefit all Canadians, Inuit interests and concerns were largely ignored (Bonesteel, 2006; Diefenbaker, 1958; QIA, 2013e).

### **Inuit co-operatives.**

The most successful initiative providing employment for Inuit was the development of Northern co-operatives. Although there was initial government funding and some outside support in the form of accountants and business managers, the success of co-operatives resides with Inuit as developers, organizers, and producers. Community-owned co-operatives continue to provide wage labour and develop the local economy. The basis of many early co-operatives featured traditional Inuit practices and activities such as fur harvesting, commercial fisheries, and arts and crafts production (Duffy, 1988; Stopp, 2012).

During a visit to the Arctic in 1948, artist and writer, James Houston was given a small stone carving of a caribou in exchange for a sketch he had drawn (Houston, 1995). He learned that carving was a central activity in Inuit camps as Inuit had been carving soapstone, whalebone, and ivory for generations. In addition to making tools, utensils, and talismans, many carved pieces were produced as toys for children, for their own self-expression, and occasionally for trade with visiting sailors. Houston, supported by the federal government and the Hudson's Bay Company, began to 'encourage' Inuit to produce more carvings, later printmaking, recognizing the potential for the production of art to contribute to Inuit economic development. Thus, Inuit carvings, handicrafts, and art prints became a product to serve as the base for Inuit-owned marketing co-operatives. Unexpectedly for Inuit, the production of Inuit art marketed for southern consumption exploded, providing a much-needed source of income to many Inuit families (Harrington, 1981; Houston, 1995; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004; Norton & Reading, 2005).

The marketing co-operatives assist in the sale of local Inuit products and handicrafts, including carvings and art prints that are world renowned. The successful co-op movement in the North continues to contribute to economic development in communities, providing employment to Inuit. Moreover, co-operatives have played a role in Inuit reclamation of self-determination and management of their own affairs (Duffy, 1988; Mitchell, 2014; Stopp, 2012). Additionally, the co-operative principles of sharing in benefits and collaborative decision-making closely align with the values of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit.

Politically active Inuit associations began to form in the 1970s, seeking greater political autonomy, and addressing problems of housing shortages, unemployment, and irrelevant and inadequate school curricula. Momentum was gained in the 1960s as young Inuit men and women

from across the Canadian Arctic attended high schools in larger centralized locations. The gathering of Inuit teens from different northern regions facilitated discussions of Inuit concerns, politics, land rights, and social justice. Following a 1971 national conference at Carleton University in Ottawa, the national political organization, Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC), now known as Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) was formed with the goal of asserting Inuit rights and governance over traditional Inuit lands (ITK, 2016c; McElroy, 2008; Purich, 1992; Wright, 2014). Uniting Inuit from different regions across northern Canada under one common organization was an important move in addressing Inuit concerns.

The ITC was a significant force in the creation of Nunavut. In 1976, the ITC prepared the first Inuit land claims proposal which was submitted to the federal government. Not only a land claim, the document proposed the creation of a new government and territory. The first basic goal of the settlement was to “preserve Inuit identity and the traditional way of life so far as possible” (Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, 1976, pg. i). Although the proposal was later withdrawn due to its complexity and perceived lack of community input, it was to be the start of the dream of Nunavut (Duffy, 1988; Hicks & White, 2000, 2015; McElroy, 2008).

The Tunngavik Federation of Nunavut, later becoming Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), was established to negotiate a land claim and create the territory of Nunavut with the federal government. Following decades of negotiations, in 1993 the House of Commons signed and enacted the *Nunavut Land Claim Agreement Act* and the *Nunavut Act* (Duffy, 1988; Hicks & White, 2015). The *Nunavut Act* (1993b) ultimately served as Nunavut’s constitution, establishing Nunavut as a territory and specifying the main principles of its government. April 1, 1999, saw the inauguration of the largest land claim in Canadian history, the official creation of the Inuit territory of Nunavut (Henderson, 2007; Hicks & White, 2015; Nunavut Act, 1993b).

## Conclusion

Inuit have experienced profound alteration of traditional ways of life since first encounters with Qallunaat. Although I have offered a historical overview, significant change continues to unfold in Inuit communities and colonial relations, practices, and structures are persistent and decisively present. Inuit oral history passed down from one generation to the next reveals stories of interactions and intrusions, of arrivals and departures of outsiders, of opportunities and tragedies, of times of prosperity and times of deprivation. Although Qallunaat played a considerable and often shameful role in Inuit histories, “contact between cultures never goes in only one direction” (Alia, 2009, p. 143). Qallunaat ventured into Inuit lands ill-equipped and ill-prepared to face the challenges of the unfamiliar Arctic environment. Undoubtedly, many Qallunaat would not have survived without the knowledge, skills, and generosity of Inuit who were willing to share. Some connections were established based on the trading of goods and wage labour as Inuit worked with Qallunaat as whalers, traders, guides, hunters, and interpreters.

I have attempted to situate and explore the socio-cultural contexts and causes of rapid, complex, and corrosive changes imposed upon Inuit through colonial encounters. In the face of cultural oppression, assimilation, and disruptions, Inuit continue to seize opportunities, negotiate relations, challenge policies, and endeavour to ensure continuity of Inuit cultural traditions. Although the stories and accounts presented are only historical fragments, they offer insight into the ways in which the onslaught of Qallunaat in Inuit lands affected Inuit economies, settlement patterns, social organization, naming of individuals and lands, and Inuit ways of life.

Forced relocations and settlements, the renaming of traditional territories, extraction and exploitation of resources and lands are among the devastating ways Qallunaat colonizers attempt to undermine and diminish Inuit relationships with land. Arctic resources attracted whalers,

traders and entrepreneurs, to name a few, who encroached upon Inuit lands in pursuit of the northwest passage, the valuable bowhead whale, luxurious Arctic fox furs, precious minerals, the Christian mission, and the goals of sovereignty. For Inuit, the land is dynamic, relational and inspires knowledge. It is a gathering place filled with stories and ancestors, requiring respect and protection in order to receive its gifts (Bennett & Rowley, 2004; Price, 2007; Styres, Haig-Brown, & Blimkie, 2013).

Certainly, Inuit have faced swift social changes, profound disruption, and immense challenges which have not been of their making, nor have they been submissive recipients of external influences (Stern, 2010). Although unjust actions have been taken which directly impact Inuit ways of life and decisions have been made without Inuit consultation or consent, Inuit increasingly resist assimilation efforts. The experiences of Inuit including John Amagoalik, Simon Tookoome, Apphia Agalakti Awa, Stephen Angulalik, Rhoda Kaujak Katsak, Attagutsiak, and Mini Aodla Freeman offer only a glimpse into the hardships Inuit endured and the ways in which Inuit challenged pervasive governmental control of their lives. There are countless other important stories to be heard. Moreover, while their experiences reveal painful loss and exploitation, there is strength and resilience in the ways in which Inuit respond to changes and challenge the incursions and injustices.

As significant change continues to unfold on Inuit lands, Inuit and Qallunaat negotiate relationships in the context of interplay between diverse knowledges, traditions, and understandings. In this era of reconciling, it is necessary to acknowledge the collective, difficult histories and complex relationships between Inuit and Qallunaat, even as a starting point. More than acknowledge, an acceptance of Qallunaat complicity in the colonial project is critical. The contexts, attitudes, misunderstandings, and practices of the past are embedded in institutions and

continue to shape Inuit-Qallunaat relationships. As John Amagoalik (1977) recognized, past historical events and experiences have an implication in the present and future. Histories should be educative. Histories are not simply about events, rather histories are experienced and created, and comprise interwoven, complex and dynamic relationships between peoples and lands.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

For Inuit, learning and living are the same thing, and knowledge, judgement, and skill can never be separated. Traditional Indigenous research which “emphasizes learning by watching and doing” (Wilson, 2008, p. 40) as well as *isumaqsayuq*, the term for Inuit experiences of learning through oral teachings, observations, and participation in community life (Stairs, 1992, 1995; Wenzel, 1987) align with critical ethnography as the researcher works towards coming to new understandings and generating relationally constructed knowledge through listening, observing, and interacting with people.

During my time in the field, I regularly heard the word *ilisai*, the descriptive term for a teacher which means ‘to teach’ (K. Attagutsiak, personal communication, December 2014), used to introduce or describe me. Certainly, it is to be expected given my previous position as a Qallunaaq teacher in the community as well as my ongoing connections with the school. Of course, I regularly clarified that I was not currently teaching at the school but visiting as a researcher. I explained my current research, my reasons for being in the community, and how my interests evolved from my teaching experiences, but my identity as *ilisai* persisted. Former students continued to refer to me as their “old teacher” and it was often suggested that I return to teach or apply for the Principal position. Interestingly, some of the comments were made by people with whom I had limited contact as a teacher. Rather than assuming the suggestions were a credit to my teaching reputation, I realized that my return to the community and the subsequent reactions of people would come to bear on the work and undoubtedly become part of the narrative.

This chapter outlines the research process, methodology, and methods of the work. I share some of the personal and professional choices I made in the process of learning, gathering, co-creating, and sharing knowledge. I have included a detailed account of my return to Arctic Bay, my experiences with people in the community, and the ways in which I have attempted to conduct respectful research with Inuit. While this work is a critical ethnography, I draw on the work of Indigenous scholars given the cross-cultural nature of my research. Its epistemological foundation is based on my developing understandings of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, in the hopes of creating new knowledges, building positive relationships, and working together towards a common goal by respectfully listening, engaging, and learning with and from others. I include discussions of reflexivity, challenges faced, and the need to consider the decolonizing process. Finally, I have endeavoured to offer some insight into the contexts within which I work.

### **Re-establishing Relationships**

I returned to the community of Arctic Bay, for ten days in May 2014 to re-establish both formal and informal relationships with appropriate groups and individuals. I met with the Hamlet Council and the locally elected members of the District Education Authority (DEA) and presented my proposed research at their meetings. I also briefly met Elder Qappik Attagutsiak (a woman in her 90s) in her *igluralaaq* (small home) with her daughter, Kataisee Attagutsiak. Qappik is the oldest resident of Arctic Bay who continues to sew with sealskins and uses a few qulliqs (traditional oil lamp) for heating and cooking. Kataisee asked questions about my research plans, interpreting my comments for her mother. We talked about the importance of Inuktitut language education and some of the work with which Kataisee is involved (Fieldnotes, May 5, 2014). I was also able to informally discuss my research plans and address questions or concerns with the Principal at Inuujaq School, current teachers working at the school, as well as



former students, parents, and some community members. I incorporated community feedback and recommendations into my proposal and interview schedule. Some of the comments made to me included the perceived lack of guidance for students who wished to enrol in post-secondary studies; the belief that students are not meaningfully engaged in schooling; support for my intention to interview students who are currently immersed in the school system; and the significant need for Qallunaat teachers to understand Inuit cultural values (Fieldnotes May 3, May 6, and May 7, 2014).

Prior to returning and presenting my proposed research at community meetings, I set up a Facebook page specific to my relationships with the people and community of Arctic Bay as a means of communicating, maintaining relationships, and following community events.

Throughout this research, I have found social media to be an invaluable tool, enabling prolonged contact with people in the community. I re-introduced myself, posted pictures of the community and surrounding area taken during my teaching tenure, and re-connected with former students. I joined community Facebook groups such as Ikpiarjuk news, Arctic Bay Selling Station, Arctic Bay photos, Inuit Hunting Stories of the Day, Learning Inuktitut, among others. Some Facebook groups, for example, “Feeding My Family” (forum in which Inuit post pictures and share high food costs in the North), highlight issues of concern, such as food security for Inuit communities. Despite the high cost of internet service in the Arctic as well as limited access to high-speed internet, many community members use Facebook to share day-to-day life, events, and experiences. In my observations, social media sites like Facebook enable Inuit young adults to communicate on their own terms with their communities, across Nunavut, and the world. Facebook provides a space for Inuit to discuss and manage representations of themselves, to develop and preserve friendships and family connections across the country, to share stories, to

tell of hunting experiences, to access pictures of the land, to ask questions or share opinions (Castleton, 2014; Fieldnotes May 2014, September 2014, June 2015).

During the time in which I lived and taught in the community, I took my students on a hunting trip out on the land with local guides; contributed to the extra-curricular life of the school; and participated in local events and celebrations. In the weeks preceding my departure, I explained to friends, colleagues, and community members that I was returning to Ontario to begin a Master's program. We discussed graduate studies and my research ideas, and several community members suggested that I return to the community to do my work. As my Master's research took the form of a narrative inquiry, I did not return at that time. However, I remained in contact with a few friends from the community and enjoyed re-connecting with people when I returned to Arctic Bay in May 2014. I felt welcomed back into the community and many asked if I noticed changes in people and the place, and how it felt to return. Several commented on my being the first Qallunaaq teacher to ever return to the community. I first heard this statement upon arrival at the airport in Arctic Bay. A friend who kindly offered to pick me up at the airport said that in her 27 years in the community, she had never known a Qallunaaq teacher to return. I felt her comment reflected the importance of building and maintaining relationships throughout this work. I continued to hear the comment during my time in the community as former students, their parents, and even people with whom I did not have a previous relationship but who recognized me, remarked on my being the first Qallunaaq teacher to return to Arctic Bay.

Research involves an ongoing negotiation of relationships and a responsibility to share the knowledge and understandings I have gained with all community members. Integral to my study is the principle of Inuuqatigiitsiarniq (respect). Respecting my relationships within the community and the ideas and contributions of others, community members have control over the

gathering of information, including the framing of questions, the framing of the outcomes, and the ways in which research is disseminated (ITK, 2016b; Menzies, 2001; Steinhauer, 2002; Weber-Pillwax, 1999).

While in the community in May 2014, I presented my proposed research at both the District Education Authority (DEA) and Hamlet Council meetings. I arranged for an Inuk interpreter at each meeting and provided payment for their services. I arrived early for the DEA meeting to set up a slideshow of photos taken while I lived in the community. Several were drawn to photos displayed on a large screen and suggested I upload them to Facebook for many to see.

I felt surprisingly calm. Perhaps because I know some of the members. Perhaps the seemingly positive (or just not outwardly negative?) response I've received the last few days in town has alleviated any prior anxiety. Perhaps because the meeting was in the school library – a place that physically hasn't changed since I taught in the school.

(Fieldnotes May 6, 2014)

During each meeting, I spoke of my background including previous teaching experiences in Arctic Bay and Cape Dorset, and current doctoral studies at York University in Toronto. Following the mention of my enrolment in a PhD program, two Inuit DEA members, both of whom were Elders, began to applaud. Other members joined in the applause. Their enthusiasm for my involvement in graduate studies was unexpected and humbling. I immediately felt acutely aware of my responsibility to this work, and more importantly, to the people of this community.

I acknowledged the fact that education is a top priority for the government of Nunavut and the progress that has been made in creating a school system responsive to Inuit culture and

the needs of the community. I explained my reasons for wanting to do this research: (1) an interest (as a former teacher) in coming to better understandings of Inuit experiences and perspectives of schooling; (2) the fact that very few researchers have researched schooling in Nunavut from an Inuit perspective, and more specifically, conducted research with young Inuit adults; and (3) my desire for this work to contribute to professional development of Qallunaat teachers so that they may make positive contributions to the schools in which they teach. I described my research plan as talking to people, listening to their stories and opinions, and coming to understand the knowledge within those stories and the ways in which that knowledge might prove useful to educators, students, and community members. I also gave examples of the types of questions I would ask participants, emphasised voluntary participation, confidentiality, and my desire to incorporate community feedback at all stages of the research (Haig-Brown, 1995). Finally, I clarified that I did not yet have a research licence with the Nunavut Research Institute but that I wanted to integrate comments and ensure community support and approval prior to making an application.

Following each of my presentations, there was an opportunity for members and Councillors to make comments or ask questions. One question posed was regarding how the research would contribute to my own development. I explained that this work would form my doctoral dissertation and that this interest stemmed from my own experiences of teaching in the community. Other questions included whether I had contacted government representatives; the ways in which this research may benefit the community; and how I would share the results of the research. I explained that it was my hope that this work may contribute to professional development for Qallunaat teachers who continue to work in Inuit communities, so that they can better respond to the needs and desires of Inuit students. The work may also prove useful to the

DEA in determining additional ways to make positive changes for schooling in the community. A DEA member, speaking in Inuktitut, commented on the value of the study. “I support her idea. A number of times there are new teachers recruited and as Inuit we are different from their life and they seem too confused - using this as a reference, it will be useful” (DEA Meeting Minutes, Translated into English by DEA Office Manager, Cindy Kilabuk. May 6, 2014; Fieldnotes May 6, 2014).

I committed to issuing copies of the final written work, in which community feedback is incorporated, to community organizations and representatives. I also made clear my intentions to leave raw interview transcripts (with participant consent which can be withdrawn at any time) in the community. As community members are best placed to determine how the research findings should be shared, I explained that I would seek guidance from the DEA, Hamlet Council, Inuujaq School personnel, and representatives from Inuit Associations. I suggested a few possible ways in which to communicate results and generate dialogue including social media and local radio as well as workshops and relevant conferences. I offered to prepare and arrange for translation of summaries in both English and Inuktitut.

At the DEA meeting, members took a vote, while I was still present, unanimously supporting my research plans. The DEA member chairing the meeting (the DEA Chair was out of town, although I had spoken to her the previous week) turned to me and formally confirmed the support of the DEA, acknowledged the importance of education, and thanked me for my interest in doing this work in their community. At the Hamlet Council meeting, I was asked to leave the room following my presentation and question period for Council members to privately discuss my research plans. The following day, the deputy Mayor confirmed the approval of Hamlet Council and I later received a letter of support.

I had only spent ten days back in the community, but I was very encouraged by the ways in which I had been received by former students and community members; the welcoming smiles, the reminiscing, the insightful and productive conversations, the support for my research both formally and informally, and the laughter. I felt very fortunate to be invited to Sunday afternoon tea out on the land, a birthday party, dinners, and a casual movie night with friends. I appreciated being welcomed back to the community and eagerly anticipated commencing research.

### **Ethical Reviews – York University & The Nunavut Research Institute**

I returned to Toronto, spending the subsequent weeks incorporating community comments, feedback, and questions into my proposal. To sustain momentum, a concerted effort was made to increase my presence on the Arctic Bay-specific Facebook profile I had created. I reached out to community members, uploaded photos of my recent trip to Arctic Bay, chatted with friends online in English, and posted details of my September return. The Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principle of Inuuqatigiitsiarniq - respecting others and relationship building- is not only foundational to Inuit ways of being, developing relationships and working to establish trust and accountability with research participants and Inuit community members is integral to relational research (Kovach, 2009). Social media was vital in maintaining re-established relationships and following community events given the significant geographical distance.

Following a successful defence of my dissertation proposal and comprehensive examination, my ethics protocol was reviewed by the York Research Ethics Board as well as the Aboriginal Research Ethics Review Advisory Board. Once approval was issued in August 2014, I prepared and submitted my application for a Social Science and Traditional Knowledge Research licence through the Nunavut Research Institute. The Nunavut Research Institute

(NRI), established in 1984 has a mandate to “develop, facilitate, and promote [social] scientific research as a resource for the well being of people in Nunavut” (NRI, 2015). Given the history of exploitative research in Nunavut, as well as the importance in ensuring research is beneficial and relevant to communities in Nunavut, (Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies, 2003; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Nunavut Research Institute, 2006) all individuals proposing to conduct research in the territory are required to obtain a licence from the Institute.

The application requirements include a detailed project summary and a copy of the Informed Consent Form in both English and Inuktitut (I provided payment to an Inuk translator from Arctic Bay), a copy of Ethics approval from York University, as well as any available documentation obtained which revealed community consultations. In support of my application, I included a letter from the Inuujaq School Principal on behalf of the DEA, a letter from Hamlet Council, a copy of the DEA Meeting Minutes, as well as names of community representatives with whom I discussed my proposed research.

While in Iqaluit in May 2014, I visited the Nunavut Research Institute Manager-Research Liaison Officer who explained that my consultations with community and supporting documentation would greatly expedite the application approval process as some researchers rely on the NRI to initiate community consultations. The NRI sends all documentation to relevant community authorities and representative Inuit organizations for review. Inuit organizations involved in application review include Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), responsible for ensuring federal and territorial governments fulfil obligations under the *Nunavut Agreement* (1993) and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, representing Inuit of the Qikiqtani (Qikiqtaaluk or Baffin) region of Nunavut (Fieldnotes May 14, 2014). The research licence application was reviewed, and licence approval was received in September 2014.

## Ethnography

Ethnography, with its roots in anthropology, is the art and science of observing, describing, and participating in a culture to come to understand ways of life from the perspectives of its participants. My intention is not to study Inuit or produce an explanatory story about a group of people, but to begin to learn (Cameron, 2015) from and with Inuit friends, colleagues, and community members. My learning has been largely shaped by my relationships with Inuit and the understandings they have brought me as I carry out this work. Historically, ethnography was an approach which focused on presenting authoritative accounts defining and describing cultural groups. Well-resourced Western academics who led the practice of early ethnography, travelled to geographically distant locations to study the exotic ‘Other’ (Clifford, 1988; Madden, 2010; Murchison, 2010). Today, interested ethnographers negotiate meanings across and from within cultures, recognizing that ethnography can “honour the cultural integrity of oral ways and to honour the people” who allow us to work with them (Haig-Brown & Archibald, 1996, p. 251).

Ethnography offers “diverse ways of thinking and writing about culture” (Clifford, 1988, p. 9) to generate insights, build and interpret understandings from the perspective of those with whom the research is conducted (Anderson, 1989). The strength of ethnography is its capacity to value social and cultural intricacies of human existence (Madden, 2010). Ethnography is an approach to understanding the reality of human situations; a way of being with people, talking with people, exploring and learning with people, writing about people, and analysing, theorizing, and interpreting meanings people attach to experiences, actions, and relationships (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Madden, 2010).



The ethnographer herself becomes the central research instrument (Dobbert, 1982; Murchison, 2010) through which information is gathered, recorded, and analysed. As such, it is important to consider one's position as an ethnographer and as someone who will aim to represent her understandings of the experiences, perspectives, and narratives of research participants. Reflexivity has also become something of a standard in ethnographic work, particularly in cross-cultural contexts (Anderson, 1989; Atkinson, 2011; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Kovach, 2010) attesting to the relational nature of the approach.

Reflexivity, necessitates that a researcher interrogates personal and professional experiences and practices, never losing sight of the assumptions and perspectives she brings to her work as she can never be independent of the research. An active process, reflexivity is crucial to examining personal perspectives and interpersonal dynamics, and continuing self-awareness. Although reflexivity has been problematized as self-indulgent confessions which function to maintain the authority of the researcher and concede claims to greater validity (Finlay, 2002; Seale, 1999), I see reflexivity as a valuable process which helps to increase understandings, question research practices, methods, interpretations and representations, and generate insights into participants' accounts. Certainly, I feel it is essential to acknowledge my own personal background, experiences of schooling, culture, ideology, privilege, and biases as well as understand that as an ethnographer, I bring myself into the field with me and am a part of that field (Agar, 1980, Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

I have incorporated details of myself in the first chapter including how I came to be interested in this work given my previous experiences of teaching in Nunavut. At various points throughout the dissertation, I have inserted my own thoughts, reflections, motivations, and

experiences as it relates to this research, my understandings of Inuit Qaujimagajatuqangit, and my approaches, in an effort to make my assumptions and decisions explicit (Creswell, 2014). More than acknowledging my position, the act of contextualizing and making my positionality transparent to study participants (Madison, 2011), required (and continues to require as I write) attention to my own subjectivities, informed by my interactions with others, and the ways in which my subjectivities come to bear on my interpretations and representations of research findings (Creswell, 2014; Madison, 2011).

Though a brief explanation of ethnography is offered, given the human element, ethnography as an endeavour resists a bounded, standardized meaning. Rather, ethnographic work generally shares similar features (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Typically, ethnography begins with an interest in a particular area of social or cultural life, with the assumption that the group of people participating in the research has shared experiences or shared cultural meanings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Punch, 2009). In this work, the people interviewed had the shared experience of attending Inuujaq School as well as being Inuit living in the same High Arctic community. An ethnographer is sensitive to the meanings that events, actions, and contexts have, from the perspectives of the people involved as they engage in an exploration of a cultural group, endeavour to understand, learn, and interpret everyday ways of life from the perspectives of its community members (Agar, 1980; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; O’Leary, 2010).

An ethnography at its best is an evolving study as meanings and new understandings unfold throughout the research. More importantly, no ethnography is ever complete – they are “inherently *partial*” (Clifford, 1986, p. 7, emphasis in original) as it is impossible to include all perspectives, experiences, or individuals. In the case of this work, understandings have been

shared, created, and shaped through the use of the English language. Ethnographers recognize that one can only “gain partial understandings of other cultural realities” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 17) and our assumptions, concepts, and findings never final, but incomplete and subject to rethinking (Thomas, 1993). The work I share here is a glimpse of what some individuals in one High Arctic community are thinking about schooling. It is a moment in time, a document “full of ellipses” (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). And yet, the intricate details shared provide deep insights into everyday phenomena not available in more reductionist approaches.

### **Fieldwork**

The practice of ethnographic research typically involves engaging in fieldwork, previously characterized by extended periods in a particular place, emphasizing the importance of personal connection with the people, their culture, and the place. Today, researchers continue to carry out fieldwork as “a means of producing knowledge from an intense, intersubjective engagement” (Clifford, 1988, p. 24). However, while time in the field may be reduced (Agar, 1980; Wolcott, 2008), ethnography remains fundamentally “holistic, cross-cultural and comparative, long-term, based on first-hand experience, and undertaken with explicit intent” (Wolcott, 2008, p. 229).

My time ‘in the field’ happened over two separate periods. Phase one occurred from September 17 to December 15, 2014 and phase two occurred the following spring, April 20 to June 16, 2015, although my previous teaching experiences in the community contributed to contextualizing and understandings. There were several reasons for my splitting fieldwork into two phases including seasonal considerations, housing availability, employment, and financial matters. Despite pangs of doubt as to the suitability of dividing my time ‘in the field’, I came to recognize the advantages of returning to the community in the spring. I felt that the physical

distance from the community would be useful in encouraging reflexivity. The time out of the community also afforded me the opportunity to begin transcription and more intensive analysis. I now see the value of time and distance in sharpening the direction or focus of my work, coming to understandings of the nuances of interactions, and considering additional questions. Again, a social media presence was critical in maintaining relationships and following community events.

### **Watching and Learning**

Ethnographers rely primarily on observations and interviews (Agar, 1980; Carspecken, 1996) to develop understandings of a cultural group. Although interpretation, and arguably analysis, began as soon as I entered the field, taking everything in and gathering information from observations of people and situations, the location itself and the interactions which occurred there, there was a prior step which involved reading, watching, and listening to all available sources to get a better sense of the place to which I was returning. I continue to read widely and critically various texts including historical documents, academic articles, government and curricular documents, ethnographies, Inuit fiction, as well as anthologies of Inuit oral histories and interviews. Available literature, as well as current news stories, provides insights into Inuit histories, attitudes, values, and struggles.

Additionally, I draw on my previous experiences of teaching in the community as well as time spent working in other Northern communities. I recall my experiences, observations, and interactions on the land; in the classroom; at family celebrations; at community meetings; at Friday night Bingo games; in the aisles of community stores; and in people's kitchens. Although one's memory of past experiences is affected by present situations and can be elusive or fragmented, undoubtedly, memories of past encounters come to bear on present relationships and understandings. As much of our salient experiences are carried with us, in our memory, I argue

that the ethnographer's memories are a valuable component of the work (Collins & Gallinat, 2013), having the potential to prompt vivid, extensive recollections and facilitate insight.

Certainly, the informal interactions, events, conversations, experiences, and time spent with Inuit in the community have contributed to my developing understandings of Inuit culture and language, ways of life, and values. In an effort to come to better understandings, I took some preliminary Inuktitut lessons with a local teacher. Although I had a brief introduction to Inuktitut during my time as a teacher in Nunavut, I found the lessons provided an overview of some fundamentals, including nuances of grammar and sounds. In Toronto, I applied to take an Inuktitut course through the Glendon Extended Learning program at York University. Unfortunately, the enrolment numbers were insufficient to make the course feasible. Attempts to contact an Inuktitut instructor to inquire about the possibility of private sessions were unsuccessful. Language embodies particular world views, reflects culture, and shapes ways of thinking. Inuktitut encompasses Inuit "culture, lifestyle or cultural activities" (M. Allurut, personal communication, June 2017). I recognize the complex intertwining of language with culture (Dorais, 1990; Kovach, 2009), and the immense value in learning the languages of the people with whom one works, regrettably, I was not able to sustain language learning outside the community.

According to Agar (1980) "observation and interview mutually interact with each other....in the course of doing ethnography" (p. 109). Observations may build upon accounts or details offered by participants in interviews or inform the types of questions posed in an interview (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Shortly after commencing fieldwork, I noticed a Facebook post regarding one person's views of the school's cultural program. I read the post, followed the ensuing online conversations, and was subsequently prompted to modify an

interview question about cultural classes as related to traditional Inuit ways of teaching and learning. Initially, I included a question which asked participants to describe or tell me about cultural classes. Following my observations of the remarks on Facebook, I explored the question further by asking about specific activities and learning in the cultural classes, and about the ways in which particular skills had been taught. When appropriate to the natural flow of the conversation, I asked for participants' views on cultural classes. Though I had my own perspectives of the school's cultural program, the candid and passionate comments posted by some community members underscored the importance of exploring this topic further. Observations of online social interactions provided great insight into social structures and community concerns. As mentioned elsewhere, the establishment of an Arctic Bay-specific Facebook profile was invaluable to my work. A useful communication tool, an online presence also served as a naturalistic and unobtrusive form of observation. Online posts, often frank and revealing, acted as a commentary on current issues affecting the community, revealed topics identified as important by community members, and were helpful in contextualizing other observations and experiences.

The practice of writing fieldnotes in a research journal offered a chance to record informal observations, conversations, and developing thoughts related to analysis of interactions and experiences. In community life, observations of everyday activities, local events, practices, places, and exchanges with people in the community offer rich information to interpret meanings. I recorded fieldnotes based on my observations and informal interactions, while also attending to the emotionality of fieldwork, and prepared a detailed research journal. Electronic links to current news articles were included in fieldnotes to offer context and stay informed of topical environmental, social, political, and economic developments in Nunavut. My research

journal served as a record of questions (many of which remain unanswered), surprises, emerging themes, and reflections.

At the core of ethnographic fieldwork are the relationships which develop with individuals. Success in fieldwork depends on the ability to foster meaningful reciprocal relationships (Agar, 1980; Robben & Sluka, 2012) which involve an “exchange of understandings” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 19) as well as a “deep and abiding dialogue” (Madison, 2011, p. 10) with and among others. Ethnography is an approach to understanding the meanings which evolve from a researcher’s personal involvement in a community (Haig-Brown, 1995, 2010) and the developing relationships with people in a particular place. Generally, ethnography “involves long-term association with some group...with the purpose of learning from their ways of doing things” (Agar, 1980, p. 6). As a former teacher in the community, I developed relationships with many Inuit community members. Those relationships have informed this work and have contributed to my developing knowledge of Inuit practices, culture, and values. Several Inuit friends, who became mentors and teachers were not formal interview participants, yet all continue to make meaningful and important contributions to the theoretical, methodological, and epistemological approaches and understandings of this work.

### **Critical Ethnography**

Although ethnography focuses on the study of culture and understandings of the world, to be of practical value, ethnographic research may be concerned with using those understandings to effect positive social change (Carspecken, 1996; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; O’Leary, 2010). According to Thomas (1993), “critical ethnography is conventional ethnography with a political purpose” (p. 4). Critical ethnography begins with a commitment to expose inequalities or unfairness, striving to unmask dominant social constructions, change existing systems, and

disrupt the status quo (Madison, 2011). The critical ethnographer invokes “a call to action (and) attempts to use knowledge for social change” (Thomas, 1993, p. 4).

Sol Tax’s (1907-1995) development of action anthropology is part of the origin story of critical ethnography. As a discrete applied approach, action anthropology promotes collaboration and a commitment to the community in which one works (Tax, 1964/2009). Tax imagined co-creating knowledge which was practical and useful, but which also provided theoretical and methodological legitimacy. Through his work with Indigenous populations in the United States, Mexico, and Central America, Tax came to recognize that anthropologists should not impose their views on people but rather work under the direction and at the discretion of the community (Bennett, 1997; Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Daubenmier, 2008; Hinshaw, 1979; Tax, 1964/2009). An effective approach in working with Indigenous communities, action anthropologists are responsive to the needs of communities, generally motivated by concerns for social justice, and hold the belief that decisions affecting a community are best made by that community (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Daubenmier, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As with critical ethnographers, Tax was determined to listen carefully to research participants, learn from experiences, and share what had been learned with the community with the hopes of improving a particular situation or issue (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Nahm & Hughes Rinker, 2015).

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970/2010) contends that genuine dialogue should be the goal and essential component of “true education” (p. 93) and function as a way of challenging oppression. Authentic dialogue is contingent upon the existence of mutual trust, love (for people, for the world), humility, faith in human kind, critical thinking, and hope. Dialogue cannot be useful without some level of faith and confidence that people share concern for the fate of the



world and will continue to act to make the world a better place. We engage in dialogue or conversation in the belief that it holds the possibility and hope of change. For Freire, an important quality of the concept of dialogue is its democratic nature. Through dialogue, humans may begin to make sense of their realities and new understandings may emerge as a result of mutual sharing and learning. True dialogue should occur within egalitarian respectful relations. Although Freire's conception of dialogue is outlined as a necessary element of pedagogy, it has implications for ethnographic research methods, which are inherently dialogical as the researcher and participants engage in a collaborative, reciprocal, communicative encounter to learn, reflect, create, and re-create knowledge. Freire's (1970/2010) pedagogy is instructive for critical ethnographers who are committed to conducting respectful research with individuals in the hopes of effecting positive change.

Critical ethnographers value local knowledge systems, aspire to come to mutual understandings with research participants, have an enduring relationship and commitment to the community in which they work, and respect protocols of that community (Agar, 1980; Anderson, 1989; Madison, 2011; O'Leary, 2010). Communicating, developing, and maintaining relationships are inherent to fieldwork (Marcus, 1997) and the role of researcher involves an ongoing negotiation of cross-cultural relationships. Building trust is vital for researchers in Indigenous settings who wish to hear and incorporate the words of Indigenous people into their analyses (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Weber-Pillwax, 1999). Qallunaat, who too often bring with them the injustices of colonialism and the insensitivities of outsiders, have been a dominant and privileged minority in the Arctic (McGregor, 2010). Current research reveals that Inuit students face many challenges including being "marginalized" (Mancini Billson & Mancini, 2007; McGregor, 2010; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003; Walton & O'Leary, 2015) in schools which

purport to exist for their benefit. Critical ethnography attempts to “expose inequitable, unjust, or repressive influences that are acting on ‘marginalized’ cultural groups, in a bid to offer avenues for positive change” (O’Leary, 2010, p. 155). My work fits within a critical tradition because it attempts to contextualize the current situation and explore the existing practices and experiences of schooling in Nunavut in the hopes of opening up possibilities for change.

### **Indigenous Methodologies**

Although this work is fundamentally a critical ethnography, I think it is appropriate to have some understandings of Indigenous approaches from which to draw, given the cross-cultural and geographically-situated nature of my research. I wanted to ensure the methods employed were suitable and served the community, allowing me to fulfill my responsibilities and relationships. Learning from Indigenous methodologies allows me to come to deeper understandings of Indigenous issues, values, and beliefs. Additionally, drawing on Indigenous research approaches is a way of honouring Indigenous ways of knowing (Kovach, 2010). The guiding principles of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, which point to responsibilities and expectations for social interactions, are Indigenous processes and practices that guide my approach to research. I feel Indigenous methodologies coordinate with and complement critical ethnography as relational approaches wherein enduring relationships and a commitment to the community in which a researcher is working are paramount.

Critical ethnography and Indigenous methodologies also incorporate a critical stance and are committed to challenging the status quo to open up possibilities for change (Denzin, Lincoln & Tuhiwai Smith, 2008; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Kovach, 2010; Madison, 2011; Thomas, 1993;). In addition, both ethnography and Indigenous approaches must show evidence of a research process and recognize the researcher as central to that process. As relational

approaches, arguably both ethnography and Indigenous methodologies are incapable of generating knowledge which is independent of the process that produced it (Kovach, 2010; Madden, 2010; Pole & Morrison, 2003). Furthermore, there is recognition that the researcher is not a “neutral instrument of the research process” (Kovach, 2010, p. 32) nor can the research be independent of the researcher.

Indigenous research methodologies are interrelated, holistic, require a critical consciousness, and should privilege Indigenous contexts, and be congruent with the goals, objectives, values, and beliefs of Indigenous ways of knowing (Absolon, 2011; ITK, 2013; Kovach, 2009; Sunseri, 2007; Wilson, 2008). Wilson (2008) argues that Indigenous methodologies are approaches grounded in an Indigenous epistemology or worldview. Thus, any engagement with Indigenous approaches should reflect a deep understanding of worldview. In the *Future Directions in Research in Inuit Education Report* (ITK, 2013), respect for Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit in research design, including research methodologies and in the research findings, was highlighted as a key principle for research in Inuit education. Certainly, the research methods employed in any study should be consistent with the theoretical and philosophical orientation outlined in the research design. Kovach (2010) maintains that research methods should align with an Indigenous knowledge perspective. As this research considers how Inuit students experience school in relation to some of the Qallunaat approaches of that schooling system, as previously discussed, I draw on Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit to frame this work.

