

The Nature of Inuit Self-Governance in Nunavut Territory

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Table of Contents



Introduction	1
Chapter 1	
It Began in Alaska: The Rise of Canadian Inuit Political Consciousness	12
Chapter 2	
Education as a Social, Political and Cultural Determinant	35
Chapter 3	
Who Runs the Government? Inuit Employment and the IQ Project	61
Chapter 4	
It is Beginning in Nunavut: Re-Centering Alaska Native Priorities	81

We should learn as much as we can from this new culture, but we must not forget our own culture which is important to all of us.

There are only very few Eskimos, but millions of whites, just like mosquitoes. It is something very special and wonderful to be an Eskimo – they are like the snow geese. If an Eskimo forgets his language and Eskimo ways, he will be nothing but just another mosquito.

Abraham Okpik, 1962



Nunavut and surrounding Canadian provinces and territories. Courtesy of Listings Canada: <http://listingsca.com/maps.asp>

Introduction

As the airplane began its slow descent over south Baffin Island, the intercom came on and passengers were advised to prepare for landing. The flight attendant delivered the instructions in Canada's two official languages, English and French, and then a recording was played in Inuktitut, the heavily-glottal language of the eastern Arctic Inuit. It was a reminder that we had entered Inuit country, over a thousand miles north of Ottawa. Thick angles of sunlight splashed into the fuselage through the cabin windows and I craned my neck to get a better view of the landscape passing thousands of feet below me.

Windswept black rock dusted with snow and glazed pink in the setting sun stretched into the infinite horizon. There were no trees, only rugged buckling hills that churned into the distance and disappeared over the arc of the earth. I saw a land awash in immense drapes of ice, a surreal sight whose mystique has captured the imaginations of explorers, writers, and ordinary southerners for centuries for all its intimidation and seeming impossibility, challenging what it means to live and thrive on this planet. It was about 1:00 p.m., yet night was already enveloping this part of the world. The landscape looked strange and cold and difficult to me. The eastern Canadian Arctic is not my ancestral homeland, but even so, I could begin to understand even at a cursory glance the kind of arresting power that that vast expanse communicates to the Inuit who have called Baffin Island home for millennia.

I was en route to Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut, a territory carved out of the Northwest Territories in 1999 after nearly three decades of prolonged negotiations between Inuit and the Northwest Territorial and federal Canadian governments. Through

Article 4 of the 1993 Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA), a constitutionally binding modern treaty between the Tunngavik Federation of Nunavut and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada, Inuit negotiated the creation of a public territorial government that is in a state of exciting evolution today. The treaty was not the first of its kind in Canada, but it was the most jurisdictionally empowering for Inuit. Inuit desired control over their homeland and resources with real political and legal leverage to affect meaningful change in the status quo of their lives. They wanted to guard and promote the use of their language, to secure access to their land and traditional life ways, extant to the present day, and they perceived public governance as the best path to accomplishing those goals. Inuit wanted accountable leadership and the ability to decide their own future and the pace of change in their communities on their own terms as a distinct Aboriginal culture and society within Canada. Nunavut's official creation on April 1, 1999 was a deeply powerful statement to the world: Inuit had talked back to the Canadian government after decades of neglect followed by humiliating paternalism and marginalization from the political processes that were governing their lives in the North. It was only in 1962 that residents of Canada's eastern Arctic, then a part of the Northwest Territories, were able to vote in territorial and federal elections. As a result of their patience and persistence, Inuit won a level of measured autonomy and a land base unprecedented in indigenous North America. The degree to which the Government of Nunavut is utilizing that autonomy to build a society that reflects, accommodates, and promotes the unique cultural interests of Nunavummiut,¹ however, is an increasingly urgent question being sounded by Inuit in the wake of their government's tenth birthday on April 1, 2009.

Telling the ongoing story of Nunavut yields important lessons that Inuit and other indigenous peoples can learn from. The narrative sets standards that we as Aboriginal peoples can aspire to and examples that should be avoided in our own homelands. As a territory, the Government of Nunavut (GN) has unique jurisdictional rights that other Aboriginal peoples in Canada and abroad can only dream of, and is therefore laying the groundwork, in many ways, in areas where Native peoples in the post-European contact era have had no power. Inuit hold the reins to education in their territory and participate as equal partners in wildlife management. In the realm of natural resource development, the GN is seeking Crown land (federal land) royalty rights from private developers contracting with the federal government. Through the NLCA, Inuit won \$1.48 billion in federal compensation and received legal title to approximately 217,470 square miles of Nunavut's 1.2 million square miles, about 22,000 square miles of which include mineral rights. Inuit beneficiaries of the land claim can hunt and fish virtually anywhere in the settlement, representing one fifth or twenty percent of Canada's total land mass, without a permit. New Inuit language and education legislation was recently passed in the last year by the Nunavut Legislative Assembly that aims to give Inuit a more permanent voice and cultural position – quite literally – in their own society.

Perhaps most important to the creation of Nunavut Territory was the emergence of choice. Finally, Inuit can choose how their children will be educated, what language(s) will be spoken in their communities, and who gets to come into their homeland and for what reasons. How that new power is being confronted, negotiated and, most importantly, utilized to create the type of society that Inuit leaders originally envisioned is the primary focus of this work. The drawbacks and benefits of a public territorial rather than an ethnic

form of tribal government will be explored, as will the ongoing tension between these different concepts of governance. Finally, I will better frame the nature of Inuit self-governance in Nunavut by describing some of the outcomes of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), of which I am a beneficiary. The Alaska Native land claim had much different goals than the NLCA, producing non-governing economic institutions that differ significantly from those found in Nunavut. Our land claim helped to inspire Inuit claims to Arctic Canada, however, and it is interesting to compare what kind of societies the two different models have aspired to create.

Inspiration for Research

My desire to investigate what is happening in Nunavut today is an extension of my interest and early research in political developments within the larger Inuit world. I am generally curious about the way Inuit and other Northern peoples live. In elementary school, my brother introduced me to several works by James Huston, a non-Inuk from Toronto, Ontario whose children's stories and adult fiction are largely set in the Canadian North. I was in the third grade when I first read *The White Archer: An Eskimo Legend*, which compelled me to read several of his other books. In retrospect, many of the motifs that Huston drew on – the *iglu*, Inuit survival in a harsh environment, shamanism and ancient legends, sled dogs and endless wilderness – were romantically idealized, yet strangely familiar to me. I had the vague sense that the people Huston was describing were close to home, that I shared much in common with them. Yet there was also a sense of separateness: their parkas looked different in the pictures I saw, their drums and dances were different, their language unfamiliar and written in odd looking syllabics. It was only in middle school that I learned that Inupiat had never lived in igloos as our

eastern cousins had. But that lingering sense of connection to Canadian Inuit stayed with me, and as I grew older, I wanted to understand my own people in relation to other Arctic peoples, especially in the realm of political and cultural self-determination.

In high school, I learned about the Inuit Circumpolar Council as a janitor vacuuming the organization's Alaska offices in Anchorage. The ICC is an international non-governmental organization formed in 1977 that serves to unite the voices of all Inuit² and to articulate our collective rights and interests in our Arctic homeland to the world. The creation of the ICC formally acknowledged for the first time that Arctic peoples living in Chukotka, Alaska, Canada, and Greenland have more similarities than differences in language and culture. Today, the ICC shares a rotating seat with the Sami on the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. I also learned that Inuit live as far away as Greenland, where they call themselves Kalaallit. Greenlanders were granted Home Rule status by Denmark in 1979 with powers comparable to a Canadian province and exercise a considerable degree of autonomy, expanded in a November 2008 referendum that could eventually pave the way to political independence.

For our small numbers, Inuit have been surprisingly influential and incredibly busy over the last several decades. Beginning with the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), which was largely propelled by Congress' desire to develop vast Arctic oil resources on Inupiat lands, Inuit have settled land claims across the circumpolar world. Inuit in the Nunavik region of northern Quebec signed the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in 1975. In 1984, Inuvialuit in the western Canadian Arctic settled their own land claim, which like Nunavik was expedited by the threat of unregulated resource development, and created the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. In 1993, Inuit

signed the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, simultaneously creating a public government and territory the size of Western Europe with jurisdiction over Canada's eastern and central Arctic. Most recently in 2004, the Inuit of Labrador signed their own final agreement, the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act, with the federal Canadian government.