Sensitively grounding my work in the principles that guide Indigenous research also offers an opportunity to honour some of the ethical protocols which guide communities. One of the central tenets of Indigenous research is that of respect for people. Engaging with the principle of Inuuqatigiitsiarniq, emphasizes the importance of respecting relationships with others.

Certainly, I remain committed to engaging in respectful relationships with research participants, respecting community practices and traditions, working to listen intently to the participants' perspectives, appreciating their contributions, and respecting participants' rights to review my interpretations and representations of their views. Embedded in Inuit life are the culturally-specific ways of showing respect, such as the importance of a smile upon meeting and departing, and non-interference when an Elder speaks. Sunseri (2007) claims that a key element of Indigenous methodology is the familiarity a researcher gains with the community in which she is researching. Although as a non-Indigenous researcher I cannot ever be fully immersed in subtle cultural practices, I have previously lived in Inuit communities, have some knowledge of local customs, and continue to develop relationships with people in Arctic Bay.

### **Stories**

Because stories contain knowledge of histories, practices, events, and life experiences and have traditionally been the most important means of passing along knowledge, interviewing was deemed a suitable approach to exploring some of the experiences of schooling from an Inuit perspective. According to Dion (2009) "Stories have always been valued as a means of teaching and learning" (p. 15) within Aboriginal communities. In Inuit communities, storytelling continues to be a significant aspect of contemporary social life and an important dialogical tool for passing along truths. According to Karla Jessen Williamson (2000), an Inuk scholar of Greenlandic descent, stories are often told as a way of enlightening listeners and reflect Inuit societal values. Inuit oral traditions range in form and themes, from creation stories, myths, legends, and stories about the spirits and animal-human relations, to stories that pass down knowledge of family and community historical events as well as Inuit connections to land (Wachowich et al., 1999).

Throughout the interview process, participants were encouraged to share details, relay personal stories of schooling, offer narratives of a typical school day, and provide an account of their own experiences of schooling. The stories shared in interviews were often anecdotes or brief personal accounts of their experiences. I considered abandoning a question which asked participants to describe a typical school day, as the responses to the question ranged from “I don’t remember” to listing school subjects, recalling physical features of a classroom including rows of desks and chalkboards, and discussions of the struggles with language. Reminded of Dion’s (2009) call to listen and engage with the details, I eventually came to realize that the responses offered insight into Inuit conceptualizations of schooling, some of the teaching approaches employed, and the challenges faced.

In Indigenous methodologies, the oral tradition of storytelling is an important approach to gathering knowledge, involving an active process of telling and sharing stories. Moreover, the use of narratives and storytelling are key pieces associated with teaching and learning practices in Inuit communities (Martin, 2012). Jessen Williamson (2006) claims that, “Stories are powerful in connecting the listener to the souls and minds of human beings, animals, and the land” (p. 109). According to Wilson (2008), the relationship building which stems from participating in the sharing of stories is a key component of respectful Indigenous research. Stories are the conduit for imparting teachings and practices, thus the relationship between knowing and story is inextricable. Dion (2009) claims that “stories provided me with a sense of belonging and purpose, an understanding of my connections” (p. 15). Frequently, research employing Indigenous methodologies includes stories of the researcher and their research experiences (Absolon, 2011, Kovach, 2009). As such, I include some personal reflections and experiences throughout this dissertation. Kovach (2010) describes the conversational method,

which is consistent with Indigenous approaches as its orientation is grounded in an Indigenous paradigm, as a way of “gathering knowledge through story” (p. 40). Arguably, engaging in interviews with participants is a way of sharing knowledge and coming to new understandings. Interviews are an appropriate and valuable method for hearing stories and exploring Inuit experiences of schooling.

I attempted to pose questions that were broad, allowing individuals to create personal meaning through the telling of narratives of experiences. That said, an important distinction between stories and interviews is that interview questions are typically framed from the researcher’s perspective whereas stories are told from the storyteller’s point of view. I feel immensely fortunate that I have had opportunities to listen to, and learn from compelling Inuit stories, told sometimes in Inuktitut, under the cover of a canvas tent, on the ice beside a fishing hole, to the rhythm of skins being scraped while sitting on a kitchen floor, and in living rooms among women laughing and sewing.

Regardless of one’s theoretical frameworks or chosen methodologies, consideration must be given to the motivation for the research. I think an important part of demonstrating Inuuqatigiitsiarniq, and developing respectful relationships with people, is being open, direct, and honest about intentions and motivations for the research. Kovach (2009) claims that “Indigenous research needs to benefit Indigenous people in some way, shape or form – that is the bottom line” (p. 93). Admittedly, I will benefit from the research as it will allow me to complete my doctoral degree. However, in working with Inuit participants to explore and learn from their experiences of schooling, this work may contribute to existing literature which may prove useful to educators, curriculum developers, or scholars with the hopes of benefitting Inuit students learning in classrooms.

### A Decolonizing Process

As a Qallunaaq researcher, there is a necessity to think about decolonizing consistently as I work in a context where colonization continues to play such a dramatic role. Menzies (2001) claimed that non-Indigenous social science researchers must engage in a process of decolonizing to make meaningful contributions. Furthermore, decolonizing and respectful research requires a commitment to conduct research *with* Indigenous peoples rather than *on* Indigenous peoples (p. 21). Qallunaat educators or researchers are often seen as unwanted intruders in an Inuit context and I am constantly aware of this tension. That said, in many ways, this tension is productive in that it creates a heightened sensitivity to the work which I am doing.

By the term, decolonizing, I refer to the process of challenging the colonizing project, initiated by early settlers and continuing in a modified form to this day. My sense is that decolonizing is a process of recognizing and considering the colonial tensions that have impacted Indigenous peoples and their land, and acknowledging the persisting consequences for all. The acknowledgment of the marginalization of Indigenous knowledges is fundamental to the project of decolonizing (Haig-Brown, 2009; Kovach, 2010; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). I think the decolonizing researcher has an understanding of the colonial histories of the people in the particular territory in which they are conducting research, considers life to be a web of relationships, celebrates complexity, welcomes indeterminacy, and asks how the representation of knowledge can incorporate more diverse perspectives (Kovach, 2009; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

In her seminal text, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Māori researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) offers a historical overview, in addition to an extensive critique of Western research and knowledge paradigms, calling for the decolonizing of methodologies, and setting a new agenda of Indigenous research. Western research

methodologies, theories, and writing styles, are “inextricably linked” (p. 1) and encoded in imperial and colonial discourses which have objectified and threatened Indigenous peoples throughout the world. These research practices have led many Indigenous peoples to be rightfully suspicious and distrustful of non-Indigenous researchers and the research itself (ITK, 2013). Thus, to understand the act of decolonizing, and before a researcher may conceptualize how to decolonize her approaches, she must attend to Indigenous research agendas. I have included a discussion of Indigenous methodologies in the previous section as it has informed my research approach. Addressing researchers working in Indigenous contexts, Tuhiwai Smith (1999) asserts that decolonizing involves “having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations, and values which inform research practices” (p. 20).

In addition to respecting Indigenous epistemologies and beliefs, the process of decolonizing considers the most appropriate methods to gathering knowledge, understanding knowledge, and representing research agendas. As my research explores the spaces where Qallunaat knowledge and approaches to teaching and learning come into relation with Inuit students’ knowledge and practices, I draw on Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, an Inuit epistemology encompassing Inuit values, knowledge, language and worldview (Arnakak, 2002) to frame this work. While a decolonizing approach may directly involve Indigenous peoples and communities, it is important to know the cultural history of the people in the place where the research is conducted (Absolon, 2011). I understand one dimension of decolonizing to mean that there is a need to recognize and acknowledge the strengths in Indigenous ways and that it requires an active ‘undoing’ of the unequal relations that exist between the knowledges of colonized and colonizer. The process of decolonizing makes Western or Euro-Canadian systems of knowledge the object of inquiry and critique (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). In the case of my research, the process



of hearing and learning from Inuit experiences and perspectives of the current school system which has been imposed upon Inuit, presented an opportunity to examine a system which often privileges Qallunaat approaches (Denzin et al., 2008).

There are several determining elements or characteristics of a decolonizing process, yet it does not observe a distinctive method or methodology. Rather, the multiplicity of issues which call for a decolonizing perspective necessitate widely varying approaches. That said, decolonizing practices have been primarily grounded in inclusiveness, collaboration, and engagement. Some of the guidelines for decolonizing research include collaborating with community members at all stages of the research; developing long-term relationships as well as spending a sustained period of time with community members; and working towards a better understanding of Indigenous epistemologies. Underpinning the decolonizing process is an understanding of ongoing histories of colonization (Denzin et al, 2008). Respecting relationships with Inuit, I have endeavoured to follow these guidelines in my work.

## **Research Methods**

### **Interviewing**

Interviews are relational experiences and offer us a way of making meaning; of trying to understand events, situations, viewpoints, and cultural practices from the point of view of the interview participant (Chirban, 1996; Seidman, 2006; Wilson, 2008). The ethnographic interviews I conducted were open-ended (Spradley, 1979) and “closer in character to conversations” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 152) than other, more structured interviews. I attempted to create a relaxed and natural setting for the interview by offering coffee or tea, and sitting with research participants around the kitchen table or in the living room. Each interview lasted approximately 1 – 1.5 hours. Though I did have an agenda, I loosely followed an interview

schedule, adapting as necessary, paying close attention, and making connections to what the participant was saying during the interview (See Appendix A). To understand the participants' feelings, perceptions, and lived experiences, I attempted to generate a flexible list of questions, with the hopes of offering a format for interviewees to answer in their own words.

At the heart of interviewing is a desire to understand the experiences and perspectives of other people and through this exchange, there is negotiation and shared exploration of meanings individuals make of those experiences. Interviewing involves complex, relational interactions between the interviewer and participants and knowledge is co-constructed in these interactions (Clifford, 1988; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Spradley, 1979). As human beings are communicative beings, the need for dialogue is a particularly human endeavour and an “existential necessity” (Freire, 2010. p. 88). Interviewing, if done sensitively and respectfully, offers a way to gain insight into educational concerns through understanding the perspectives and experiences of the people whose lives reflect those concerns (Seidman, 2006). Open-ended interviews, resembling conversations, affords participants the chance to share stories, lived experiences, and perspectives. When deemed appropriate, as a token of reciprocity, I shared some of my stories with the interview participants.

As first language Inuktitut speakers, participating in an interview in English, and sharing personal experiences and encounters with the English language, presents complexities. Although participants declined the offer to conduct interviews in Inuktitut with an interpreter, the act of translation also raises concerns of accuracy and authenticity as original meanings can be lost in the process. At the same time, the presence of an interpreter may impact the details participants choose to share. Certainly, Inuktitut words and phrases do not necessarily have exact equivalents in English. Working to find the most appropriate words to convey the full sense of meaning and

attempting to communicate meaning to another person is demanding and requires carefulness. Moreover, culture shapes thinking processes and the thinking of both participants and myself as the interviewer, is mediated by the language(s) we use (Vygotsky, 1962/2012). Indeed, the very term “Inuktitut” referring to Inuit language, means “like an Inuk and can also refer to culture or lifestyle or cultural activities” (M. Allurut, personal communication, June 2017).

At times, it was difficult to isolate the effects of English language on the interview process from the context of the interview. For example, if a participant seemed reticent or hesitant regarding a particular question, was it due to challenges of full expression in the interview language? Or disinterest in the question? Resistance to the interview process? Was the participant simply taking time to reflect and consider a response? Was the participant unwilling or unable to talk about something they had not personally experienced? Or was it another reason such as boredom or tiredness? Committed to working towards ways of communicating that most authentically reflects participants’ thinking (Seidman, 2006), and recognizing the presence of culture and language in thoughts, I employed a few different techniques to try and mitigate some of the tensions. As mentioned, I attempted to provide sufficient openness and time for participants to share their perspectives and honour their ways of sharing details, discussing, and reflecting. Additionally, I subtly asked clarifying questions during the interview and occasionally followed up with participants days after. Continuing to check back with participants and issuing copies of my representations to participants for their comments and feedback has also been important.

### **Participant selection.**

As I previously lived in the community, I interviewed people with whom I had an existing relationship or a mutual connection. I also welcomed recommendations of potentially

strong participants as well as anyone who inquired or demonstrated an interest in participating. When I visited the community in May 2014 to discuss my proposed research, integrate community suggestions, and address any concerns, I had the opportunity to speak about my work with community members, in various settings, in the hopes of generating participant interest. On more than one occasion when discussing my work or the interview process, individuals claimed they would not be a suitable candidate as they had not completed high school. I emphasized that their educational background or graduation status had no bearing on their candidacy for an interview, that they had attended the school and I was interested in their experiences and thoughts. In fact, perhaps their reasons for leaving school might be useful in coming to better understandings of the challenges Inuit students face. Certainly, if individuals seemed hesitant, I did not persist.

I interviewed 24 Inuit community members who had attended the local school. Four participants had also attended another school either within Nunavut or elsewhere in Canada. Research participants shared perspectives and described personal experiences of learning and schooling in their community. In total, 15 women and 9 men were interviewed. All participants were between the ages of 19 and 45 years, with the vast majority in their 20s and early 30s. More than half the participants had children. Each participant received a \$50 Northern gift card as honorarium, just prior to the interview commencing.<sup>39</sup> My intention was to offer the gift card at the beginning of the interview so that the participant was entitled regardless and to acknowledge their agreement to participate. I explained to each participant that they would keep the gift card, even if they later chose to withdraw. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

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<sup>39</sup> The amount of the gift card is not indicative of the value of participants' contributions. Rather, I wanted to acknowledge participants' interest and commitment of time and provide an honorarium that might offer some practical benefit.

### **The conversations.**

My interview guide was loosely organized into three sections (See Appendix A). The first section aimed to establish the context of the participants' experience – a sort of focused life history, including early experiences with families, on the land, and in their community. I incorporated a couple of questions in the interview schedule which explored the participants' experiences of Inuit learning, as opposed to formal schooling, as it may inform some of what professional development might look like. The second section focused on details of their lived experiences, and included questions of memories of schooling. The third section offered an opportunity for participants to reflect on their understandings of their experiences and share hopes for future. Questions included: What do you wish Qallunaat teachers understood about your community/your culture? What should the school's goals be?

I tried to develop an approach to interviewing which aligned with an Indigenous approach to gathering knowledge, honouring a person's particular way of sharing details, discussing, and reflecting as ways of knowing (Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2009). I ended each interview, asking the participant if there was anything that I should have asked (Haig-Brown, 1995). Though I included an extensive list of questions on the interview schedule ultimately, I wanted to ensure there was a degree of flexibility in my approach, providing sufficient openness for the participants to share their perspectives, and allow for an organic process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Seidman, 2006). Interviewees were made aware prior to each interview commencing and throughout the interview that they could refuse to answer any question and end the interview at any point.

Prior to beginning each interview, I reiterated my purposes for taking up this work, requested permission to record the interview (offering to take notes if they preferred), and asked

participants how they wished to be identified in any written reports. I explained that my reason for wanting to record was so that I would have the advantage of being free to listen carefully and consider what they were saying. Maintaining the ethical duty of confidentiality is vital to relationships of respect and trust between participant and researcher (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Nunavut Research Institute, 2006; Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies, 2003). That said, the history of exploitative research in Nunavut has meant that Inuit contributions to research have often been omitted (ITK, 2013). As such, I offered to include names with consent if a participant wanted to be credited with their contribution. Most preferred to remain anonymous, six participants asked that I use their names.

To designate pseudonyms, I include a first name followed by an asterisk \*. I recognize the importance of Inuit naming traditions (Alia, 2009; Owljoot & Flaherty, 2013) and struggled with the process of assigning pseudonyms. I attempted to select pseudonyms typical of the community, reflecting the participant's age or resonating with their name (e.g. An English or Inuit name). I use first names and surnames with those participants who wished to be acknowledged with their contribution. As some participants were reluctant to have their exact age included, I refer to the age bracket of all participants for consistency. I also included any other details participants felt appropriate such as participation in post-secondary studies. I revisited this issue when I returned to the community in the spring 2017, confirming participants' preference for identification in the written work.

Each research participant signed the York University Informed Consent form and received a copy of it. Informed Consent forms were available in both English and Inuktitut syllabics (See Appendices B and C). Except for two participants, all chose to read and sign the English version. One participant asked for both versions, seeming to cross-reference as she read

(Fieldnote: October 26, 2014). Most participants explained that reading in English was more expeditious.

All interviews were conducted in English. I recognize that as a method of investigation, interviewing is aligned with people's capacity to make meaning through language and acknowledge the problems that arise engaging in this endeavour in one's second language. I raised the issue of language with participants prior to their committing to an interview, offering to arrange for an interpreter if they preferred. Everyone declined an interpreter, agreeing to be interviewed in English.

Scheduling interviews presented some complications as people have busy lives. Cancellations, re-scheduling, and forgotten appointments are to be expected in fieldwork. Though most interview appointments were discussed in person, online contact proved useful to communicate, arrange, and confirm details. In virtually every situation, another interview was re-arranged at a mutually convenient time.

Inherent complexities arise from working in an Inuit community as a Qallunaaq given the history of forced settlements, residential and federal day schooling, as well as other assimilative government policies, many of which were administered by Qallunaaq representatives. As such, throughout fieldwork I recognized that Inuit may rightfully resist telling their stories, feel a sense of injustice, harbour resentment, or feel a sense of loss. I realize that those tensions may have influenced relationships with the interviewees and have the potential to complicate the act of representing participants' experiences of schooling which they have shared with me. Moreover, these complications may have structured what I did and did not hear.

Given the colonial underpinnings of schooling in Nunavut, my position as a Qallunaaq as well as my position as a former teacher in the community may have affected the details

participants were willing to share. I also recognize that participants may have tempered their comments in relation to their beliefs about me (Haig-Brown, 1995). On occasion, I added annotations to transcripts with the question “for my benefit?” if I perceived comments to be of particular high praise for schooling, Qallunaat teachers, or English language. I believe that striving for equity is not only an ethical imperative but also a methodological one. An equitable process is “the foundation for the trust necessary for participants to be willing to share their experiences with an interviewer” (Seidman, 2006, p. 110). Although I cannot reconcile my status as a Qallunaaq, as an interviewer, I endeavoured to develop an equitable relationship, honour the words and stories of Inuit participants, and strived to offer reciprocity in my research.

I also recognize the possibility that teachers working in the school may have felt suspicious of my interviewing current students or develop a sense that they were being evaluated. That said, I had informal conversations with the school Principal as well as several teachers in the school at various stages of my research and no concerns were raised. I made it clear to the Principal that my research is not meant to undermine the work of the teachers and the contributions they are making to the school, nor is my project concerned with evaluating the teachers’ capabilities. Rather, Inuit students’ perspectives and experiences of schooling have the potential to provide insight into the complexities Inuit students face in schools with implications beyond that community.

I developed relationships with some teachers during fieldwork who occasionally asked how my work was progressing. I attended community-school events including a Halloween Assembly, the High School Graduation Ceremony, the Christmas Concert, and the end-of-year School BBQ. I also volunteered at the school Literacy day, outdoor games on the ice, Spring Camp, and assisted with various school and community fundraising activities. I occasionally



visited the school staffroom during recess or lunch breaks. Perhaps my position as a former teacher in two Nunavut communities, and my visibility within the school and community, alleviated any potential reservations teachers had about my intentions.

### **Inuit young adults.**

I was particularly interested in interviewing young Inuit adults (under the age of 45) for several reasons. I believe that the stories and perspectives of some Inuit senior students, currently enrolled and perhaps nearing graduation, might provide useful context of the current state of schooling in the community. Additionally, students entrenched in the daily activities of school are in an interesting position to consider the significance of their experiences. I also felt that former students, including those who had graduated or left school, may offer a unique perspective having had the advantage of time, and arguably distance, to reflect on their schooling experiences. Certainly, interviewing former students raised issues surrounding the nature of memory as one's recollection of events and experiences of the past is affected by the present context under which those details are revealed, remembered, and received. However, "much of ethnographic inquiry is getting people to remember" (Fabian, 2007, p. 132).

Canadian Inuit have a median age of just 23 years (ITK, 2016a). In Arctic Bay, over 80% of the population is under the age of 45 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the national representational organization for Canada's Inuit is committed to ensuring Inuit young people are involved in determining their own futures. The National Inuit Youth Council holds annual summits which invites Inuit youth across Canada to participate in cultural activities, workshops, and seminars regarding issues affecting their communities (ITK, 2016b). In my own readings, I found the perspectives of Inuit young adults often overlooked in discussions about schooling, learning, and curriculum policy. While I hold the knowledge of Inuit Elders in high

esteem, and recognize their roles as language experts, cultural advisors, knowledge-keepers, guides, and teachers to younger generations, a great deal of research has been carried out with Elders (Bennett & Rowley, 2004; Niutaq Cultural Institute, 2011; Oosten & Laugrand, 1999, 2007; Oosten et al., 2010). I believe Inuit young adults are well placed, as future Elders, to share their knowledge, perspectives, and experiences.

Although I had established an interest in working with Inuit young adults, a conversation with a friend who has called Arctic Bay home for almost 30 years, substantiated that interest. In May 2014, as we stood in the entrance of the school corridor, she remarked the numerous graduation portraits that lined the walls. While there was great pride in those who had graduated from the school, she gestured to the photographs and rhetorically asked how the school system had contributed to their development given that very few had enrolled in post-secondary programs or held gainful employment (Fieldnotes May 6, 2014). Our conversation raised complex questions of opportunities, access, participation in post-secondary education, and success. Rather than a commentary on barriers, I felt the conversation reflected the challenge Inuit students face in navigating the complex ways in which Qallunaat and Inuit knowledges and practices interweave in the contemporary North.

### **The work of listening.**

*If you listen... you will know something of the mind of the Inuit and you will know about our communities. You will know what it is that concerns us.*

(Northern Quebec Inuit Association, 1974, p. 37)

Talking to and listening to participants are important parts of the ethnographic interview process. The act of interviewing and the sharing of stories provides a “compelling invitation”

(Dion, citing Friedlander, 2009, p. 17) to reconsider the ways in which I am implicated in Inuit experiences and perspectives of schooling. Attending to and recognizing that “this story has something to do with me” (Dion, 2009, p. 16) offers an opportunity to “acknowledge that which has happened” (p. 18), rethink understandings of schooling, and re-examine my connections with Inuit. I realize that I have deep investments in the research and the research participants have deep investments in their personal experiences – and these deep investments highlight an inherent contradiction at the heart of research: a researcher must balance their closeness, interest, and passionate attachment to a topic yet be open to the process of listening and approach the research with a sense of naiveté, innocence, and absence of prejudgements (Seidman, 2006).

Are there particular ways to listen as one interviews another? Archibald (2008) describes the work of listening as requiring trust, patience, and an openness to our emotions. Arguably, listening is the most important skill in interviewing. Kovach (2010) claims that in situations wherein a participant is asked to share stories or describe experiences, it is essential that the researcher be an adept listener, allowing the participant to share her story without interruption or re-direction. The practice of listening is an important value in Inuit society (NDE, 2007). In my observations, Inuit are highly adept at listening. Moreover, Inuit respect for the sacred concept of *isuma* means that another person’s views, feelings, or thought process, is not to be intruded upon (Attitug Qitsualik, 1999). I have attended meetings which continued late into the night allowing all members to speak without interruption. On the importance of listening, Dion (2009) writes, “Within Aboriginal culture it is understood that listeners will know what is expected of them in the storyteller-listener relationship” (p. 16). In ethnographic interviews, to learn as much as possible about the participant’s experiences, I tried to listen carefully, follow up on

participant's responses without interrupting the story flow to gain details of the participant's experience, and generally exercise reservation in contributing to the talk.

There is a responsibility that attends listening; a responsibility to hear, engage with the details, and work towards finding meaning in the stories (Dion, 2009). Certainly, the interviewee and the interviewer (or the story 'teller' and the 'listener') are positioned in relation to one another, each contributing to how meaning is made through mutual interpretations of shared narratives. The meanings which emerged from Inuit students' experiences through the act of interpretation as a listener has offered multiple new and different understandings of schooling in the community. Ultimately, listening to Inuit students' experiences of schooling prompted a shift in my conceptions of myself and my relationships with Inuit (Dion, 2009).

#### **Conversation spaces.**

Each interview was conducted in the home I rented, usually at the kitchen table or in the living room. When discussing the possibility of being interviewed with a prospective participant, I suggested my home as our interview site but recognizing that participants may feel more comfortable in "their own territory" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 150), I indicated my openness to an alternate location, if preferred. Although my rental accommodation changed more than once during fieldwork, I lived alone so each space was private to ensure confidentiality and minimize disruption. In one of the homes I rented, I placed the kitchen table in front of a window overlooking the Bay. Many interviewees commented on the fortune of such a beautiful view. While sharing stories, participants would point out the window towards various locations – the Bay, King George Mountain, Uluksat Point – ensuring I knew the places of which they spoke. Additionally, several participants spoke about family members who had previously

lived in the home, where they lived in relation to the interview space, or named people who lived nearby. All aspects of life and place are interconnected.

As interviews drew to a close, paying close attention to the non-verbal cues, I invited participants to share any other details they felt important. Very few had anything further to add but several commented on the experience of being interviewed, or their reasons for doing an interview. Margaret\*, a woman in her 30s, said “That was just like visiting! I liked what you asked and hopefully it’ll help a little.” Leslie Oyukuluk, a woman in her 20s who recently graduated from high school claimed, “I actually let all the things go that I wanted to get out for a while. I’ve been meaning to say but couldn’t find a way.” These comments and the participants’ commitment of time and energy reminded me of the “entrusted responsibility” (Dion, 2009, p. 31) to respectfully pass on the knowledge shared in the hopes that it makes a difference to schooling in the community.

Except for two participants, each interviewee stayed at my home and continued conversations long after the recorder stopped. In some instances, the most interesting comments or stories were shared during that time. “We chatted for over an hour after the interview was over – really wish I could have recorded that too!” (Fieldnote, October 26, 2014). Interviewing proved to be a compelling way to come to some deeper understandings of the educational, cultural, and relational experiences of research participants. Moreover, many interviews became the springboard of deep and lasting relationships.

### **Transcription**

I began transcribing recordings of the interviews following my return from the first phase of fieldwork. Prior to transcription, I spent substantial time listening to the interview recordings while in the community. Ensuring the interview was captured on the digital recorder was

important but I also found listening to interviews offered an opportunity to note developing thoughts as related to analysis and log explanatory notes including memories of context, body language, or facial expressions. I noted questions with which participants seem to hesitate and attempted to re-work in subsequent interviews.

I became aware of some verbal and non-verbal cues and nuances of Inuit language and expression regarding agreement, disagreement, or memory retrieval which added another layer of meaning to interview analysis. For example, the words *yes* and *no* are not generally spoken but expressed through facial gestures. Affirmative, or ‘yes’ is communicated through widened eyes and raised eyebrows, sometimes, as if inhaling, the sound *ii* (pronounced “ee”) accompanies it. I found that the volume or intensity of *ii* or the inhaling sound, related to the level of agreement placed on a particular point. Greater emphasis of both facial gestures and the accompanying *ii* sound suggested stronger agreement. Negative, or ‘no’ is expressed by squinting eyes and scrunching the nose. The Inuktitut word *akka* is occasionally used at the same time but I found this less commonly used than *ii*. Of course, these communicative intricacies emphasise the face-to-face culture of Inuit (Kulchyski, 2006; <sup>40</sup> Kulchyski & Tester, 2008). Occasionally, I heard participants use the phrase *ii laa* which I came to recognize as similar to the English term “um” to signal a pause or hesitation and sometimes memory or word retrieval.

The process of listening to recordings was also useful to my own development as an interviewer. In early interviews, I occasionally took the participant’s pause as the mark of a finished answer. I recoiled hearing the moments when I unintentionally interrupted the flow of the interview. As interviews progressed, I became more comfortable with silences, ensuring participants had ample time to reflect and consider the questions being asked. Listening to

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<sup>40</sup> Lower case letters, including the author’s name, are used throughout the particular work cited.

interview recordings also provided a chance to hear things which I inadvertently neglected, allowing me to informally follow up with the participant while still in the community and adapt interview questions as necessary.

All recordings were transcribed by me and one other person, whom I hired to work with me and with whom I had previously worked. Although a slow and time-consuming endeavour, I felt it necessary to do some transcribing myself as a way of identifying themes and drawing connections. Accurate transcripts were of vital importance, enabling later analysis and consideration of themes previously overlooked (O'Reilly, 2005). I was committed to ensuring each recording was transcribed fully and verbatim. I reiterated issues of confidentiality with the other transcriber and provided her with a list of Inuit terms, raised in interviews, often referring to place names related to the community. We also agreed that she would include timecodes at any uncertain or inaudible moments as I would carefully review each transcript for accuracy. With the benefit of context and some knowledge of the people and place, I was generally able to quickly insert the few terms with which the other transcriber struggled.

### **Analysis**

As I worked to listen and engage with details of participants' experiences during interviews and later in listening to interview recordings as well as in the reading and re-reading of transcripts, the words, experiences, and perspectives of Inuit participants resonated with my developing understandings of principles and values of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, reaffirming that Inuit knowledge is "not objectively given, but always produced in relational terms" (Oosten & Laugrand, 2009, p. 24). For example, interview participants' narratives of interactions with the land as well as my conversations with Inuit, and observations and experiences of being on the land with Inuit, helped to clarify and shape my understandings of land as fundamental to Inuit

identity, and deepened insights and expanded my awareness of the principle of Avatimik Kamattiarniq. At the same time, my growing familiarity with the principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit proved useful in magnifying what I had been observing in my interactions with community members and what I had been hearing and learning in conversations.

Once full transcripts were completed, I set out reading, making notes, and working towards searching for a pattern to guide the overwhelming amount of information. Although I had electronic files of the transcripts, I printed each out and began coding with pen in hand. I annotated transcripts, circling or starring emergent themes. Given the wealth of knowledge embedded in Inuit students' experiences and perspectives of schooling, the centrality of the principles and values of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in this study helped me to make choices about the knowledge that I privileged.

In some cases, I raised questions related to developing analysis and looked to fieldnotes and my research journal to cross-reference. Once each transcript had been read and annotated, I started the process of re-reading, using coloured highlighters to flag emerging themes. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit informed the work as I continued to return to the things I have learned from Inuit teachers and friends as well as reading pieces written by Inuit and other scholars. I then began typing notes which included some relevant extracts to see descriptive categories. I also had a considerable number of printed screen-shots of Facebook postings which proved useful in providing additional context to the analysis.

While being open to the unexpected, some of the emergent themes, such as the desire for strong foundations in Inuktitut, had been identified in literature (Aylward, 2007; Berger, 2009) and were not surprising. I had several categories and began to consider the interrelationships of the themes. Of course, the holistic, relational nature of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit focuses on land,



language, values, and relationships. I returned to the words I read in a book called *Taqramiut - The Northerners* published in 1974, which I shared in the introduction of this dissertation:

*We want you to come to know us... We see you when you come to our communities. Sometimes you even live among us, but you don't know us very well. The doors of the Inuit are always open to the Qallunaaq, but you don't come for tea very often.*

(Northern Quebec Inuit Association, 1974, p. 11)

I considered this appeal and the ways in which it resonated with words of the interview participants, and I reflected on the significance of these words in relation to the principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. This evoked an overarching concept guiding the ways in which I began to organize analysis. My sense of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a space or context of learning but also a lived space between people, experiences, and values invariably implicates Qallunaaq teachers who work in Inuit communities. There is a responsibility for Qallunaaq teachers to work towards tukisiumaniq, building understanding, being open to new understandings, and making meaning from observations, reciprocal dialogue, and experiences. In teasing out this concept, I returned to the emergent themes, identifying three interrelated, holistic domains or areas of focus, all critical pieces, central to Inuit experiences of education and schooling: land, language, and learning.

As I worked at chapters, I struggled with the fragmented ways in which I incorporated people's words among commentary. Reminded of the "entrusted responsibility" (Dion, 2009, p. 31), I worried about extracting sections which might misrepresent or decontextualize one's experiences or perspectives. It is important for me to accurately include words of participants, particularly given the oral culture of Inuit. As such, there is a clear distinction between

participants' words and my comments and interpretations. Although committed to maintaining the basic structure, quality, and integrity of interviews, I included sections of interviews as they related to each of the three areas of focus, only omitting interruptions, digressions, repetitions, or assertions which disrupted the flow. Though preserving participants' words, I felt that incorporating a short paragraph into analysis and discussions might provide a more fluid narrative and convey the weight of one's claim or perspective instead of including disjointed short sentences.

*After you're brought into the community, you have a responsibility to continue maintaining the relationship. To put it simply, you have to keep showing up in order for those relationships to be valid.*

(Wab Kinew, CBC Radio, *The Current*, January 5, 2017)

### **Revisiting and Revising**

I returned to Arctic Bay in the spring 2017 for six weeks to re-connect with friends, issue copies of my representations to participants for their comments and feedback, and present preliminary research findings to community members and Inuit organizations. Given the history of exploitative research in Indigenous contexts, it has been important to continue to check back with participants, making notes of responses, incorporating comments, ensuring acceptability, and encouraging feedback at all stages of the research. A friend announced my return on the local radio, welcoming me back to the community. I was fortunate to spend time out on the land, camping and fishing during the annual Fishing Derby, and hunted with students during Inuujaq School's Spring Camp. My attendance at community meetings and social events, as well as participation in fundraising and school-community activities allowed for greater opportunities to discuss the research with a range of community members and visitors to the community,

including the President and some members of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) who were holding public meetings in the community. My return to Arctic Bay also provided a chance to follow up on questions or seek clarification on points that arose as I was writing, such as factual details, community history, place names, or nuances of Inuit language.

Prior to returning to Arctic Bay, I prepared a few documents, later enclosed in an envelope, which I intended to personally distribute to each participant. Rather than issuing a full transcript, I felt it more appropriate for participants to see the selections from their interviews, in relation to the three main themes, that I intended to incorporate in my dissertation. I also created a diagram to visually represent the themes, relationships, and key points (see Appendices D and E) and a two-page written summary of research findings so that participants could see the ways in which their words shaped my understandings and analysis. I arranged for the diagram and summary page to be translated into Inuktitut. In the small package of documents, I included an introductory letter briefly outlining the analysis process, explaining that I sought feedback and welcomed any changes, elaborations, or comments. I provided my contact details in Toronto and while in Arctic Bay and made myself available for individual meetings.

Fortunately, I was able to re-connect with each participant in some way. Three interview participants were not living in Arctic Bay, so I mailed copies of their interview pieces and the summary of research findings. Once again, Facebook proved a valuable resource. In addition to its usefulness as a social forum, I was able to privately follow up with participants, offer to meet if they had questions or concerns, and connect with those who were not in community. One participant gave feedback via private messaging and included elaboration on a particular point made during the interview. Another participant telephoned a few hours after receiving the envelope to confirm that she had read the documents and supported the work. She asked that I

use her real name, Pakak Qamanirq, rather than a pseudonym as she claimed, “I still agree with what I said...I think I said some important things” (Fieldnotes May 10, 2017).

Issuing an envelope of documents to each participant worked well as individuals could review the summary and their interview extracts at their convenience. In fact, summary pages were issued to several community members who were not directly connected with interviews but had expressed an interest or with whom I had informative and interesting conversations. Several people seemed surprised that I was in the community to follow up with participants and encourage feedback. One community member, who was not interviewed, claimed that “usually we don’t hear about it again” (Fieldnotes April 28, 2017). In some cases, I visited participants at their home or they came to my home, which allowed for more in-depth conversations about the work. Several participants approached me around town, days after receiving the transcript pieces and summary notes to confirm that they had reviewed the documents and requested no changes. Prior to opening the envelope, one participant revealed, “you can quote anything I said in the interview...anything to improve education” (Fieldnotes May 10, 2017).

I made presentations, with an Inuk interpreter, of preliminary findings to both the Hamlet Council and the District Education Authority. I inquired about the possibility of speaking with teachers and school staff, but the Principal felt that there was insufficient time in the end-of-year school schedule. That said, I had several productive conversations with teachers working at the school. At community meetings, I issued the diagram representing key themes and a two-page summary in both English and Inuktitut and invited comments and questions from Council and DEA members. Although it had been mentioned during my presentation, one Council member confirmed that I was following up with each participant and seeking their feedback and critical response. Another Council member inquired about my decision to interview young adults. I

explained that while I value the knowledge of Elders, I am interested in the perspectives and experiences of young adults, future Elders, who have had recent involvement with the current school system. Additionally, many of those interviewed are parents to young children who attend (or will attend in the future) Inuujaq School. A DEA member suggested that I include photos of the Arctic landscape in my dissertation. It was also suggested during the DEA meeting that I send copies of the final dissertation to the Nunavut Minister of Education. I confirmed that copies of my dissertation and all transcripts would be made available to the District Education Authority, Inuujaq School, Hamlet Council, and any other organizations (such as Qikiqtani School Operations and the Department of Education) as suggested by participants or community groups.

Following an informal conversation with an Inuk woman in Arctic Bay about my dissertation, including some of the histories of Inuit and Qallunaat relations, she remarked that she couldn't wait to read it. I asked if she was interested in reading a draft of the history chapter and she graciously agreed. She found that the key historical moments had been suitably covered and suggested further elaboration on the piece about Inuit identification, specifically the use of e-disks. I appreciated her time, feedback, recommendations of archival documents, and her willingness to share her knowledge of Inuit naming practices as well as some family and personal understandings of past events.

### **Conclusion**

This ethnography represents particular people's perspectives and experiences of schooling in a particular community at a particular time, through selective interpretation of what I saw and heard. Of course, interpretations are filtered through my position and personal experiences, not only as a Qallunaaq researcher, but as a former teacher in the community.

Although analysis has been informed by my developing understandings Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, the language, and my interactions, observations, and conversations in the field, it is limited by my position as a Qallunaaq and by my inability to speak Inuktitut. What follows is just part of the picture of Inuit students' experiences of schooling in Arctic Bay, but the knowledge embedded in narratives provides rich insights into complexities Inuit continue to face.

## CHAPTER 4: LAND

*I can still see my father drum dancing. He danced with great joy to my mother's singing, chanting loud cries and reaching innermost insights and outermost spirits – making a connection to the past and to the land. The land is about stories. Inuit simply means “the people,” those who live here. We are the place.*

Peter Irniq, “Foreword” in Robert Semeniuk, *Among the Inuit* (2007)

Outsider understandings of the Arctic landscape are usually shaped by stereotypes and assumptions. The far North is often imagined as an inhospitable, unforgiving, and forbiddingly distant land. As Qallunaat visitors venture onto Inuit lands, they regularly remark the vastness of the North and perceive it to be remote, harsh, or desolate. Qallunaat images and representations of the Arctic are formed and transformed in encounters with Northern realities. The ice, cold, darkness of winter, the howling wind or the vast white expanse comprise the popular discourse. Upon arrival in King William Land <sup>41</sup> in 1938, French adventurer Gontran de Poncins (1941/1985) described his first impressions of the Arctic landscape:

Land is flat, desolate and storm-swept. Sown with millions of skull-shaped stones, this barren ground is as sinister as an antique battlefield, a dead earth almost colorless in its brown monotony. The heart sinks as the eye moves round this cheerless expanse, this sapless and skeletal space...Nothing here exalts the spirit, comforts the eye, or challenges man's strength. (p. 25)

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<sup>41</sup> King William Land, also known as King William Island is in the Kitikmeot region of Nunavut. It is known as Qikiqtaq by local people. Ursuqtuuq (Gjoa Haven) is the only community on the island (de Poncins & Galantière, 1985).

Inuit, who occupy Arctic lands, have successfully negotiated their environment, “interacted with and studied the land, and this has guided the formulation of Inuit survival knowledge” (Price, 2008, p. 131). The variability of the environment is a fundamental aspect of the context in which Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit evolves. Although the Arctic can be demanding and unpredictable, Inuit have faced the rigours of the North with strength, resourcefulness, and respect for the land. Rather than perceiving Arctic lands as harsh, barren, bleak, or empty, Inuit understand the land to be beautiful, dynamic, diverse, offering knowledge and nourishment. The land generously provides, nurtures, and sustains people with its gifts (Bennett & Rowley, 2004; Jessen Williamson, 2006, 2011, 2014; Watt Cloutier, 2015). Inuk scholar, Jackie Price (2008) asserts that “For Inuit, *Nunavut*<sup>42</sup> is beautiful and full of resources and potential” (p. 130). Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2015) maintains that “the Arctic is not a frozen wasteland. Its ice and snow are teeming with life – not just marine and animal life, but human life: men, women and children; families and communities” (p. xxi). As opposed to seeing the land as desolate or harsh, Inuit honour the land, recognizing and respecting its power, beauty, generosity and influence.

Without exception, each interview participant made reference to their dynamic relationships with land, their respect for the land and animals, their histories with the land, the knowledge that exists in their interactions with the land, and the sense of responsibility felt towards the land. In this chapter, I offer explanations of Inuit relationships with land, generally considered to be foundational to Inuit culture. I also include my understandings of Inuit experiences with land as a source of cultural identity, learning, and wellbeing. In recalling their experiences of schooling, people often spoke more passionately about their interactions with land as part of the school’s cultural program or spring camp than any other learning throughout their

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<sup>42</sup> Emphasis in original to refer to the Inuktitut use of the word meaning our land or Inuit homeland (Price, 2008).



schooling. Many also recounted childhood connections to land and the meaningful learning that occurs when families travel, gather, camp, tell stories, and hunt on the land. As learning on, from, and with land is integral to Inuit culture, most people interviewed called for greater land-centred learning opportunities within a schooling context.

Inuit “ways of being recognize the land as the source of all existence” (Price, 2007, p. 36), offering everything people might need. Inuit enduring relationships with land are fundamental to Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit and testament to the ways in which the land and its resources provide for Inuit life. In fact, the IQ Task Force (2002) refer to the relationship with land as “the *primordial* relationship (the first relationship and the one from which the others flow).”<sup>43</sup> Simonie Akpalialuk explains, “[Our] relationship to the land is very important because the land is alive, the animals and the sea itself; and you are interacting [with them] ...” (as cited in Freeman, 1998, p. 42). Inuit experiences with land form the foundation of Inuit culture and provide sources of Inuit learning, sustenance, health, and wellbeing (Kirmayer, Fletcher & Watt, 2009).



Figure 17: View of King George V Mountain (Iniksaaluk), from Uluksat Point. Photo taken May 2017.

<sup>43</sup> Emphasis and parenthesis in original. The First Annual Report of the Inuit Qaujimagatuqanginnut (IQ) Task Force is available online but as it is a lengthy document divided by headings and subheadings, the exact paragraph number of quote is unclear. Please see References for website access details.

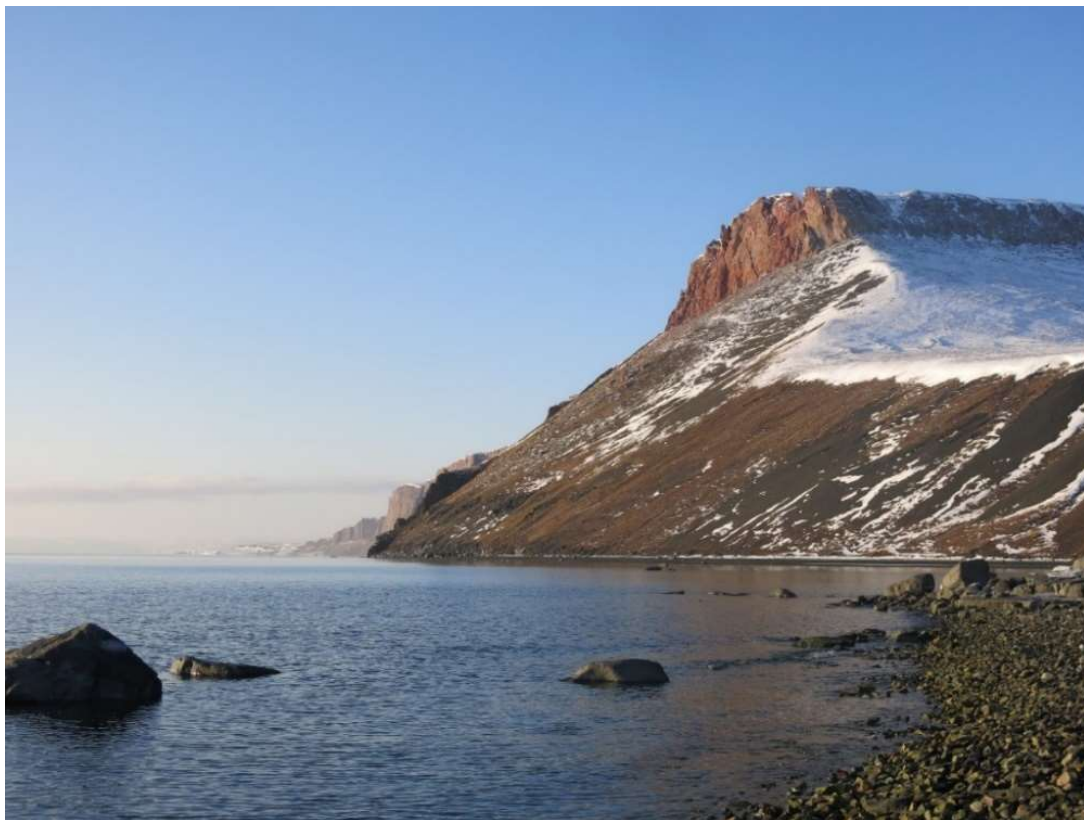


Figure 18: Uluksat Point (on the western side of the Bay), Arctic Bay. Photo taken October 2014.

Throughout this dissertation, *land* refers to the geographical land, ice, water, wind, sky, mountains, plants and animals, but also the spiritual, dynamic, and emotional aspects of land which have sustained Inuit since time immemorial. More than providing sources of food, shelter, and clothing, land is a source of knowledge, strength, culture, and wellbeing. Inuit are physically and spiritually part of the land and believe that their relationships and knowledge also guide the land as “the earth is shaped by people’s thoughts” (Margaret Uyauperk Aniksak, as cited in Bennett & Rowley, 2004, p. 119). My understanding is that for Inuit, the living land is largely a set of relationships that are constantly changing, evolving, and shifting. Land is complex, relational, and all-embracing, encompassing culture, dreams, thoughts, values and beliefs (Collignon, 2006). The Inuit regard “the individual as an interactive constituent of the

landscape” (Fletcher & Denham, 2008, p. 122) and are thus, inseparable from land. Peter Kulchyski (2005) recognizes that Inuit, as with other Aboriginal communities, “exist their landscape” (p. 18). Inuk Elder Mariano Aupilaarjuk explains:

The living person and the land are actually tied up together because without one the other doesn't survive and vice versa. You have to protect the land in order to receive from the land. If you start mistreating the land, then it won't support you...In order to survive from the land, you have to protect it. The land is so important for us to survive and live on; that's why we treat it as part of ourselves. (as cited in Bennett & Rowley, 2004, p. 118)

Interconnected and inextricable relationships with land are integral to Inuit lives. The ability to survive and thrive on the land, adapt to changing environments, rely on practical knowledge and make effective use of available resources is a source of Inuit fulfilment (IQ Task Force, 2002).

*For we Inuit, our history is written on the land. The land has always sustained us. This land is our life.*

Jamie Takkiruq, Nunavut Sivuniksavut student (as cited in Edgar, 2017)

It is significant that the Inuit name of their territory is made up of the Inuktitut root word *nuna* which means “land” and the suffix *-vut* which means “our”. Thus, Nunavut means “our land” or perhaps more precisely, “our homeland” in English, emphasizing Inuit relationships with land as well as Inuit land use and occupancy for thousands of years. Of course, Inuit have used the Inuktitut word ‘nunavut’ for generations, long before land agreements, revealing the

history of Arctic occupancy and culture (Kusugak, 2000; Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated [NTI], 1993). In a broader sense, Inuk scholar Karla Jessen Williamson (2006) explains that while *nuna* is generally translated as ‘land’, it also means “‘total habitat’ including the sea, the ice, the mountains, the air, the animals, fish, and even souls and memories of events and the people who lived in the past” (p. 19).<sup>44</sup> Kulchyski (2005) asserts that “one can [learn to] read the stories inscribed in the landscape with as much care as one reads the narratives of classical history” (p. 18). One may see the rocks, ice, hills, water, and animals but the landscape is also a series of processes and relationships, of questions and possibilities, of memories and stories that inscribe the connections between Inuit, animals, and lands.

Inuit identity is irrevocably and intimately bound to land as Inuit identify themselves and family groups by reference to particular locations on the land using the suffix *-miut* (plural) or *-miutaq* (singular) to mean ‘people of’ (Brody, 2000; Collignon, 2006; Fossett, 2001; QIA, 2013a). Thus, the Ikpiarjukmiut are the people of Ikpiarjuk (Arctic Bay), acknowledging their relations to the land of birth (Jessen Williamson, 2006). Of course, Inuit can be ‘people of’ more than one community or geographical area. Ikpiarjukmiut are also Qikiqtaalungmuit (the Qikiqtaaluk region) and Nunavummiut (the Inuit territory of Nunavut). Inuit identify themselves in relation to the lands they occupy, yet Inuk scholar Jackie Price (2007) asserts that Inuit understand “that the land belongs to no one, as it was free to be respectfully used by all people” (p. 37).

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<sup>44</sup> See also Nuttall (1992).



Figure 19: King George V Mountain (Iniksaaluk), Arctic Bay. Photo taken October 2014.

### **Cultural Identity**

Historically, the *-miut* suffix was used to describe regional groupings of people with kinship ties, in relation to a specific geographical feature of the land or land use, including hunting and harvesting, in a large territory. Ultimately, these place names continue to anchor people’s perceptions, experiences, and memories in particular locations, reminding living Inuit of “their ancient presence on that land” (Collignon, 2006, p. 111). In this sense, land and person are virtually inseparable as place is incorporated into personal identities (Alia, 2009). *Tununiq* is a term which means “the shadow of the sun – the land that is facing away from the sun in reference to the mountains of Bylot Island” (M. Allurut, personal communication, June 2017) and is used to describe the Pond Inlet (Mittimatalik) area. Inuit of Pond Inlet refer to themselves as *Tununirmiut*.

Arctic Bay and the surrounding area is often called *Tununirusiq* which means “the smaller place that is facing away from the sun” (M. Allurut, personal communication, June 2017), a “shaded or shadowy place” (QIA, 2013a, p. 22), in reference to the large mountain, King George V, also known as Iniksaaluk, in front of the community that faces south and other nearby mountains (Grant, 2002; QIA, 2013a; Tigullaraq, 2010). *Tununirusirmiut*, people of the Arctic Bay region, continue to “share a cultural unity based on geography” (QIA, 2013a, p. 22) with Inuit in Pond Inlet. For Inuit, these place names disclose significant cultural information, draw together webs of meaning, inscribe history, and are articulated within culturally distinctive ways of knowing. The named places evoke memories, hold personal and collective significance, convey an affinity with particular areas, express kinship ties, and reveal connections to and knowledge of a living land.

Each interviewee spoke about family traditions of camping in spring or summer, berry-picking, fishing, and hunting with family. Some shared details of particular areas that feature the best fish or plentiful hunting grounds. In interviews, informal conversations, as well as the occasions I joined friends to camp, fish, or have tea on the land, Inuit named places in their own language which describe distinguishing physical or cultural features of landscape, ultimately imparting cultural and personal meanings of geographical locations and conveying those concepts and narratives to others. Conversations often continued after interviews and on one occasion, a map became our focus:

During our conversation, various place names had been mentioned and it dawned on me that there was a large map of the area rolled up in the hallway closet. I grabbed the map and spread it out on the table. He looked at it for a minute and started to orient himself, pointing out a few important places, giving me both English and Inuit names. He pointed

out Ikpikittuarjuk, declared it the best fishing grounds, and traced his finger along the typical route from the community. As he spoke, I was struck by the ways in which his depictions were route oriented, like lines connecting places together. I wish the recorder was still on... (Fieldnotes November 17, 2014)

Place names tell stories of the land and contain histories of people who lived there in the past and people who live there now, suggesting that memories and stories cannot be detached from the land (Collignon, 2006). More than identifying specific locations, “place names may provide a point of entry to the past” (Cruikshank, 1991, p. 354) and offer a sense of historical and cultural continuity.

*The land... is such an important part of our spirit, our culture.*

(Sheila Watt-Cloutier, 2015, p. xv)

The notion of Arctic landscape being bound up with Inuit personal and collective identity emerged in interviews, although often in subtle ways. Individuals seem to learn, understand and experience identity by being ‘on the land’ or going ‘out on the land’, a place separate from the community in which they work, reside, and attend school. I recognize that the physical spaces of Inuit communities, which had been established as camps long before the federal government concentrated Inuit populations into permanent settlements, hold significant histories, memories, and connections to ancestors. However, historically *nuna* refers to land that is not the community settlement. In modern Inuit discourse, the English phrase ‘going out on the land’ or ‘being out on the land’ refers to any activity such as hunting, fishing, camping, walking or travelling on the terrain, the ice, the hills, or the waters beyond the local community. For people



in Arctic Bay, being ‘out on the land’ implies a shift to a separate area, away from or outside the community settlement. For many, being on the land means ‘coming home’ (Marchand, 2014; McElroy, 2008; van Dam, 2008). Although my understandings are situated in my experiences, observations, and relationships with Inuit in a High Arctic community, I recognize that whether Inuit reside in the North or in southern urban spaces, relationships with land are foundational to Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit.<sup>45</sup>

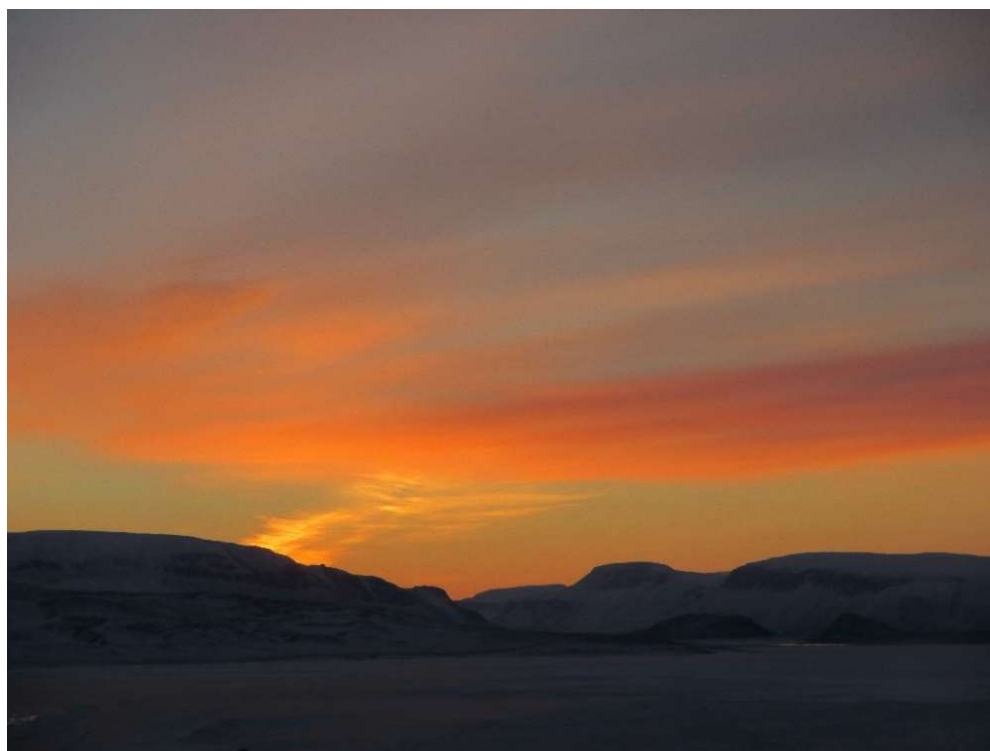


Figure 20: Sunset over the Bay (view towards *Pattatalik*). Photo taken October 2014.

Inuk leader John Amagoalik (2001) claims that traditionally “the land shaped our mind and language, our culture, our legends, our philosophy and our view of life” (p. 9). Certainly, the ways in which Inuit understand the lands upon which they live, travel, and hunt as well as the ways in which they are grounded and informed by their relationships with land is not held in the

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<sup>45</sup> For further discussion of the significance of land for urban Inuit, please see Kushwaha (2013).



past. Inuit have always known how to adapt to new contexts and recognize the continuity between past and present, tradition and modernity (Laugrand & Oosten, 2002). Though Inuit consider their culture to be dynamic and changing, preservation of local and traditional knowledge is of critical importance, particularly in schooling contexts. Pakak Qamanirq, a mother of two in her late 20s, explains:

I still want my Inuit culture to be stronger than Qallunaat culture. Nunavut is changing. I try my best to keep my Inuit traditions, but I want our children to learn more Inuktitut. I want them to learn not only in the school but outside too...on the land, camping.

Inuit approaches to learning have always been experiential and land based. Inuit culture, traditions, and language are formed on land. The norms, values, beliefs and ways in which people view the world and give it meaning are passed from one generation to the next. For decades, Inuit have been calling for the integration of Inuit cultural learning with the land into the school curricula. In fact, Nunavut is the only region in Canada with education legislation mandating all public schooling be based on Indigenous knowledge (NDE, 2007; Government of Nunavut, 2008). While Inuit perspectives inform the basic elements of curriculum in Nunavut and cross-curricular competencies are based on the eight principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, the people with whom I spoke all perceived inadequacies, calling for greater land-centred or land-related learning activities, effective bilingual education, and culturally responsive teaching and learning approaches. Curriculum frameworks and foundation documents are necessary, yet meaningful learning occurs in the ways students, teachers and community members work together and engage each other. More than promoting or honouring Inuit traditions and enacting principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, providing students with opportunities to “explore the

traditions, knowledge, and beliefs that have helped Inuit know and belong to the land through the cycles of seasons and years” (NDE, 2007, p. 22) is a necessary step in guaranteeing Inuit knowledges take their rightful place as valuable, legitimate, and academic knowledges within schools. In fact, as Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is the foundation of schooling across Nunavut, there is a risk of dismissing or simplifying it if taken out of the land context.

*Our land is the mother, our heart, it's the only thing that takes our pain away.*

(Tanya Tagaq, Inuit Studies Conference, October 9th, 2016)

### **Land and Wellbeing**

Inuit understandings of wellbeing include the experiences of gathering with family to share food, talk, or spend time together, and be with the land (Kral, Idlout, Minroe, Dyck, & Kirmayer, 2011). Ultimately, it is a grounding in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, an ongoing focus on Inuit knowledge and reliance on cultural strengths that supports cultural continuity and wellbeing. Respecting, following, and enacting Inuit cultural knowledge including sewing, hunting, berry-picking, sharing and eating country food, gathering with family, and speaking Inuktitut all contribute to health and wellbeing (Pauktuutit Women’s Association, 2004; Tagalik, 2010a, 2015).

Pitsula Akavak, a seasoned Inuk counselor, points to the need to turn to the land for healing to address pain caused by trauma, abuse, and cultural dissonance, explaining that “the land is healing on its own...you can heal so much when you are in nature, it calms you down” (as cited in Pauktuutit Inuit Women’s Association, 2004, p. 20). The healing possibilities of the land are well recognized by Inuit (Laugrand & Oosten, 2009; Ootoova et al., 2001; Pauktuutit

Inuit Women's Association, 2004; Searles, 2006; Tagalik, 2010a, 2015). Forced relocations or dislocations, residential schooling, rapid socio-cultural changes, and assimilation policies have impacted Inuit relationships with land. As Inuit understand "the individual as in constant transaction with the physical environment" (Kirmayer et al., 2009, p. 292), interacting and (re)connecting with land are among healing strategies employed by Inuit. Community-based initiatives such as *Ilisaqsivik* in Clyde River (*Kangirqtugaapik*), facilitate land programming, among other projects with youth, families, and Elders to support individual and community health and wellbeing (Ilisaqsivik, 2017). *Somebody's Daughter* is a land-based learning and healing summer program for woman across Nunavut, hosted by the Kivalliq Inuit Association (2017). As land holds a central place in Inuit lives, culture, histories, and experiences, being with the land and engaging in traditional cultural activities can heal the wounds inflicted by contemporary life.

*The Bathurst Mandate*, later replaced by *Pinasuaqtavut* meaning "that which we've set out to do" (Government of Nunavut, 1999) identifies four priority areas as part of the vision of Nunavut. One of the key priorities is *Inuuqatigiittarniq* which means "the healthy inter-connection of mind, body, spirit and environment" (p. 3). Inuit strive for holistic balance with land and often realize spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical, and mental wellbeing in their connections and experiences with land as it is imbued with collective cultural histories, meanings, and memories (Fletcher & Denham, 2008; Kulchyski, 2005; Styres, 2011; Tagalik, 2010a, 2015). For most Inuit with whom I spoke, being with the land away from the community settlement offers a quiet space to be purposefully reflective. Additionally, interactions with the land can be invigorating, inspire mental clarity, and bring joy to individuals and families spending time together fishing, hunting, or camping. For many, the land is a place of familiarity

and comfort which provides spiritual strength and lessons on how to live in a good way (Price, 2007).

Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit is rooted in process as Inuit observe, apply, practice, and experience knowledge in the expectation of living a good life (Tagalik, 2015). One of the key guiding principles is the concept of *Avatimik Kamattiarniq* which involves respect and care for the land, animals, and the environment. The value of environmental stewardship extends beyond environmental protection and wildlife management but points to the interrelationships of all environmental elements and underscores an intimate reciprocal relationship between people and animals. The principle of *avatimik kamattiarniq* comprises an awareness of the interconnectedness of ecological dimensions and the ways in which the environment is impacted by human behaviour (Arnakak, 2000; IQ Task Force, 2002; NDE, 2007). Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2015) asserts that Inuit “intense affinity with the land and with wildlife taught us how to live in harmony with the natural world...Inuit have lived sustainably in our environment. We have been stewards of the land” (p. xvi). To many people, Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit underpins Inuit social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and physical wellbeing. Inuit recognize that the knowledge and cultural strengths that sustained them through contact, colonial oppression, and policies of assimilation and forced relocation have directly contributed to Inuit wellbeing for centuries (IQ Task Force, 2002; Tagalik, 2010a).

Healing, for most Inuit is embedded in the need to strive for and to maintain harmony and balance. It is the ongoing process or movement to a better place, a place of wellbeing. Thus, the process of healing is a holistic endeavour, incorporating all facets of life, to reclaim wellbeing (Fletcher & Denham, 2008; Pauktuutit Inuit Women’s Association, 2004; Tagalik, 2015). The discourse of Inuit healing is often positioned in relation to social problems which exist in Inuit

communities, as they exist for so many people across the country, including addictions, violence, suicide, trauma, and abuse which are tragic consequences of the legacy of colonial injustices, suffering, and ongoing colonial impositions. Inuit interview participants did not explicitly refer to the notion of healing as a process or their personal experiences of healing. Rather, their accounts of connections with land reveal the diverse ways in which those experiences and respectful and meaningful relationships with land contribute to emotional, mental, spiritual, intellectual, and physical health and wellbeing.

Inuit interview participants frequently described their land experiences as rejuvenating, freeing, and allowing for greater focus and heightened awareness. Paul\*, a man in his 20s, appreciates the simplicity of spending time with the land, learning to heed lessons of land away from pressures of modern life. Paul \* realizes that “out on the land, we learn to enjoy the little things.” More than an escape from the realities of daily life, travelling, fishing, hunting, or camping on the land inspires solitude and calmness, a sense of wholeness, and is an important aspect of wellbeing. For Paul \*, being on the land enables engagement in the process of coming to know, perhaps through emotions or spirituality, the teachings of land and to (re)direct attention on moments, lessons, or elements that are gratifying, nurturing, and sustaining.

The intimate relationship Ikpiarjukmiut (people from Ikpiarjuk or Arctic Bay) share with land influences characterizations of community life, which often feels increasingly isolated from the land. Engagement with land can also offer a sense of redemption. Pakak Qamanirq, a woman in her 20s explains:

Our land is free. I know our town is small and isolated and it gets wild sometimes because people get tired of it, tired of each other. But when you're out on the land, you're away from all that, it's so free.

Being with land offers physical, emotional, and mental distance from the disruptions and exasperations of “town” and from overcrowded homes, sadly all-too-common in many Inuit communities. Furthermore, the land can offer a sense of calm as individuals manage emotional contexts and navigate tensions and complexities that arise from living in contemporary settlements. It is not uncommon for Inuit to retreat out onto the land in times of personal crisis (Fieldnotes November 7, 2014). Yet, the interconnected and reciprocal relationships between Inuit and land means that land represents more than a vast, open, reflective space to escape the confines of contemporary communities. Rather, the sense of freedom that is experienced on the land and in relationship with land, perhaps stems from an openness to cultural teachings of land as well as engagement with personal memories, histories, and shared cultural experiences which are inscribed on the land (Kulchyski, 2005). To interact with or travel through the land is a reminder of gatherings, stories, traditions, and cultural strength (Fletcher & Denham, 2008; Styres et al., 2013). In this way, the land can embrace emotions or contain an individual’s troubles, hurt, or stress thereby liberating people from problems and bringing a sense of happiness, peace, and harmony.

In exploring the ways in which experiences with land contribute to emotional and social wellbeing, in interviews, informal interactions and observations, I paid close attention as Inuit recounted stories or reminisced about their lives, remarking *how* participants communicated their experiences on the land. Frequently, I noticed expressions of affection and fulfilment in gentle smiles, deep breaths as if savouring the memory, and widened eyes in affirmation. The energy in households and around the community as families prepare for the spring Fishing Derby or summer camping excursions is electric and palpable. Women hold informal gatherings to sew or repair tents, make warm clothing, share patterns, swap material, and laugh together. Men can be

found outdoors often working together building qamutiks (sleds) or *iglutaqs* (sleds with shelter/storage space), fetching supplies, or repairing snowmobiles in preparation. Fundraising activities and plans for community-wide fishing, hunting, or camping events dominate conversations around town, in the Co-op and Northern stores, and in living rooms (Fieldnotes October 2014; December 2014; May 2015; June 2015). The sharing of resources, collaboration, and the ways in which Ikpiarjukmiut support each other in preparation, but also while out on the land hunting or camping, reflects Inuit recognition of social interdependence between families and friends and is evidence of land inspiring collective social wellbeing.

For many, the land can be a place that has invigorating and inspirational effects. Bruno Attagutsiak, a man in his 20s recognizes:

“Even just being out on the land it can refresh your mind and we have less problems learning. It’s a chance to have a clear mind and be more focused on what you need to know.”

The mental and spiritual clarity offered in spending time on the land allows for mindfulness, intellectual wellbeing, and creates a curiosity, openness, and preparedness for learning possibilities. Moreover, it is the embodied experiences of land that gestures to meaningful learning in relation to the cultural knowledge of a living land. Inuit learners engage land in mutual and respectful relationships recognizing the lessons of the land as essential. Given that the land shapes Inuit minds, language, culture, philosophy, and views of life (Amagoalik, 2001), students and educators should collectively come to better understandings of the ways in which land informs teaching and learning. Additionally, as Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit forms the foundation of schooling across Nunavut, pedagogical approaches in Inuujaq School should

acknowledge the “*primordial relationship*” Inuit have with their lands to support effective learning and student success.



Figure 21: Inuit men drilling hole for ice fishing at the Fishing Derby, Ikpikittuarjuk (approximately 100 km south of Arctic Bay). Photo taken May 2017.

People consistently spoke positively about experiences of learning with the land with teachers and classmates. The opportunity to learn on the land with Elders seemed to inspire Leslie Oyukuluk, a woman in her 20s, currently enrolled at Arctic College. Leslie reflects on her own school-organized experiences of learning with and from the land:

Spring camp.... those days were pretty awesome. Because more students would learn, learn traditional things. We used to go out on the land camping for about a week or more. We watched how the Elder hunted, watched how he was doing it and we learned. It's motivating for younger students and they need to learn their traditions. I think kids are



motivated for camping and hunting now. Learning our traditions is what gets me. It makes me smile, yeah.

The school-organized spring camping experiences are important in ensuring a sense of continuity in the context of contemporary community life. Inuit cultural tradition is found in the landscape and in the patterns of social relationships (Fletcher & Denham, 2008). As the land is extolled with shared values, knowledge and histories, Inuit strengths, traditions, and resilience are enacted and embodied in experiences and connections with land (Styres, 2011; Styres et al., 2013). In addition to viewing the camping opportunities as a cultural imperative for youth who can continue to observe and practice traditional skills passed down through generations, Leslie imparts cultural pride in the ongoing teaching and learning of traditional practices. The affect (it “gets me...it makes me smile, yeah”) of witnessing young people engaging with the land and learning with Elders is inspiring and points to the land as an energizing force of teaching and learning.



Figure 22: Grade 9 students from Inuujaq School. Spring Camp, learning to hunt seal. Photo taken May 2017.

The numerous and diverse ways in which land pedagogies contribute to wellbeing include bolstered self-confidence and motivation, openness and preparedness to possibilities of learning, and increased student morale which arises from social connections between students, Elders and teachers learning valuable Inuit traditions, and knowledge-sharing (Fletcher & Denham, 2008; Hirsch et al., 2016; Kirmayer et al., 2009; Kral et al., 2011). Arctic Bay community members recognize that being with land enhances emotional, social, physical, and spiritual wellbeing of young people. Paul \* spoke about the activities of youth during summer months when school is not in session:

“The community should have summer activities, so kids don’t say up all night. Maybe hunting in the summer, going out on a boat, fishing, berry picking. Going out on the land.”

Community facilitation of organized youth recreation activities, particularly in relation to hunting, fishing and camping on the land, away from the community settlement enables students to collaborate with land and remain connected to cultural practices.

In a recent Facebook post in the Ikpiarjuk News group, a community member posted the following question: “Do you think there should be a youth centre here in Arctic Bay? Please comment” (January 2016). While several community members “liked” the post, one particular comment highlighted the value Inuit place on relationships with land. In response to the question posed, a man in his 20s wrote, “Go out on the land, not a youth centre. Out on the land is all together better for youth” (Facebook post January 9, 2016). Although no further explanation was offered, and no additional comments made, I understood this response as a gesture to the importance of ensuring the emotional and social wellbeing of Inuit young people in the context of rapid social and cultural change. Inuit youth can continue to develop meaningful and

respectful relationships with land by collectively learning cultural knowledge, language, and skills from land. There is an implication that in order to confront contemporary challenges, youth need to continue to come to better understandings of their relationships with land, be open to the lessons of land, but also engage with knowledge that has sustained Inuit for centuries.

In addition to the emotional and social wellbeing influenced by spending time on the land, hunting and camping, the land continues to be a source of sustenance, contributing to the physical health of Inuit. Families in Arctic Bay, as with other Inuit communities, continue to engage in harvesting resources of the land and surrounding waters. Suzanne\*, a woman in her 30s, explained that during the weekends, “we get together at my mom’s and she invites other Inuit to have some country food.” Certainly, the interconnectivity of sharing country food among family and friends, as well as gatherings on the land and community feasts promotes the collective social wellness of the community. Additionally, sharing country food is a way to bring the land into the community settlement. Throughout the community of Arctic Bay, resources of land are visibly present as seal skins and animal hides are stretched on frames, drying outside homes. A strong cultural ethic of sharing as well as relational supports creates harmony and contributes to Inuit health and wellbeing. Hunters share their catch with family, Elders, and community members. Photos and announcements of Sunday brunches, family birthday parties, or even weeknight family meals are regularly posted on community Facebook group pages accompanied by the invitational note “everyone welcome” (Fieldnotes November 2014).



Figure 23: *Qisik* (a seal skin) stretched to dry.

Photo taken October 2014.



Figure 24: *Pitsi* (dried fish, arctic char)

Photo taken June 2017.

Food sharing strengthens social relationships, and promotes cohesion, and the sharing and consumption of country food in particular is an important aspect of nutrition and health (Price, 2007; Watt-Cloutier, 2015). *Inuksiutit*, Inuit food or country food, food from the land such as *tuktu* (caribou), *maktaaq* (whale skin with fat), *nattiq* (ringed seal), *kanguq* (goose) and *iqaluk* (fish, arctic char) is regularly eaten by Ikpiarjukmiut and is fresher, more economical, and healthier than many options at the local Northern store. While enrolled in a post-secondary course and living in another Northern community, a friend from Arctic Bay claimed that she occasionally lacked focus and struggled to concentrate on her coursework. Ruth felt strongly that it was due to the absence of *nattiq* (ringed seal), an important food source, in her diet. As a student living outside her home community and thus separated from family members who share

the bounty of their hunt, Ruth’s course instructor assisted in connecting her with a local hunter. As the land shares its gifts with humans, so too should one share with others what one receives from the animal (Gombay, 2010). After preparing, sharing, and consuming the nattiq, Ruth felt reenergized, motivated, and focused, affirming nattiq and other country food as important in maintaining physical and mental health and wellbeing (Ruth Oyukuluk, personal communication, May 2017). It is not uncommon for Inuit to send country food to family members living in the South to sustain good health, reflecting the fact that Inuit health and social wellbeing continues to be rooted in relationships with land. According to Jessen Williamson (2000), animals “provide us with the means of life and enrichment of our souls” (p. 126).



Figure 25: Women sharing *tuktu* and *ipigluk* (caribou and caribou leg). Photo taken May 2017.