As I have learned more about the Inuit world over the last several years, I am continually baffled that these and similar events that speak to our resilient agency in our own homelands were never alluded to in school. Instead of learning about our own heroes and our own accomplishments, we learned about George Washington, the Bill of Rights, and the Civil War; we learned about the Harlem Renaissance, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Christopher Columbus; we learned about the “winning” of the West, prohibition, and World War II – about the constituent pieces of a fuzzy American identity that many of my friends and I could hardly relate to, even in the urban center of our state. Many of us did not stand for the pledge of allegiance each morning, for which we were sometimes reprimanded. There was hardly any emphasis, even in classes comprised entirely of Alaska Native students, on people with whom we could identify and historic events that we have a personal stake in.

Before departing Anchorage for Nunavut in early January 2009, my Iñupiat friends and relatives had no idea where I was going. Many of them had no idea that the people who live in Nunavut speak a language and practice a culture nearly identical to our own, three thousand miles to the east. To a large degree, then, this project was motivated by my desire to bring the concept of Nunavut home as an example of what is being achieved by a group of people that we, as Iñupiat and Alaska Natives, can identify with in

pragmatic ways. It is my hope not that the Nunavut project be imitated by Iñupiat and other Aboriginal groups as it becomes more widely known and understood, but that my generation may use its successes as positive reference points while aspiring to raise our standards for a more self-determined future than was possible for past generations.

The Nunavut narrative and others like it are important and compelling today not just because it is an example of Inuit self-determination in action, potentially inspiring and raising the political specter and consciousness of other Aboriginal peoples, but also because of what it tells us, as Iñupiat, about ourselves. During my conversations with Nunavummiut in Iqaluit, it struck me that while the GN has not lived up to the expectations of many Inuit, especially in the areas of health, education, and culture, legislators, bureaucrats, and many ordinary citizens are conversant in or at least have a concept of what is important to them as Inuit living in Inuit society. In my view, this is what makes Nunavut especially intriguing: the presence and power of accountability and the growing demand by Inuit to see change in the status quo.

There is little written about Nunavut within the field of Native American Studies. The anthropological and archeological literature concerning Inuit dwarfs existing political analysis. Given the young age of the territory, much of the published scholarship that does exist in this area focuses on Nunavut's shifting political and cultural orientation within Canada, and this thesis is largely a contribution to that field of research. This thesis draws largely on recorded conversations that I had with ten Inuk and three non-Inuk individuals in Iqaluit, Nunavut between January 4 and 10, 2009. Twelve of the thirteen participants were government or Inuit organization employees with a good cross section of ages represented. Given the potentially sensitive nature of those discussions

and in order to protect the identities of participants, pseudonyms have been substituted for some real names. Drawing on formal academic research about the NLCA conducted during the fall of 2008, I had formed a single question that found its way to the center of the conversations that I would have with Nunavummiut during my short stay in the capital. I wanted to know, from the perspective of Nunavummiut, whether or not governance is taking place in the new territory in ways that serve the unique heritage of the 85% Inuit ethnic majority. The proceeding chapters are influenced by those conversations and focus primarily on addressing this question.

The first chapter, “It Began in Alaska: The Rise of a Canadian Inuit Political Consciousness,” describes the confluence of historical, political, and social events that drove Inuit to organize and lay claim to their homelands. In the second chapter, “Education as a Social, Political and Cultural Determinant,” I will examine education as it relates to cultural and political autonomy for Inuit. In “Who Runs the Government? Inuit Employment and the IQ Project,” I will outline the impediments to full Inuit representation in the territorial government and the role that cultural values are playing in conversations about Inuit self-governance. The fourth chapter, “It is Beginning in Nunavut: Re-Centering Alaska Native Priorities, ” directly addresses the question of whether or not Inuit self-governance is taking place in the territory, why this matters, and what Nunavut’s political evolution could look like.

A Note on Language

The word “Inuit” (plural, literally “the People”) is used broadly in reference to the Arctic indigenous peoples of Alaska, Canada, and Greenland collectively who speak a range of related dialects within the Inuit language family. It is used more specifically in

this text to delineate the people of the central and eastern Canadian Arctic. “Inuk” (literally “Person”) is used in central and eastern Canada as an adjective to refer to an individual’s ethnicity, e.g. “John is Inuk.” “Iñupiat” (literally, “the Real People”) refers to speakers of the Inuit language family in northern Alaska. “Iñupiaq” is both the singular form and the name of our language. The people of Canada’s western Arctic identify as Inuvialuit (also “the Real People,” sl. “Inuvialuk”), their language called “Inuvialuktun.” The central and eastern Canadian dialects of the language are “Inuinnaqtun” and “Inuktitut” respectively, while the Greenlanders call themselves Kalaallit and their language “Kalaallisut.” Because both Inuinnaqtun and Inuktitut are spoken in Nunavut, “Inuit language” is used as an inclusive designation when describing the language. “Nunavummiut” means “the people of/from Nunavut.” “Qallunaat” is the term used by Inuit to describe Caucasians. “Eskimo” is an appropriated misnomer and is considered a highly pejorative and antiquated term in Canada, having fallen out of use over the last several decades. The word continues to be used in Alaska, however.

Quyaanaqpak
 Qujannamiik
 Thank you

This thesis could not have taken its present form without the aid of Letia and Natan Obed. Both went great lengths to insure I had the chance to speak with a wealth of knowledgeable, diverse, and supportive individuals in Iqaluit. I am thankful to them both for the warmth and generosity that made my trip successful, enjoyable, and productive. Special thanks to Mary E. Hiratsuka (Dartmouth ’07). Without her help and network of support, I could not have arranged to visit Iqaluit and given this topic the attention it deserves. Thank you to Pitseolalaq Moss-Davies of the Inuit Circumpolar Council

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¹ Nunavummiut means “the people of/from Nunavut.”

² ICC defines Inuit as the Yupiat of Chukotka and St. Lawrence Island, the Yupiit of Southwest Alaska, and the Iñupiat of northern Alaska; the Inuvialuit of the western Canadian Arctic, the Inuit of the central and eastern Arctic, and the Kalaallit of Greenland. All speak an Eskimoan language, within which there are two major branches: the Yupik languages of Chukotka and western Alaska and the Inuit language family of northern Alaska, Canada, and Greenland.

Chapter 1

It Began in Alaska: The Rise of Inuit Political Consciousness

The bright yellow airport in Iqaluit with its rounded edges and tiny windows reminded me of a submarine on stilts, winking out of the darkening landscape like some bright effigy of the sun built for the somber months of winter. I disembarked from the airplane, walked across the tarmac, and entered the airport's cramped interior. Dozens of people, most of them Inuit, greeted friends and relatives or waited for their own planes to board. Many of the people that I saw looked eerily familiar to me, their height, stature, body language and facial features the same as the Iñupiat people I have known all of my life. Aside from the profusion of hockey sticks and equipment bags, and the white noise of Inuktitut, I could have been in Kotzebue or Barrow. Looking around the room I half expected some relative to warmly greet and hug me, and then ask how my parents and brother were doing. On the luggage conveyor belt there were the usual primary-colored coolers and boxes full of cheap southern groceries, a common sight in the North. They had probably been full of country food – maybe caribou and seal, Arctic char – shared with friends and relatives living in the south, and had now completed their circuitous journey. After finding my bag, I dug change out of my pocket and approached the payphone, from which I called my contact and now friend in Iqaluit.

Nearly three thousand miles to the west of Baffin Island in Northwest Alaska, the Iñupiat, my people, live along the marine coasts of the gently rolling tundra and among the marshy birch and taiga forests that crowd the Selawik, Noatak, and Kobuk rivers. In a sense, Northwest Alaska is the cradle of the Inuit world – the point from which all Inuit spread north and east. The Seward Peninsula, jutting into the Bering Sea toward Chukotka, is believed to be the point of entry for all indigenous peoples entering the North and South American continents. The Inuit language family is divided into dialects,

many of which are mutually intelligible. The distance of the language's longitudinal spread – halfway around the globe – is unequaled by any other.¹ North America's Arctic latitudes have been peopled by a series of distinct cultures over the last several millennia, of which Inuit are only the most recent. Shifts in climate, hunting technology, and architecture accent the movement of Arctic peoples from the Bering Sea coast of western Alaska across Canada to Greenland in three major waves, with other less prominent cultural shifts taking place in different geographic zones.