Appeals for and offers to share country food frequently appear in community Facebook posts. I recall an occasion in which a friend posted on the Arctic Bay Facebook group requesting country food for her elderly mother who was unwell and struggling with sleep deprivation during the dark season. Recognizing the restorative powers of Inuksiutit, she explained to me that her



mother needed to eat country food to help with her exhaustion but also to soothe her so that she could rest and feel better. In response to the Facebook post, reaffirming Arctic Bay as an interdependent community, a family member dropped off some nattiq (ringed seal) which was prepared and shared among our group. Following our meal of *nattiq uujuq* (boiled seal), I became aware of a palpable sense of relief and confidence among family that the consumed country food would settle *Ningiuk* (grandmother or older woman) (Fieldnotes December 4, 2014). While the country food provided nutrition, and contributed to her physical health, it seemed that her emotional, social, and spiritual health lifted as well. Arguably, the social gathering of family and friends to prepare and share food was important in addressing her personal and emotional needs. As an elderly woman who spent most of her life living on the land, the consumption of country food offers a spiritual connection to land and her traditional life, perhaps strengthens her cultural identity, and reaffirms Inuit interconnected relationships with animals and hunting (Borré, 1994).



Figure 26: Woman using an *ulu* (knife) to prepare *ikaluk* (fish, arctic char). Photo taken December 2014.

Inuit understand the powerful influence of country food on health, as well as spiritual and material wellbeing (Borré, 1994; Gombay, 2010; Kirmayer et al, 2009; Nappaaluk, 2014; Ootoova et al., 2001; Price, 2007; Watt-Cloutier, 2015). The land provides an abundance of resources including nutritious food, medicines, materials for warmth, tools, and cooking and fuel oils. Animal pelts including caribou hides and seal skins are frequently used to create warm clothing for hunting and camping activities. Moreover, for Inuit, consuming Inuksiutit or country food while hunting, camping, or travelling on the land is essential in maintaining strength and stamina to withstand extreme conditions. Friends often affectionately commented on my flushed complexion following consumption of country food, reminding me of its warming and therapeutic effects. I remember learning from Inuit friends: <sup>46</sup>

I listened to hunting stories and the experiences of land they were willing to share, asking questions along the way. Eventually, I felt comfortable enough to ask about my first experience of eating seal meat many years prior. I tried to describe the tingling sensation felt in my feet and the warmth which came over me. I wasn't sure if it was a common response or my body's reaction to unfamiliar food. The two men nodded knowingly and explained that it was my blood warming, getting stronger from the seal meat. I was then kindly cautioned that if I were to ever join them on a hunting excursion, I would need to eat seal meat for energy and warmth – it would be the only way I would survive the cold.

(Fieldnotes November 26, 2014)

Inuit relationships with land embedded in hunting and camping activities, harvesting, sharing and eating country food, and cultural values are integral to Inuit lives. Respectful

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<sup>46</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the healing properties of seal meat, please see Borré (1994).

relationships with land underpin traditional Inuit spirituality. Inuit hold the fundamental belief that as a people and culture, they are “inseparable from the land” (IQ Task Force, 2002). Thus, interacting with the land, learning from the land, consuming resources of the land and sharing knowledge and experiences of the land all contribute to the production of health and wellbeing in Inuit communities. Hunting, harvesting, and eating country food on the land is an affirmation of Inuit hunting identities and traditional skills that have sustained Inuit since time immemorial. The land contains cultural traditions, sustenance, shared histories, personal and collective memories and teaches important virtues of patience, mindfulness, endurance, and tenacity.

### **A Gathering Place**



Figure 27: Camping at Ikpikittuarjuk (located on Moffet Inlet approx. 100 km south of Arctic Bay) for the annual Fishing Derby. Photo taken May 2017.

In recalling childhood activities, participants fondly shared memories of camping with family, travelling on the land, learning to hunt and fish, picking geese eggs and berries and attending Spring Camp with their classmates as part of the school’s cultural program. For many,



land is a gathering place (Haig-Brown, 2009) that brings families, friends, and community members together to camp, fish, hunt, share stories and experiences. Of course, opportunities to be with the land are less frequent for some, given the high cost of gas and equipment needed for land travel. The northern location of Arctic Bay also creates difficulties in acquiring and maintaining equipment. Inuit community members regularly post Facebook ads seeking snowmobile electrical or engine parts, drive belts, or bearings to repair machines (Fieldnotes May 2015). Paul \*, a man in his 20s, recognizes the challenges:

We used to go out camping a lot and travel to other towns to visit relatives. Now that's all gone since it keeps getting harder....things are getting expensive. We used to go egg picking, geese hunting, seal hunting, drying fish. We would spend two weeks, three weeks out on the land. Not really anymore....broken down skidoo.

Additionally, for those employed in non-subsistence work, there are difficulties balancing wage labour with opportunities to be out with the land. That said, for each participant the connections and shared experiences on the land with family and as part of school-organized activities were closely associated with happiness, wellness, and the acquisition of important knowledge.

Although land is considered the *primordial relationship*, relationships with family, relationships with community and the relationship with one's own inner spirit together form the four relationships foundational to Inuit culture (IQ Task Force, 2002). The guiding principle of *Pijitsirniq* refers to the concept of serving, providing for, or commitment and responsibility to family, and by extension to a larger network of community and society. The family is the means of transferring language, knowledge, culture and values, providing an environment within which children learn and develop (IQ Task Force, 2002). As Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit is holistic in its

perspectives and approach and aspects of life are interrelated, it is not surprising that for Inuit, land and family are generally inseparable. Typically, Inuit go out on the land with family to hunt, fish, pick berries, or camp. Several interview participants spoke of important skills learned on the land from parents or other family members. Being out on the land with family provides further opportunities to learn and practice traditional skills, come to know the environment, and understand migration of animals. Additionally, family members have roles and responsibilities and rely on each other to stay safe. Max Kalluk, a man in his late 20s, explains it in this way:

This is how I see our way of life connected to the land. When we're out camping, all of us go. Our Elders, parents, and kids. So, we cooperate together and keep things going. Our leaders are usually the Elders. We do what they say and follow their instructions...we're expected to because the land has consequences.

The extreme cold and unpredictable Arctic climate presents considerable risks and challenges. Inuit are resourceful and continue to thrive in the Arctic by successfully adapting to conditions. While dangers have always been present, rapid environmental changes resulting in thinning sea ice, melting permafrost, and variable weather patterns make navigating and weather prediction even more difficult. The changing conditions of sea ice including decreasing ice thickness, roughness, and earlier break-up of sea ice makes travel dangerous. Stories of hunters or campers stranded on the open tundra during an unexpected storm, drifting off on ice detached from the mainland, or plunging through thin ice are sadly, not uncommon. Cooperation as a family unit is essential for survival (M. Allurut, personal communication, May 2017; Price, 2008; Watt-Cloutier, 2015; Fieldnotes, September 2014, November 2014, May 2017).

Spending time with family on the land camping, hunting, sharing food and experiences contributes to strengthening family relationships which hold a central place in Inuit life. Kelly\*, a mother of two in her 20s, spoke of her childhood camping on the land:

When I was growing up, we used to go out camping as a family. Out on the land. I really liked to go out camping, I wouldn't miss it when my family went out. I always had to follow them anywhere they went.

Bruno Attagutsiak has similar recollections:

As a child growing up, I used to go out on the land with my family, every year. We still do. We're planning on going out camping for the long weekend. We go out every summer. There used to be a lot of caribou in that area, we'd go caribou hunting every year by boat.

Each person interviewed spoke warmly of experiences of being out on the land with family. Traditional values and practices are reinforced by hunting, harvesting, camping, and the sharing of country food. Moreover, social ties and familial bonds are fostered and maintained through shared experiences, learning, conversations, and shared stories. The relationship with one's own spirit and sense of identity is fostered through *Pilimmaksarniq* – the concept of gaining skills and knowledge through learning, doing, and practice. *Pilimmaksarniq* involves building personal capacity and becoming empowered not just through skills acquisition but also by invoking a sense of responsibility. Inuit children are expected to adapt to continually changing circumstances, learn the art of discipline, and become prepared to take their roles in the family

and community (Arnakak, 2002; IQ Task Force, 2002; NDE, 2007). Joseph\*, a man in his 30s, recalls childhood experiences with the land that connected families and community members:

There were lots of activities. Many people were outside more and there were more gatherings. Games and storytelling. All the good stuff. We used to go out to Victor Bay and go spring camping. We used to go to the small gatherings, used to go to have fun. There was no other reason but to go have fun.

The social gatherings on the land are perhaps a way of celebrating relationships with land and nurturing family and community relationships. On the land, Inuit share knowledge, teach children and pass along Inuit culture through storytelling (Wachowich et al., 1999), which has always been a vital aspect of Inuit social life. In Inuit stories, the land is usually central. Stories reveal family and local histories in relation to land, remembrances of the past, and creation stories. Inuit stories told in gatherings express relationships between land, humans and animals and often recreate a particular event or experience on the land such as a hunt, descriptions of trails, or a brush with death. As such, stories are entrenched in the physical environment where Inuit camp, hunt, and travel (Aporta, 2016; Wachowich et al., 1999).

Social gatherings on the land are important for fostering social interaction, collaboration, and trust among family but also function to develop strong community ties. Louisa\*, a woman in her 20s, attended school in Arctic Bay, as well as two other communities in Nunavut and is currently enrolled in a program at Arctic College in Iqaluit. She recognizes the importance of developing positive and trusting relationships between Inuit students and their teacher:

“I remember going out with my class to learn how to seal hunt out on the ice. I think doing these sorts of activities bring the teacher and students closer.”



Figure 28: Campsite near Arctic Bay for Nunavut Quest (Annual Dog Team Race). Photo Taken April 2008.

Bruno Attagutsiak, a man in his 20s, also recalls events which brought the school and community together:

In school, I remember there used to be a lot of activities, when the sun comes up in the spring, on the first day everybody would go out on the ice. The community would be invited, we used to play games and make inuksuk in the snow. There used to be competitions and activities out on the ice. They used to go out on the land more.

Everybody would go out on the land, there would be dog teams. I think they [the school] kind of stopped doing it, I don't know why. I would like to see it come back. It was good to say outside more often instead of just being inside the school.

The contexts of many conversations involved personal and family interactions with land, growing up, and schooling experiences. As such, interview participants often spoke in past tense, recalling childhood memories, events, family activities, and school days. Despite some modern challenges previously mentioned, many families continue to camp, hunt, fish, travel and gather together on the land.



Figure 29: Community members gathered at Ikpikittuarjuk (located on Moffet Inlet approx. 100 km south of Arctic Bay) for the annual Fishing Derby. Photo taken May 2017.

The repeated calls for increased opportunities to learn with and from the land underpins the fundamental belief that Inuit people and culture are “inseparable from the land” (Alia, 2009; IQ Task Force, 2002). Community-wide events including Nunavut Quest, the annual dog-sled

race for which Arctic Bay acts as either the starting or finishing point, or the May Fishing Derby or return of the sun in the spring are occasions to evoke relationships with land, develop social connections, as well as foster community identity, and cohesion. Perhaps more importantly, school or student participation in these activities acknowledges holistic perspectives of learning and incorporates the four primary relationships which form the basis of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and are essential to Inuit culture: the relationship of people to their land and by extension to their culture; relationship to one's family; relationship of an individual to his or her own inner spirit; and the relationship to one's community or organization (IQ Task Force, 2002). Inuit students are informed by land and by personal, familial and community relationships. Moreover, Inuit students are influenced by knowledge, language, traditions, and ceremonies enacted on the land.

### **Inspiring Knowledge**

For Inuit, the land inspires and offers knowledge. In fact, Inuit recognize that “knowledge exists within the rhythm and realities of the land” (Price, 2007, p. 38). Inuit experiences of learning are based on a family-centred lifestyle, in relation to land. As with many Aboriginal peoples, the land is the original ‘classroom’, the first teacher, and source of knowledge (Haig-Brown & Hodson, 2009; Simpson, 2014; Styres, 2011; Watt-Cloutier, 2000). Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2000) celebrates the knowledge of the land, recognizing the profound learning offered by the living land. She explains:

we had our parents and Elders to teach us, but the land was our greatest teacher. Learning to live on the land, overcoming the difficulties with intelligence, ingenuity, patience, courage, a sense of humour, and cooperation is what taught our spirit and shaped who we were as a people. We can teach about this in the classroom, but we cannot acquire the spirit. The only place this can be learned is on the land. (p. 124)

Traditionally for Inuit children, the land is their education and meaningful learning occurs in their connections to the land. Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2015) explains that “the discipline of land” was “the traditional way in which we educated our children” (p. xv). Significant lessons arise from interacting and collaborating with the land. Perhaps more importantly, the knowledge offered by the land is knowledge that is deemed essential and most valuable to Inuit. At the 2016 Inuit Studies Conference held in St. John’s, Newfoundland, Maatalii Okalik, President of the National Inuit Youth Organization, gave a keynote address regarding the education of Inuit youth. She spoke passionately about harvesting her first caribou in Arviat and claimed that she holds the education received on the land in higher esteem than the Political Science degree she is pursuing in Ottawa. In fact, she reminded the audience that “we [Inuit] are still here by virtue of that knowledge” (M. Okalik, personal communication, October 10, 2016).

In many Indigenous communities, the purpose of education is to strengthen personal, social, and cultural relationships to the land and natural environment in addition to learning the skills necessary for living within contemporary society (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005). Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2014) claims that Indigenous education “comes through the land...and comes from being enveloped by land” (p. 9). Moreover, “we shouldn’t just be striving for land-based pedagogies. The land must once again *become* the pedagogy” (p. 14, emphasis in original). Ensuring students have access to learning on the land and experiencing land in schooling contexts is important in contributing to developing Inuit understandings of the ways the world works and enacting Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit within the schooling framework. Of course, knowledge and skills are contextually interdependent, developing from interactions among people, the land, and tools used. Bruno Attagutsiak, a man in his 20s, shared memories of learning cultural knowledge and skills:



Our cultural teacher used to take us out on the land sometimes, even walk around the beach to get supplies we needed and then return to the school. We had many choices of things to make. He taught us how to make qamutiks and tools. We could suggest something and he would teach us how to make it. Sometimes he would draw it or show me how to do it or suggest that if I try another way it would be easier. I remember walking on the beach. I remember learning how to make an ulu, that was my favourite. I learned how to make a knife, a harpoon, harpoon head, line - all the things we need when we're out seal hunting.

For Bruno, his cultural teacher, and presumably other classmates, the land stimulates the production of knowledge and the creation of useful tools. Max Kalluk also spoke about making tools:

When I was younger, we used to go out hunting for the day with an instructor. As I got older, we learned more trades, making tools, which was useful because we were taught how to use the hunting knife we made. We went to spring camp each year too, but those sorts of activities didn't happen often.

Certainly, the land inspires creativity and provides endless resources that relate to every area of the school curriculum. The Arctic environment is arguably one of the most appropriate locations to explore such matters as climate change, animal adaptation, and issues of social, economic, and environmental sustainability. The most valuable resources from which to teach topics such as comparative anatomy, ecology of Arctic fish, classification of lichen species, weather patterns, or rocks and minerals, are outside the walls of the classroom. Students can access Inuit knowledge

in practice and in relationship with teachers, Elders, and other school personnel. Furthermore, collaborating with land provides an important entry point for questions, discussions, and further exploration.

The Alaska Native Knowledge Network (ANKN, 2011) is an online portal for gathering and sharing publications, lessons, and teaching units related to Alaska Native knowledge systems and ways of knowing. Included in the database are numerous culturally-based adaptable resources, which span across grade levels, and link curricular content and cultural standards. Incorporating Elders as teachers to facilitate culturally-relevant programming is strongly encouraged. Lesson ideas include locating, naming, and classifying local tundra plants; performing mathematical functions such as estimation, measurement, and geometry while picking berries within a circle plot; and collaborating with Elders to build a working thermometer and learn how temperatures affect subsistence activities.



Figure 30: Jeremy Attagutsiak building a qamutik. Photo taken and included with permission May 2017.

Pakak Qamanirq recognizes the wealth of information and resources offered by the land and the necessity of acquiring that knowledge. Moreover, she reveals a determination and preparedness to be open to the learning possibilities of the land:

I had to learn all the details of our land, our animals, our culture. There was so much to learn. I know how to hunt because someone taught me instead of staying here in the house. If teachers just talk to students, without letting them explore on the land, our culture will weaken.

For Pakak, interactions with land are essential in preserving and supporting Inuit knowledge and culture. Additionally, Inuit recognize the enormity of the knowledge required to be out on the land.

Inuit cultural knowledges and learning emerge in relationship with the land. Environmental and geographical knowledge, hunting skills, and animal harvesting are interlinked and cannot be taught as discrete subjects. Certainly, the Nunavut-approved curriculum and teaching resources (NDE, 2016) recommend numerous materials to support land-based learning including science resources aptly named “Learning Science Away from the Classroom” (p. 66). Inuit study and interact with the science of the land in subsistence activities and many Elders pass on their knowledges of astronomy, ecology, meteorology, and physics to younger generations, generally in relation to practice (Fieldnotes, October 2014, May 2017). Moreover, a collaborative approach to learning with the land, animals, and the environment through the process of observing, listening, practicing and experiencing embodies the principles of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit.

While teaching a lesson on a typical school day, I became aware of the animated voices of two Inuit women speaking outside my classroom door. Although I could not understand their conversation, I sensed enthusiasm in their voices and watched as they hastily and eagerly made their way out the main entrance of the school. Curious, I asked one of the students what was happening, and she told me they were on their way to the shore to see the whales. I immediately stopped the lesson to ask the class more questions. The students told me that belugas migrate along the coast of Baffin Island at the end of October, heading further north to feeding grounds and come very close to shore. During this time, local hunters harvest the whales, share the food among the community members, and celebrate the occasion with a community feast.

Moments later I darted next door to the principal's office who kindly agreed to my proposal of a spontaneous and immediate class trip to see the whale harvest. As we made our way to the shore, I continued to ask students questions about the number of whales and hunting methods. Students described the preparation of the meat and its traditional uses as oil for cooking and *qulliq* (lamp used for light and heat) fuel.

After a few short minutes, we arrived at the shore to find more than ten beluga whales lining the water's edge. Community members were busily hauling whales onto the shore, preparing the meat and enjoying the feast. I became aware that I was the only Qallunaaq on the shore. Surrounded by students from my class, I watched as an Inuk man, who noticed our group, approached us with a slab of maktaaq in his hands. I understood the expectation and accepted the small piece he cut off for me. Students laughed and joked about my first experience of eating country food.

Upon return to our classroom that afternoon, I suggested jumping ahead in our science unit and we spent the following weeks focusing on belugas, including their migration patterns and human impacts on their ecosystem. Students created questions and interviewed a local hunter or someone in their family about hunting practices, dangers, and traditional ways of preparing and preserving maktaaq and meat. Having just seen the whales on the shore and perhaps taking pleasure in the recognition of my lack of knowledge, students worked well and seemed engaged as we worked through the science unit.

I tell this story as a way of highlighting what it means for a teacher to be not only open to learning in an unfamiliar context but to be able to respond spontaneously when the opportunity unexpectedly arises. My experience of the whale harvest <sup>47</sup> is an example of the work I am proposing; the work of watching, listening to, speaking with, and learning from Inuit in an effort to come to better understandings and teach in culturally responsive ways.

I came to understand that for Inuit, cultural knowledge is tied to the land and generally gleaned in two substantive ways: through personal experiences including observations and activity and through oral tradition including storytelling (Collignon, 2006). Bruno Attagutsiak, who is in his early 20s and recently graduated from high school, recalls meaningful learning on the land as a student:

My cultural teacher was an Elder and he took us out on the land...we watched how he hunted and we learned. He used to tell stories too, talking about life on the land, how they used to live, what to do, how hard it was sometimes. That's when everybody in my class got together and learned what we need to know.

The value of knowledge the land offers is clearly vital to Inuit young adults. Understandings and new skills are acquired through careful observation and listening. The stories shared by the Elder feature the land as the central character and include personal histories, memories, and experiences of the past. In recounting or reminiscing about the challenges of living on the land, students are compelled to consider the land in particular ways and respect its power. Engagement with the knowledge offered by the land is a relational process, involving collaboration and

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<sup>47</sup> This experience occurred during my first year of teaching in Nunavut, in a South Baffin community. Although beluga whales migrate through Lancaster Sound to northern waters, they are not commonly harvested in Arctic Bay.

shared memories. Moreover, the knowledge attained from interactions with the land and through the oral traditions of Elders is knowledge that “we need to know” – that which is deemed relevant, necessary, and significant to Inuit.

Eva\*, a mother of three in her 30s, also believes in the importance of land pedagogies, recognizing the ways in which land knowledge is fundamental to Inuit ways of life.

I think there should be more trips on the land. I think it would be useful for students because they could learn how to put up a tent or learn about the past, traditional ways, the way things were done in the past. The basics. It’s like having fun as you learn.

Inuit histories, camping skills, and traditional practices are considered “the basics” of Inuit knowledge in relation to land. The knowledge and skills acquired on the land are regarded as a source of cultural strength and resilience relevant to thriving in the modern world (Kirmayer et al., 2009). Additionally, Eva \*, like many people, regards learning on the land as enjoyable. In asking participants to describe their experiences of school-organized land activities, responses were always favourable. In fact, land-based or land-related learning opportunities with teachers and classmates were frequently described as the *best* part of the school year.

Though the land inspires and offers knowledge, the land also compels knowledge in order to live, travel, hunt, and be connected to it. Inuit perceptions of and relationships with land are entrenched in knowledge passed down through generations. As children grow up, they learn to understand their locations on the land, recognize the terrain and be aware of surroundings. They watch parents and develop a land-based literacy to determine weather patterns, ice conditions, or wind direction based on snow drifts. In my own experiences with the land in both North and South Baffin Island, I relied entirely on the land skills and knowledge of Inuit with whom I

travelled. Paul \*, a man in his 20s, recognizes the generational knowledge-sharing that occurs with the land:

“Out on the land we learned a lot of important skills from our parents who learned from their parents – skinning seals, plucking geese, drying fish, hunting.”

Keen observation, an ability to read the variations in ice configurations and the orientation of snow drifts, as well as listen to the sounds of sea ice are necessary skills to travel, hunt, and ultimately survive on the land.

### **Land as a Schooling Priority**

Given that for Inuit, land is the *primordial relationship* and the one from which all others flow, and Inuit Qaujimaqatigait forms the foundation of schooling across Nunavut, it only stands to reason that many Inuit with whom I spoke desire greater meaningful opportunities to learn on, from, and with the land within a schooling context. Ten years following the development of the 1996 document *Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective*, Lynn Aylward (2012) conducted interviews with curriculum developers who believe that “education needs to be firmly anchored in Nunavut communities, on the land, outside classrooms, such that cultural and linguistic maintenance is possible” (p. 223).

As has been previously discussed, Inuit relationships with land contribute to wellbeing and inspire knowledge. Land is the first teacher, a place of learning, a place of memories and histories, a gathering place, and a source of traditions, nourishment, healing, and cultural identity. Barnhardt & Kawagley (2005) argue that for Indigenous students, learning should begin with details relevant to the student’s knowledge and experiences. Connecting learning with the cultural and physical environment is important in sustaining Indigenous knowledge,

nourishing relationships with land, and enriching students' educational experiences. The repeated appeals to incorporate learning on, learning from, and learning with the land in schooling reaffirms what Inuit have been expressing for decades – the need for schooling to reflect Inuit culture and practices. Perhaps not surprisingly, the comments made in interviews were echoed in informal conversations with Inuit friends around kitchen tables and in my observations, and experiences both as a teacher and researcher with Inuit out on their land.



Figure 31: Grade 9 students from Inuujaq School. Spring Camp, learning to hunt seal. Photo taken May 2017.

As Inuit approaches to teaching and learning are holistic, the guiding principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as well as the four primary Inuit relationships including relationships with land, family, community and inner spirit, cannot be extracted from the Inuit cultural context of life on the land, as it is that context which gives each principle and primary relationship meaning (IQ Task Force, 2002). Each of the guiding principles is interrelated, fostered, and enacted when Inuit interact with, and learn from land both outside and even within classroom walls.

Ultimately, Inuit desires to learn with and from the land are explicit appeals for curriculum and



pedagogy in accordance with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. That said, Qallunaat teachers who wish to incorporate land-based learning activities should work to engage students on meaningful levels and consider the contexts of cultural principles. An afternoon fishing trip may give students an opportunity to develop and practice cultural skills, but it is important to try and extend the learning and draw connections to principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and other curricular programming.

Almost everyone interviewed articulated the need for greater opportunities to learn from and with the land, with several suggesting that it should be the foremost goal or priority of the school in their community. These appeals for greater land-centred learning opportunities are not superficial, romantic desires to return to the past and to ancestral ways of life. Nor are Inuit simply wanting to engage in experiential activities with the land. Rather, community members continue to recognize the need to ground schooling in Inuit cultural strengths so that students may successfully navigate contemporary contexts (NDE, 2007). Inuit can, as they always have, apply the learning from valuable lessons found in relation to land to modern concerns.

David \*, a man in his 30s who grew up in Arctic Bay and attended Inuujaq School, recognizes the knowledge, skills, and learning that comes from interactions with land:

I think there should be more Inuit culture taught in schools. Land trips, taking kids out hunting, that happened when I was a student but not as much now. When I was in school, the land trips taught me quite a bit – hunting skills, things like that. I think that should be a priority for the school: more outdoor, I mean, camping trips, land trips, traditional stuff.

Pakak Qamanirq echoes these comments in response to a question regarding her views of school priorities:

It should be camping. It is the most fun and learning that you can have as an Inuk. Even though you're out there camping you feel like you're not learning anything, but you are with your own traditions. I learned about my culture by myself from experience instead of a teacher telling me. I would love to see that more in education. You learn on your own. Even though teachers are there, he or she is learning too out on the land. By action. Not just by words telling them what to do.

Pilimmaksarniq, one of the guiding principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit refers to the passing on of knowledge and development through observation, doing, and practice. More than a process of learning traditions or practical skills, pilimmaksarniq nurtures personal development, a sense of identity, and fosters inner spirit as students build capacity, adapt to changing circumstances, learn patience and resourcefulness (IQ Task Force, 2002). Pakak Qamanirq elaborates:

I see it as so bizarre because students are in school all day not learning. Well, they're learning but they need to go out and explore our land. As Inuit, we grew up out on the land. I think it's funny that they stay inside. That's kind of Qallunaat stuff.

Interviewees continue to call on learning and teaching connected with local and Inuit epistemologies and ontologies as well as an acknowledgement of Inuit histories of collective living and learning in relation to land. For many, the desire to continue learning with land and to

ensure opportunities are provided within the school program is a way of preserving Inuit knowledge of a living land and resisting ongoing colonialism in Nunavut.

In a recent Facebook post, an Inuk man from Arctic Bay shared his thoughts on the school's cultural program:

I didn't finish school that long ago, but I remember doing more outings. Sometimes I ask my son how cultural class went. Most of the time it makes me laugh. I think the school is looking for an easy way out and not teaching young students. When I took cultural classes, we did lots of hunting in summer, fall, and spring. The way I look at it, the school is teaching us to stay in the community.

(October 2014)

Another male community member included this response to the post:

I remember a cultural teacher that shared his knowledge by involving students in the real thing - building an igloo, learning to strike rocks together to make a spark and much more. Cultural values and pride were shared this way. Wish it happened today.

(October 2014)

The perceived shortage of adequate land-learning experiences suggests that there is perhaps a lack of recognition by Qallunaat teachers of the ways in which Inuit students are grounded and informed by their relationships with land. Of course, some teachers may be deterred from arranging land-centred learning activities because of the logistical challenges or their own unfamiliarity or discomfort with nuna and land-based perspectives.

In a keynote address, Maatalii Okalik, President of the National Inuit Youth Council, shared some of the interests and key priorities as identified by Inuit youth, including preservation and promotion of Inuit languages, suicide prevention, and education in both Inuit and Qallunaat ways of knowing. Additionally, Okalik claimed that “Inuit youth are craving” opportunities to learn cultural and environmental knowledge as well as animal harvesting processes on the land (M. Okalik, personal communication, October 10, 2016). This notion of “craving” or longing for land-centred activities was reiterated in many interviews. In some instances, there was a sense of urgency in continuing to infuse opportunities to learn with and learn from land into school programming. For example, Paul\*, a man in his early 20s, said,

“I think it’s important to go out on the land. We went out with my class at school, just once or twice a year, I would like to see that keep going. Keep it going!”

Elisapee\* a woman in her 20s, makes the same sort of plea:

“Now classes go out on the land for one day or maybe overnight camping in the spring, but they should do that more often...so we will know how it is to be on the land. Teach us how to hunt.”

The desire to continue to learn traditional skills, understand, appreciate and respect the land is strong for many people in Arctic Bay.

Numerous people with whom I spoke expressed hopes that the knowledge and stories of Elders, rooted in practice and personal experience in relation to land, would feature more frequently in school programming. At the same time, interviewees recognize the personal and

collective responsibilities in preserving cultural traditions and values. In articulating her thoughts on the connections between teenagers and Elders in the community, Elisapee\* suggested that,

“Maybe if teenagers could visit Elders more often we could keep their tradition alive.

Sew with them, make qamutiks, go out on the land, go hunting.”

In my own teaching experiences and observations in the community and out on the land, Elders teach traditional skills in the context of storytelling and practice, sharing their experiences, skills and knowledge with younger generations. Many interviewees and friends informally commented on the value of learning with Elders, parents, and other community members and the wish for that type of learning to occur more often. Pakak Qamanirq describes her aspirations for her children:

When my son gets to school, I want him to learn Inuit culture which I learned growing up.... though I'm going to teach him too.... being out there on the land...I would love to see more hunting, and more history about our Elders.

In several instances, teachers who organized opportunities for students to learn with and from the land, outside the confines of classrooms were highly-regarded, often described as “favourite teacher(s)”. Joseph\*, a man in his 30s, shares his views:

My favourite teacher, he used to take us out on the land...he was helping to keep our culture alive. That's what I really loved about that teacher. He was a Qallunaaq teacher. He was great. He used to participate. He had his own qamutik and he knew about seal

hunting and fishing. When he first started, he didn't really know what to do but he would go out with Inuit hunters, that's where he learned.

Teachers who are committed to respectfully learning and responding to the cultural and educational needs and interests of students, contribute to the wellbeing of Inuit students in their care (Berger, 2007). Although the responsibility often rests on individual teachers and navigating logistical challenges such as costs, hiring guides, accessing equipment, and planning activities can be daunting, actively learning about Inuit culture including learning with and from land with Inuit opens up possibilities for Inuit students to continue to learn their histories, traditional practices, and skills. Moreover, Qallunaat teachers have a responsibility to come to better understandings of the knowledges, culture, and educational approaches of Inuit students whom we teach.

Qallunaat teachers who demonstrate a commitment to learning and show respect by using culturally relevant pedagogies can make positive contributions to students' learning experiences. Max Kalluk, a man in his late 20s, recognizes shared interests and the ways his favourite teacher respected Inuit culture, explaining:

“My favourite teacher, he loved hunting too. He was from the South, but he was really interested in our tradition, our culture”

As Berger (2007) acknowledges, Inuit students and community members often remark those teachers who respect and make efforts to meaningfully engage with Inuit knowledges, cultural practices, and traditions. Pakak Qamanirq, a woman in her 20s, fondly remembers her experiences of school-organized Spring Camp:

My favourite year was Grade 9 because we went to spring camp and spent one week on the land, learning more about our culture and traditions. We had to hunt on our own and learn about life that Elders lived. That's what we had to learn. It was pretty awesome, and I learned so much, learned about our culture. It was a Qallunaaq teacher that took us, with Inuit guides, but he was so excited to see Inuit culture, so it was pretty fun. That was the best part of my school year.

Kelly \*, a woman in her 20s, shares her experiences:

I think Qallunaaq teachers need to know about Inuit culture. They need to learn about the community, how things are. They should know what we do or go out on the land with Inuit. There was a Qallunaaq teacher, he was in town for about 5 or 6 years and he used to go out camping by himself once he knew good places to go. He knew a lot about Inuit culture. I guess he went out on the land and learned from other hunters.

For teachers who chose to work in Northern communities coming to understand Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, particularly the ways in which Inuit are informed by land, is necessary to teach in culturally relevant ways to facilitate meaningful learning for all and develop respectful relationships with Inuit on whose territory we live and work.

Several Inuit students also recognize the “knowledge gap” (Dion, 2014) between the Qallunaaq teachers who work with the school curriculum and Inuit culture. The approaches employed by Qallunaaq teachers are often inconsistent with Inuit ways of learning and knowledge sharing (Douglas, 2009). Rather than learning within the walled confines of a

classroom, many stated a preference for learning with the land. Donathan Kigutikakjuk, a current high school student nearing graduation, articulates his predilection:

“I would rather learn out there. I like learning out there, on the land.”

The direct and compelling statement points to the importance of culturally appropriate approaches and pedagogies as Inuit ways of knowing, doing, and being exist in relationship with land. Paul \* echoes this preference for learning from land:

When I was a student, it would have been better to go out on the land more. I like to enjoy the view, learn from the hunter. Learn how he hunts and how he uses his skills and relies on things around him.

Inuit experiences of education are holistic, in relation to land, and based on observing, applying, and learning through experiences. Several interview participants expressed an awareness and understanding of their own personal learning processes, identifying their learning needs and the ways in which their learning might have been supported. Max Kalluk admits to feeling a disconnect with his schooling experiences as he believed the content, physical space, and approaches to teaching and learning were not well suited to his cultural needs and interests. Max describes his experiences at Inuujaq school and his childhood connections to land:

When I was growing up, I did mostly hunting. I tried doing sports, but I turned to hunting instead. I still do it now. It was very important to me growing up. So important that I even dropped out of school in Grade 11. I didn't really do much with the school. I wasn't really involved with it. I would go to the land and walk, look for ptarmigans or rabbits.



Each day after school I would do that. When I was younger, I needed to learn a lot more hands-on training outside the school, not inside. Each May I would be in school thinking about migrating animals. My mind was always somewhere else instead of in school.

### **Conclusion**

Interview participants' experiences of learning with and from the land, observing hunters, practising traditional skills, as well as listening to and engaging with the stories and knowledge of Elders are among the *very manifestations* of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in contemporary Inuit contexts. Most Inuit with whom I spoke acknowledged the meaningful learning, valuable knowledge, reciprocal knowledge-sharing, and cultural strengths which come from interacting with and experiencing a living land. However, the call, and need for greater land-learning opportunities reveal that its enactment with the school in Arctic Bay, and perhaps other communities in Nunavut, is not being fully realized.

## CHAPTER 5: LANGUAGE

*Our worldview is best expressed in our language. It is a core part of our identity.*

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami President Natan Obed (as cited in Pucci, 2017)

Inuktut or Inuit language, formed on the land and spiritually interconnected with the land, is an important part of Inuit identity as it is a means of maintaining culture. As stated elsewhere, Inuktut has replaced the term ‘Inuit language’ which encompasses Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun. I use the term “Inuktut” when referencing the languages spoken across Inuit Nunangat; use the phrase “Inuit language” as it is referenced in other texts; and employ the term “Inuktitut” in relation to the language spoken by people from Arctic Bay. Inuktut reflects Inuit ways of knowing encompassing traditional values, customs, and histories. Language shapes ways of thinking and is central to the ways in which knowledge is constructed. As cultural beliefs and understandings of the world are embodied in language, learned through language, expressed and transmitted through language, preservation and promotion of Inuktut was integral to the land-claims negotiations that led to the creation of Nunavut (Martin, 2000, 2017; Timpson, 2009; Tulloch et al., 2009).

There is significant variation in Inuktut language use across Northern regions (Martin, 2000). Exposure to English, the dominant or colonial language,<sup>48</sup> through community interaction is common, particularly in larger communities such as Iqaluit. Despite the colonial legacy of English-imposed schooling, and the ongoing pervasive influence of English in classrooms and

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<sup>48</sup> I also recognize French as a colonial language, imposed upon Inuit (and other Aboriginal peoples) on the land now known as Canada. Although French is spoken (and taught) in Nunavut, it is not common in Arctic Bay and thus, beyond the scope of this work.

media texts, Inuktitut persists and language knowledge and use is high in Arctic Bay. Over 90% of the population of Arctic Bay declare Inuktitut as the mother tongue, the first language learned at home, spoken most often at home, and still understood (Statistics Canada, 2016). Almost all adults under the age of 60 also speak English with varying degrees of fluency; those who speak only Inuktitut are primarily Elders and children. In my experiences and observations, students regularly speak Inuktitut with each other in classrooms, school corridors, and on the playground. Inuktitut, the ancestral language of Inuit, is the language typically used in homes, in social situations, and on the land. Community meetings are generally conducted in Inuktitut, although depending on attendance and context, English translation may be offered. Inuktitut is commonly heard in community spaces including stores, churches, and the workplace, except when communicating with Qallunaat colleagues or customers. Many community members tune in to the local radio station, which broadcasts mainly in Inuktitut, to hear news reports, music, or community announcements. Although the use of Inuktitut persists in Arctic Bay, common concerns have been expressed over shifts in language, the threat of language loss, and the ways in which English influence dilutes Inuktitut, as people mix words or phrases from both languages simultaneously (Fieldnotes May 2014; November 2015; April 2017).

In Arctic Bay, Inuktitut is the language of instruction at the primary levels until Grade 4, occasionally Grade 3. Then, students are generally taught by (often monolingual) English-speaking Qallunaat teachers from Grades 4/5-12 and English becomes the primary medium of schooling, although recent efforts have been made to increase Inuit teachers in the junior-intermediate level. Inuit cultural classes and Inuktitut are taught as discrete subjects. Although there are variations across Nunavut, this staffing model is typical (Berger, 2007; Qanatsiaq

Anoee, Tulloch, Arreak-Kullualik, Wheatley, & McAuley, 2017). Essentially, Inuit children are not typically immersed in their first language beyond Grade 4.

This chapter outlines some of the language protection and bilingual education legislation and describes the current landscape of language teaching and learning in Nunavut. Focusing on the words of Inuit interview participants, I explore the narratives of experiences, impressions, and emotional responses to learning an additional or second language, which are fraught with tensions and complexities. Recommendations for promoting and supporting Inuktitut language learning and effective bilingual programming are also offered.

### **Language Legislation and Research**

In 2008, the *Inuit Language Protection Act* recognized that “Inuit of Nunavut have an inherent right of the use of the Inuit language” (Government of Nunavut, 2008, p. 1). The Act acknowledges the importance of Inuit language as ongoing expressions of cultural identity, the means by which Inuit express and pass on Inuit knowledge, history, traditions, and values, and as foundational to the development of individuals and communities working to create a sustainable future for Inuit of Nunavut. One of the main objectives of the Act, as it relates to this work, is to ensure that Inuit language is protected and promoted and affirmed as the “language of education” (p. 1). This is currently the only Act in Canada that aims to preserve and promote an Indigenous language, although in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action (2015b), steps are underway to develop legislation to ensure the protection, preservation, and revitalization of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages across Canada (Pucci, 2017; Government of Canada, 2017).

The *Nunavut Official Languages Act* (Nunavut, 2008) recognizes Inuit language, alongside English and French, as an official language of the territory. The *Nunavut Agreement*

(1993), though not explicitly a language policy document, set the language rights framework for the territory, including the wish of Inuit to have public services, electoral procedures, and communication policies available in the language of their choice; a school system principally staffed by Inuit; and the right to have children educated in Inuktitut. In fact, language rights and fear of loss of Inuktitut were fundamental in Inuit leaders' decision to negotiate a land claim with the Canadian government (Martin, 2017). The provisions in the *Nunavut Agreement* align with the Government of Nunavut's goal of implementing Inuktitut as the working language of the territory by 2020, as outlined in *The Bathurst Mandate* (Nunavut, 1999). The *Nunavut Education Act* (Nunavut, 2008), "recognizing the relationship between learning and language and culture" (p. 1) and the belief that bilingual education contributes to protection and promotion of Inuit language and culture, requires that the school system respond to Inuit linguistic, cultural, and societal values and provide bilingual education in Inuit language and either English or French. Additionally, the central vision for Inuit education as set out in the *First Canadians, Canadians First: National Strategy on Inuit Education 2011*, calls for a bilingual education system founded on Inuit societal values, knowledges, and traditions. Recommendations include increasing bilingual educators and programs, and developing effective bilingual curricular language resources (ITK, 2011).

Significantly, there is considerable territorial legislation expressing the need to preserve and promote Inuktitut, particularly within schooling. Of course, the processes of colonization and contact, including residential schooling which imposed the English language, is the reason such Inuit language protection legislation is necessary. Grounded in the *Nunavut Agreement*, the three pieces of legislation passed in 2008 (*Inuit Language Protection Act*, *Nunavut Official Languages Act*, and the *Nunavut Education Act*), were (and continue to be) legitimate, widely-supported,

Inuit-driven efforts to establish frameworks which would support a strong, effective bilingual education system, in which Inuit high school graduates would be fluent in both spoken and written English and Inuktitut. Although language policy and legislation is useful, and arguably vital, it is not enough in itself to ensure the status of Inuktitut. Former Languages Commissioner Eva Aariak<sup>49</sup>, claims that Inuit families and communities have important roles to play in the preservation of Inuktitut. However, “so too does the government as the provider of education and the largest employer in the territory” (Office of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, 2000, p. 4). Inuit have been striving to protect language and education rights across Nunavut since the 1970s (Rasmussen, 2011; Qanatsiaq Anooe et al., 2017). The development and passing of legislation and the creation of a national strategy for bilingual education are considerable feats. Favourable policies, programs, and initiatives that support and promote Inuktitut and Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit in schooling are underway. Yet, the need to increase the number of Inuit educators, develop effective and comprehensive bilingual curricular resources, as well as strengthen Inuit educational leadership requires adequate and sustained financial and material support (Berger 2017; Martin, 2000, 2017; Timpson, 2009; Tulloch et al., 2009).

A report produced by the Special Committee to Review the Education Act (2015) involving key stakeholders in schooling, led to some dramatic recommendations including shifting the focus on Inuit language and culture to a standardized curricular program, extending the deadline for delivery of bilingual education, and implementing a single language of instruction model. The former Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, Sandra Inutiq (2015),

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<sup>49</sup> Eva Aariak is originally from Arctic Bay and became the first Languages Commissioner of Nunavut. In 2008 she became the only woman elected to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut and was subsequently chosen as the Premier of Nunavut. She has also served as the Minister of Education in Nunavut. Her name is occasionally seen spelled as Arreak which was a misspelling by a Qallunaat government representative (Brown, 2002; Gregoire, 2011).

issued a press release in response to the Review of the Education Act, claiming the recommendations were “seemingly regressive in protecting and revitalizing Inuktut” (p. 1), pointing to the implication in the review that schooling in Nunavut is a choice between a “strong academic foundation” or a system “including language, culture and history” (Special Committee to Review the Education Act, 2015, p. 9). The proposed amendments to the Act - Bill 37 - denounced by many, provoked heated debate. Amid the battle of the Bill 37, Ian Martin (2017), a sociolinguistic professor with a long involvement in Nunavut, released an alarming report detailing the current state of Inuktut in the territory. Following public consultations, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) called on the legislative assembly to reject the controversial recommendations. However, the Minister of Education, Paul Quassa, released a statement in May 2017 outlining some of the positive aspects of the Bill, including assigning local DEAs greater control in policy development (Quassa, 2017, p. 2). As of September 2017, Nunavut MLAs voted against debating Bill 37. Following the meeting, Nunavut Education Minister Paul Quassa (now Premier of Nunavut as of November 2017), announced that “the bill is dead” (Sponagle, 2017).

All of this is to paint a picture of the current political and social climate surrounding Inuit education and Inuktut language protection in Nunavut. For Inuit, and other Aboriginal peoples, “language is not only a means of communication but a link that connects people with their past and grounds their social, emotional, and spiritual vitality” (Norris, 1998, p. 8). Forced assimilation policies, cultural and linguistic oppression, and the damaging effects of residential schools resulted in profound Aboriginal language loss. The current school model in Nunavut shares responsibility. Aboriginal peoples across Canada continue to reclaim, revitalize, renew (Battiste & Barman 1995; Fontaine, 2016; Galley 2009) languages through research partnerships,

post-secondary initiatives, policy development, and bilingual or immersion practices (McIvor, 2009; Tulloch et al., 2009).

There is a growing body of scholarship documenting Inuit perspectives on language preservation, identity construction, attitudes towards language, and bilingual education within Canadian Inuit communities (Berger, 2008; Crago, Annahatak, & Ningiuruvik, 1993; Dorais, 2006; Dorais & Sammons, 2002; Hodgkins, 2010; Qanatsiaq Anooe et al., 2017; Tulloch, 2004; Tulloch et al., 2009). Studies examining languages of instruction and bilingual education systems in Nunavut schools, commissioned by the Government of Nunavut (Corson, 2000; Martin, 2000) reveal critical issues with implementation of existing language teaching models. Much of this scholarship points to the need for substantial funding from territorial and federal governments, in part to redress the imbalance of official languages financial support received by other provinces, but also to adequately fund and support the human and material resources needed. Lynn Aylward's (2010) study exploring the role of Inuit language in educational policies, and teaching pedagogies and practices, offers valuable insights into dominant discourses of bilingual education in Nunavut schools.

Recognizing the interconnectedness of one's emotional, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions in learning, Inuit narratives and perspectives of schooling in Arctic Bay provide insights into the affectual responses to first experiences with English as the language of instruction or first encounters with Qallunaat teachers. Intensely personal, often emotionally charged experiences of language learning reveal diverse personal and social influences, motivations, attitudes, and complex relationships with Inuktitut and English. Most Inuit are bilingual and immersed in the interplay of Inuit and Qallunaat languages, knowledges and



cultural traditions. The ways in which Inuit research participants grapple with these complexities is evident in their narratives as they reconcile the tensions between desires and difficulties.

### **Inuktitut**

*Our language reflects the essence of who we are. It is important we continue to learn it, use it and remind ourselves of the importance of our language by celebrating it.*

Sandra Inutiq, former Languages Commissioner of Nunavut (as cited in Quinn, 2014)

Inuktitut is the language of Inuit cultural identity, reflecting traditions, histories and worldview. Significantly, Inuktitut is valued as the mother tongue, the language learned and spoken in the home. Of course, language is not the only marker of cultural identity. In her research with Inuit youth, Shelly Tulloch (2004) found that knowledge and use of Inuktitut is an important part of Inuit tradition, a source of pride, and a tool for accessing cultural knowledge. For many Inuit youth, speaking in Inuktitut reflects knowledge, reinforces a sense of belonging, and respects communicative norms between family and community members. That said, the relationship between Inuktitut and Inuit cultural identity is not absolute. Faced with varying rates of Inuktitut language decline and loss across the territory, Inuit youth recognize Inuktitut as one component of culture and that collective and individual Inuit identity may be nourished by numerous other means.

For Inuit in Arctic Bay, and many across Inuit Nunangat, Inuktitut is the language of access to family, community, Elders, Inuit history, knowledge, and traditional learning on the land (Patrick, 2003; Tulloch, 2004). Significant steps have been taken to preserve, promote, and establish Inuktitut at the forefront of Inuit cultural learning. The languages of instruction

foundation document, *Atausiunggittumut Uqausirmut: Foundation for Languages of Instruction in Nunavut Schools* (NDE, 2010), produced by the Nunavut Department of Education in collaboration with language specialists, Inuit educators, and the Curriculum and School Services Elder Advisory Committee, outlines the purpose, principles, strategies, practices, recommendations, and expectations for ensuring Inuktitut language remains vital in communities across Nunavut. The National Strategy on Inuit Education (ITK, 2011) outlines a vision for education which must “restore the central role of the Inuit language” (p. 70). Additionally, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, which encompasses “all aspects of traditional Inuit culture including values, worldview, and language” (NDE, 2007, p. 20) forms the foundation of schooling.

Thus, as with other school programming, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit should underpin language learning across Nunavut. Importantly, educational leaders or school principals should be adequately equipped, supported, and motivated to incorporate and respect IQ and in turn, contribute to fostering a strong foundation for Inuktitut language learning and effective bilingual programming (Tulloch, Metuq, Hainnu, Pitsiulak, Flaherty, Lee, and Walton, 2016). As Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is holistic and grounded in relational ways of knowing and being, expectations of open and effective communication, collaboration, and inclusivity are key elements of language learning. The principles and approaches outlined in *Atausiunggittumut Uqausirmut* (NDE, 2010) are “grounded in connected relationships” (p. 19) as the purposes of language are social, based on the need and desire to communicate with others as well as describe and come to shared understandings of the world. “Strength of relations is viewed as essential to the strength of language acquisition and development in children” (NDE, 2010, p. 24).

Interviews, informal conversations, and observations reveal Inuit desire for continued high use of Inuktitut, the necessity of Inuktitut language in schooling, ensuring students have a

strong grounding in Inuktitut, and maintaining rigorous Inuktitut language programming throughout their schooling (K-12). These views are echoed in several studies (Berger, 2008; Martin, 2000, 2017; Qanatsiaq Anoe et al., 2017; Tulloch et al., 2009). Paul \* a man in his early 20s, shares his struggles with learning English as a second language and speaks to the need for Inuktitut to hold a dominant position within the school:

School was difficult for me. I couldn't really communicate with teacher, except for having Inuit teachers. I think I was in Grade 4 when I had a Qallunaaq teacher for the first time. It was tough for me. It was hard for me to understand and translate. English was my worst subject. I find reading English easy now, but I didn't like writing essays – I always made them short. I don't really think we need to be learning English at school because we're losing our language. Our language is important. I found Inuktitut classes tough at school since I was just learning about English. I forgot how to write Inuktitut.

Sensitive to concerns of language loss, Paul \* admits to struggling with Inuktitut classes and losing some competence in Inuktitut writing because of increased promotion of English in school.

According to Jim Cummins, (1990) who reviewed several programs supporting Aboriginal language development, strengthening a child's Aboriginal language skills does not negatively impact their ability to acquire English language skills. In fact, English (or French) is enhanced by continued development of skills in first Aboriginal language as students can “use the strength of their first language to transfer language skills and become fluent also in a second language” (NDE, 2010, p. 11). Barnhardt and Kawagley (2008) argue that, “By not teaching the indigenous youngsters their own language and ways of doing things, the classroom teachers are

signalling that the traditional language, knowledge, and skills are of little importance. The students begin to think of themselves as being less than other people. After all, they are expected to learn through a language other than their own, to learn values that are often in conflict with their own, and to learn a ‘better’ way of seeing and doing things” (p. 228).

The orality of Inuktitut, formed on the land and passed down from generation to generation, has been disrupted by the imposition of English. Interacting with Elders contributes to strengthening and enriching Inuktitut language. Bruno Attagutsiak, a man in 20s, shares this:

I know my Inuktitut is pretty strong and I know some Inuktitut words that they [Elders] used to use, they still use them sometimes out on the land. Language is changing. Sometimes if an Elder asks me something, I have to think about what I have to say in Inuktitut and I have to think a little more to make it understandable for them. But language changes, not just for Inuit but down south too. It’s changing all over the world.

Recognizing that the traditional cultural experiences on the land underpin language, there is pride in using language that reflects the knowledge of the Elders. That said, the shift in language, affecting language patterns and fluency, impacts intergenerational communicative interactions. The strength of Inuktitut is preserved and upheld in home use, and in the context of family, intergenerational, and community relationships (Northwest Territories Department of Education, Culture, and Employment [NWTDECE], 1996; NDE, 2010; Qanatsiaq Anooe et al., 2017; Tulloch et al., 2009).

In research conducted with Inuit community members in Arviat, several Elders, Inuit teachers, educational leaders, and parents emphasized that effective bilingual programming “does not mean treating the two languages equally, but that Inuktitut must be deliberately

prioritized next to internationally dominant English” (Qanatsiaq Anoe et al., 2017, p. 5). Recognizing the importance of language preservation and the value of bilingualism, Arviat community members work to actively prioritize Inuktitut language teaching and learning practices in various local contexts, including in homes, on the land, in church, and through local radio. Significantly, ongoing Inuktitut language use in the home and with family remains the foundation of language learning (Qanatsiaq Anoe et al., 2017; Tulloch et al., 2009). That said, schooling plays an important role in supporting students’ Inuktitut language acquisition and proficiency, and providing supplementary and complementary contexts for teaching reading, writing, and academically advanced forms of Inuktitut (Corson, 2000; NDE, 2010; Qanatsiaq Anoe et al., 2017).

Lewthwaite and McMillan (2010) conducted a study with Inuit students and classroom teachers in the Qikiqtani region, and found that teachers who do not speak the majority language of students, can effectively support and promote students’ first language in the classroom by adapting approaches or developing strategies to facilitate clear communication and ensure understanding. For example, verbal communication of expectations alongside demonstrations, visual representations, as well as occasionally calling on the assistance of student support assistants or other students in the classroom are effective means to support language learning. Additionally, encouraging students to continue to develop and use their first language in the classroom by discussing a concept or working through understandings of a task or assignment in Inuktitut with other students, contributes to deeper levels of conceptual understandings. According to Cummins (2000), “conceptual knowledge developed in one language helps to make input in the other language comprehensible” (p. 29).

A key feature of the language learning process for Inuit students is the role of Inuktitut language in cultural preservation. Inuit Elders recognize that “Language must be lived culturally and disassociating language learning from cultural practices reduces the authenticity of the language” (NDE, 2010, p. 44). As such, the development of effective bilingual pedagogy should respect the learner’s interests, experiences, and the contexts with which students are familiar. The process of language acquisition or the development of a language pedagogy for Inuit students should include culturally-relevant ways of teaching, learning, and sharing knowledge. In the language development process, Inuit Elders place considerable importance on developing children’s observational and listening skills, supporting extensive oral communication, encouraging students to work in mutually supportive ways, associating language terms with lived or authentic experiences, developing shared understandings, persevering to become successful, and using stories to situate meanings (NDE, 2010).

An Inuk teacher generously offered evening Inuktitut language classes to Qallunaat teachers in Arctic Bay and I was fortunate to join the sessions (Fieldnotes, December 2014). As “language reflects the culture of the speaker” (Dorais, 1990, p. 204), beginning to learn some of the fundamentals of Inuktitut served as a valuable introduction to language sounds, some basic vocabulary, and grammatical conventions. Arguably, Qallunaat teachers should undergo intensive Inuktitut language learning prior to teaching in the North. As Berger (2007) asserts, learning Inuktitut is important for Qallunaat teachers to come to better understandings of Inuit culture and experience some of the challenges of second language learning which students often face. Furthermore, exposure to some of the nuances of Inuktitut may provide insight into students’ understandings and application of English, such as differences in use of pronouns and prepositions.

One of the expectations outlined in *Atausiunggittumut Uqausirmut* (NDE, 2010), calls for both Qallunaat and Inuit educators to strive to learn, practice, and improve their own Inuktit language skills as part of ongoing professional development. This practice models the importance of lifelong learning for students and the wider community. Additionally, schools should offer language courses or cultural learning opportunities (e.g. sewing, tool-making, land activities) to parents and Qallunaat teachers to foster language learning in relation to cultural practices, and build positive relationships. While an important responsibility, learning Inuktit is also a mark of respect of Inuit culture and Inuit students.

### **English**

Contemporary Inuit culture is informed by the imposition of Qallunaat, if we take seriously the notion that culture is always affected by its interaction with another culture (Wagner, 1981). Inuktit is highly valued as the ancestral language, recognized as an official language in Nunavut, and the first language of most Inuit. However, English is also a part of modern Inuit identities.

Since the inception of day schools in the 1950s, imposed as part of the federal government's plan to move Inuit families into permanent settlements (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994), English has played a prominent role in Inuit education in the Eastern Arctic. Although Mission schools were established in the North much earlier, operation in the Eastern Arctic came later (TRC, 2015a). At the time, the federal policy of English instruction was to prepare Inuit for wage labour (King, 2006). Certainly, ongoing English language schooling contributes to language loss (Dorais & Sammons, 2002). Assimilationist policies created profound cultural disruption, Inuit language loss, and ruptures in family connections, yet Inuit continue to challenge the hegemony of English. Seeking to reverse the trend of Inuit language decline, Inuit

have developed strategies, programs, and contexts to support and promote Inuktitut language learning alongside the use of English (Tulloch et al., 2009).

Government efforts to assimilate Inuit into the language and culture of mainstream Canadian society, as well as longstanding and intense contact with Qallunaat have threatened Inuktitut language use (Berger, 2009; Tulloch, 2004). Although most Inuit want Inuktitut to hold its rightful place in schooling across Nunavut (Berger, 2008; Martin, 2000, 2017; Tulloch, 2004; Qanatsiaq Anooe et al., 2017), many believe English also has a role to play. Louisa \*, a woman in her 20s shares her thoughts:

“I think English language teaching needs to be improved. Of course, parents want their children to keep their language and that’s important, but they should still be taught English.”

Certainly, colonial influences across Nunavut and the country are profoundly pervasive. Attitudes, discourses, and beliefs are shaped by the social, cultural, and linguistic realities of contact between two cultures (Annahatak, 1994; Tulloch, 2004).

In interviews and informal conversations, English is often seen as a tool for communication, and a means of accessing economic, social, and political resources and opportunities (Dorais, 2006; Dorais & Sammons, 2002; Tulloch, 2004). As Inuit learn and apply their learning in culturally relevant and appropriate ways (Annahatak, 1994), the desire and motivation for fluency in English as well as the ability to use English serves their own purposes. Thus, English offers a practicality (Dorais, 1995). Aside from acknowledging the prevalence of English, many Inuit with whom I spoke perceive English as the key to opening doors to greater employment opportunities, educational experiences, and as a means of communication when travelling outside the community (Tulloch, 2004). Although Margaret \* wants her children to



learn English, she speaks of the challenges she experienced in an English learning context (Berger, 2014):

The worst part of school for me was struggling with English. We didn't speak English in our house because there were Elders there, so we weren't hearing it. I struggled. It was new for us and I think we were all struggling. From my experience, I didn't know how to speak English and I don't want that to happen to the kids anymore. In order to have a job, you need to speak English.

Of course, there are varying perspectives on the implementation of effective bilingual programming. Amanda, a woman in her 20s, believes that:

“the younger students need to start learning English early. I think it's hard to get a job if you don't speak both languages. Most jobs require English now.”

Significantly, those who endorse English language programming in schools, do so with the expectation that English is taught *alongside* Inuktitut, and not at the expense of Inuktitut preservation and promotion.

We need to keep learning Inuktitut, we can't forget that. But I think one goal of the school should also be English, reading and speaking English. Improving students' English. When you talk to students in English, they're confused. I think they're not reading or paying attention to their teacher. I hear young people talking and they are making mistakes in English, they don't know some words, their spelling is poor, they're

not reading English books. They've got to learn more English, that's all I can say, English.

(Tony\*, a man in his late 30s)

Concerns about the quality of English learning and teaching are not uncommon. The current bilingual model in schooling presents significant problems (Martin, 2000, 2017) and many Qallunaat teachers, myself included, arrive in the North inexperienced in EAL teaching and learning (Berger & Epp, 2007; Berger, 2014). The perception of disparities in English competence across communities in Nunavut was also expressed. Eva \* a woman in her late 30s, describes her thoughts on her daughter's experience:

My daughter graduated from high school here and when she went to another community, she felt her English wasn't as good as people in other communities. That's something to be concerned about. Not to be all negative, this is from my point of view, but I really notice a difference between graduates here from our small community and graduates from Iqaluit – there's a big difference. It's sad but, what can you do?

Many Inuit participants and community members acknowledge English as an important part of schooling in Nunavut and desire opportunities to learn English as an *additional* or *second* language. The underlying pressure on Inuit young people to learn and use English to access further educational and employment opportunities points to use of English as also desired and required. Embraced as a tool, English can be used to serve individual purposes. In my observations, Inuit in Arctic Bay are committed to preservation and promotion of Inuktitut but are perhaps seeking ways to find a meaningful balance of both languages.

## Complexities and Tensions

Inuit narratives and experiences of language learning within a schooling context are fraught with complexities and tensions. Although most Inuit with whom I spoke support a strong bilingual school system, the current model – an “early-exit” transitional model – moves Inuktitut speaking children into English programs taught primarily by Qallunaat teachers by Grade 4 (Aylward, 2010; Martin, 2000, 2017), and presents considerable challenges. As the dominant language at home is Inuktitut, ruptures are created between the school and home or community. Participants generously shared personal emotions, attitudes, and responses to their introductions to immersion in English language programs and first encounters with Qallunaat teachers. Feelings of frustration, discomfort, and confusion are unfortunately, far too common in Inuit experiences with second language learning and impact language attitudes and motivations.

This frustration related to language experiences may also be attributed to the Government of Nunavut’s slow progress in developing Inuit Employment Plans for educators to meet Article 23 obligations (Timpson, 2009). According to Ian Martin (2017), since 2008 “there have been no major efforts to increase the numbers of Inuit teachers” (p. 6) and insufficient resources and curricula in Inuktitut. Further, the Nunavut Teacher Education Program (NTEP) does not presently offer programs to qualify teachers at the intermediate and senior grade levels (Berger et al., 2017). As such, there are insufficient numbers of Inuit teachers and limited comprehensive Inuktitut resources and curricular materials available to effectively deliver the mandated bilingual education system and implement language rights enshrined in the *Nunavut Agreement* (Martin, 2017). In 2015, NTI received \$255.5 million from the federal government, awarded as part of an out-of-court lawsuit settlement in which NTI argued the government had significantly underfunded education in the territory and consequently did not meet its responsibility to Article

23 to increase Inuit employment and representation in public services. A considerable portion of the settlement has been earmarked for training programs (Frizzell, 2017).

Significantly, Inuit narratives and perspectives shared here reveal the feelings associated with the experience of being propelled into an English stream at the junior-intermediate level and the ways in which those affectual responses have contributed to complex, and often contradictory, relationships with English and Inuktitut. Leslie Oyukuluk, a woman in her 20s, shares her jarring experience:

The first few months of having a Qallunaaq teacher was really hard because we hadn't been taught English until we had a Qallunaaq teacher. Then, all of a sudden, we had to start talking English. All of a sudden! It was hard work for us. But now, it seems English is a lot stronger than Inuktitut. By the time I reached high school, I found reading Inuktitut harder than reading English. I speak Inuktitut regularly but my writing in Inuktitut is slower than writing in English. Our Inuktitut can be really strong but once we started learning English, we started to forget. But for us, talking to another Inuit person, our Inuktitut is really strong. It's our first language and I don't want to lose it, but we're stuck with speaking English too. In this world, we have to speak English but then again, our first language is our first language. It's really hard to give it away. But um, English gets us more nowadays.

When I was in high school, Inuktitut was a little harder for me to read...Even though it's my first language. When I reached high school, I wasn't writing in Inuktitut as much. It was harder for me to write, it was harder for me to read. But I speak regularly in Inuktitut.

The abrupt (“all of a sudden”) move to an English stream has impacted Leslie’s abilities in Inuktitut reading and writing although she asserts her strong oral skills. Her complex relationships with both English and Inuktitut are evident in the ways she grapples with the tension between commitment to, preservation, and use of her first language and being “stuck with speaking English.” Although she recognizes the colonial legacy of English, Leslie rejects English dominance. Rather, she seems to use English for her own purposes, as a tool to access economic and social resources (Dorais, 2006).

Although Inuktitut is valued as the ancestral language, English is often viewed as the language of modernity (Tulloch, 2004). Suzanne \*, a woman in her 30s, acknowledges English as a means of accessing greater opportunities. However, she advocates for stable, balanced bilingualism and biliteracy in both English and Inuktitut.

I think language should be the most important to teachers at the school. Students reading, learning how to read and write, learning how to speak in English and Inuktitut. Most children here have been learning how to speak Inuktitut since they were able to speak but English is important too. I became more confident when I was learning to speak English better. I always tell my son he’ll have more opportunities after he graduates and can speak English and Inuktitut. It’s very important to speak both languages.

The perception that English is a tool for accessing employment opportunities, and communication outside the community suggests there is value in its practicality (Dorais, 2006). Additionally, the interplay between Inuktitut and English and the pervasive presence of English, points to the pressure on Inuit to learn English and transmit it to their children (Tulloch, 2004). Kelly \*, a woman in her 20s, shares her experiences:

It was weird for me having a Qallunaaq teacher. I was in Grade 8 and I didn't know how to speak English very well and it was my first [Qallunaaq] teacher. I was shy. I couldn't say anything or even ask anything. I only attended and just listened and after school I always used to ask my mom what things meant. I didn't feel like I could ask the teacher. I know we have to keep our language strong, but I think we need to learn Inuktitut and English. Half-half. When you travel, when you leave the community, you need to know English. You need English in order to apply for a job.

Whereas most Inuit students move to English as the main language of instruction in Grade 3 or 4, Kelly \* did not have a Qallunaaq teacher until Grade 8. In my own teaching experiences in Arctic Bay, I was the first Qallunaaq teacher for my Grade 7 class, although Qallunaaq teachers held positions in Grades 4-6. In addition to the problematic structures of language teaching, there are inconsistencies in implementation. Several participants also commented on their perceived limitations of English speaking, writing, or reading abilities upon arrival into the English stream. Of course, as second language *learners*, this is realistic and to be expected. Is the implication that the expectations of Qallunaaq teachers are such that they fail to recognize the language contexts and experiences of our students?

As learners move between Inuktitut and English, the affective dimensions of anxiety, discomfort, and loss of the familiar present challenges in additional language acquisition. For some, enacting silence may be a form of resistance, or a response to a stressful situation. Alternatively, remaining silent may be a mark of respect or an intentional act of listening, learning, gathering knowledge, and reflecting. Traditionally, Inuit children learn through

observation and are generally discouraged from asking questions. Rather, they are expected to observe closely, practice, and find solutions independently (Briggs, 1991). Often, questioning strategies employed by Qallunaat teachers are different from Inuit pedagogical approaches. Suzanne \*, relates experiences of learning English to feeling as though she was hiding in the classroom:

I was a bit shy because I wasn't able to speak English. The first time was Grade 5, our teacher wanted us to write in journals but most of us couldn't read or write well in Qallunaatitut [English] so we just repeated sentences... "today is sunny, yesterday I played outside..."

I couldn't speak in English very well. I think in my first report card my mom was told that I don't ask questions. She told me to start asking questions when I'm stuck with something. It would feel like I would be hiding in the classroom. Sometimes I would try to be confident. To me it was a bit scary.

The phenomenon of feeling, or being made to feel invisible, excluded, inhibited, or silenced perhaps reveals the deep sense of loss, conflict, or anxiety that Inuit may experience as they negotiate the complexities of culture and identity construction within second language learning contexts (Granger, 2004).

Rebecca \* a woman in her mid-20s, spent most of her childhood in an outpost camp. Her entrance into the English stream at school presented significant challenges:

The first time I had a Qallunaaq teacher was really hard for me. I grew up in an outpost camp and we only came into town a few weeks every season. The longest time I spent in

school was 3 months when I was in Grade 7. I barely knew how to speak in English. I couldn't understand him [the Qallunaaq teacher]. I didn't know how to write or speak in English until I was in Grade 7/8. That was really hard for me the first year. I was really behind in the work. My classmates would help with translating things for me. If I had to talk in front of my class I would be really quiet.

As Inuktitut was the only language spoken and exposure to English was minimal, Rebecca's \* sense of alienation in the English classroom was strong. I later asked what supports had been offered and she explained, "the good thing was my classmates would help me with anything." Tony\*, a man in his 30s, also spoke about collaboration and the ways students support each other:

We learn our Inuktitut from talking to our parents and then when we go to school, we learn English. When I was in school, my classmates were interpreting for me or translating words that my teacher said, that I didn't understand. My classmates told me what she was saying. Other students helped me with the reading. It was pretty hard at first. Well, I was kind of embarrassed sometimes, so I tried to learn it as much as I could to try and catch up with my classmates. I did and I tried, 'cause I wanted to learn the language. I've met quite a few people that only have one language, like many Qallunaaq only speak one language and they tell me I'm lucky I can speak two languages.

Despite the considerable challenges, Tony \* expresses his motivation and desire to learn English and his pride in the ability to speak both Inuktitut and English. Arguably, his attitude and commitment to English have been shaped by colonial influences and reflect the social and



cultural realities of the contact between Inuktitut and English (Tulloch, 2004). That said, Tony \* seems to have embraced English for his own purposes.

Feelings of anger, frustration, embarrassment, confusion, and uncertainty were commonly felt by Inuit participants regarding English language learning experiences. Elisapee \*, a woman in her 20s, questions the very presence of Qallunaat teachers in her school:

Our first Qallunaaq teacher was when I was in Grade 4. We had a hard time understanding what our teacher said. We needed a translator. I remember thinking it was weird at first. Weird like, why do we have to have Qallunaat teachers?

Donathan Kigutikakjuk, who is still attending Inuujaq School, describes his impressions of English language learning:

It was complicated at first because I didn't know what word I was going to use. I remember learning a bit of English in Kindergarten, just ABCs and basic words. I think my first Qallunaaq teacher was when I was in Grade 4. I remember trying to teach my Qallunaaq teacher a little bit of Inuktitut. I was kind of angry when I was trying to learn or maybe it was frustration. Now, it's alright. Sometimes I don't understand the word. It can be confusing and uncomfortable. Sometimes I underline the word or try to say it out loud. I can ask one of my teachers or sometimes I ask my mom. Sometimes my friends and I work and help each other.

Rather than a gradual and supportive transition to English, many describe the experience as sudden and disruptive, which only serves to intensify the tensions and challenges. Pakak Qamanirq, a woman in her 20s, describes her experience:

That was the hardest part. It was Grade 3. It was just like come in, start teaching Qallunaat [in English]. We didn't know. We weren't used to it. It was so hard for us, all of us, students and teacher. She never lived in Nunavut, just came and started teaching. It was bizarre for her because she didn't learn first. She just appeared and started teaching. That was kind of hard for both of us.

The teacher, new to the community and ostensibly unfamiliar with the cultural and linguistic context, was ill-prepared to effectively support the students. The lack of supportive transition for students resulted in a disruption in learning which was both unsettling and challenging.

As participants narrated their experiences, conversations occasionally shifted to attitudes towards Inuit and English languages, perspectives on the place of languages within schooling, and on the importance of learning and maintaining two languages. Of course, perspectives are diverse, and experiences and desires vary. Bruno Attagutsiak, a man in his early 20s, reflects on the process of language learning:

I remember my first Qallunaaq teacher. That was hard. I had a hard time understanding what she was saying, what I had to say, and how to reply. When I started learning English I had to think about what to say with proper words or a proper sentence. It takes time learning new languages. I had Qallunaat teachers from Grade 6 all the way through [high school]. It's good to have both languages, not just one but both.

Bruno's recognition that "it takes time learning new languages" is confirmed in research conducted by Jim Cummins (1981, 1989) who found that language learners immersed in a second language start to learn functional language in short bursts and within five months will engage in daily patterns of interactions and routines, but students will not have acquired much of the language. With the progression of time, English language learners begin to recognize typical phrases and question-answer formats and after two years, students may achieve a social level of English, engaging in conversations, and responding to teacher questions. Research has shown that it takes approximately five years of exposure to English to interpret and use complex academic language.

The vast majority of children in Arctic Bay arrive at school speaking Inuktitut. Their early primary years are taught almost exclusively in Inuktitut by Inuit teachers. As they shift into an English stream in the junior levels, Inuktitut is taught as a subject, but English remains the *dominant* language of instruction (Martin, 2000). Most Inuit with whom I spoke affirm the value of learning Inuktitut throughout schooling, yet there are differing views as to the timing of English introduction.

From kindergarten to Grade 5 I had Inuit teachers, then from Grade 5 onwards, I had Qallunaat teachers. I started learning English in Grade 5, so that's very late. I think it's better to start learning English early. I remember my first Qallunaaq teacher. It was weird and awkward. I was always afraid I wouldn't understand her or that she wouldn't understand me.

(Christine\*, woman in her 30s)

Max Kalluk, a man in his late 20s, recognizes the duality of his language attitudes and experiences of schooling:

My favourite class was English in Grade 9. My teacher taught English well. I thought having a Qallunaaq teacher was exciting because I was going to learn how to read English. I really wanted to learn how to read English. But I think the main language at school should be Inuktitut because we're losing some of our language. Even the way we talk is different now. Inuktitut words are more broken these days. It's my first language but I don't really think I had a strong foundation in Inuktitut.

Although Max enjoyed learning to speak and read in English, he asserts the importance of grounding schooling in Inuktitut, in part for fear of language loss. Max also acknowledges the shifts in Inuktitut and recognizes that language usage and language proficiency are interrelated (Tulloch, 2004). Interestingly, most participants who expressed concerns over language loss are in their 20s. Identified as a key priority at the National Inuit Youth Summit in 2015, many Inuit young people are asserting linguistic rights, and recognize the importance of keeping Inuktitut strong to protect and promote the Inuit culture and language (Anguti Johnston, 2013; Kaljur, 2016; Thompson, 2017).

The realities, struggles, and desires of Inuit, and the varying perspectives on the place and role of Inuit languages within a schooling context reveal complex relationships with Inuktitut and English.

I would love to see my kids learn more English. Even though I'm going to teach them Inuit culture and Inuktitut, which I learned growing up. I will talk to them about that,

they're not teaching enough cultural stuff. So, I would love to see more Inuit culture taught. And I would love to see him learn more English, more than I did.... There is more English up North than before. I want them to really understand English. I want my son to choose his own life, if he wants to live in the South, I want him to be ready for that. That's how I see it...I want him to have our Inuit culture strong. And yet to have the, how do you say it, how to live in Qallunaat. I want him to balance that in his life.

(Pakak Qamanirq, woman in her 20s)

The desire to reaffirm and strengthen Inuktitut language teaching and learning in schools *and* learn English is an ever-present tension for many Inuit in Arctic Bay. In the words of bell hooks (1990/2015), “language is also a place of struggle” (p. 145). Affective responses to experiences of first encounters with Qallunaat teachers, and ultimately, English, including apprehension, anxiety, embarrassment, discomfort but also excitement and pride, highlight the realities and complexities for Inuit students.

### **Bilingual Teaching and Learning**

Consistently, Inuit in Arctic Bay call for effective, stable, bilingual programming. Language research has long established that “bilingual education is *good for all education, and therefore good for all children*” (Garcia, 2009, p. 11, emphasis in original). Although there are diverse perspectives in terms of approaches, motivations, and implementation, the overwhelming majority want to maintain and promote Inuktitut *and* learn English. This desire is echoed in other studies (Aylward, 2010; Berger, 2006; Corson, 2000; Government of Nunavut, 1999; Martin, 2000, 2017; Qanatsiaq Anooe et al., 2017; Tulloch et al., 2009). Although important legislation has passed and the 2011 National Strategy on Inuit Education and the Educational

Framework (NDE, 2007) reaffirm commitment to bilingual education, as mentioned, considerable resources and support are necessary.