Just as Arctic peoples, cultures, and languages spread east from northern Alaska over centuries and millennia, so too would ideas of Aboriginal self-determination in the late twentieth century. John Amagoalik, an Inuk originally from Inukjuak, Nunavik in northern Quebec, is widely regarded as the Father of Nunavut for the instrumental role he played as a lead negotiator for the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. In 1953, Amagoalik's family was relocated by the Canadian government from Inukjuak to Resolute Bay in the high Arctic. They and other Inuit exiles served as federal pawns, moved under the false pretense that they would encounter plentiful game in a resource rich country and promised safe return in two years time if they did not find the land agreeable. Instead, they were left abandoned in a treeless, windswept Martian environment with no provisions to speak of and no knowledge of their surroundings, exploited by the government in its mission to establish a foothold in Canada's high Arctic land holdings, then relatively unknown. In his 2005 autobiography, Amagoalik explains that political activities in Alaska had a significant bearing on Canadian Inuit land claims in the 1970s:

The possibility for Inuit to negotiate land claims agreements in Canada all started in 1971, when the Alaskan Iñupiat signed the first modern treaty in

North America. When we heard about that, it was a real eye-opener for us, “You mean Inuit can actually negotiate a modern treaty? Wow!” We got very interested. We thought, “Maybe we can do this here in Canada as well!”²

I had a chance to sit down with Amagoalik in his Iqaluit office to have a discussion about this and other topics related to the Nunavut land claim. He wore jeans and tennis shoe, his humble demeanor belying the instrumental role he played in the world’s largest Aboriginal land claim. While an early impetus for Inuit claims, the Canadian leadership saw the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA) as “a lot of money and not enough land.”³ The ANCSA’s extinguishment of Alaska Native’s Aboriginal title⁴ to their lands was especially troubling in the eyes of Canadian Inuit. Extinguishment was a problematic legal concept because it meant that land ownership (title) based on patterns of historical use and occupancy established over millennia would no longer be recognized in court after settlement. In a way, the concept involved the symbolic forfeiture of history in exchange for land and money. The Tunggavik Federation of Nunavut, the primary negotiating body for the NLCA, signaled their dissatisfaction with the outcomes of ANCSA as early as 1986, warning the federal government of imposing a “land and cash deal” leading to an “Alaskan-style land claims settlement with all its attendant problems, disappointments, frustrations, and failures.”⁵

While the Alaska land claim had been speeded by Atlantic Richfield’s 1968 discovery of vast oil reserves at Prudhoe Bay on the Arctic Slope and the state’s desire to build a pipeline across Native lands to carry that oil to market, the situation in the central and eastern Arctic differed significantly. When Inuit vocalized their desire for their own territory, they were speaking to their dissatisfaction with Canada’s behavior in the Arctic

over a matter of decades. The incremental erosion of Inuit power in their own homelands was deeply disturbing to an Inuit leadership that had born witness to momentous social changes in a single generation. “We were in that situation,” John Amagoalik writes, “the colonizer and the colonized.”⁶ Change clearly needed to happen in the political hierarchy from the perspective of Inuit. Aided by developments in Alaska, Inuit saw that a vehicle was available to them to effect change in their relationship with the Canadian state. This relationship had developed rapidly and quite recently in comparison to other regions in the Circumpolar Arctic.

During and after World War II, Canada’s political strategy in the central and eastern Arctic shifted from overt neglect to paternalistic oversight in less than a decade. Inuit homelands had become tactically important spaces for the American and Canadian military during the war years, forcing the state to take a serious look at the region’s Aboriginal peoples for the first time. The relationship between Inuit and the Canadian government became increasingly tenuous as the state began socially engineering Inuit society. From the perspective of the Canadian federal government, it was simply unacceptable that Inuit – Canada’s Inuit – were living in snow and sod houses, relying on their own hunting abilities instead of the grocery store to survive. New housing infrastructure, medical services, and other southern institutions were introduced into Arctic communities.⁷ Families were relocated from seasonal camps into permanent settlements by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Children were removed from their homes – sometimes without parental consent – and sent to residential schools that were often far away.⁸ In the process, rigorous steps were taken to reorient Aboriginal concepts of education, individual success, and family roles and responsibilities to comply

with southern norms. By 1971, Inuit leaders realized that they had lost control of their own homeland to people who had no history or legitimacy in the Arctic. Their world had changed and continued to change rapidly: something had to be done quickly in order to begin a process of reversal. At that time, conversations about Aboriginal rights to self-determination were happening in organizations at the national and regional levels, but they were not necessarily Native organizations. Inuit needed their own unique organization to advocate for their interests, specific to the far North. The Inuit Tapirisat of Canada would be their voice.

The Inuit Tapirisat of Canada is Born

If we do not form an organization amongst ourselves, our ways, lives, culture and language will disappear and we will have no control over it in a very short time.

Noah Qumak of Sugluk, Nunavik
Ottawa, 1971

The Indian Eskimo Association (IEA) was the most prominent and influential national Canadian Aboriginal organization in the 1960s and 1970s. The IEA was sponsored by educators, public servants, and religious leaders who had a deep concern for the future of Native Canadians. Primarily funded by private donors with some government support, the organization's first executive board largely consisted of non-Natives who sought to promote awareness of Native peoples and their rights across Canada and to encourage their advancement through community development, education, communication, and economics within Native communities on Native terms.⁹ IEA sponsored conferences became arenas where the pertinent issues across Native Canada could be discussed by Aboriginal leaders and their non-Native allies. In July 1970, for example, the IEA co-sponsored the Coppermine Conference of Arctic Native People,

held in Coppermine, Northwest Territories (NWT). The meeting produced the Committee for Original Peoples' Entitlement (COPE), an Inuit organization that worked to oppose non-consultative resource exploration in the Mackenzie Delta and Western Arctic. In order to be more inclusive of Inuit living in dispersed communities across the North, the IEA hired twenty-six year old Tagak Curley of Coral Harbor, NWT to work as an Inuit community liaison. In February 1971, Curley invited six Inuit community leaders to a board meeting in Toronto at the IEA's expense. Over the course of four days, the leaders – from across the NWT and northern Quebec – shared their deep concerns about the direction of Inuit Country and came up with a future action plan to reverse the negative trends that the leaders were observing in their communities.

At this meeting, the actual role of the IEA seems to have been peripheral if not ambiguous to those in attendance. IEA directors were not immediately present during the first day but their legal expertise could be sought if desired. Some of the delegates had not heard of the organization until Coppermine, others had never heard of it. While the IEA's purpose in relation to Inuit may have been vague, it was clear to the Inuit leaders that the organization was not serving Inuit interests in the capacity desired: they urgently wanted to broadcast their own unique voice in a time of rapid change. On February 18, Jacob Oweetaluktuk of Port Harrison, Nunavik set the tone for the discussions that followed:

In the past there was nothing bothering us, but right now at this very moment there is something interfering with us Inuit. The culture of the Inuit will not be the same anymore as it used to be. Our culture is still here, but in the near future it is not going to be the same as it used to be. If this continues too long from now into the future, there won't be any power left in us...if we say right now that we want the government to handle our problems, our affairs and our lives, we will never be able to do things on our own...So we have to find an organized voice amongst ourselves so we

may direct our lives the way we want them to be. Maybe we should have something like an Inuit organization.¹⁰

The fact that the IEA was a governmentally affiliated organization was cause for some consternation among the Inuit delegates, whose lives had become increasingly affected by decisions made in Ottawa since World War II. The overwhelming sentiment understood by all present was that Inuit still owned the land and had always owned the land. Inuit had been primary resource users in the Arctic since time immemorial and no treaty had ever abrogated those rights. Inuit communities had absolutely no say in the business enterprises and other projects that sometimes spontaneously appeared in their backyards overnight, often threatening their livelihoods. Inuit were a marginalized majority in the Arctic at the beginning of the 1970s – second class citizens in the land of their forefathers. It made no sense to them.