According to Thomas Berger (2006), meeting the objectives of Article 23 of the *Nunavut Agreement* cannot be achieved without consideration of schooling as it is Inuit high school graduates and Inuit graduates of college, university, and other post-secondary programs who will enter the public service. As such, Berger advocates a comprehensive bilingual education program. Although Inuktitut language teaching and learning is not explicitly addressed in Article 23 of the *Nunavut Agreement* (aside from Inuktitut instruction as part of pre-employment training), it is invariably implicated. Inuktitut is the language of Inuit cultural identity, remains the dominant language of Nunavut, and the desired language of the territorial government. Moreover, language preservation was the impetus in negotiating the *Nunavut Agreement* (Martin, 2017). As research has confirmed, the promotion and strengthening of Inuktitut in the community, the school, and the home leads to achievement in both English and Inuktitut (T. Berger, 2006; Cummins, 1989, 1990, 2000; Cummins & Schecter, 2003; McCarty, 1994; Qanatsiaq Anooe et al., 2017).

Informal conversations with Inuit teachers reveal that a significant amount of time is spent creating, and translating materials from English into Inuktitut, which is considerable workload on top of the demands of classroom teaching. Moreover, creation of quality Inuktitut language resources and programming requires more than translating existent English resources. One Inuktitut teacher told me “we make everything ourselves!” (Fieldnotes September 2014). In addition to concerns over the lack of or quality of Inuktitut resources, views on language of instruction and bilingual teaching approaches are diverse. Cathy \*, a woman in her early 40s, shares her thoughts:

I have done some substitute teaching at the school and I worked in some high school Inuktitut classes. I sat with some students that weren't finished and they didn't have a clue how to read or write Inuktitut. That's why they weren't doing their work. But there are problems with the books. The resources are not advanced for high school, they have different dialects. But the Grade 10, 11 and 12 Inuktitut classes were all together and all at different levels so it's hard for teachers. The support is not there.

I mean, Inuktitut is very important to us and I love the Inuktitut teachers here, but I think the way of teaching our language needs to be changed. The way it is right now, it's gearing up for the students to fail. By the time students are in Grade 3, they've got a white southerner as a teacher and then they have a harder time trying to learn English. If the way of teaching Inuktitut was totally changed, it would be awesome but the way it is right now it's gearing up for the students to fail.

I think students need to be taught English early on. If English is taught early in school, it doesn't mean we'll lose our language. Even if a job requires a person to be Inuit, they still have to be bilingual. Everything around us is English. I know people say we will lose our language, but we still have our language here. My children speak and write in Inuktitut, their first language is Inuktitut.

The sense that the current model is rendering students trapped in a space where there are weaknesses in both Inuktitut and English language proficiency is not uncommon. Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2015), in her work as part of the Nunavik Education Task Force in the early 90s, highlights the tension that parents, students, teachers, and community members felt:

Many wondered if teaching our language in schools was slowing down the process of learning a second language. Some felt that learning their mother tongue first was a must in order for young people to know their identity. Some wondered if their children would be adequately prepared for jobs that required English if they were only taught Inuktitut during the first several years of schooling. (p. 108-109)

While these concerns are still debated, advocates of effective bilingual programs recognize that English language proficiency and preservation of Aboriginal languages and culture are mutually supportive (Cummins, 1990; Cummins & Schecter, 2003; McCarty, 1994).

The repeated calls for more Inuit teachers, the development of relevant Inuktitut curricula and resources across all levels, and access to professional development opportunities are not new (Arctic Institute of North America, 1973; Aylward, 2010; T. Berger, 2006; Martin, 2000, 2017; O'Donoghue, 1998; Tompkins, 1998). Thomas Berger (2006), appointed to examine implementation of the *Nunavut Agreement* (1993), expressed significant concern about the funding necessary to reach targets and support Inuktitut. He called for \$20 million annually, and millions more to achieve the goal of bilingual schooling in Nunavut. Ian Martin (2017) also highlights the urgent need for federal and territorial financial support to realize the goals of effective bilingual schooling. Although these barriers present significant challenges to developing and sustaining quality bilingual programming, we need to respond to the Inuit students sitting in classrooms today.

Ongoing open communication, engagement, and collaboration with parents and strong school - community partnerships are necessary to support students' language learning and ensure that Inuktitut is vital and meets the communicative needs of Inuit community members (NDE, 2010; Qanatsiaq Anooe et al., 2017). Educators should work to build positive relationships with



students and parents to better understand family and community language aspirations to collaboratively set learning expectations and effectively support students. Additionally, encouraging the use of Inuktitut at home and supporting family-based language by providing parents with Inuktitut books or other reading resources, audio recordings, and writing materials extends language learning and draws parents into students' school experiences (NDE, 2010; Qanatsiaq Anoe et al., 2017).

### **Conclusion**

*Piliriqatigiingniq* is the concept of cooperation. As Inuit are a “communal society” (Arnakak, 2002, p. 38), developing collaborative relationships and working together for the common good are of critical importance (Arnakak, 20002; NDE, 2007). Research has shown that effective bilingual education is based in the home, in family and community relationships (Cummins, 1989; Qanatsiaq Anoe et al., 2017; Tulloch et al., 2009). Elders, as experts in Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit and Inuktitut, are well positioned to contribute to effective bilingual programming at schools. Respectfully collaborating with parents, Inuit teachers, leaders, and Elders, to develop home-community-school partnerships honours Inuktitut and Inuit knowledge but also contributes to better understandings for teachers and enhanced support for students.

Within *Atausiunggittumut Uqausirmut* (NDE, 2010), there are numerous suggestions for educators to promote and support Inuktitut in both the school and community context. Educational leaders and teachers should work to actively encourage and enhance the use of Inuktitut by setting high expectations for language use in the school. Recommendations such as ensuring school services and school communications are available in Inuktitut, and hiring local Inuit to fill positions including Student Support Assistants, clerical, and custodial staff are common practices in Arctic Bay. Inuit interview participants' calls for the meaningful inclusion

of Elders in school programming is echoed in much of the literature on Inuit language revitalization and bilingual education. Providing opportunities for students to practice Inuktitut with Elders links the learning to culturally authentic experiences, and exposes students to precise and traditional terminology (ANKN, 2011; Aylward, 2010; ITK, 2017; Martin, 2017; NDE, 2010).

Although many Qallunaat teachers arrive in the North with limited experience or background in EAL teaching, there are a number of ways in which to support Inuit students. In addition to developing collaborative relationships with parents and other Inuit community members, enrolling in Inuktitut classes introduces and clarifies the fundamentals of language and offers insight into challenges students face in speaking English. Furthermore, encouraging Inuktitut in the classroom is important in promoting and respecting students' first language but also supports English acquisition. The use of visual representations, games, manipulatives, and other hands-on activities supplement written or spoken information and helps students to understand and remember concepts.

The terrain of bilingual education and role of languages in schooling in Nunavut can be difficult to navigate. Multiple perspectives, underlying tensions, and histories of language loss contribute to complicated relationships with both Inuktitut and English. Perhaps most important for teachers confronting the various barriers to ongoing implementation of quality bilingual programming, including lack of resources and support, is to recognize the students sitting in front of us, to acknowledge the colonial influences on languages, and consider the contexts of students' language learning. Engaging with Inuit narratives of language learning allows for better understandings of experiences in order to respond to students' affective natures and needs.

## CHAPTER 6: LEARNING

In North Baffin Island, Inuit distinguish between two different approaches and concepts of education (Stairs, 1992, 1995; Wenzel, 1987). Inuit use the term *Isumaqsayuq* to encompass Inuit experiences of learning or Inuit education, the primary concept being to “cause (or cause to increase) thought” (Briggs, 1998, p. 5; Stairs, 1992). *Isumaqsayuq* is “to think, to be creative and come up with solutions” (M. Allurut, personal communication, June 2017) and is the means of passing on knowledge and social culture through oral teachings, observations, and participation in daily family life and community activities. Value is placed on relationships and collaboration. Inuit learn from multiple teachers by listening carefully, observing closely, practising, exercising discernment, and developing patience and personal capacity (Stairs, 1992; Wenzel, 1987). Embedded in everyday life, learners generally refrain from asking questions but rather acquire knowledge and skills through practice (Stern, 2010). Inuit learning requires fostering *isuma* – “thought, ideas, the mind” (M. Allurut, personal communication, June 2017; Stairs, 1992). According to Jackie Price (2008), “*isuma* represents the strength and discipline of an individual’s emotions and mind” (p. 134). The capacity for thought, sense, and reason develops autonomously as one becomes an adult (Brody, 2000; Wenzel, 1987).

Recognizing the differences between Euro-Canadian schooling and traditional Inuit education, Inuit use the term *ilisayuq*, meaning to learn in the context of a fixed setting detached from daily life (Wenzel, 1987; Stairs, 1992, 1995). Acquiring skills, often for future occupation, is the primary goal (Briggs, 1998; Cameron, 2015; Stairs, 1992). The root word *ili* – means to learn, get the grasp of something, but it also means to put or place (M. Allurut, personal communication, June 2017; Cameron, 2015; Spalding, 1979) therefore *ilisayuq* is to “put ideas

into the mind or put knowledge into a person” (M. Allurut, personal communication, June 2017). Isumaqsayuq and ilisayuq - two vastly different approaches to teaching and learning which come into relation with each other in classrooms across Nunavut (Stairs, 1992).

In this chapter, I provide a brief historical overview of Inuit education and experiences of schooling, including residential schooling, to contextualize the findings and offer insight into current educational issues. The meaning and practice of education and learning for Inuit differs significantly from the schooling practices often exercised by Qallunaat. In interviews as well as informal conversations, participants shared their experiences of learning within the schooling system, and the valuable education which exists outside a classroom context, detailing varying teaching and learning approaches. Coming to better understandings of the ways in which Inuit learn has allowed me to think critically about educational contexts and spaces. I offer my understandings of Inuit ways of teaching and learning, based on a family-centred lifestyle, in relation to land, and integrated into daily routines. Aspirations for schooling, including the need for higher academic expectations, more culturally relevant resources and pedagogies (Aylward, 2009a), and the meaningful inclusion of Elders in school programming, is also discussed.

During a staff in-service session at Inuujaq School, teachers and student support assistants were asked to organize ourselves into small groups related to grade level or subjects taught. I worked with the Grade 5/6 and Grade 8 teacher, both of whom were Qallunaat. In our groups we were asked to review and discuss different curricular resources, suggest ideas for lessons, and highlight learning outcomes with the intention of sharing plans among the whole staff. As each group presented some key ideas, the Principal recorded various points on a flip chart.

When it came time for one of the groups to present, an Inuit teacher stood and started to tell a story in Inuktitut (told in English through an interpreter). She talked about learning to sew

and do beadwork by watching her grandmother. As a child, she spent hours watching her grandmother, keen to try for herself. Eventually, she was given some seal skin scraps and thread so she could begin to learn to sew. Once started, she found the process demanding and her fingers became tender and sore. The stitches she completed were loose and uneven and her grandmother ripped them out. She cried and complained and wanted to stop but her grandmother insisted she keep trying. The storyteller described how she persevered, practiced, and worked hard. She eventually became skilled at beadwork and sewing, and continues to make clothing for her family. She finished her story by explaining that she would teach her daughters in the same way. Then she sat down.

The Principal (a Qallunaat) stood in front of the flip chart, marker in hand, seemingly uncertain as to how best to note the key details from her story. He thanked her for her contribution but did not add any further comments or ideas to the flip chart.

Certainly, the Inuit teacher's story addressed what groups had been asked to discuss – ideas for lessons or pedagogies, linked to relevant curricular strands, and important learning outcomes. It was up to each individual to listen carefully and make meaning from the story they heard. Listeners also had the opportunity to consider the context within which the story was told as it could have different meanings depending on what the storyteller wished to convey. This teacher's story of learning to sew highlighted the importance of listening respectfully, engaging with the details, and learning from and with each other to explore and create new knowledges and ways of teaching.

I came to recognize that the story reflects the concept of *pilimmaksarniq*, as she acquired skills and knowledge by closely watching her grandmother and practicing. Her commitment to learning despite frustrations and discomfort is evident in her ability to make clothing for her family and her determination to pass on her knowledge and skills, and Inuit culture and traditions, to her daughters.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> In respecting Inuit with whom I work, I spoke with Connie Kalluk, a NTEP student teacher at the time, who shared her story of learning to sew with Inuujaq School staff in 2008 and granted permission for it to be included here (October 2017).

*Pilimmaksarniq* is one of the guiding principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, and the concept of learning, acquisition of skills and knowledge, and capacity building, often grounded in observation and practice. The ability to adopt effective work methods, analyze practices and procedures in order to develop excellence and skilled independence are among key features of competency in pilimmaksarniq (NDE, 2007). Although oral tradition plays a central role in the transmission of Inuit culture, histories, and cosmology; practical skills and knowledge continue to be passed on through observation, action, and practice (Arnakak, 2002). The concept of Pilimmaksarniq is fundamental to Inuit teaching and learning styles.

### **History of Schooling in the Eastern Arctic**

To understand some of the current issues facing Inuit in schooling, it is essential to review the various rapid social changes which have impacted Inuit over the last sixty years. As discussed elsewhere, the period in which Inuit were moved or compelled to move into permanent settlements (1945-1970) saw the introduction of a new school system, vastly different from the approaches, content, and methods of Inuit teaching and learning. Certainly, the imposed school system was culturally assimilative and detrimental to Inuit languages and culture (McGregor, 2010). That said, Inuit have always resisted imposed changes, determined to preserve Inuit values, languages, and culture. The origins of residential schooling for Aboriginal children on the land now known as Canada reach back to 1600s (Miller, 1996). However, Inuit have a more recent history of residential schooling, connected to the social, economic, and political changes in the North, beginning in the 1940s. As previously mentioned, the federal government largely ignored responsibilities to deliver social programs and services including health, education, and welfare to Inuit prior to the mid-1950s. As such, Anglican and Catholic churches continued to deliver education, usually in the form of religious teachings with some basic literacy and

numeracy, with minimal government grants (QIA, 2013c; TRC, 2015a). Although Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries established missions in the North in the 1800s, and small mission schools, sometimes “tent camps”, operated in Labrador (the Moravian missionaries), the Yukon, and the Mackenzie Valley in the Northwest Territories, it was not until the late 1940s and 1950s that these church-run schools, initially funded by the clergy and eventually the federal government, operated in the Eastern Arctic (Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2013; Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC], 2015a).

Day schools were imposed on the Inuit as part of the federal government’s plan to move families from the land into settlements in the 1950s (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Additionally, the federal government’s establishment of day schools and accompanying small and large hostels across the Eastern Arctic in the 1950s was another move to strengthen sovereignty in the North (TRC, 2015a). Initially, large hostels were established in a few centralized settlements. Schools across the North were considered “federal day schools” by Northern Affairs, although as students lived in hostels away from home, they were undeniably residential school students. The first government-regulated school in the territory now recognized as Nunavut was opened in 1951 in Chesterfield Inlet, followed by large hostels built in Inuvik, and eventually Iqaluit (formerly Frobisher Bay) (King, 2006). Some residences were located thousands of kilometres away from families living in new settlements. The challenge and cost of travel across the great distances of the North, as well as the limited means of communication, meant that many children were unable to see families or return home, sometimes for years at a time (Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2013). The separation of children from their families had devastating impacts on kinship systems, Inuit languages, culture, and traditional ways of life.

In 1954, the federal government produced the *Education in Canada's Northland* report which concluded, "The residential school is perhaps the most effective way of giving children from primitive environments, experience in education along the lines of civilization leading to vocational training to fit them for occupations in the white man's economy" (as cited in TRC, 2015a, p. 54). Yet, Inuit education committees of the time reported that although "instruction should be in English. The use of the Eskimo language should not be discouraged..." (TRC, 2015a, p. 54). Margery Hinds, a teacher in Inukjuak (known also by its English name, Port Harrison) and the first Qallunaaq teacher in Arctic Bay, wrote that "If we are genuine in our desire to help the Eskimo we must respect his right to use and retain his own language." She added that educators had "a duty to keep alive the Eskimo culture" (as cited in TRC, 2015a, p. 54). However, the policy of teaching English often ignored or undermined Inuit languages and culture. Moreover, the physical separation of children from families devalued cultural practices and the forced assimilation process had far reaching and tragic consequences. The stories of abuse, personal trauma, and cultural oppression of Aboriginal students across Canada are well documented (Haig-Brown, 1988, Regan, 2010; TRC, 2015a, 2015b; Wells, 2012) and the painful experiences were also common to many Inuit children across the Canadian Arctic (Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2013; TRC, 2015a).

Not all Inuit students remained in the Arctic. In the 1960s, several students were selected to be billeted with Qallunaaq families in Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Manitoba, to attend school as part of the "Experimental Eskimo" program (TRC, 2015a). The intention was to immerse Inuit students in Qallunaaq society "to know if Inuit kids could compete in the southern education system" (Ittinuar, 2008, p. 59). Several of those students became Aboriginal rights activists, leaders, and key figures in the creation of the territory of Nunavut. However, the experiment also



deprived them of connections to parents, Inuit languages, and culture. The students' experiences feature in a 2009 documentary film *The Experimental Eskimos*. Ittinuar (2008) wrote that fellow student Zebedee Nungak often claimed that "he has never regretted the experience, but he has also never recovered from it" (p. 65).

The assimilative approach of the residential school system, which resulted in physical and cultural displacement, continues to affect the perception of the current model of schooling, which "is still met with apprehension, suspicion, and fear by some community members" (Moore, Tulk, & Mitchell, 2005, p. 121). Given the recent history of residential schooling in the Eastern Arctic, many Survivors<sup>51</sup> and parents of Survivors are living today. Thus, the intergenerational impacts, which exist for Aboriginal peoples across Canada, remain strong in the North (TRC, 2015a).

In 1958, a federal day school was established in Arctic Bay, although the settlement remained largely a "Qallunaat enclave" (QIA, 2013a, p. 9) which included a Roman Catholic mission, a weather station, a HBC post, and visiting RCMP officers. According to Atoat from Arctic Bay, "the big change came when school started" (as cited in Innuksuk & Cowan, 1976, p. 79). Only seven *Tununirusirmuit* (people from the smaller place that faces away from the sun) families lived in the settlement at that time and nine students attended the school full-time (Hinds, 1968). Although other families camped nearby, they only ventured into the community settlement to trade, meet the supply ship, or receive medical attention (QIA, 2013a).

The first Qallunaat teacher in the community, Margery Hinds (1968) provided individual lessons to children who came into the settlement from outpost camps with parents. Some of the men who came from camps to trade at the store requested school work for their children, although parents had already taught reading and writing in Inuktitut syllabics. She also provided

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<sup>51</sup> The term Survivor has been capitalized as a mark of respect and in keeping with the TRC (2015) conventions.

English and numeracy lessons to adults who requested instruction. A new school was built in Arctic Bay in 1962 to which Tununirusirmuit were increasingly encouraged to send their children. By 1968, there was a small hostel built in Arctic Bay. Two full time teachers and an Inuit classroom assistant were employed to teach 30 students (QIA, 2013a). Many Tununirusirmuit continued to live in extended family camps into the 1960s and 70s (Douglas, 1998). In Arctic Bay, as with some other communities, families were obligated to send children to regional centres and boarding homes throughout the 1970s, 1980s and even into the early 90s as local day schools did not offer schooling beyond Grade 10. Several students from Arctic Bay were forced to move to Pond Inlet or Iqaluit to complete Grade 12 (Fieldnotes November 2014; May 2015; June 2017).

The federal day schools, increasingly appearing in community settlements across the Eastern Arctic in the 1960s, were largely based on the “knowledge, pedagogy, and culture of Euro-Canadians” (Berger, 2009, p. 73). Not surprisingly, the teaching approaches and curriculum of the day schools were inconsistent with Inuit experiences of teaching and learning. As with residential schools, English was the language of instruction, and it remained the overarching goal and purpose of schooling (McGregor, 2010). The curriculum employed throughout the early days of the schools was often borrowed from southern provinces, the content of which was largely irrelevant to Inuit culture and ways of life. Inuit-centred curriculum development is ongoing in Nunavut, yet high school students in Arctic Bay are still required to complete the Alberta curriculum diploma exams as part of their final assessment (Fieldnotes June 2015; June 2017). As Vick-Westgate (2002) rightly explains, educational policy and curricular programs in the Arctic have “traditionally been developed in the South and shipped to the North” (p. 13). Expectations of regular attendance, punctuality, and adherence to the school

schedule introduced by Qallunaat teachers and school administration remain noticeable points of difference between Inuit and Qallunaat ways of life (Berger, Epp & Møller, 2006).

By the 1970s, there was an effort made to address the question of culture and language in Inuit education. Several Inuit associations and organizations including the Eskimo Brotherhood, Qinnuayuak, Inuit Tapirisat (now known as Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami), and the Inuit Cultural Institute held conferences to discuss educational issues and put forth recommendations such as Inuit-run teacher certification programs, land-based camping experiences, and increased Inuit culture and Inuktitut language in schools. These concerns and recommendations were largely ignored (NTI, 2007). Also during this time, control of schools was transferred from the federal government to the government of Northwest Territories.

The shift to greater local control of schooling came in the 1980s and 1990s as regional boards of education were established throughout the Northwest Territories (NWT) and high school classes were offered in every community. The Baffin Divisional Board of Education (BDBE), the first Inuit board of education in the NWT, produced *Piniaqtavut* (1989), a K-9 program of studies which incorporated Inuit worldviews, Northern topics, and culturally relevant themes. Perhaps most important, community and parental involvement in schooling was a key initiative of the BDBE (BDBE, 1989; McGregor, 2012a). One of the first holistic programs developed for use in the North (Vick-Westgate, 2002), the framework of *Piniaqtavut* supported culturally based pedagogy, bilingual education, and an increase in the recruitment of Inuit teachers. Although the production of a curricular framework document grounded in Inuit language, culture, and ways of knowing is an important development, the expectations and descriptions of Inuit values were not clearly articulated. Given that Qallunaat teachers comprise the majority, this limitation affected meaningful implementation (McGregor, 2012a).

In 1996, *Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective*<sup>52</sup> (Northwest Territories Department of Education, Culture and Employment [NWTDECE], 1996) was released which contextualizes and outlines Inuit visions of schooling, goals and purposes of schooling, and names the traditional knowledge, values, skills, experiences, and attitudes deemed necessary at each level (Berger & Epp, 2007; McGregor, 2010). The document was collaboratively produced with numerous Inuit Elders, educators, and other Inuit groups across the territory, providing the necessary context for teachers to begin to incorporate culturally appropriate lessons, content, and teaching approaches (McGregor, 2012a). The document articulates various aspects of Inuit culture and provides greater direction for teachers, outlining key experiences and recommending some culturally-responsive learning activities for students. However, additional adequate learning materials and specific resources from which to work are required. Additionally, further professional and cultural orientation and ongoing in-service for teachers would support effective and appropriate engagement with the content (Berger, 2007; Berger & Epp, 2007; McGregor, 2012a).

Following the creation of the Inuit territory of Nunavut on April 1, 1999, the new government cabinet voted to dissolve regional boards of education in favour of one centralized Nunavut Department of Education. Each community across Nunavut continues to have a locally-elected seven-member District Education Authority (DEA) that monitors school plans, sets school policies, controls school budget, provides direction to principals, and maintains overall responsibility for school administration (McGregor, 2010). Additionally, the DEA oversees the school's Inuit cultural program, including the hiring of cultural instructors. In September 2008, the *Nunavut Education Act* was passed in the legislative assembly. The Act calls for significant

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<sup>52</sup> See also Aylward (2009b).

changes to the existing schooling system including a commitment to ensuring Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit forms the foundation of schooling in Nunavut; dedication to bilingual education in Inuktitut and English or French; the delegation of significant responsibilities to local DEAs in terms of policy development and school programming and administration; and more support for students including counselors and improved student-teacher ratios (Government of Nunavut, 2008).

Nunavut is the only region in Canada with education legislation mandating all public schooling be based on Indigenous knowledge. Inuit schooling has undergone incredible changes in a very short period of time. Yet what has been remarkably consistent over the last 40 years is the call by Inuit parents, organizations, government representatives, and academics for local control of schooling delivered by curriculum developed explicitly for the communities and culture in which Inuit students live.

### **Inuit Ways of Learning**

Effective Inuit education has existed since time immemorial, intertwining practical skills with cultural values, and enabling Inuit to be successful long before the interference of Qallunaat. The traditional hunting culture of Inuit and the sometimes-demanding Arctic environment requires that children be adequately equipped to survive on the land. The features of Inuit education proved effective in the context of traditional Inuit life on the land (Watt-Cloutier, 2000). While vast societal changes have impacted these approaches, most still exist in a modified form that reflect Inuit contemporary reality.

*Sometimes when we recall what our lives were like, we remember thinking that we were not being educated. But we realize now that we were learning all along.*

Letia Kyak (as cited in Niutaq Cultural Institute, 2011, p. 145)

As with many Aboriginal peoples, the land is the original ‘classroom’ and the first teacher (Haig-Brown & Hodson, 2009; Styres, 2011; Watt-Cloutier, 2000). The land for Inuit is complex, relational, and all-encompassing, a place which is shared by spirits of the land, animals, and Inuit (Bennett & Rowley, 2004). Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2015) claims that for Inuit children, “the great northern landscape was our playground” (p. 19). Children are given responsibilities and taught the required skills and practices to ensure an enduring relationship with the land, the animals, the sea, and sky (McGregor, 2010). Inuk Elder Namonai Ashoona explained that “we were given tasks to do and we did them willingly... [the tasks] were for our survival. These were the skills we were going to have to learn and use” (as cited in Niutaq Cultural Institute, 2011, p. 22).

In fact, the teaching and learning which occurs on the land is so seamless, Inuk Elder, Jacopie Kokseak (2004) spoke of the good times he shared with his father and admitted that he “did not know that [he] was being given an education” (as cited in Bennett & Rowley, 2004, p. 29). One of the fundamental principles of Inuit education is that it is not separated from daily activities, rather it is embedded in everyday routines. For many Inuit, this form of learning on the land persists as children closely observe parents, older siblings, or Elders to gain skills such as building qamutiks (wooden sleds), fishing, and hunting. Children are not segregated from adults to learn, they are included in adult society, expected to participate to the best of their ability and make their own decisions. Adults recognize the capabilities of learners and place considerable value on child autonomy, promoting independence and resourcefulness (McGregor, 2010; Stern, 2010).

One afternoon during the Fishing Derby in Ikpikittuarjuk, my friend and I retreated to our tent for warmth and respite. We put the kettle on to boil, lay back on our camping ‘beds’ and pondered reasons why the fish weren’t biting, or at least not for me. We were also working our way through a large bag of candy.

There was a rustling at the entrance of the tent as someone tried to unzip the ‘door’ and come in. We recognized the mitts grabbing the material at the bottom to hold it taut: it was my friend’s granddaughter. She struggled for some time with zipper and eventually took off her mitts to get a better grip. I could see from inside the tent that the main reason for her difficulty was that the material from the flap was caught in the zipper. As I started to get up to help her, my friend held out her arm to stop me, and told me to let her figure it out on her own. I sat back and watched as the young girl, 7 years old, pulled and fought with the zipper. My friend didn’t give any direction to her granddaughter. Eventually, she tugged the material free, unzipped the tent entrance, came in, and helped us with our bag of candy.

*Children learned by watching their parents do everything.*

Leah Akavak, (as cited in Niutaq Cultural Institute, 2011, p. 67)

Early in each interview, I asked participants to describe childhood and family activities. Invariably, Inuit shared experiences of hunting, camping, berry-picking, fishing, and being out on the land. Conversations often led to the topic of interests, favourite pastimes, and the ways in which they learned necessary skills. Consistently, people spoke of learning by observing family members and practising. Inuit learning is deeply rooted in family relations. Educating children is considered to be a responsibility of parents, older siblings, Elders, and other family members.

Paul \* said:

I learned just by watching my father, without him saying anything. That's how my father used to learn, just by looking at his brother-in-law, without asking questions, without saying anything. He would just say try and experience it yourself. Once you keep doing the same thing you'll get better at it.

Inuit children generally refrain from asking questions, interrupting adult conversations, or demanding explanations, rather, approaches to teaching are primarily experiential and children learn to do by watching and doing (Stern, 2010; Watt-Cloutier, 2015). Simon Tookoome (1999) spoke of his parents' teachings: "We did not ask questions...we waited to find things out. We learned by being quiet and watching" (p. 19).

Parents actively teach their children what they need to know, consistent with their age, maturity level, and readiness to learn (Mancini Billson & Mancini, 2007). Most Inuit feel a strong sense of responsibility in teaching Inuit languages and culture to their children. Rosalie Oqallak, a woman in her 20s, describes the "good stuff" she learned:

My grandmother taught me a lot when I was little...she talked about the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit way...good stuff about the Arctic, the land, or our way of life, stories about how Inuit used to live.

Storytelling and cultural learning in artistic forms such as throat singing and drum dancing is an inherent part of Inuit life and an important means of sharing knowledge. Although a syllabic writing system exists, Inuit oral traditions are a vital way of learning and teaching.



One of the purposes of Inuit education is for the child to be successful, developing personal capacity, and learning to know, to be, and to do in the ways of the Elders (McGregor, 2010). Tony \*, a man in his 30s, describes his childhood learning:

My father was teaching me Inuktitut. He taught me hunting, how to survive, how to build igloos, how to build sod houses. I watched him building sod houses and igloos and how to hunt caribou, how to hunt seal. He brought me with him every time. We were out all day fishing, seal hunting, or caribou hunting.

Max Kalluk had similar experiences:

When I turned 12 my grandparents from Grise Fiord came back here. That was good for me. 'Cause I felt like I had teachers showing me how to hunt. That's how I learned. I learned from my uncle too. He taught me about narwhal hunting, seal hunting too.

It is common for a son to closely observe his father or other male family members to learn invaluable hunting skills, and for a daughter to follow her mother to learn how to prepare hides, sew, or cook (Watt-Cloutier, 2015). Although this may evoke learning experiences along gendered lines, Jessen Williamson (2006, 2011) explains that Inuit describe themselves as individuals and human beings prior to making gender distinctions. She regards Inuit gender relations as “philosophically egalitarian and in many ways genderless...each person’s humanity is seen as more significant than their characteristics of sex” (2011, p. 8). While gendered roles and responsibilities may be visible in household divisions of labour, parenting roles, and hunting

practices, there is flexibility and fluidity in these divisions. Inuit recognize that complementary and mutually beneficial relationships are important in all areas of life.

Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit respects this balance as evidenced in the principle of *Piliriqatigiingniq*, the concept of collaboration or working together for a common purpose, with the expectation of shared leadership (Arnakak, 2000; NDE, 2007). In order to provide food for their families, hunters require well sewn *pualuuk* (mitts) and *kamiks* (boots) to stay warm while out on the land. Inuktitut, which does not have gender specific pronouns (K. Attagutsiak, personal communication, December 2014) and Inuit naming practices, in which names are passed down from one generation to the next without subscribing to sex or gender identification, reveal the fluidity of gender in Inuit life (Alia, 2009; Jessen Williamson, 2006, 2011; Owljoot & Flaherty, 2013).<sup>53</sup> Although previously organized along gender lines, all students are now collaboratively learning valuable skills such as preparing skins, sewing, and tool-making in cultural classes at Inuujaq School (Fieldnotes, November 2014, April 2015, May 2017).

A level of caring exists between the teacher and learner, and while children are expected to listen and observe, parents recognize a child's character, often catering to the needs of the child, focusing on the child's strengths, and uncovering special skills. Learners are taught to be patient and work hard. Joseph \*, a man in his 30s, recognizes the ways he learned by listening carefully, observing closely, and acquiring knowledge and skills through trial and error.

I learned so much from my father. Hunting, how to be a good person – I learned so much from him. That's how I grew up with my family. I learned so much from them. Not only

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<sup>53</sup> For further discussions of the notion of Inuit genderlessness, sexuality, gendered divisions of labour, and gender relations, please see Jessen Williamson (2006, 2011). See also L. Jessen Williamson (2006).

my father and my mother but my siblings too. He [my father] used to tell me to be patient and he would tell me just to watch him do something first. Even if I wanted to help, he would not let me help, he just wanted me to watch. Then I would start from the beginning and keep going and finish everything on my own. If I made a mistake my dad would talk to me about the mistake I made, or he would laugh and joke with me.

Adults are actively involved in teaching children including quizzing children, playing verbal games, and responding to children's mistakes with laughter or teasing, in order to teach learners to accept mistakes and laugh at their slip-ups (Stern, 2010). Moreover, as an aspect of Inuit childrearing, teasing is a playful exchange that encourages learners to reflect on their ways of thinking, behaving, and interacting socially, and consider their place in, and relationship to, the social, physical, and spiritual world. Jessen Williamson (2010) acknowledges that "teasing helps a learner understand that human beings are just a small fraction of the whole, considering the vast extent of the universe" (Jessen Williamson & Kirmayer, 2010, p. 303).

Following Inuit students' narratives of childhood activities and the learning that occurs with family and in relation to land, conversations eventually moved to experiences of learning in a school setting. Though each interview schedule was flexible, allowing for an organic process, participants were generally asked to describe a typical school day, recount a memorable lesson, and discuss the ways in which they learned at school. Additionally, I asked participants about their preferred classes or to describe qualities of a favourite teacher. Responses often evolved into discussions of aspects of school which they liked and disliked.

Most of the recollections of lessons or discussions of preferred classes are those grounded in Inuit culture and specifically in relationships with land, explored more fully in an earlier chapter. Additionally, science lessons involving visual demonstrations, experimental, practical,

and hands-on activities were frequently recalled as notable, reflecting the Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit principle of pilimmaksarniq, and reaffirming educational practices and ways of learning, through observation, practice, and action which have sustained Inuit communities. In discussing approaches to learning, Rebecca \*, a woman in her mid-20s, highlights the contradictory nature of learning that often happens in classrooms with learning that occurs within Inuit families:

We watched my parents doing things, I think that's how we learned from them. We watched my mother a lot with skinning, sewing... When I started going to high school we would only copy from the board, not use our minds. We would copy what the teacher wrote on the board. It was really weird. I don't think I really learned anything from copying the board.

Amanda \*, a woman in her 20s, had a similar description of some of the ways in which she was taught in the school:

Sometimes the teacher just talked and wrote on the board and we would just copy it... We didn't do anything with it. We just put it inside our desk, leave it until the end of the school year and then just put it in the garbage.

Although one might argue that there is value in the discipline of copying notes from board as students simultaneously read, listen, and write while making sense of the material, as a pedagogical practice, it is a lacklustre activity often used as a classroom management tool. As a student, Amanda \* did not see the value of the task, did not interact with the material, nor did she

have ownership over the process or the information. Donathan Kigutikakjuk, a current high school student nearing graduation, also describes school learning in this way:

Work is written on the board. Students are copying off the board. Students sometimes work in groups and the teacher helps. The teacher talks to the class most of the time. We sit in our desks with our notebook and we write what the teacher says and what's on the board.

My purpose is not to critique teachers, nor are these comments indicative of all experiences of learning at school. Tremendous efforts have been made. The Nunavut Department of Education (2016) has produced some meaningful, culturally-relevant, and engaging learning materials and initiatives are underway. In fact, collaborative efforts to develop Inuit-centred curricular programming, integrate Inuit culture into curriculum, and produce Inuktitut language materials have been ongoing since the 1980s (McGregor, 2010). That said, the influence of Qallunaat culture has disrupted effective Inuit ways of teaching and learning. Although Nunavut's curriculum competencies are drawn from Inuit principles and values (NDE, 2007, 2015, 2016), further detail, context, culturally-responsive, locally-relevant teaching, and learning materials are required (McGregor, 2012a).

Aylward's (2009b) exploration of the experiences of Inuit curriculum developers creating the 1996 document *Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective* highlights an important point about teaching in culturally-responsive ways. In the process of curriculum development and in-service sessions at the time, Qallunaat teachers often claimed difficulties in teaching from Inuit principles, a lack of knowledge or confidence, and uncertainty regarding ways of incorporating Inuit perspectives into lessons. Inuit authors responded by questioning

how one might teach about any culture, “How do you teach about Japan if you are not Japanese?” (p. 150) and reminded teachers of the advantage in teaching from principles of Inuit culture being surrounded by local resource people and Elders. Susan Dion (2009) also points out that “we cannot use our fear of saying the wrong thing as an excuse for not doing the work” (p. 55). Recognizing Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a space or context for learning within which discussion, questioning, and respectful dialogue can take place offers greater scope to transform pedagogy and curricula and support Inuit students’ needs.

Since the 1980s, the Baffin Division Board of Education and the Department of Education, in partnership with Inuit Elders and Inuit educators, have worked to create curricular documents (e.g. *Piniaqtavut & Inuuqatigiit*) reflective of Inuit language, culture, and values.<sup>54</sup> At the time of creation and release, these curricular documents were ground-breaking and led to the development of other innovative work based on Inuit perspectives (McGregor, 2012a). In my own experiences and observations, many teachers work hard to develop pedagogy that reflects students’ needs, cultural values, and interests. Teachers who are working towards respectful and culturally-responsive ways of teaching are often those who recognize personal responsibility, engage with Inuit colleagues and community members to actively learn, and maintain high expectations for their students (Berger, 2007; Fieldnotes December 2014, May 2015, May 2017). That said, the above comments highlight the fundamental contradiction between Inuit education and ways of learning and some of the practices in the current school system.

In sharing qualities of their favourite teachers, Inuit students generally describe those who are supportive, committed, and value students, have high expectations, create positive, interactive, and enjoyable learning environments, and develop cooperative teaching and learning

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<sup>54</sup> See also McGregor (2010).

strategies. As previously discussed, teachers who respectfully incorporate cultural practices, particularly in relation to land-based learning, are also among the favoured. What is significant are the ways in which particular teacher attributes or behaviours impact students and contribute to their positive experiences of schooling. Margaret \*, a woman in her 30s, describes the long-lasting impact of a Qallunaaq teacher:

My favourite teacher, he would just talk to you in person, he was there. He could explain, and he was someone pushing me to do better. He helped a lot. I mean with the students, he knew we were struggling and he would take time to help out. He was a role model to everybody. Even to the community, even to parents. He sort of changed things. I mean teachers would never...my parents would never go and talk to them [teachers] and he went to my mother's house. We were shocked. There was a white person inside my house talking about me. He told my parents that my grades were improving and that I had progressed. He was the one going to parents. Everybody loved him. Everybody. I mean, I didn't know I had that knowledge, that I'm smart until he showed me. I mean, wow, changed my life.

Engaging with parents is an effective way in which to support students' learning and build cooperative school-home relationships which contribute to establishing high expectations for students (ITK, 2013). Rebecca \* describes her favourite teacher as being accessible and supportive:

She was caring, and she would help us with anything we needed. She was open to talk to and we could talk to other students to help each other out. She explained really well how

to do our work in English and Inuktitut. She explained everything we would do that day at school.

*Tunnganarniq*, another guiding principle of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, means to be open, friendly, accepting, welcoming to others, inclusive, kind, and respectful. Expressing this concept is a way of fostering good spirit and is important in building positive relationships (Kalluak, 2017; Karetak & Tester, 2017; NDE, 2007; Qanatsiaq Anoe, 2015). Teachers who take personal interests in students, care for students, demonstrate a belief that students can succeed, and actively motivate and encourage students, are engaging with the concept of *tunnganarniq*. This helps to improve student self-esteem, makes students feel acknowledged and appreciated, and has the potential to make a positive difference in students' learning experiences at school (Qanatsiaq Anoe, 2015). Margaret's \* teacher, perhaps recognizing the ways in which parents have been deeply affected by their own educational experiences, assumed responsibility for initiating contact with families to develop positive and respectful relationships. Elisapee \* appreciated the humour and collaborative learning environment created by her favourite teacher:

My favourite teacher was Inuk – she was a great teacher. She was a very good storyteller. She was funny. We sometimes learned through games and we worked a lot together.

Calls to increase the number of Inuit teachers in Nunavut schools, for schools to truly reflect Inuit cultural values and language, are not new (Arctic Institute of North America, 1973; Berger, 2008, 2009; Government of Nunavut, 2008; Martin, 2017; O'Donoghue, 1998; Tompkins, 1998). Under Article 23 of the *Nunavut Agreement*, Inuit must fill positions in public services at a representative level. The objective of Article 23 is fundamental to the spirit and



intentions of the *Nunavut Agreement* in ensuring Inuit are participating in and accessing economic opportunities, and in encouraging Inuit cultural and social wellbeing. Although recent research suggests that young Inuit are interested in pursuing careers in education, there remain numerous barriers (Berger et al., 2017). In describing her favourite teacher, Louisa \*, a woman in her 20s, acknowledges the importance of Inuit teachers in classrooms:

My favourite teacher made us do hands-on work. She explained things in an understandable way. She was an Inuk too. She was fun. She understood her students. I noticed some of the teachers, half of the teachers, they want to teach the students with their words and also, we mostly did work by ourselves. I think it would be best if there was an Inuk, like a SSA [Student Support Assistant] or something to be with the students. If there is going to be Qallunaat teachers, there should be an Inuk in the classroom with them.

This is not a study of teachers, their methods, or their contributions to schooling in Nunavut. Certainly, students across Canada are likely to remark similar characteristics of their favourite teachers. Rather, the details which emerged in depictions of favourite teachers include qualities that are tantamount to values and principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, particularly tunnganarniq. Moreover, themes of collaboration, learning in relation to observation, experience, and practice, the importance of relationships, the oral tradition of passing on knowledge, and teaching with humour, are among traditionally Inuit ways of educating and learning.

It has long been recognized that Aboriginal students become more engaged in learning in a school environment that responds to and values community and culture, integrates Aboriginal

knowledge and perspectives into programing, incorporates teaching strategies appropriate to Aboriginal learners, creates positive learning environments, and works to engage students and parents (Berger, 2008; Dion, 2009, 2014; Government of Nunavut, 2008; ITK, 2011; Kanu, 2011; Lewthwaite & McMillan, 2010). As a final interview question, participants were asked to share their hopes or aspirations for schooling in their community. Not surprisingly, an overwhelming majority expressed their desire for schooling to be grounded in Inuit culture, and incorporate Inuit ways of teaching and learning. Certainly, holistic learning requires connections to culture, including land and language. Max Kalluk shared his views:

I would make our culture foundation for our learning. Send more kids outside, on the land, to be connected more with each other and with the Elders. Not using ordinary people as teachers, but Elders. I think use a different curriculum, not ‘down south’ based.

Inuit education and ways of learning are profoundly holistic, relational, and experiential. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, which embodies Inuit ways of knowing, doing, learning, and ways of being, privileges the “intimate, experiential knowledge of the Inuit” (Arnakak, 2002, p. 6). Eva \* recalls the value of cooperative and hands-on learning:

I think there needs to be more hands-on learning, learning together with teachers. I know there are a lot of kids to teach, but as you learn with them you get to have fun. But more hands-on learning. I remember an Elder was helping me sew and she started to tear up my sewing, tearing what I had sewn to start all over. I was so frustrated I started crying [laughs]...but that’s how we learned.

Leslie Oyukuluk, a woman now enrolled in Arctic College, highlights the importance of relationships and collaboration in education:

The best part of school was learning, learning new things every day. It was way better learning together with friends or with a teacher. The whole class would learn something together.

Rhoda \*, a woman in her early 40s, has similar comments:

I think they [the school] should focus on making learning fun. School needs to be more fun and motivating but also challenging, but enough for the students to understand that. Or find what students are interested in...I think that would be helpful. There needs to be more hands-on instead of just books. Because that's how we were taught and raised.

While I was teaching at Inuujaq School, at one point in the school year, the main photocopier broke down. When efforts to repair it were unsuccessful, new parts were ordered. For more than six weeks, teachers worked without any printable resources. Although student textbooks were available for some subjects, other programs offered teacher kits, manuals, or handbooks each of which contained resources to be photocopied. At the time, my classroom did not have an interactive whiteboard or computer.

Without a working photocopier, teachers were forced to get creative, be resourceful, and ultimately adapt prior practices. Teachers shared ideas that worked well – using flexible pipe cleaners for math lessons on angles; history puzzles made from construction paper with which students matched key figures with causes and significance of particular events; and the use of games. Of course, some of these types of activities had already been occurring in classrooms. I believe most teachers recognize the value of developing exciting and interactive lessons yet sometimes the perceived lack of resources, heavy workloads, insufficient opportunities to

collaborate and create with others, the ease of photocopying materials developed for mass markets, and commitment of time can overshadow intentions.

I too was unable to photocopy individual handouts and cooperative and hands-on activities took their place. I came to realize how often I had relied on tedious worksheets. A favourite activity among my students became a science-related Jeopardy game (“I’ll take Rocks and Minerals for 400”). Although not all students were familiar with the intricacies of the game, most had seen episodes or clips on television. I created ‘answers’ for different topics or categories, written on construction paper and taped to the chalkboard. Students worked in teams to select a category and cooperatively answer the question (or as is typical in the game of Jeopardy, provide the question). On one occasion, a student’s grandmother, a monolingual Inuktitut speaker, visited our classroom while we were playing the game. She joined one of the groups and eagerly played along. Students explained the process, interpreted the questions for her and at one point, her team asked her to select the next category and worked with her to answer the question!

Admittedly, there was relief when the photocopier was eventually repaired as there are valuable printable resources. That said, many of the learning activities developed or employed at that time remained part of the class program, including our weekly game of Jeopardy.

I came to realize that the six weeks in which teachers worked without printable resources, we were ultimately engaging with and demonstrating the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principle of *Qanuqtuurunnarniq*, the concept of being resourceful and seeking solutions through flexibility, adaptability, and creativity. For Inuit, innovation, resourcefulness, the ability to improvise and use materials at hand, reflect on a problem, and consider possible solutions is critical to adapting to the ever-changing Arctic environment (Arnakak, 2002; NDE, 2007). In addition to recognizing *Qanuqtuurunnarniq* as an expectation for social development, Jaypeetee Arnakak (2002) claims that for Inuit, “*Qanuqtuurunnarniq* is a true source of pride” (p. 39). Additionally, students had fun and worked collaboratively.

*Piliriqatigiingniq* is the concept of working cooperatively for a common purpose and fostering collaborative relationships. Inuit believe that the good of the group is more important than the individual and this fundamental belief “should pervade all teaching” (NDE, 2007, p. 44). Bruno Attagutsiak, shares his thoughts on the need for collaborative teaching and learning approaches:

If there’s something going on at school...they need to talk to them more about what to do...helping each other more. Connecting. Having a connection between the students and the teacher and the office admin or counsellor... It’s more fun when everybody gets together, help each other out...Coming together as one, that’s when you get to learn more. Discussing as a class is more important than working alone.

It is important for Qallunaat teachers to recognize and understand traditional Inuit ways of learning in order to reflect on and adapt current practices. The various learning experiences shared offer great insight into useful, appropriate methods that educators may wish to incorporate into their teaching practices. For example, creating opportunities for students to learn collaboratively and incorporating hands-on or experiential activities are among important and effective approaches with Inuit students (Berger, 2007).

Educational programming in Nunavut continues to be developed within the context of Inuit foundations, in the hopes of grounding the school system in Inuit values (McGregor 2012a, 2012b; Laugrand & Oosten, 2009), yet in my own observations and teaching experiences, the realization of sufficient materials and practices meaningfully informed by Inuit knowledges has been elusive. Moreover, there remains an assumption that teachers know how to take up the content of Inuit values within an appropriate cultural framework (McGregor, 2012a).

Professional development programs, further in-service opportunities for Qallunaat and Inuit teachers to collaborate, learn with and from each other, share resources and plan lessons have the potential to lead to greater understandings and better support and programming for Inuit students (Berger, 2007; Berger & Epp, 2007; O'Donoghue, 1998; Tompkins, 1998).

Nunia Qanatsiaq Anoe (2015) describes her experiences as a teacher in Hall Beach and explains the ways teachers modelled the concept of *piliriqatigiingniq* to students by collaborating to develop thematic teaching units, plan lessons, and share learning resources. Presumably, the teachers also demonstrated the IQ principle of *aajiiqatigiingniq* as they sought to seek solutions and constantly improve through cooperation, contributing to the team, interacting with open minds, developing shared understandings, and arriving at decisions through consensus (NDE, 2007). In a model outlined by Tompkins (1998), Inuit and Qallunaat teachers were released from classes in order to work together to plan and prepare work with the common goal of supporting students. Teachers helped each other, shared the workload, learned with and from each other, developed materials, and planned together. In addition to demonstrating collaborative relationships to students, teachers also fostered the IQ principle of *tunnganarniq* as they worked towards building positive collegial relationships, developing inclusive and open practices, and accepting the views and ideas of all involved.

### **Valuable Learning**

Recognizing the valuable learning experiences and life skills acquired through participation in sports, music groups, extra-curricular, exchange programs, Cadets, and other activities, many interviewees spoke highly of the opportunities to learn outside the classroom walls and beyond the community. Involvement in educational volunteer work and travel programs and other extra-curricular activities, often facilitated through the school and teachers,

has the potential to provide rich learning experiences for students. Many acknowledged the ways in which their experiences contributed to personal growth, development, and sense of self, as well as fostering intellectual curiosity and building positive social relationships. Additionally, the experiences of travelling across Nunavut, Canada, or internationally provides opportunities to gain new perspectives and explore unfamiliar places.

Rosalie Oqallak, a woman in her 20s, spoke about her varied learning experiences in cultural and educational youth programs, the pride and excitement she shared with family and community members, and the confidence and strength she (re)discovered in herself:

I've been in three programs so far. Students on Ice was a great experience. We learned about the Arctic, the environment, climate change, travelled to Greenland, saw glaciers. We were about 35 Inuit students from Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut, and Greenland and the other students were from all over the world. My teacher was talking about it and I thought I should apply. Other people were trying to apply but it was a lot of work to put the application in. My teacher helped me with it, my English teacher. I filled out some of the application, but it was a bit hard, she helped me the whole time. A month later, she called me and said, guess what? You got a scholarship for Students on Ice!

My Grandma was so excited and she said, "You're going to have a good experience out there learning." She went on the radio to announce it and everyone was excited about it because they couldn't even imagine a student from here going on a ship and learning through that program.

When you stay here long and you don't want to do anything any more, you want to experience another dimension. And the other dimension is far from you and you don't know what's happening out there and you learn about it. I think, wow we can do this

stuff and you don't know what you can do. I found out that I put myself out there. You find this strength in you, like you can do it. You can do whatever you want. I learned about myself. What you don't really expect.

Exposure to unfamiliar people and places, and learning experiences outside one's home community can open the mind to other ways of thinking, foster greater self-awareness, and unlock personal potential. The application process for educational programs or exchanges can be overwhelming and several spoke of the effort required and the challenges of accessing information and navigating websites, particularly in a community where internet access is very costly and can be intermittent. That said, many teachers and other community members encourage students and offer assistance.

Intercultural urban experiences through participation in sports, cultural exchanges, and other programs often provide opportunities to come to greater understandings of one's own language and culture. Interviewees referenced the ways in which such experiences enhanced personal strengths, impacted academic performance, supported independence, and contributed to social development, leadership, and interpersonal skills. Although stepping into the unknown can be daunting, Christine \*, a woman in her 30s, recognizes the value of broadening horizons, exploring interests, and the worthwhile learning that occurs in sometimes uncomfortable and unfamiliar situations:

I went to Nunavut Sivuniksavut. It was good, but a big transition coming from the Arctic going down to Ottawa. The learning was good. Good teachers, good support. Yeah, so it was awesome. It made you more aware of Nunavut. They taught us the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and you become more aware of how Nunavut government works,



QIA and NTI [Qikiqtani Inuit Association and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated.] It was a good experience. I also did the Nunavut Youth Abroad program when I was 16. That was awesome. It makes you more aware of what's out in the world. Seeing some things for the first time, you learn a lot from it.

Suzanne \*, a woman in her 30s, also appreciated the opportunities to travel and recognizes her personal experiences as invaluable:

I'll tell you what my experience has been. I was so used to living in the small community and everybody knows everybody, and we just want to have family. When you live most of your life in a small community, you don't know you have more opportunities. Some people don't even think about going to college or trying to get a job until they have to. I was like that. I wasn't trying at all until I moved to Ottawa because then I saw a lot of opportunities. When I saw it, it was like my eyes opened up and I saw what I have to do and what I want to do and what opportunities we have. You hear about different opportunities, but you don't see them until you experience them. I think there should be more exchange students, see other parts of Nunavut, other communities. Encounters with Canada, Northern Youth Abroad, Cadets. Those opportunities are really good.

Certainly, there are countless benefits associated with participation in various types of activities and programs. For students in Arctic Bay, involvement in these types of activities or programs often requires travel. Bruno Attagutsiak perhaps succinctly highlighted the ultimate value in participation in extra-curricular activities and exposure to the vast and abundant

opportunities that await young people. “If you travel outside the community, you can bring back what you learned to the community.”

### **Working Towards Tunnganarniq**

The purpose of schooling in Nunavut, as laid out in the *Educational Framework: Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit for Nunavut Curriculum* (2007), is to

...provide support to students in all areas of their development so they can achieve personal goals, become well-equipped to contribute and serve their families and communities, demonstrate leadership and healthy attitudes, and be able to actively participate and contribute as Nunavut takes on new roles in the global community. (p. 19)

The goal remains that students will be supported in the process of the “development of *innusiq* (life and living) and ultimately *isuma* (wisdom). It is a process that leads one to become an *inummarik* (human being or able person who can act with wisdom)” (p. 19). Educators in Nunavut should endeavour to develop educational spaces, grounded in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, that respect individual learners and maintain “high expectations for the contribution that each brings to the group” (NDE, 2007, p. 52).

Reiterated in interviews and casual conversations was the perception of the low academic expectations often set for Inuit students. Inuk activist, Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2000) argues that “rigour and challenge no longer exists in our schools”, noting that the schooling system “challenges our youth so little that it undermines their intelligence” (p. 115). Other studies (Berger, 2007, 2008; 2014; Rodon, 2015) as well as anecdotal evidence in the media (Zerehi, 2016b) acknowledge Inuit desire for higher academic expectations in schooling. Paul Quassa, Nunavut Minister of Education (now Premier of Nunavut), recognizes that while more work is

required, the “education system is very rigorous” (Zelniker, 2016). Although educational initiatives take time to implement and progress is gradual, many Inuit in Arctic Bay expressed concern. Unfortunately, ongoing colonialism in the form of structural racism, deficit thinking, biases, stereotypes, and prejudicial assumptions exist in schools and communities in Nunavut, as they exist across Canada (Berger, 2014; Kanu, 2011; Watt-Cloutier, 2000).

Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2000) claims that “the watering down of programs, the lowering of standards and expectations is a form of structural racism that we must make every attempt to stop” (p. 115). In order to effectively support Inuit students, we Qallunaat teachers need to work towards decolonizing beliefs about knowledge and the ways in which it influences pedagogical approaches. Examining colonial histories and the persisting colonial interruptions on Inuit culture is challenging, but important work. Learning from histories of Inuit education and schooling is necessary for Qallunaat teachers to recognize tensions, critically reflect on practices and assumptions, and rethink approaches, but requires a significant shift in understandings about relationships between Inuit and Qallunaat (Berger, 2007; Dion, 2009; Dion, Johnston, & Rice, 2010; Kovach, 2009). In their research with Inuit students and classroom teachers across the northern Qikiqtani region, Lewthwaite and McMillan (2010), found that “effective teachers recognize that they *can* and *must* change their teaching” (p. 169, emphasis in original) to support students’ learning. Moreover, as identified by Inuit participants, effective teachers adapt their approaches to include teaching and learning practices reflective of the local cultural context. Louisa \* who has lived and attended school in other communities, shares her experiences:

I’ve been to school in two other communities, high school here is a lot easier than both [named other communities]. Most teachers are giving easier work. I’ve noticed we’ve missed out a lot. It makes me want to go back to school. We just need more passionate

teachers. I want to just go take NTEP.... I want to teach them better. I want to teach the students here what they've been missing, how they can learn better, more understandable ways, not just make everything easy for them.... I want to see my children doing hard work. Harder work than I've done. I think some teachers are trying to make it easier for the students. Just don't be too easy on them. When I came here, I was learning things I'd already learned.

Rhoda \* discusses her son's experience and the disappointment she feels:

I wanted my son to have the best education. Well, he doesn't like school here to be honest. He'd rather go somewhere else for school. He went to Iqaluit for school for a couple of years and stayed with family, but it was hard financially and my sister was moving anyways. When he came back, he was doing what he did in Iqaluit a year before. So, he was bored in school because he had already done that work. He thinks school here is very easy. I was hoping for the best education for my son, but I guess not. The school system here...I know some people are doing a great job, but I know some aren't too.

According to an ethnographic study conducted by Judith Kleinfeld<sup>55</sup> (1972), effective teachers of Inuit students work to create "a climate of emotional warmth" (p. 17) in classrooms by spending considerable time building personal relationships with students. Positive interpersonal relationships between teacher and students, and within the student group, were

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<sup>55</sup> Kleinfeld's ethnography was conducted in Alaska and the terms "Indian" and "Eskimo" are referenced throughout her work. Although the name "Eskimo" is commonly used in Alaska to refer to all Inuit and Yupik people, in keeping with Canadian practices and as used throughout this dissertation, I have chosen to employ the term "Inuit" in my discussion of Kleinfeld's work.

found to improve motivation, strengthen classroom communication, and increase academic performance of Inuit students. A second characteristic of effective teachers of Inuit students is the extent to which teachers actively expect and demand “a high level of academic work” (p. 25). It is within the context of personal relationships that teachers can insist upon high quality academic performance. Students come to recognize the “demandingness” (p. 25) of teachers is an expression of their personal concern for students, rather than concern for subject material. For students, working to meet the teacher’s academic expectations “becomes their reciprocal obligation in the personal relationships” (p. 36).

Lewthwaite and McMillan (2010), found that teachers who communicate their beliefs in the capabilities of students, express their desires for students to succeed, and “do not see deficits in their students” (p. 168), foster caring learning environments and subsequently, reveal high expectations for students. Māori scholar, Russell Bishop asserts that “the dominant discourse of deficiency is what needs to be broken” (personal communication, October 2, 2017). Similarly, Berger (2007) claims that the development of a positive and caring learning environment in which high expectations are maintained requires commitment and action from Qallunaat teachers. More importantly, “accepting it [the responsibility] is an indication of caring” (p. 6). What does a caring learning environment look like? Berger (2007) describes features of caring teaching including demonstrating respect, commitment, reflection, as well as working towards understandings of cultural differences and historical and present relationships between Inuit and Qallunaat, and provides some useful direction for teachers. I assert that in Nunavut, a caring learning environment is one in which students and teachers consider the guiding principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit to be the ground rules of expectations, responsibilities, and approaches

for classroom interactions. In particular, engaging with the principle of *tunnganarniq* is important in creating an environment which is welcoming and inclusive.

Margaret \*, attended school in a large urban centre and remarked the academic rigour:

I moved to Ottawa for 4 years and I had to take ESL [English as a second language]. I learned a lot in Ottawa. When I came back here and went to school, it's so different. I mean, I thought it used to be hard here and then I went to Ottawa and it was even harder. When I came back here I realized they're not teaching hard enough. I didn't realize that until I went to Ottawa and then came back here. They're teaching us very, very little.

The perceived disparity between academic expectations across communities in Nunavut and between Northern standards and those 'down south' frequently arose in conversations. On several occasions, friends and acquaintances in Arctic Bay approached me to discuss the quality of schooling in their community, many asking for my input regarding decisions to relocate to larger centres with the view that schools 'down south' would better prepare students for academic endeavours or occupational opportunities (Fieldnotes May 2014; December 2014; May 2015; May 2016).

Although concern was expressed, many acknowledged the enormous challenges Nunavut teachers face. The lack of culturally-relevant resources, the difficulty and expense of obtaining specialized equipment, the limited access to various supplies, inadequate Inuktitut language materials, and insufficient numbers of Inuit teachers greatly impact effective teaching and learning practices. The lack of teacher orientation or ongoing professional development for educators remains problematic (Berger & Epp, 2007). Christine \*, a woman in her 30s, enjoyed attending school but was frustrated by the expectations set:

The best part of school was learning, learning new things and how interesting it can be. But I understood that what we were doing, school work was kind of easy. In high school, we were supposed to be doing challenging stuff. What we were doing wasn't challenging enough and we're supposed to be learning, right? In some classes, all we would do is copy off the board, note taking. That was pretty boring. If there were more supplies, that could be interesting, like test tubes, more books. A lack of supplies is what limits us...lack of teachers, lack of support.

Cathy \* has been an occasional substitute teacher at Inuujaq School. Although she acknowledges some systemic barriers, including limited course options, she sees tremendous value in classes grounded in Inuit cultural practices:

The teachers have got their hands full. There is no challenge here, no challenge here whatsoever. And students are not pushed enough, it's only based on attendance. The school needs to provide more challenging work. In high school, there aren't enough classes. There was one Inuktitut teacher in high school. There are not enough subjects to get the kids motivated. So, they don't look forward to going to school, they don't look forward to going to work. I'm very happy to see cultural classes that happen every now and then though. I mean, if there were more classes like that...there have been a few projects making mitts, parkas, and seeing pictures of the girls [with their sewing projects], they are standing so proud.

The controversial practice of ‘social promotion’ or ‘continuous progress’ in which students pass into the next grade with their peers regardless of academic performance, was also criticized. Kelly \*, a woman in her 20s, expresses concerns about her children’s schooling:

I worry that my children are not learning very well. That’s what I think. Maybe they are going to graduate just because they attend school. I don’t think it’s a good idea, but it seems like only attendance is used but it should be the skills they learn in school.

David \* also views the practice of social promotion as enforcing low expectations on students:

I think the school should be doing a lot better. I hope that my kids will graduate in the first place and the school curriculum changes for the better. Well, from what I think school is supposed to be the stepping point in your life. They should give better knowledge to the kids, prepare them for when they grow up. Nowadays...they just seem to let people pass. It’s too easy now. I think passing has to come from their work.

Traditional life on the land necessitated a high level of skill and expertise in order to survive and thrive in the environment. Of course, contemporary interactions with land, hunting or camping requires the same high level of skill and knowledge. Young people are expected to be patient, listen closely to Elders, but demonstrate desire and capacity to learn and understand. Watt-Cloutier (2000) asserts that “People do not learn the most significant things unless they are challenged” (p. 117). Donathan Kigutikakjuk, a student in his final year of high school, seems to derive satisfaction from working hard and meeting difficult academic expectations. Donathan



expresses his desire and commitment to learning, his willingness to work hard to feel a sense of accomplishment, and his wish to be challenged academically:

I wish I could take a socials class again. I want to learn more histories. It makes me think more when work is tougher. I like learning even if it's hard. Sometimes it's challenging. Sometimes science is hard, trying to find words is a challenge. I think teachers need to make students work. They should give more homework.

Setting aside significant issues of funding, contentious policies, claims of insufficient resources, lack of leadership, inadequate support for bilingual education, or educator effectiveness, Eva \* ultimately envisions school as a place that helps to instill a passion for learning:

I don't know what they're doing around here but something has to change. I would like to see a positive change in our school. I want to see students looking forward to school and be committed to learning. But to be committed, it has to be fun. There needs to be a mix of learning, fun, and discipline. I would want my children at bedtime to be excited about school tomorrow. I would love to see them talk about their excitement for the subject or a teacher or what they might do tomorrow.

Participants' lived experiences offer insight into the tensions and challenges of negotiating the interplay of Qallunaat and Inuit knowledges and practices in schools across Nunavut. I believe most teachers recognize that students arrive at school with different learning strengths, skills, abilities, and challenges. Creating challenging and engaging learning

opportunities that are collaborative and reciprocal, in which students can showcase their individual strengths, share their knowledge, interact with each other, contribute to the group, support and learn with and from others are important ways to promote high expectations in the classroom. Additionally, teachers who participate in learning alongside students position themselves as continual learners who value the knowledge of others.

Perhaps what is required is a return to the concept of *tunnganarniq*, a need for all educators and school personnel to work towards establishing an inclusive environment in which students feel welcomed and supported. *Tunnganarniq* involves being caring, kind-hearted, and “respectful of all living things” (Karetak & Tester, 2017, p. 13). Inuk Elder Mark Kalluak (2017) describes *tunnganarniq* as “open heartedness” and a “core expectation for all Inuit” (p. 44). Nunia Qanatsiaq Anoe (2015) outlines some successful practices of incorporating *tunnganarniq* at a school in Hall Beach, including displaying students work around the school, increasing the presence of community members to build collaborative school-community relationships, and developing peer support programs to motivate and encourage students.

Increasing interaction and communication with parents and community members is also important in building positive relationships between the school and community and fostering *tunnganarniq*. Inuujaq School routinely produces newsletters in Inuktitut and English, informing parents of school activities and upcoming events. Local radio is also used. That said, the desire for greater communication between the school and community emerged in interviews and in casual conversations (Fieldnotes, October 2014, December 2014). Facebook is a valuable way of communicating with community members, and commonly used by people in Arctic Bay, yet an Inuujaq School Facebook page was not established until the 2015-2016 school year. The school’s Facebook page is an important means of sharing student achievements, highlighting

student and class work, celebrating successes, informing community members of upcoming events, and announcing activities or meetings. Teachers also use the Facebook page to issue reminders, post photos or video clips, and respond to parent questions. It has become a more interactive, diverse, and immediate way of communicating but also valuable means of fostering open and inclusive relationships between school and community (Fieldnotes, May 2017).

A Qallunaaq teacher who has lived and worked in Arctic Bay for more than 10 years, voluntarily established a Visual Art program, open to senior students and all community members, held in an art classroom in the school on Sunday afternoons. In addition to learning, developing, and practicing artistic skills, community members are invited into the school and relationships are fostered. The annual *Art Attack* exhibit is open to the public and showcases the work of local artists. Artwork is available for purchase and the money raised is used to purchase additional art supplies for the program. Many teachers also give of their time, skills, and energy to coach sports teams, lead Cadets, run music programs, and support the local foodbank (Fieldnotes May 2014, September 2014, April 2015, May 2017). These activities are representative of some of the ways in which teachers can move towards applying the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principle of *tunnganarniq* in schools and in relation to school-based activities, in order for students to feel welcomed, accepted, and respected at school (Qanatsiaq Anooe, 2015).

### **Elders as Knowledge-Sharers**

Inuit have long been calling for the meaningful inclusion of Elders in student learning programs. At the Baffin Region Eskimo Advisory Council Conference in 1968, Alain Maktar from Pond Inlet stated that “we want the Eskimos to be taught in Eskimo” and called for the need to employ Elders in the classroom (as cited in TRC, 2015a, p. 170). Inuit recognize that through

observation and application, Inuit children benefit directly and tacitly from the skills and knowledge of the Elders, with the expectation that the knowledge be passed down from one generation to the next (Mancini Billson & Mancini, 2007; McGregor, 2010). Moreover, sharing knowledge is critical in preserving and promoting culture and language. Elders embody cultural values and are important teachers, knowledge keepers, role models, and “culture-bearers” (Tagalik, 2010a, p. 5) in Aboriginal culture (Archibald, 2008; Battiste, 2013; Kovach, 2010; NWTDECE, 1996; Oosten & Laugrand, 1999; Owljoot, 2008). Paul, \* a recent high school graduate, calls on the need for more Elders in the classroom and recognizes the importance of accessing the valuable cultural knowledge and experiences held by Elders:

I would like to see Elders teaching young ones since our Elders are passing away. I think they should teach how to cooperate with others, how they coped with life in the past, and the different skills they had in the past. There are things that should be taught in cultural classes...how to build an igloo, make qamutiks, learn how to build a kayak, how qarmait (sod houses) are built, how to take care of a dog team, how to train the dogs....

It was good having Elders in our class. They used to tell their stories about how they used to live and how they used to play. I liked learning the histories through the years, what happened...Inuit history of this land and all over, land claims agreement in Nunavut.

Battiste (2013) asserts that “successful schools also enlist elders, and draw on their wisdom and knowledge, and in so doing, reinvigorate the customary role of elders as transmitters of traditional knowledge” (p. 156). The integration of Elders and their linguistic knowledge and cultural expertise into classrooms and curricular programs has far reaching consequences for students. Collaborating with Elders is an effective way to connect with local knowledge. The

1996 document, *Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective* includes the recommendation or expectation that “Every school, ideally, every classroom, should have elders adding their living wisdom and skills to our children’s education” (p. 15). Moreover, involving Elders in the school program as master teachers is a requirement under section 102 of the *Nunavut Education Act* (2008). As outlined in the *Education Act*, community members can identify and nominate Elders to the local DEA for *Innait Inuksiutilirijiit* certification in recognition of their particular cultural expertise. On the recommendation of a DEA, the Minister of Education issues a certificate which registers and certifies the Elder(s) to participate in schools (Government of Nunavut, 2008, section 102, 1-4). The presence of Elders (as well as parents and other community members) honours traditional Inuit knowledge and stories, increases culturally relevant learning, enriches community-school relationships, improves student focus and motivation (Kanu, 2011), and supports students’ sense of wellbeing (Dion, 2014). Leslie Oyukuluk acknowledges the link between the valuable knowledge of the past and its significance and relevancy in the present:

I would like to learn more traditional stuff, tools they used and how they [Elders] survived. Tell the stories, everything that happened from the past because we would have to learn about it too, it’s our tradition. If we don’t learn it from our Elders, the next generation won’t know. We have to pass the traditions on, over and over. But if we don’t try and learn from it we won’t know. I’m glad it’s slowly getting there...it’s slowly coming back to the school.

Recognizing that the knowledge of the Elders grounds Inuit ways of teaching and learning, Elders’ participate in developing territorial educational frameworks and curricular

programs (NDE, 2007, 2016). In fact, Elders, along with Inuit educators and curriculum staff, were instrumental in the development of the *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Education Framework for Nunavut Curriculum* (NDE, 2007), articulating Inuit principles, values, attitudes, and beliefs which underpin schooling in Nunavut. If we take seriously the demand to address colonial inequities and rightfully place Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as foundational knowledge in schooling, then creating opportunities to engage with Elders is paramount. In addition to supporting student learning, most Qallunaat teachers would greatly benefit from learning from and with Elders, particularly to facilitate culturally responsive programs (Berger & Epp, 2007). Additionally, many Inuit teachers desire greater opportunities to learn from Elders in order to enhance their cultural and linguistic skills, and effectively incorporate Inuit knowledge into classroom programs (Aylward, 2009b).

Although there are recommendations and significant space within the Department of Education Nunavut Approved Curriculum (2016) for Elders to be involved in the delivery of learning modules, in my own experiences and observations, an established, standard framework at Inuujaq School is lacking. As with the incorporation of land-based pedagogies, the responsibility to coordinate Elders in classroom programming often rests with individual teachers. Furthermore, the conventional classroom may not be the most suitable context for Elders. Of course, Elders' teachings and or mentorship with family and community outside the school context is different from Elder instruction or Elder-led events in classrooms. Thus, teachers should be open, flexible, and willing to adapt the learning environment to the needs and wishes of Elders and consider how to provide conditions that are respectful and more culturally appropriate.

Another piece that emerged in numerous informal conversations was the problematic expectation that Elders volunteer in classrooms (Berger, 2014). Although Inuit guides are remunerated for their involvement in Spring Camp, and Inuit cultural instructors are employed at the school, there is often an assumption that Elders in the community visit classrooms and give freely and willingly of their time and knowledge. Although the issue of adequate financial support is often touted, my understanding is that funding for the purpose of hiring Elders is available from the DEA but issued at their discretion, based on school programming needs (Fieldnotes, May 2015). Perhaps the procedure, or lack of familiarity with the procedure, of requesting and accessing funds deters teachers. Regardless, as Inuit Qaujimaqatugangit is the foundation of schooling in Nunavut and Elders are sources of traditional knowledge, it is unreasonable and unethical to expect Elders to voluntarily deliver programming while other teachers are paid (Berger, 2014). On the occasions when Elders are paid, some feel that the payment offered does not reflect their cultural skills and expertise (Fieldnotes, April 2017). Rather than commodifying knowledge, payment or honoraria provided to Inuit Elders who may tell stories, teach skills, or pass on their knowledge in a classroom setting underscores the importance and value of Inuit knowledge.

According to Aylward (2010), effective teaching must sincerely engage with the intricacies of the community. Inuit Elders are important and respected members of their communities who “have a sincere desire to transfer their knowledge to youth, and are deeply convinced of the importance of their knowledge for youth” (Oosten & Laugrand, 2007, p. xii). To be effective and functional, schools should be collaborative and creative. Collaboration should rely both on the needs and values of the community. Inuit teaching and learning is holistic, relational, based on increasing shared meanings and experiences, and fostering

connections with community. Making the classroom accessible and open and incorporating Elders as teachers in the school context is a way of accessing Indigenous knowledge, building relationships, collaborating with the community, attending to the emotional, spiritual, and mental wellbeing of students, and enriching the student experience in a way that is authentic, respectful, and meaningful (Doherty, 2009).

### **Conclusion**

Engaging with educational histories, particularly local histories of traditional learning is important for educators in Nunavut to understand the purposes, practices, and processes that have sustained Inuit communities (Berger, 2007). The development of schooling across the Arctic regions has a difficult history. The learning experiences shared by participants not only provides insight into culturally meaningful ways of learning but also reveals some of the complexities and challenges Inuit students continue to face in schools. If Inuit children are to become citizens who value their home and seek to contribute to its success, ensuring their schooling reflects Inuit perspectives and is grounded in the needs of the community is critical. Culturally responsive teaching demands that we respect, value, and promote Inuit approaches of gathering and sharing knowledge. Moreover, it requires an understanding of historical legacies, cultural values, and learning approaches, as well as a recognition of practices that have not supported Inuit learning.