During the 1971 Toronto meeting, Celestino Makpah of Whale Cove, NWT recounted an instance in which a non-Native southerner started a private fishing enterprise on two lakes near Whale Cove without consulting the local people. At the time, the federal government decided what projects would or would not happen in the Northwest Territories. “These should have been under our control,” Makpah said, “[the lakes] should never have been given to the American enterpriser. If I had not been suspicious of that man I would have fought him and fought the government official; but whenever I started to mention anything of that sort he would just seem to pick up a heavy rock and put it on top of me.”¹¹ Ipeelee Kilabuk of Pangnirtung related a similar series of events in his community, where a southerner was in the process of building tourist cabins on Pangnirtung’s main fishing river. “I know very well this Kabloona [white person] is

going to make a lot of profit from this area, and his profits will not mean anything to the community.”¹² Josiah Kadlusiak of Igloolik, NWT was the first to suggest land claims as a solution: “The time is here now for us Inuit to unite and work together, and I think we Inuit should try with all our rights to take control of our land. The assistance the government is now handing to Inuit (which is welfare) will not make anyone a man. Should the land be controlled by the government or by Inuit?”¹³

By the following day, it was clear that a new organization was integral to speed Inuit action in the North. Noah Qumak suggested they call that organization the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC or “Inuit Brother of Canada” in English) to unanimous agreement. Over the next two days the group of seven, which had designated itself an interim organizing committee with Noah Qumak as chairman, Jose Kadlusiak as vice-chairman, and Tagak Curley as secretary treasurer, continued the discourse about critical challenges in Inuit Country and made plans to coordinate a founding conference for in Ottawa on August 18-27. The desire for more cooperation between Canada’s four Inuit regions had been an important ingredient in the decision to organize. “We should no longer let this nonsupport amongst Inuit continue,” Curley said, “we must now unite and support each other as Inuit... We should all become one group.”¹⁴ It was integral that Inuit join together across provinces and territories if they were to move forward with a united voice. At the time, the boundary of the Northwest Territories extended east from Yukon Territory to eastern coast of Baffin Island. The Inuit of Quebec and Labrador were not to be excluded from ITC’s conversations by imaginary provincial borders, however. Twenty-three Inuit representatives from across Arctic Canada attended the Ottawa conference in August 1971.¹⁵

Going Forward With Inuit Land Claims

Beginning in 1971, the IEA shifted from promoting Native interests directly to assisting the development of self-sustaining, independent Native organizations. Its name change to the Canadian Association in Support of the Native Peoples (CASNP) in 1973 reflected the new emphasis on publishing, fund-raising, and promotional roles rather than direct coordination of the Native political agenda. The change was also indication that Canadian regional and national Native organizations had by then become self-reliant and often powerful voices for their people. By 1973, the government had acquiesced and agreed to fund the ITC's land claims project, which had originally envisioned a single comprehensive land claim to all Inuit lands in the Canadian Arctic. The Canadian Arctic is a vast space, however, and Arctic resource exploration put disproportionate pressure on the four Inuit regions at different times. In 1975, Cree and Inuit in northern Quebec had signed on to the James Bay Agreement, the first "modern treaty" between Canadian Aboriginal peoples and the federal government. The two groups opposed a project to develop the hydroelectric potential of the James Bay watershed. Threatened by non-consultative development and the potential flooding of vast portions of their lands, Cree and Inuit won an injunction that eventually froze the project while their separate land claims proceedings played out in the courts. While the land claim's outcome in terms of land and rights were not the most expansive, it had become clear that a new era had arrived in government-Native dealings over resource-rich lands.¹⁶

The first proposal for a Nunavut land claim was put to the federal government by the ITC in 1976, which at the time included Inuvialuit lands in the western Arctic. Intensifying off-shore oil exploration in the Beaufort Sea and the Mackenzie Valley

pipeline proposal put disproportionate pressure on Inuvialuit in the western Arctic, making a blanket claim covering all of the Northwest Territories increasingly impractical. COPE and Inuvialuit separation from the ITC to pursue the 1982 Inuvialuit Land Claims Agreement was preceded by growing disconcertion in Inuit communities, which sensed that the first proposal had been initiated with too much reliance on southern lawyers and consultants and not enough consultation with Inuit. It was subsequently withdrawn and redrawn to fit the new political, attitudinal, and geographic realities of the North. John Amagoalik, who had worked with other Inuit leaders on the 1976 claim moved to Frobisher Bay (Iqaluit since 1987), where he initiated a stepped-up program of community workshops.¹⁷

The second land claim proposal, “Speaking for the First Citizens of the Canadian Arctic,” asked for both land and self-governance and was submitted in September 1977. Inuit leaders used public education campaigns, community meetings and radio phone-in shows to discuss the issues facing and the options available to Inuit, this time receiving overwhelming Inuit support.¹⁸ The federal government rejected this second proposal, reluctant to grant or even discuss self-governance at the negotiating table. For Inuit, self-governance was inseparable from a land claim. The ITC and the voices it represented did not want their Aboriginal title extinguished for land management rights and other forms of compensation: they wanted real control over their land, lives, and culture after decades on the sideline.

Canadian Power and Inuit Dreams

In 1973, the Canadian Supreme Court’s landmark decision in *Calder et al. v. Attorney General of British Columbia* had opened the way for comprehensive Aboriginal land

claims agreements in cases of an existing Aboriginal title. The Nisga'a Indians of British Columbia had been pursuing a land claims agreement with the federal government but had never treated with Canada. In 1973, Frank Calder, the president of the Nisga'a Tribal Council, made the case for the existence of Aboriginal title on ancestral tribal lands, which he argued had been established over generations of continued use and occupancy. Three judges supported the claim and three held that British Columbia had extinguished Nisga'a Aboriginal title prior to Confederation, while the seventh and deciding judge rejected the claim on a procedural technicality.¹⁹ Although the tribe initially lost the case, the ruling set an important precedent for Aboriginal peoples generally, as six of the judges had for the first time in Canadian history acknowledged Aboriginal title as a valid legal designation with real power in land claims negotiations.

The decision provided that non-treaty tribes retained their Aboriginal title to their lands, which could form the basis for comprehensive land claims agreements (modern treaties). The decision and the developments that followed opened a new chapter for Aboriginal self-determination in Canada. In reaction to the *Calder* decision, the federal government created the Office of Native Claims and outlined two types of land claims: (1) specific claims, for those who had previously signed treaties and had a grievance with the Crown, and (2) comprehensive claims for those who had not signed away title to their land.²⁰ Nunavut fell into the second category.

In order to push Inuit land claims, the ITC had begun working with anthropologists in 1973 to document their historical use and occupancy (Aboriginal title) of the lands they would eventually lay claim to. The desire by Inuit to retain control of as much land as possible was paramount to a successful settlement, and the project was one important

way that Inuit community members became involved in the claims process at the grassroots level. Funded by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and initiated by the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada in 1973, the *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project* aimed to document the total Inuit land use area of the Northwest Territories, then stretching from the Mackenzie River to east Baffin Island, and to provide, in Milton Freeman's words, "information in support of the fact that Inuit have used and occupied this vast northern land since time immemorial and that they still use and occupy it to this day."²¹ Data acquired by fieldworkers through consultation with Inuit hunters, fishers, and trappers across the Canadian North were meant to establish the basis for land claims negotiations with Ottawa. Within each community, Inuit consulted with fieldworkers and marked the locations and types of land use on tracing paper placed over regional maps, distinguishing between the different kinds of land or water use in each area.

Anthropologist David Hoffman, who conducted fieldwork in Whale Cove, was among the experts whose studies contributed to the *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project*. In a personal interview with him at his home in Anchorage, AK in December 2008, Hoffman remarked on the precision with which Inuit – who did not ordinarily use maps and who often could not read English – were able to recall specific areas of use and the "incredible encyclopedic knowledge of the land," formed by generations of dependence on its living bounty.²²

I wanted to know, from Hoffman's perspective, if these political developments and realities were reflected at the grassroots level in Whale Cove during the 1970s. When asked if he got the sense that the Inuit with whom he worked on the Inuit Land Use and

Occupancy Project felt as if they were contributing to an urgent political movement, Hoffman responded:

I think the communities were proud of the guys that were smart enough to go off to Ottawa and do this [land claims]. But there wasn't a lot of grassroots political sensibility. What there was, though, is – that I sensed just a little bit – it was a very colonial administrative system. So the commissioner of the Northwest Territories was appointed by the federal government – wasn't elected. And he was sort of the dictator. It was through the civil service [in Yellowknife] that they would select the hamlet manager or the village manager, and the village manager was the dictator. He controlled all of the equipment and all of the resources... There was no local participation. There was no democracy... I never heard of a local person being manager. And some of these people had come from other countries and some of them were power freaks and kind of strange people. Some of them were military. And it was very much a colonial administrative system and I think people were starting to resent that. They weren't angry but they were kind of resentful.²³

The Inuit living in Whale Cove at the time had been relocated from the Barren Grounds west of Hudson Bay, and their economic strategies were based almost entirely on inland caribou herds that had thinned by the 1950s and left many families hungry. Coastal dwelling Inuit were relocated to Whale Cove from nearby coastal communities in order to aid the inlanders in adapting to a marine subsistence economy. Relocating Inuit from their seasonal camps into permanent settlements represented one prong of Canada's postwar hegemonic strategy in the Arctic. Government surveillance of Inuit was possible in sedentary communities where health care, education, and religious pacification could be more easily delivered. Crowding in the settlements often produced the opposite effect, however. Epidemics of tuberculosis could spread like wildfire in cramped living quarters and across communities, devouring entire families. In Eskimo Point (present day Arviat) eighty-two Inuit families were crowded into sixty-four wooden and snow houses, and between 1962 and 1963, an epidemic of tuberculosis affected 55 percent of those

households.²⁴ Appalling, claustrophobic living conditions were also compounded by food shortages in some communities, contributing to rising vocal criticism of the Canadian government by Inuit in their communities. The totalizing forces of government authority meant to break down Inuit cultural and economic autonomy had the opposite effect, however, and by the late 1960s a new generation of Inuit had become the Canadian government's fiercest opponents in the Arctic.

In the new communities, education was the primary arena in which Inuit felt the influence of Canadian power during the second half of the twentieth century. During the 1950s and 60s, the residential school became the central acculturative force in Canada's plan for the Arctic. Children were often taken from their homes at ages as young as six or seven to residential schools as far away as Yellowknife and Inuvik in the Northwest Territories and Churchill in Manitoba. Some schools were administered by the federal government and others by different Christian denominations, leading to a high level of variance in the experiences that people had. Some young men and women came away from the schools permanently traumatized by their time away from home, emotionally, psychologically, and sexually abused. Older generations of Inuit, often demure, intimidated by non-Natives, and culturally accustomed to conflict avoidance, were not always able or willing to directly resist the system. But their children were. John Amagoalik, who attended residential school in Churchill recalls:

There were social circles. I don't remember talking about politics, but we spent a lot of time discussing how we were going to change the Arctic. We were young. We were in our teens: fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, but we were already talking about how we were going to change the North.²⁵

Teachers became new authoritative figures in communities where parents and extended family members had assumed responsibility for the education of their children for

millennia. In Canada's schools, Inuit children were not learning how to be productive, contributing members of a society shaped and defined by a highly specific set of skills and a refined environmental knowledge base. Where children had spent their days helping parents with hunting, trapping, fishing, skin preparation, and general household chores, they now spent much of the day in institutional settings learning skills unrelated, and sometimes antithetical, to those that they were expected to know at home.²⁶ They were taught in English about ideas, concepts, and events that bore no cultural relationship to the Inuit people or their surroundings. The education system lent nothing to the idea that Inuit had a future as a distinct, powerful, and autonomous culture within Canada. The goal of the education system was to produce Canadian citizens who happened to be Inuit, rather than Inuit who happened to live within Canada's borders. Rigby points out that the schools "contributed to a far-reaching and totally unintended outcome," that had set the stage for the "development of a vigorous political consciousness among the Inuit that would ultimately lead to the settlement of a land claim involving nearly 20 percent of Canada's landmass."²⁷

Nunavut, Our Land, is Born

We have travelled enough miles to go to the moon and back. We have persevered – we did not give up. Our efforts are now being rewarded. Our land claims are now almost settled. Nunavut is within reach. Our people support us. The civil servants who live among us now understand that we must be masters in our own house.

John Amagoalik, Pangnirtung 1991

Sixteen years after ITC filed its first land claim in 1976, Inuit land claims negotiators had not wavered in their insistence that Nunavut must be included in any land claims package. They desired settlement "of a comprehensive land claim which would set out

and enshrine Inuit use of their lands and would compensate them for past and future use of Inuit lands,” together with “a new government in the eastern and central Arctic with capacity to protect and foster Inuit language, culture and social-well being.”²⁸ The Inuit leadership made it clear to the government of the Northwest Territories and the federal government that they did not wish to be part of the existing Northwest Territories or its bureaucracy in faraway Yellowknife, a world away from the Inuit homeland. The ITC’s third land claims proposal to the federal government in 1979, “Political Development in Nunavut,” became the starting point toward an agreement in principle and then a final agreement over a decade later. In this document, ITC stated four objectives: (1) ownership rights over portions of land rich in non-renewable resources; (2) decision making power over the management of land and resources within the settlement area; (3) financial indemnity and royalties from resources developed in the area; (4) a commitment from Ottawa to negotiate self-government once a land claim agreement-in-principle is signed.²⁹ The proposal also called for the division of the Northwest Territories within ten years to form Nunavut Territory.

By 1980, the ITC had given notice to Ottawa that Inuit would not sign a land claims agreement without a firm commitment to create Nunavut. The idea of splitting the Northwest Territories had been considered before Inuit land claims but never seriously explored until Inuit started to force the issue of division onto the agenda of the NWT Legislative Assembly, which at the time favored devolution of federal power to the territory without addressing division.³⁰ The NWT Legislative Assembly decided to put the question of division to the residents of the territory in a 1982 non-binding plebiscite. The results of the vote showed that an overwhelming majority of NWT Native people and

a slim majority of total residents were in favor of division. In an April 15, 1982 CBC News television broadcast, Whit Fraser reported that:

The vote itself is a solid indication [that] the Northwest Territories is not only divided geographically but also racially. The Indians and Inuit made it clear that they do want to establish their own territories. That idea has always been rejected by a majority of whites and that came through in yesterday's results. But the outcome will make the Indians and Inuit more determined than ever to establish their own forms of government.³¹

The results of the plebiscite meant that Inuit had cleared a major hurdle on the road to Nunavut and self-governance. They had insisted all along that they wanted and needed their own territory to go forward into the future as a unique people, and now they had shown the government in clear terms how they felt. The second major hurdle would come ten years later, when Inuit and NWT residents again went to the polls, this time to vote on the specific boundary that would separate Nunavut. A boundary settlement was almost reached in the late 1980s but negotiations were halted by competing Inuit and Dene-Metis claims to huge tracts of land west of Hudson Bay, which aside from the community of Baker Lake was a virtual barren ground to which both sides claimed historical use and occupancy. Following former NWT Commissioner John Parker's mediation of the deadlock, the boundary line was put to a vote in 1992, despite the opposition of some Dene-Metis groups. Again, the plebiscite passed to the great satisfaction of Inuit. By agreeing to put the future of Nunavut to a public vote rather than keep negotiations private, the Tunngavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN)³² had taken a bold but worthwhile risk. In no uncertain terms could Ottawa ignore Inuit demands or prolong negotiations. After over a decade of negotiations, Ottawa finally understood what Inuit wanted and

why they wanted it: a territory to call their own together with a land claims package. In May 1992, on the eve of the plebiscite, a CBC News anchor reported that:

Although the plebiscite isn't legally binding, a 'Yes' vote will give Ottawa all the support it feels it needs to conclude a boundary and final land claims settlement with the Inuit. But the Inuit are outnumbered in the Northwest Territories two to one, and a strong 'No' vote will make it politically difficult if not impossible for Nunavut to go ahead.³³

And indeed, this second plebiscite was the final push that Ottawa needed to conclude a land claims agreement with Inuit. In November 1992, 69 percent (the percentage of voters in agreement of total votes cast was actually much higher, as non-votes counted as 'No' votes) of eligible Inuit voters went to the polls and ratified the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA).³⁴ Inuit were clearly in favor of the land claims package, Article 4 of which guaranteed the creation of Nunavut Territory through subsequent legislation: "The Government of Canada will recommend to Parliament, as a government measure, legislation to establish, within a defined time period, a new Nunavut Territory, with its own Legislative Assembly and public government, separate from the Government of the remainder of the Northwest Territories."³⁵ On May 25, 1993, Inuit and representatives from the federal government signed the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) in Iqaluit, the new capitol of the government of Nunavut. In June, Parliament enacted two separate pieces of legislation: *The Nunavut Act* which created Nunavut Territory and the Government of Nunavut (GN), and the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act* (ratifying the NLCA as law). The Territory of Nunavut was born, but at considerable cost. Inuit surrendered their Aboriginal title when they signed on to the Agreement, Article 2 of which makes clear in rather dour terms that the NLCA was to be

the first and final opportunity for Inuit in the central and eastern Canadian Arctic to formally claim their lands. Inuit were to:

(a) cede, release and surrender to Her Majesty The Queen in Right of Canada, all their Aboriginal claims, rights, title and interests, if any, in and to lands and waters anywhere within Canada and adjacent offshore areas within the sovereignty or jurisdiction of Canada; and

(b) agree, on their behalf, and on behalf of their heirs, descendants and successors not to assert any cause of action, action for a declaration, claim or demand of whatever kind or nature which they ever had, now have or may hereafter have against Her Majesty The Queen in Right of Canada or any province, the government of any territory or any person based on any Aboriginal claims, rights, title or interests in and to lands and waters described in Sub-section (a).³⁶

Between 1993 and Nunavut's formal birth on April 1, 1999 – the day the Government of Nunavut assumed responsibility for the full range of its jurisdictional powers – a Nunavut Implementation Commission (NIC) laid the groundwork for the new territory.

Throughout the years, from the passage of the *Nunavut Act* to the formal set-up of Nunavut in 1999, major policy decisions as to government structure, implementation strategy, scheduling and the like were made through a series of 'Nunavut Leaders' Summits' which took place several times a year in various Nunavut communities.³⁷ The meetings brought together leaders from the GNWT, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI)³⁸ and the government of Canada to set up the new government during the six year interim period.

Making Nunavut Work for the People: The Ongoing Question of Legitimacy

While Article 4 of the NLCA paired Inuit land claims with the creation of a new public government, NTI, as the organization representative of Inuit, is not always in complimentary agreement with the GN's political machinations and legislation. In recent

years there has been considerable tension between the institutions, both of which claim legitimacy as representatives of the Inuit people. NTI is able to work cooperatively in an advisory capacity with government, but it is ultimately the GN that has the power to make decisions that will most directly shape Inuit society in Nunavut. Subsequent chapters will explore these tensions in greater detail. On December 13, 1976, John Amagoalik appeared in front of a non-Native panel on the CBC television program, *Front Page Challenge*, to answer questions about ITC's recently filed land claim. "I think it's very important to remember the original intent of land claims – over the past few years people seem to think that we're after money, we're after services, but the original intent was very simply survival of our people, as a unique race in Canada," Amagoalik said. "We want to save our language, our heritage, our philosophy, our whole way of life."³⁹ With these issues at the core of Inuit land claims in 1976, the question of whether or not the creation of the territory has helped to fulfill those objectives can be threshed out by consulting the perspectives of individuals who live in the territory today and are vigorously participating in its evolution. This chapter has been a cursory examination of the road leading up to the creation of Nunavut, emphasizing what I interpret to be the major legal and social variables necessitating land claims and self-governance by the Inuit of the central and eastern Arctic. The following chapters will bring this historical tapestry to Nunavummiut themselves, who are the ultimate judges of whether the goals for Nunavut emphasized by Inuit leaders, are any nearer to being realized today than on April 1, 1999.

Following the results of the 1992 plebiscite, which settled the border dispute between the NWT and Nunavut Settlement Area, Amagoalik appeared on CBC News again,

saying much of the same thing. “The settlement of claims and the institutions of self-government will provide us with the opportunity to preserve our language, to preserve our culture, and to determine our own future,” Amagoalik said.⁴⁰ Self-government, or more particularly, a public territorial government, would be the primary apparatus through which Inuit would accomplish the objectives set out in 1976. With Nunavut Territory’s tenth birthday recently passed, Nunavummiut are as anxious and expectant as ever to see the GN fully capitalize on the opportunity to create a society that places high value on the Inuit language and culture, and that creates a space in the education system and in the life of the territory, for Inuit to flourish. With these historical precedents in mind, the minutia of contemporary Inuit self-governance in Canada can now be interrogated with the valuable aid of Nunavummiut opinion.

Notes

¹ John F. Hoffecker, *A Prehistory of the North: Human Settlement of the Higher Latitudes* (Rutgers University Press, 2005), pp. 134

² John Amagoalik, *Changing the Face of Canada*, ed. Louis McComber (Nunavut Arctic College, 2007), pp. 59

³ John Amagoalik, Personal Interview (January 9, 2009)

⁴ David S. Case defines aboriginal title as follows: “aboriginal title ... is first of all group or tribal title. It differs from fee simple title in that aboriginal title is only the right of exclusive occupancy and does not include the ultimate fee, the ability to convey the occupied land freely. Aboriginal occupants may sell their lands, but only the federal government or those authorized by it may purchase such lands. This basic rule is founded on early principles of international law.” From: David S. Case, *Alaska Natives and American Laws* (University of Alaska Press, 2002), pp. 36

⁵ John Merritt et al., *Nunavut: Political Choices and Manifest Destiny* (Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, 1989), pp. 20

⁶ John Amagoalik, *Changing the Face of Canada*, ed. Louis McComber (Nunavut Arctic College, 2007), pp. 35

⁷ Quinn R. Duffy, *The Road to Nunavut: The Progress of the Eastern Arctic Inuit Since the Second World War* (McGill-Queens University Press, 1988)

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- ⁸ Frank James Tester and Peter Kulchyski, *Tammarniit (mistakes): Inuit Relocation in the Eastern Arctic, 1939-63* (UBC Press, 1994)
- ⁹ Robert McPherson, *New Owners in Their Own Lands: Minerals and Inuit Land Claims* (University of Calgary Press, 2003), pp. 57
- ¹⁰ Jacob Oweetaluktuk, "Meeting of Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada: Toronto, Ontario February 18-22, 1971" (1971) On file with author.
- ¹¹ Celestino Makpah, "Meeting of Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada: Toronto, Ontario February 18-22, 1971" (1971) On file with author.
- ¹² Ipeelee Kilabuk, "Meeting of Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada: Toronto, Ontario February 18-22, 1971" (1971) On file with author.
- ¹³ Josiah Kadlusiak, "Meeting of Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada: Toronto, Ontario February 18-22, 1971" (1971) On file with author.
- ¹⁴ Tagak Curley, "Meeting of Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada: Toronto, Ontario February 18-22, 1971" (1971) On file with author.
- ¹⁵ Robert McPherson, *New Owners in Their Own Lands: Minerals and Inuit Land Claims* (University of Calgary Press, 2003), pp. 63
- ¹⁶ J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2000) pp. 344
- ¹⁷ Robert McPherson, *New Owners in Their Own Lands: Minerals and Inuit Land Claims* (University of Calgary Press, 2003), pp. 70
- ¹⁸ Jack Hicks and Graham White, *Nunavut: Inuit Self-Determination Through a Land Claim and Public Government?*, ed. Jens Dahl et al. (International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2000), pp. 28
- ¹⁹ Jeremy Webber, *Reimagining Canada: Language, Culture, Community and the Canadian Constitution* (New York: McGill-Queen's UP, 1994), pp. 71
- ²⁰ Ailsa Henderson, *Nunavut: Rethinking Political Culture* (UBC Press, 2007), pp. 24
- ²¹ Milton Freeman Research Limited, *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project: A Report* (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1976), pp. 19
- ²² David Hoffman, Personal Interview (December 30, 2008)
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Frank James Tester and Peter Kulchyski, *Tammarniit (mistakes): Inuit Relocation in the Eastern Arctic, 1939-63* (UBC Press, 1994), pp. 358-359
- ²⁵ John Amagoalik, *Changing the Face of Canada*, ed. Louis McComber (Nunavut Arctic College, 2007), pp. 45
- ²⁶ Richard G. Condon, *Inuit Youth: Growth and Change in the Canadian Arctic* (Rutgers University Press, 1988), pp. 157

²⁷ Bruce Rigby, et al., *Endangered Peoples of the Arctic: Struggles to Survive and Thrive*, ed. Milton M.R. Freeman (Greenwood Press, 2000), pp. 100

²⁸ Jack Hicks and Graham White, *Nunavut: Inuit Self-Determination Through a Land Claim and Public Government?*, ed. Jens Dahl et al. (International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2000), pp. 29

²⁹ Andre Legare, "The Process Leading to a Land Claims Agreement and its Implementation: The Case of the Nunavut Land Claims Settlement," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* XVI (1996), pp. 147

³⁰ John Amagoalik, "The New Territory of Nunavut" (1998), On file with author.

³¹ Whit Fraser, "Voters choose N.W.T. split," *CBC News* (April 15, 1982), RVD
<http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/provincial_territorial_politics/topics/108/> February 10, 2009

³² TFN inherited responsibility for negotiating the Nunavut land claim from ITK in 1982. Like COPE, TFN was closely affiliated with the parent national Inuit organization but would focus on the Nunavut land claim independently.

³³ Eric Sorenson, "Dene Oppose Nunavut Boundary," *CBC News* (May 5, 1992), RVD
<http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/provincial_territorial_politics/topics/108/> February 10, 2009

³⁴ Jack Hicks and Graham White, *Nunavut: Inuit Self-Determination Through a Land Claim and Public Government?*, ed. Jens Dahl et al. (International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2000), pp. 32

³⁵ Canada, *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement: Agreement Between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada*, (1993), pp. 23

³⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 11-12

³⁷ Jack Hicks and Graham White, *Nunavut: Inuit Self-Determination Through a Land Claim and Public Government?*, ed. Jens Dahl et al. (International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2000), pp. 39

³⁸ Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated replaced the TFN in 1993 and became responsible for implementing the NLCA and safeguarding the rights and interests of Inuit.

³⁹ CBC News, "Deciphering 'Eskimo' land claims," (December 16, 1976), RVD
<http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/federal_politics/clips/6853/> May 29, 2009

⁴⁰ Eric Sorenson, "Dene Oppose Nunavut Boundaries," *CBC News* (May 5, 1992), RVD
<http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/provincial_territorial_politics/topics/108/> May 31, 2009

Chapter 2

Education as a Social, Political and Cultural Determinant

The Inuk woman sawed at the flesh of the headless Arctic char lying on the cutting board with a steel *u/u*, slicing away small pale hunks of frozen meat. It occurred to me that this durable half-moon shaped “woman’s knife,” used for everything from scraping the blubber off of sealskins to cutting whale meat down to size, could be found in the kitchens of virtually every Native household from the Aleutian Islands in Alaska north and east to Greenland, halfway around the world. I was offered a piece and let it melt in my mouth, chewed and swallowed. “*Nakuu*,” I said, “it tastes good.” The woman smiled approvingly and gave me a small plate of the frozen delicacy. I was offered tea and sat down at the dining room table to speak to the woman’s daughter, a young government employee (“Anna” for the sake of privacy) about what the creation of Nunavut has meant to her since the territory’s division from the Northwest Territories in 1999. It was enlivening to hear Anna communicate with her mother and two teenage brothers entirely in Inuktitut. As elders pass away, the Inuit language is competing with English for space in Inuit households and, unfortunately, losing. Major actions have recently been taken to preserve Nunavut’s culture and heritage by implementing a number of different strategies, including the introduction of new language and education legislation and a cultural school. For young Nunavummiut leaders, the territory – with all of its attendant problems – is theirs to inherit, and many of the individuals I spoke with were quite vocal, impassioned, and honest in their criticisms of the territorial leadership. Language and culture as Inuit birthrights were central topics in the vast majority of the conversations I had, topics which have become indelibly linked to Nunavut’s public education system as elders pass away and youth are increasingly exposed to global popular culture. This chapter focuses on the ways in which the GN is leveraging the territory’s exclusive power

over the public education system to insure that Inuit language and culture have a firm and well-guarded place in the future of the territory.

As a teenager, Anna understood that momentous change would follow the creation of Nunavut but had only a dim understanding of the nature and direction that the Inuit leadership would drive new policy in the territory. As a young adult, the opportunity to travel and interact with other Aboriginal peoples helped her to better locate the source of territorial optimism:

There are some people who actually have taken the time to learn about [Nunavut]. When I would interact with those people in my travels, there was always a sense of ‘Wow, if only we could do what you did! You have no idea what we would do to have what you have!’ I didn’t realize how fortunate we were until I had those interactions...I would come back and I did a lot of presentations and when I would do facilitations I would try to get the young people excited about where they’re from and how fortunate they were – how fortunate we are to have a language, have a culture, have an identity – and our people decided that they wanted to have a land that said, ‘Okay, this is going to be our land and in this land we are going to be able to make the choices, and those choices are going to be our choices, and now we can fight for that because it’s recognized, it’s no longer just “those guys up there”’¹

On April 1, 2009 Nunavut turned ten years old, and the political decisions that Members of the Legislative Assembly are making (or not making) are coming under increased public scrutiny. Nunavut is at once an opportunity for Nunavummiut to ensure that Inuit culture, language, and values are elevated to parity with European-Canada while at the same time preparing young Inuit for success in a world that is becoming increasingly connected. This project is meaningful to a global Aboriginal community that can now take inspiration from the precedent set by an experiment in self-determination that contains an impressive amount of jurisdictional power. In the ITC’s 1979 annual general meeting in Igloolik, a list of grievances and arguments outlining the fundamental need for

a new territory was presented. On the topic of human rights, “preservation of Inuit culture, language, and lifestyle” is given primacy.² Yet the degree to which the GN has proactively worked to accommodate global acculturative forces without sacrificing the Inuit heritage is considered unsatisfactory to some. For so many years Canadian residential schools worked to squash the identities of the country’s Aboriginal peoples, warranting an official apology by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in June 2008. Today, classrooms in many Aboriginal communities are considered the contemporary battleground for fundamental value shifts away from Western educational paradigms and pedagogy toward culturally specific education. The Territory of Nunavut is breaking new ground in this direction.

Making Education Work for Nunavummiut: Not an Isolated Challenge

The frustrating part is our languages are dying. Our cultural practices and the way in which youth grow up is fundamentally changing. What it means to be an Inuk, how you live your life, what you learn – those are things that have always been of primary importance because they make up the society. There will always be an Inuit society, but will it be the difference between Canadian society and U.S. society or will it be the difference between what is now Inuit society and Canadian society?

Natan Obed
Director, Social and Cultural Development
Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated

Within Nunavut, two regimes claim legitimacy as primary representatives of the Inuit people. Because Inuit comprise a clear demographic majority in the territory and within the legislature, the GN and its electorate are believed by some to accurately mirror the society represented, including all of its values, concerns, and ambitions. On the other hand, NTI is the primary Inuit organization representing “tribal” interests specifically. Inuit residents living within the Nunavut Settlement Area instantly became beneficiaries

of the NLCA in 1993, and NTI's primary obligations are to manage the Nunavut Trust monies, which were part of settlement, and to ensure that the articles of the Agreement are being implemented by the GN. Within the territory, NTI has consultative status only. Despite a formal declaration by the GN and NTI in 2004 that outlined a new working relationship between both parties, it is ultimately the GN that holds the most political power. This declaration, called *Iqqanaijaqatigiit: Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated Working Together*, recognizes NTI as "the primary Inuit organization with the mandate to speak for the Inuit of Nunavut with respect to the rights and benefits of Inuit under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement."³

According to some residents of Nunavut, this has generated a tense and unproductive relationship between the two entities. I had the good fortune of speaking with Natan Obed, director of NTI's Department of Social and Cultural Development. He spoke largely about this binary relationship and its effect on the status of health and education in the territory, his own interpretation of the original intent and purpose of the NLCA in relation to the GN, and the challenges of governing in a manner consistent with cultural values. The potential for cultural self-determination flowing from Nunavut's unique jurisdictional powers together with the almost classic quagmire of an Aboriginal people struggling to reconcile their own cultural ambitions within a fundamentally Western model of governance is intriguing.

I related an anecdote to Obed about a surreal experience I once had as an intern for an Alaska Native organization. When I arrived on the first day of the organization's orientation and picked up my nametag, I was dismayed to see that instead of my tribal affiliation, my Alaska Native regional corporation was listed below my name. Here was

an organization committed to cultivating Alaska Native leaders implicitly endorsing an imposed corporate regime that effectively displaced Alaska Natives' tribal identities and traditional self-governance with for-profit corporations created by an act of Congress. I explained to Obed that since the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971 and the creation of twelve Alaska Native regional corporations in lieu of reservations, the Native leadership has consistently advanced economic self-determination often at the expense of cultural self-determination. The problem with this model is that the goal of cultural self-determination, which is indelibly linked to education, nearly always ranks lower in priority than paying shareholder's dividends, reinvestment into future projects, and necessary infrastructural needs. On the other hand, each Native village in Alaska is considered a unique, federally recognized tribe and is considered apart from but sometimes working in consultation with the regional corporations, whose interests sometimes differ from the tribes'. The Native Village of Kotzebue in the Northwest Arctic has started an Iñupiaq language immersion school, for example, partly funded by the regional Iñupiat Corporation.⁴ In my view, stronger linkages should be formed between tribal cultural assets and Native corporation economic assets. In a similar way, dueling power relationships are apparent within Nunavut Territory. Obed acknowledged the parallels in these words:

I see your analogy as being relevant here, where the territorial government to date has not asserted its power and has let itself be pushed in the direction of the way Ottawa would like it to function, rather than to be a different jurisdiction than any other one in Canada because of its population... Where else in Canada – where else in the world – would you have the rights and interests of a fifteen percent minority be equal to or greater than an eighty-five percent majority within public policy. Where else in the country would you have an eighty-five percent population not be given the ability to attend school in their first language? Not even possible, it doesn't even exist.⁵

How we view the societies we live in and the value we assign to them is largely conditioned by the education we receive. What is emphasized in the classroom within the narratives presented and the societies behind those narratives has the power to inform the self-identity of entire peoples, countries, and civilizations. The conspicuous absence of curricula that speak to who Aboriginal peoples are through our own robust histories, literary works, and languages should be taken as a signal that our disappearance from the North American scene is still considered imminent by dominant governments. As Aboriginal peoples, our collective hesitancy to push for radical departures from normative curricula that often have no relation to who we are as distinct peoples may cause many of us to lose a race against time that will determine the future of our cultures. Inuit do have control over education in Nunavut, but a paradigm shift has been slow in coming, especially considering the centrality of educational reform in the argument for Inuit land claims. Again, Obed's words acknowledge this struggle:

There isn't that concept of the long term; what should be funded, what should be recognized as being essential to the identity of the territory versus what's easiest, what's the cheapest way to educate people... The thought process isn't there to say, 'Okay, we have an opportunity that almost no other Aboriginal group in the world has: to be a key player within in entire country... There aren't many Aboriginal groups that can say they have a controlling interest of a territory within a country. So what I push for is the discussions to talk about what is possible, not necessarily what Southern Canada has done. We talk about the transfer of degrees in an education and say, 'Okay, well we need to make sure that a person that graduates from grade twelve can take that [degree] anywhere in Canada and use it anywhere. But my philosophy is, wouldn't you first want to make sure that they can use it in their own community? Wouldn't you want to make sure – above all else – that their community supports their education and thinks that it's relevant?'⁶

It is not coincidental that of Nunavummiut surveyed in 2001, "Bored with school" (12%) was cited as a primary reason for not finishing elementary or high school, second only to

“Pregnancy or taking care of children” (13%).⁷ According to the same source, of Canadian Inuit men and women aged 25-64 in 2006, only 12% of men and 14% of women had received a high school diploma. To put these numbers into perspective in Nunavut specifically, approximately 75% of Nunavummiut dropped out of high school in 2002-03.⁸ Aboriginal educational underachievement is not specific to Nunavut. It is an international pandemic rooted in asymmetrical power relationships between Aboriginal peoples and colonizing nation states. Rather than approached as a form of empowerment, success within Western educational paradigms is still widely considered a negative form of capitulation by young people who culturally have nothing at stake in Southern-based curricula. What Inuit students learn in school does not necessarily correspond with what they are expected to know at home, placing them between a rock and a hard place. As Native peoples, knowing where we come from is critical to knowing where we are going. The problem with educational systems that do not recognize and value the dynamic and imperative roles of Aboriginal language and experience in our own communities’ classrooms is that we are forced to choose between two radically different concepts of success that should be complimentary. Obed framed this dilemma in terms of colonialism:

It seems as though our leaders are making decisions that push us towards an unsettling new form of colonialism which is self-inflicted, because we buy into the value of financial markets, the value of money, for our children and our children’s children...Money as being intrinsically the best thing to give them. To me, I’d rather give them a society that functions almost entirely in Inuktitut, and give them a society in which they grow up learning their cultural traditions, and have a firm sense of who they are in relation to the rest of the world. I would rather give them that than a billion dollars.⁹

If education has reached a crossroads in Nunavut, Alaska is already ground zero for the types of culturally corrosive changes that many Nunavummiut fear. In his 2001 address

to the Alaska Native Education Summit in Anchorage, AK, Iñupiaq professor of education at the University of Alaska Anchorage Paul Ongtooguk described the origins of our own educational crises:

We have a challenge, and it's called schools. Alaska Natives have largely embraced the promises of school. The promise was, and has been, to prepare our young people to become contributing members of our communities, our state and our nation. But schools for Alaska Natives are like a meal laced with an unintended, poisonous effect. Along with the promise of preparing us for the future was this poisonous idea – and Byron's [Mallott] already referred to it – that our Native cultures, our ways of life, our languages, our traditions, our ideas, our understandings of the world, the very societies that were keys to living here for thousands of years should be stripped from the minds of our children in order to prepare them for a future that will not include Alaska Native cultures. We live with the consequences of this to the present day, and we see the after-effects reverberating through our communities.¹⁰

Growing up in Alaska, the state with the highest proportion of Natives to non-Natives in the union, our diverse cultures were always treated peripherally within the education system. In high school, instead of learning about land claims, histories of pre-contact international trade, warfare, and nationalism, civil disobedience and Aboriginal intellectualism leading to ripe opportunities to improve the status of our peoples, we were humored with dream catcher making workshops, were occasionally exposed to Native story-tellers, films that dealt with Native themes, traditional dance and Alaska Native games. While this kind of exposure was well-intentioned, Aboriginal peoples across the grid have more to offer than curious aesthetics. As Aboriginal peoples collectively, we deserve better and we can do better for ourselves and our future generations.

Piqqusilirivvik: Reviving Inuit Education

An old approach to Inuit education is being revisited by the GN that aims to elevate the values and unique attributes of Inuit society within an alternative learning space. The

Department of Culture, Language, Elders, and Youth (CLEY) has been working to turn Piqqusilirivvik (literally “a place for the learning of things cultural”) into a reality since Nunavut’s second election in 2004. That year’s official mandate outlined the key prerogatives of the GN for the next four years, including the goal to “Strengthen Inuit culture for future generations by finalizing plans for a Nunavut Culture School.”¹¹ Hugh Lloyd is the project coordinator of the Piqqusilirivvik project, which features an entirely new approach to education inspired by the Knud Rasmussen Folk Hojskole in Sisimiut, Greenland, established in 1962 to focus on Greenlandic language, values, and culture. Similar to the Greenlandic model, Piqqusilirivvik will be a residential school that concentrates on transferring Inuit cultural skills and knowledge from elders to young adults within the Inuktitut language that will – hopefully – translate into more widely applicable life-skills. Piqqusilirivvik will radically depart from Nunavut’s existing school curricula where Inuit traditional knowledge, if it is taught at all, is always supplementary to Southern Canadian educational standards. Lloyd explained that:

This is the antithesis of that, in that, the school system here – you go to school and if you get a little extra time and somebody’s got the balls and the smarts, you go out on the land. It’s a nice little field trip. The priority is the curriculum, the curriculum is the Alberta curriculum in our case, it’s not even our own... That’s sacrosanct and you can’t mess with that, or no ones willing to mess with it. This doesn’t have to follow that and we want to make sure it doesn’t follow that.¹²

It is important to note that Piqqusilirivvik is not intended to solve Nunavut’s educational crisis and indeed, it will exist apart from educational bureaucracy. The facility will provide a land-based education for Inuit eighteen years and older who are proficient in the Inuit language, offering guidance and assistance from elders whose invaluable knowledge will finally be central within an Inuit-specific educational institution. The

physical facility will be located outside of Clyde River, a settlement on north Baffin Island, with two satellite locations at Baker Lake and Igloolik providing regional diversity through their unique subsistence economies. The principal facility will house approximately twenty six students at a time for up to nine months of the year, and aside from Inuit language skills, will require no educational prerequisites.

Lloyd estimates that initial construction will cost at least \$20 million federal dollars, a paltry sum compared to the wealth of knowledge potentially lost forever if not inherited and used by successive generations of Inuit. The physical design of the space, while incorporating computers, a library, and other technological amenities, will be conducive to more intimate and open exchanges of information between elders and youth by foregoing desk-filled classrooms intended for the unilateral flow of information. A cold room designed specifically for dressing and preparing seals – the first of its kind – together with a sewing room for making traditional clothing and other articles, are among the space’s unique attributes. “Every one of us that’s been through a North American school system – you bring with you phenomenal conditioning,” Lloyd pointed out during one conversation at CLEY headquarters. “We all know about recess, we all know about bells, and how you are trained by teachers to sit down in little desks – and that’s all part of the Qallunaat, Southern, European culture, and that’s not what this place is all about.”¹³ Administration of the facility (Lloyd was emphatic that “school” is not an accurate description) will be provided by CLEY rather than the Department of Education, absolving the program of obligations under Nunavut’s recently passed *Education Act*. Piquisilirivvik and CLEY will therefore have an impressive amount of flexibility to

implement the types of programs necessary to creating “a place that recognizes and bestows prestige upon the acquisition of traditional Inuit knowledge and culture.”¹⁴

Canada’s Constitution endows the territories and provinces with complete jurisdiction over education. The absence of a federal Department of Education has therefore produced unique educational models across the country, and Nunavummiut have been keen to see their government flex its constitutional muscle and take creative risks within an education system designed for