Although teacher orientation, professional development, and ongoing support is necessary (Berger & Epp, 2007), there remains a responsibility on the part of Qallunaat teachers to reflect and consider current practices, rethink assumptions, honour Inuit ways of learning, adapt teaching methods to best support student learning, build respectful relationships, and work collaboratively with students, Inuit teachers, parents, and community members. I have shared



some personal reflections and observations as examples of pedagogies that exemplify principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and provide insight into Inuit cultural values. Setting high expectations for students by recognizing individual strengths and developing challenging, engaging, and interactive lessons is important in promoting learning. I have also included examples of ways in which teachers may work towards developing open and inclusive practices which support student wellbeing and contribute to building positive relationships with students and community members. Perhaps the blending of the approaches of isumaqsayuq and ilisayuq may create new cultural knowledges and models of teaching and learning (Stairs, 1992).

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Throughout this dissertation, I have endeavoured to engage with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as an epistemology guiding the work but also in framing my understandings of Inuit experiences of schooling. Recognizing that Inuit knowledge is integrated with Inuit language and land (Price, 2008), this research has explored the ways in which the holistic, interrelated themes of land, language, and learning are fundamental to Inuit experiences of schooling in Arctic Bay. I offer a brief summary of each of the three key themes and the ways in which they intertwine.

The purpose of this work has been to come to better understandings of Inuit perspectives and experiences, and consider the ways in which Qallunaat teachers working in Nunavut might respond to the knowledge embedded in Inuit experiences of schooling. As such, in this chapter I have included some statements by Inuit participants, directed at present and future Qallunaat teachers who live and work in their community. The eight guiding principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, outlined in the *Nunavut Education Act*, have been integral to this work, influencing my approach to research as well as my relationships with people in Arctic Bay. Discussions of each of the IQ guiding principles are included throughout the dissertation, and although each principle has significant implications for teaching and learning in schools across Nunavut, I have chosen to further explore the principles of *Pijitsirniq*, *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq*, and *Piliriqatigiingniq*, and discuss the ways in which these concepts might inform teaching practices. Finally, I discuss the significance of Qallunaat teachers' position as visitors in Inuit lands.

As this work engages with Inuit perspectives of schooling and the ways in which Qallunaat knowledge and pedagogical approaches come into relation with Inuit knowledge and practices, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit has framed the research and informed approaches,

understandings, and relationships. Though Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is a diverse and dynamic theory of knowledge encompassing Inuit cultural practices, values, and social processes that have sustained Inuit since time immemorial, the guiding principles are asserted as foundations, expectations, and responsibilities of social development and social interactions. In recognizing Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a space or context for learning, exploring, and engaging with knowledge, I argue that Qallunaat teachers working and living in Nunavut are thereby inevitably implicated in the space or context of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

Given the cultural and linguistic limitations, Qallunaat teachers can never fully appreciate or understand the deep wisdom embedded within Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. However, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is the basis for curriculum in Nunavut and IQ guiding principles form the strands of curricular content and the learning competencies for Inuit students (NDE, 2007). As such, all teachers in Nunavut are required not only to have knowledge and understanding of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles, but also to develop curricula, pedagogical approaches, and evaluation practices in accordance with Inuit perspectives and values. As Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is a space or context for learning, and a lived space between people, the land, ideas, experiences, practices, and values, I contend that Qallunaat teachers should therefore work towards tukisiumaniq, building and developing understanding, having an open mind which facilitates understanding, endeavouring to make meaning, and working towards being able to understand (J. Attagutsiak, personal communication, September 2017; Tagalik, 2010b). As Qallunaat work towards developing tukisiumaniq, there is greater potential for schooling in Nunavut to reflect Inuit knowledge, language, perspectives, values, and culture.

A historical analysis of Inuit encounters with Qallunaat on Inuit lands has been important in examining the processes of colonization and highlighting some of the significant cultural and

socio-economic changes imposed upon Inuit and their lands. Perhaps more importantly, while the details presented are only historical fragments, they offer insight into the complex relationships between Inuit and Qallunaat. As Tester and Irniq (2008) argue, a lack of understanding of Inuit and Qallunaat relations and the historical context within which Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit has developed creates problems in understanding its meanings and the ways in which it informs work. Learning from the collective, difficult histories of contact, colonization, and resistance, in which Qallunaat are invariably implicated, is necessary in coming to better understandings (Amagoalik, 2012; Dion, 2009). Also included in this work are numerous examples of resistance as Inuit continue to assert their own cultural, political, and educational changes while maintaining and promoting the continuity of Inuit cultural traditions and language.

I have also provided a brief historical overview of Inuit education and experiences of schooling, including residential schooling, to contextualize the research findings and offer insight into current educational issues (Dion, 2009). Engaging with educational histories, particularly local histories of traditional learning is necessary in order for Qallunaat teachers to understand Inuit approaches of gathering and sharing knowledge. Moreover, it is important to recognize that Qallunaat teachers and the current model of schooling are responsible for some of the challenges and complexities Inuit students face.

Implications for further research revealed by this work are countless. More detailed research on some of the aspects introduced here could prove valuable: relationship building in school contexts, land-based pedagogies, and Inuit perspectives on applying principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit to school-related concerns. There is considerable scope for further research around language and the increasing efforts to develop a stable bilingual school system. Related

topics include Inuktitut language promotion, Inuit perspectives on language use in the home, the value of effective collaboration between Inuit and English language teachers, and transition approaches in bilingual programs. Examination into the ways in which parents and teachers can effectively collaborate to support student learning, as well as explorations of the connections between Inuit child-rearing practices and influences on learning within the school environment, are worthy of further study. Additionally, Inuit perspectives on the various ways in which Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles and values are incorporated in teaching practices and pedagogies could prove fruitful.

As this work focuses on Inuit participants' experiences and perspectives of schooling, educational policy was not explicitly addressed in interviews. However, there are considerable implications for future strategic directions and educational policy development within this work. Issues of culturally-responsive teaching and learning, effective bilingual education programming, and the need for additional school resources emerged in interviews and echo the findings arising from the 2017 Inuit Education Forum, as well as those recommendations outlined in *First Canadians, Canadians First*, the National Strategy on Inuit Education (ITK, 2011). Consistent with one of the calls to action outlined in *(re)Visioning Success in Inuit Education: a report of the 2017 Inuit Education Forum* (ITK, 2017), is the need for an increase in community-based teachers, fluent Inuktitut teachers, and Elders, as experts in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, to teach language and share cultural knowledge. Future recommendations include the development of land-based activities which place emphasis on practical application of knowledge and skills; increasing Inuktitut language use in the school; and providing ongoing professional development for teachers to adequately serve students.

The following diagram (see also Appendices D and E) is a visual representation of the key findings. Rather than defined boundaries around each, the interrelated themes of land, language, and learning, central to Inuit experiences and expectations of schooling, overlap and interconnect. Within each thematic circle are the key elements which emerged from interviews with Inuit participants, summarized below. The principles, values, and practices of Inuit Qaujimaqatqangit encompass and connect all aspects, informing understanding and providing meaning. As Inuit Qaujimaqatqangit is a living theory of knowledge, I imagine it rotating and encircling the integrated themes. At the centre are relationships which are fundamental to Inuit culture and society. The four primary relationships – Inuit relationship with land, relationship with family, relationship with one’s self or inner spirit, and relationship with community – are fostered and enacted in relation to land, language, and learning.

### Key Findings - Inuit Experiences and Expectations of Schooling

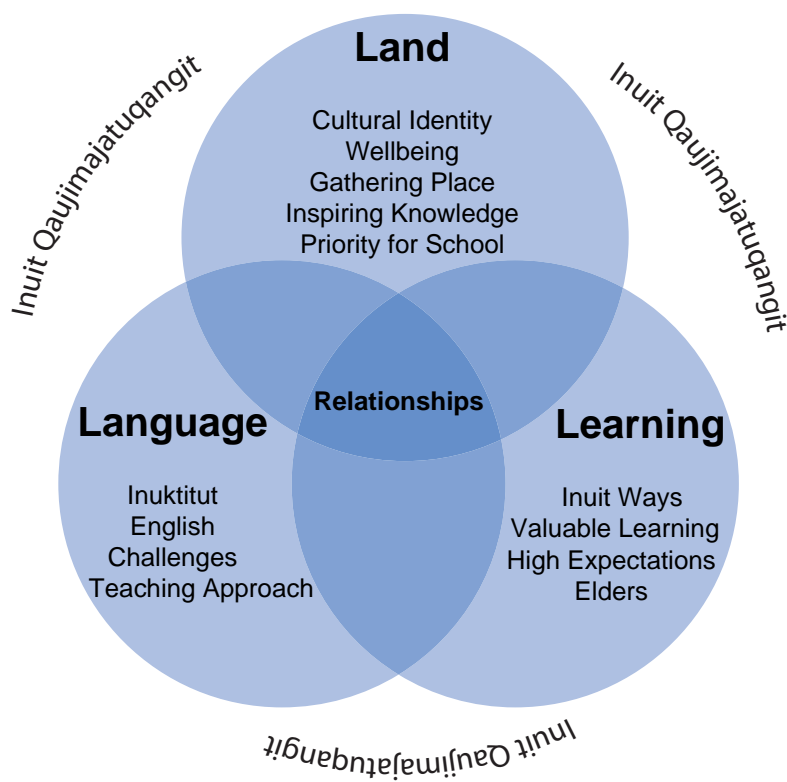


Figure 32: Visual representation of key findings.

## Land

Inuit experiences of schooling are not confined to the learning which occurs within the walls of a classroom. In fact, in discussing aspects of schooling such as memorable lessons, favourite teachers, preferred school subjects or courses, and the *best* part of school, Inuit participants frequently made reference to their storied interactions with land, teachers who promoted land-based pedagogies, and cultural lessons and skills learned on the land, acknowledging land as a source of knowledge and deep learning (Watt-Cloutier, 2000). Interconnected and inseparable relationships with land are fundamental to Inuit lives. As Inuit cultural identity is deeply entrenched in relation with land, learning on and from land provides ways to “enact and live Inuit knowledges and practices” (Rowan, 2015, p. 198). Participants’ narratives reveal the diverse ways in which interactions with land contribute to emotional, mental, spiritual, intellectual, and physical health and wellbeing. Additionally, Inuit are informed by land and continue to develop meaningful relationships with land in learning cultural knowledge, language, and skills from land.

Recognizing that for most Inuit, the English phrase ‘going out on the land’ implies an epistemological and physical shift to an area away from the community, the school and the land are ostensibly positioned in paradoxical learning spheres. Although I resist contrasting the built environment with the natural world as “it is land in all of its abstract and concrete fluidity and shifting realities that informs pedagogy” (Styres, 2011, p. 728), the contexts of Inuit experiences of land are those outside the confines of the school and usually beyond the community settlement. Significantly and consistently, learning experiences deemed the most memorable, meaningful, valuable, and inspirational to Inuit participants are those which occurred on the land or in relation to the land.

The land provides valuable knowledge and offers endless resources that relate to every area of the school curriculum. As students engage with land, they can access Inuit knowledge, histories, and traditional skills in practice and in relationship with teachers, Elders, and other school personnel. As Inuk scholar Jackie Price (2008) asserts, “Inuit must remember the lessons that come from interacting with the land” (p. 129). Opportunities to gather together to learn in collaboration with the land enables the maintenance and development of traditional skills, knowledge, and practices. Land is integral to Inuit identity and reflects Inuit cultural and spiritual values. Recognizing the land as a provider of profound learning (Watt-Cloutier, 2000), most people interviewed called for greater opportunities to learn on, from, and with the land.

### **Language**

Inuit narratives of schooling often reveal complex relationships with language. For Inuit in Arctic Bay, Inuktitut is the language of cultural identity, reflecting traditions, values, and worldview. Inuit epistemology and cultural beliefs are embodied in language, learned through language, and expressed and shared through language. As the ancestral language and mother tongue, Inuktitut provides access to family, Elders, community, history, and learning on the land (Patrick, 2003; Tulloch, 2004). The orality of Inuktitut, formed on the land and passed down through generations, has been disrupted by the imposition of English. Cultural and linguistic oppression, and the harmful effects of residential schools resulted in profound Aboriginal language loss. The current school model in Nunavut shares responsibility. That said, significant steps have been taken to reverse the trend of Inuit language decline, and implement strategies and programs designed to preserve, support, and promote Inuktitut language.

Inuktitut is highly valued as the first language, and Inuit in Arctic Bay, and across Inuit Nunangat, desire ongoing and rigorous Inuktitut language programming throughout schooling,



ensuring Inuktitut holds its rightful place in schools (Berger, 2008; Martin, 2000, 2017; Tulloch, 2004; Qanatsiaq Anooe et al., 2017). However, as English is also a part of modern Inuit identities, many believe English language has a role to play in schooling. Of course, those who support English language learning in schools, do so with the expectation that English is taught *alongside* Inuktitut, and not at the expense of Inuktitut preservation and promotion. For many, English is a tool for communication, and a means of accessing economic, social, and political resources and opportunities (Tulloch, 2004; Dorais, 2006; Dorais & Sammons, 2002).

Inuit narratives of schooling reveal insights into the affectual responses to first encounters with Qallunaat teachers and consequently, the English language. The diverse social and cultural influences, motivations, attitudes, and complex relationships with Inuktitut and English highlight a constant tension in Arctic Bay: the desire to reaffirm and strengthen Inuktitut language and teaching in schools *and* learn English. Affective experiences and responses including apprehension, embarrassment, discomfort but also enthusiasm and pride, underscore the realities, desires, tensions, and complexities for Inuit students.

### **Learning**

The processes, practices, and purposes of education and learning for Inuit differ significantly from the schooling practices often exercised by Qallunaat teachers. For Inuit, as with many Aboriginal peoples, the land is the first teacher (Haig-Brown & Hodson, 2009; Styres, 2011; Watt-Cloutier, 2000). Traditional life on the land, as with contemporary land-based camping, hunting, and travel, necessitates a high level of skill and expertise to survive the environment. Inuit ways of teaching and learning are grounded in family relationships, as young people are expected to be patient, listen closely, observe Elders and other family members, and practice to become capable. Through observation and practice, young people benefit from the

knowledge of the Elders. For Inuit, there is a responsibility to pass on the knowledge from one generation to the next (Mancini Billson & Mancini, 2007; McGregor, 2010; NWTDECE, 1996). Storytelling and other cultural artistic forms such as throat singing, drumming, music, poetry, sculpture, lithograph, and more recently film, are among important means of learning and sharing knowledge. Inuit continue to call on the meaningful inclusion of Elders in school programming, recognizing the value of Elders' linguistic knowledge and living wisdom. Additionally, participation in sports, cultural exchanges, music or artistic activities, and extra-curricular programs provides valuable learning experiences and contributes to personal and social development, which can impact academic performance.

The influence of Qallunaat culture continues to disrupt effective Inuit ways of teaching and learning. Inuit narratives of schooling highlight the contradictions between Inuit education and learning and some of the teaching approaches in the current school system. Establishing high academic expectations for students and creating a challenging and engaging learning environment, are expressions of personal concern for each student and help to promote learning. Coming to better understandings of the ways in which Inuit learn has allowed me to think critically about educational contexts and purposes. Moreover, as I listened to Inuit narratives of schooling I encountered "moments of recognition" (Dion, 2009, p. 183) of personal mistakes and misunderstandings in my teaching practice. Recognizing the ways in which my teaching approach, informed by my own educational experiences, did not necessarily support Inuit students required an acceptance of my implication.

## Pijitsirniq

*I would love to see whoever is coming north to teach Inuit...teach him how Inuit live, teach him that first and then let him be a teacher. You have to know Inuit. There's a chance that things won't go well if he doesn't know and that's because he doesn't know the whole culture.*

Pakak Qamanirq, May 2015

*Pijitsirniq* is the notion of contributing to the common good through serving and leadership. Central to the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principle of serving a purpose or community and providing for a family or community, is the understanding that each individual is valued and has an important contribution to make. The concept of *pijitsirniq* is also a key feature of Inuit leadership – authoritative instead of authoritarian. *Pijitsirniq* involves a commitment to service, social accountability, and requires a recognition of personal strengths and weaknesses. A key feature of *Pijitsirniq* is the ability to assess personal success in terms of group participation and to contribute to the common good. As a guiding principle and *maligait* (natural law), working for the common good includes a responsibility to strive to improve one's surroundings. Moreover, all individuals have a responsibility to those around them and should contribute to the collective wellbeing through their efforts and activities (Arnakak, 2002; NDE, 2007).

As visitors in Inuit communities, Qallunaat teachers have a responsibility to know colonial histories, recognize our implication in the current school system, and acknowledge that which is unknown (Dion, 2009). It is complicated work. There remains a responsibility to rethink assumptions, accept moments of discomfort, and ultimately strive for greater awareness and understandings of Inuit knowledges, values, and cultural practices to respectfully serve students. Qallunaat visitors should work to listen carefully, be open to learning in an unfamiliar

context, and endeavour to develop educational spaces that respond to the cultural and educational interests and needs of Inuit students. Many teachers commit to serving the students and community through volunteerism, including coaching sports teams, assisting with school breakfast programs, helping with school fundraising efforts, or supporting student program applications.

Actively learning about Inuit culture, including learning on and from land with Inuit, is essential to teach in culturally relevant ways and develop relationships with students. As Inuit students are grounded and informed by their relationships with land, providing opportunities for land-based learning opens up possibilities for Inuit students to continue to learn histories, traditional practices and skills. Regarding language, Qallunaat teachers should come to understand and acknowledge the colonial influences on languages, and consider the contexts of students' language learning. Recognizing and engaging with the ways in which students experience and respond to language learning is important in understanding learning processes, behaviours, attitudes, and learning motivations (Tulloch, 2004). Cultural-based schooling demands that teachers provide educational experiences for Inuit students that reflect, validate, and promote Inuit language, culture, and approaches of gathering and sharing knowledge. Furthermore, culturally-responsive teaching requires a recognition of practices that do not or have not previously supported Inuit learning.

### **Inuuqatigiitsiarniq**

*We have a different culture here. Every town has one. Be close to the community. Do activities.*

*Get to know people. When you go to the Northern [store], say hi or talk to parents. Talk to people. When you come here, it's friendly. Everybody wants to know you.*

Ruth Oyukuluk, October 2014

*I think the first thing is getting to know the community and the students. Get to know their parents and what they do outside of school. I think that's one of the most important things.*

Bruno Attagutsiak, May 2015

*Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* is the concept of respecting others, accepting others, and caring for people. It is a key Inuit belief and a guiding principle of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit which continues to inform my work and relationships. Engaging with *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* involves showing respect, contributing to a positive environment, demonstrating a caring attitude, accepting the ideas of others, and working towards developing positive relationships that strengthen communities. Respecting others is also extended to respecting one's surroundings, including the environment. Being humble and respectful of all living things is an essential belief of Inuit *maligait*, natural laws embedded in Inuit society which govern how people connect with each other and the environment (NDE, 2007).

Teachers who choose to work in Northern communities are guests on Inuit lands. As guests or visitors, it only stands to reason that we should work to positively interact with our hosts. It is important to recognize and understand positions and the cultural backgrounds of students (Tompkins, 2006). Openness, thoughtfulness, and inclusive interactions are important in building respectful relationships. Coming to know Inuit students, parents, teachers, and community members and respecting the people, culture, language, land, values, and traditions of Inuit on whose territory we live and work is paramount. While sensitive to Inuit culture, Qallunaat should acknowledge the diversity of Inuit students and the complexities of Inuit experiences. Fostering connections and attentiveness to the intricacies of community can provide deeper understandings and insights which support teaching and contribute to positive

relationships. Initiating contact with parents, participating in community events, observing, listening, speaking with Inuit and asking questions are important steps in working towards developing respectful relationships.

Being respectful, accepting the views of others and caring for people necessitates a commitment to being attentive and open to new knowledge and perspectives (Haig-Brown, 2008a). It is important to accept the moments which may be challenging or unsettling but recognize that valuable learning is possible in those moments of discomfort. In my own teaching experiences, considerable flexibility exists within the Nunavut curricular program. Logistical challenges aside, organizing and incorporating land-based learning activities are important in supporting and fostering Inuit enduring relationships with land and in developing respectful relationships with students and community members.

Learning on the land and initiating other experiential opportunities honours Inuit ways of learning, privileging land and experiences as sources of knowledge. Additionally, Qallunaat teachers should embrace opportunities to learn Inuktitut to come to better understandings of Inuit language, culture, history, and worldview. Introductory lessons are valuable in providing an overview of basic sounds, vocabulary, and grammar conventions. Familiarity with some of the structures and nuances of Inuktitut provides useful insight into students' grammatical patterns which may lead to more effective support in classrooms. Acknowledging and promoting Inuit ways of learning through observation, practice, and collaborative activities, engaging with and incorporating Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit principles and values into pedagogies, and meaningfully including Elders in student learning programs are among ways in which Qallunaat teachers may foster caring, respectful relationships but is also vital in contributing towards a positive learning environment for students.

## **Piliriqatigiingniq**

*Embrace our cultural tradition and you'll be connected with people more...Eat with the Elders and try to go out with the hunters as much as you can. Learn about everything that we're learning too. I know there are people that don't mind taking you out.*

Max Kalluk, December 2014

*Piliriqatigiingniq* is the concept of developing collaborative relationships, and working together for the common good. As a communal society, Arnakak (2000) explains that collaboration and working together are of vital importance to Inuit, ensuring that intellectual and material resources as well as the knowledge and memories of the community are used wisely and effectively. *Piliriqatigiingniq* involves understanding one's place within the group, collaborating and advocating for the group or community, and consensus-building. Inuit believe that the collective wellbeing is more important than the individual. *Piliriqatigiingniq* requires that individuals endeavour to work together for a shared purpose, share leadership, and build strong community relationships (NDE, 2007).

Qallunaat can never fully understand Inuit experiences or assume perspectives of Inuit. As such, in order to come to better understandings and respectfully serve students and the community, collaboration with Inuit is vital. Though Qallunaat teachers have personal responsibilities to develop understandings, engage with new knowledge, and work towards building relationships, working together with Inuit will advance the goal of developing a strong school system that supports Inuit learners and contribute to the collective wellbeing.

Although teachers should work to develop capacity and the knowledge required to incorporate land pedagogies into their programming, collectively learning with and from Inuit

students on the land enhances relationships and contributes to better understandings of Inuit cultural strengths, and the ways in which Inuit ways of knowing, doing, and being exist in relationship with land. Initiating land-based lessons in consultation with Inuit and accepting invitations to accompany Inuit on the land are important ways of collaborating with Inuit but also useful in coming to understand one's place within the group. In my own experiences, spending time with Inuit students and friends on the land reinforced my lack of knowledge, and my position as a visitor on Inuit lands. Furthermore, my experiences with Inuit on the land increased understandings of Inuit concepts of cooperation as individuals need to work together to successfully travel, hunt, and camp on the land. Respectfully collaborating with parents, Inuit teachers, community leaders, and Elders, to develop home-community-school partnerships, to develop lessons and programs that privilege Inuit knowledge and language, has the potential to strengthen and enrich Inuktitut language learning and contribute to better understandings for teachers and support for students. The integration of Elders and their linguistic knowledge and cultural wisdom into classrooms and curricular programs is an effective way for students and teachers to connect with local knowledge.

It is my hope that this research is useful to Qallunaat teachers who choose to work in the Inuit territory of Nunavut. That said, this work is not to serve as a list of practical guidelines. Rather, I have shared what I am learning, what I continue to observe, and some of the details of my conversations with Inuit (with their permission, of course). The knowledge revealed in the interrelated themes of land, language, and learning and the comments included by Inuit in this chapter, call for teachers to explore, endeavour to engage with, and move towards enacting and embodying the concepts of Pijitsirniq, Inuuqatigiitsiarniq, and Piliriqatigiingniq. Certainly, these principles are intertwined and interconnected, and represent some of the beliefs and maligait



(natural laws) that have sustained Inuit. The values of serving the common good and taking responsibility, respecting and caring for others, and building positive collaborative relationships are fundamental for those who are committed to responding to Inuit needs and desires and contributing positively to schooling in Nunavut.

Ultimately, the interrelated principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit all revolve around *relationships* fundamental to Inuit culture and society. Concepts of relationality and connectedness, based on developing positive relationships, working collaboratively, respecting views of others, contributing to the common good, understanding the importance of relationship-building, and respecting mutually interdependent relationships, are central to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Tagalik, 2015). Significantly, each of the comments offered by Inuit participants, as related to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles of Pijitsirniq, Inuuqatigiitsiarniq, and Piliriqatigiingniq, all reveal the value of relationships and the importance of building respectful relationships with Inuit.

### **Visitors**

*Tunnganarniq* is the concept of being welcoming to others, approachable, kind, caring, and accepting. “In Inuit culture, being kind-hearted is a way of being and behaving that extends beyond people toward all living things” (Karetak & Tester, 2017, p. 13). The Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principle of *tunnganarniq* involves “fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming, and inclusive” (NDE, 2007, p. 43) and is important in building positive relationships (Qanatsiaq Anoe, 2015). *Tunnganarniq* involves accepting new people, respecting differences, being open in communications, and smiling and being friendly with others (Kalluak, 2017; Karetak & Tester, 2017; NDE, 2007). In Arctic Bay, as with many other Northern communities, doors of homes are often left unlocked, unless occupants are out camping or travelling.

Moreover, in a small, close-knit community of families and friends who know each other well, it is uncommon to knock on the door. Of course, only family or those who know the inhabitants well would enter a home unannounced. In questioning how this came to be, Mishak Allurut (personal communication, September 2017) explained, “it is following the Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit tunnganaqniq, to be welcoming.” Mishak further clarified, “We never had doors before.”

As a Qallunaat visitor, it is my custom to knock on doors and await an invitation to enter. Over time, some Inuit friends requested that I stop knocking on their door, and extended an invitation to enter, explaining that I was welcome to visit their homes at any time. Certainly, I do not presume an invitation, nor do I wish to present a romantic portrayal of Inuit interactions and relationships with Qallunaat. As I work to build relationships and learn to learn from Inuit, I see tremendous potential for deepening understandings, enhancing teaching practices to support students, and strengthening relationships if, as visitors, Qallunaat are willing to be open to learning in an unfamiliar context, willing to see ‘doors’ not as barriers, but as possibilities. If we Qallunaat are prepared to confront the limits of our knowledge, reposition ourselves, accept differing perspectives, and recognize our responsibilities, there is potential to move to a new space which may lead to new understandings, changed relationships, and possible transformations. These new understandings will require open communication, respect for and acceptance of the co-existence of multiple worldviews, and a commitment to working together to create new possibilities.

During an interview in October 2014, Eva \* spoke about the nuances of life in a small community compared to experiences of travelling ‘down south’. As our conversation evolved, she began describing some customs and behaviours typical of the community which seemed to

contrast with her observations of social gestures and interactions in large cities. Arguably, her observations point to some of the cultural differences between Inuit and Qallunaat. She spoke about the importance of school-community connections and the need to build relationships between teachers and families. Acknowledging the potential for cultural misunderstandings or social reservations and discomfort, Eva \* offered some practical advice for teachers: talk to people, participate in community events, visit families. As she couldn't recall an occasion of a Qallunaat teacher visiting her home, I asked how she might respond if that were to happen. She chuckled and said, "I would pour some tea."

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions will serve as a guideline only. As I interview, I will try to be attuned to the participants' responses adding and eliminating questions as necessary.

\*Interviewees will be made aware prior to each interview commencing and throughout the interview that they can refuse to answer any question and end the interview at any point.

1. How would you like to be identified in the written work that comes from this interview (anonymous/pseudonym or use name to be credited for contributions)?
2. Tell me something about your family, parents – did you grow up in this community? Did you grow up in town? on the land?
3. What sort of activities do you do with your family? On the land? How were you taught/ how did you learn those skills?
4. What was most important to you while growing up?
5. Tell me how it was for you to go to school – what is it/was it like for you? Take me through a typical day in school from the time you woke up until the time you went to sleep. Or describe your day – what did you do in the classroom? What subjects? How long? Do you recall any specific lessons?
6. Tell me about any involvement or interactions your family/parents had with the school.
7. What did your friends think about school?
8. Tell me about your favourite grade or favourite time/subject at school.
9. Tell me about a good lesson – a lesson you remember.
10. What was it like to speak English at school?
11. What was it like to have Qallunaat teachers?
12. Tell me about the Cultural classes at the school? Describe some of the activities? How did instructors teach skills?
13. Tell me about a teacher that you liked? Why?
14. What did you like about school? What was the best part?
15. What didn't you like? What was the worst part?
16. What do you think the goals or priorities of the school should be?
17. What do you wish Qallunaat teachers understood about your community/your culture?
18. Is there anything I should have asked you that I didn't?

## APPENDIX B: Informed Consent Form

**Study name:** *Stories of Schooling: Hearing and Learning from Inuit Experiences of Schooling.*

**Researcher:** Alesha Moffat  
PhD Candidate  
Faculty of Education, York University

### **Purpose of the research:**

I am interested in hearing your stories of schooling, your experiences, and your feelings about Qallunaat schools and its significance in your life. The purpose of the research is to understand Inuit experiences of Qallunaat schools. Your experiences and perspectives will contribute to greater understandings and can inform professional development for teachers currently teaching in Nunavut. The research will form my doctoral dissertation.

### **What you will be asked to do in the research:**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to contribute approximately one to two hours to a face-to-face interview during the next few months. The discussion will be arranged at a time and place convenient to you. In recognition of your time and participation, a \$50 Northern Store gift card will be given to you.

### **Risks and discomforts:**

I do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research.

### **Benefits of the research and benefits to you:**

This interview will give you an opportunity to reflect on experiences, share your stories of schooling, and express perspectives of schooling with another interested adult. This research may contribute to teacher education including teacher orientation, and staff development workshops so that teachers who continue to work in Nunavut may contribute positively and respectfully to the schools in which they teach. Additionally, this research may prove useful to policymakers and Inuit scholars.

### **Voluntary participation:**

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you have every right to refuse to answer any questions or choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to continue participating will not influence your relationship or the nature of your relationship with the researcher or staff at York University either now or in the future.

### **Withdrawal from the study:**

You may stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researcher, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event that you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

**Confidentiality:**

All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in the final report and identifying details will be omitted or disguised. You will not be asked to disclose any confidential information. The interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed. Archived digital files will remain on the researcher's password protected personal computer. Word processed interview transcripts will be securely stored for five years in a locked cabinet, accessible only by the researcher. Following that retention period, all data will be destroyed. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law. A few months after the interview, you will be given a draft of my representation of your experiences for your review.

**Questions about the research?**

If you have questions about the research or your role in the study, I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have about the project. I will be in town for the next few months and you may contact me either by telephone or by e-mail.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. You may also contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, York University.

If you agree to participate, please sign this form and return it to me.

By signing this letter, I acknowledge that I understand the nature and procedures of this project and wish to participate. I know that the university and the researcher subscribe to ethical conduct of research and that a research permit, issued by Nunavut Research Institute has been obtained by Alesha Moffat.

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

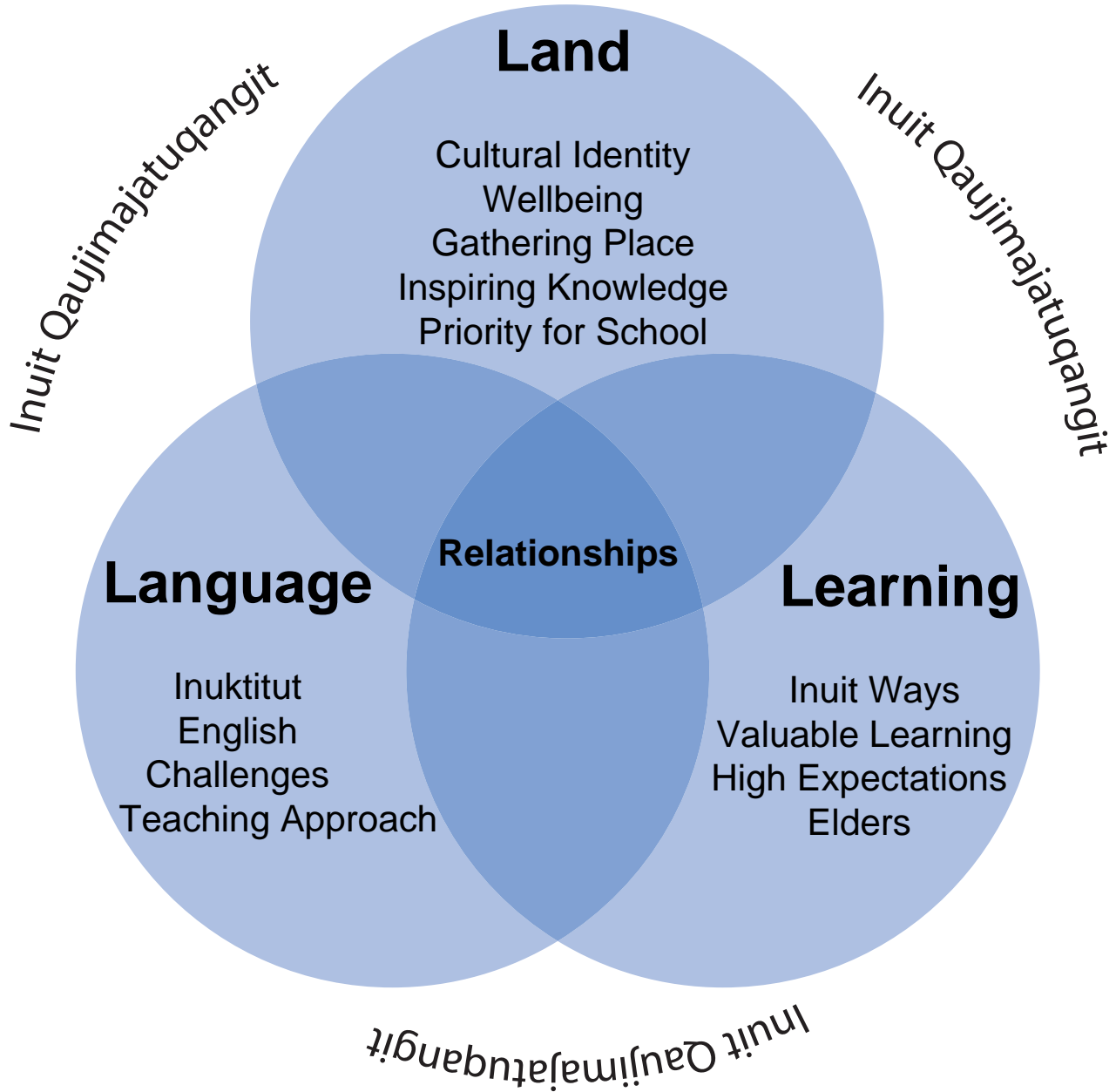
Signature of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_





APPENDIX D: IMAGE & SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS (ENGLISH)





## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### **Inuit Experiences of Schooling**

The following is a brief overview of the key findings of research conducted with 24 Arctic Baymiut from 2014-2017. As a former teacher in the community, I am interested in coming to better understandings of Inuit perspectives and experiences of school.

There is great knowledge embedded in Inuit perspectives, stories and views of schooling. While it is impossible to include all perspectives and experiences, I believe that the details and stories shared provide insight into the complexities Inuit students face in schools. It is my hope that this work may prove useful to teachers, the DEA and other policy makers and contribute to curriculum development and teacher orientation.

Throughout my dissertation, I have included the words of Inuit research participants as much as possible. A historical overview of traditional Inuit learning and schooling in the Eastern Arctic provided a useful context for understanding the research findings. The principles of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit have also informed this work. Additionally, I have included a detailed history of encounters between Inuit and Qallunaat to acknowledge colonial history and the significant changes imposed upon Inuit.

The three main themes to emerge from interviews as well as informal conversations and observations include:

Land, Language, and Learning.

#### **Land**

- Inuit cultural identity is bound to land. Inuit experience, learn and understand identity by being out on the land.
- Spending time on the land contributes to wellbeing. Sharing country food contributes to physical wellbeing.
- Land is invigorating and provides mental clarity, openness to learning, motivation, and self-confidence.
- Land is a gathering place. Families, friends gather to tell stories, share food, hunt, nurture relationships.
- Land is the first teacher and original ‘classroom’. Inuit education based on family lifestyle in relation to land.
- More opportunities to learn from and learn on the land should be a school priority.

## Language

- Inuktitut as foundation of schooling. Inuktitut language holds culture, history.
- English is an important part of modern Inuit identities. Desire for fluency in English.
- English as language of instruction sometimes a barrier to learning. Concerns over loss of Inuktitut.
- Effective bilingual education is about the ways language is taught. Inuktitut taught beside English.
- Greater need for Inuit language teachers.
- Support needed for Inuktitut language programming and teachers (resources, professional development).

## Learning

- Inuit ways of learning through observation, practice, and experience. Learning as holistic and cooperative.
- Valuable learning includes extra-curricular, sports, exchanges, Cadets, cultural classes, sewing, and music.
- Perception that expectations in school are low. Desire for higher academic expectations throughout schooling.
- Need for relevant resources, more equipment, additional course options.
- Elders in classrooms to demonstrate traditional skills, tell stories. Not as volunteers.

Inuit relationships with land, family, community and self or inner spirit are the ‘glue’ that hold the principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit together. All the four primary relationships are fostered and enacted in relation to land, language, and learning.





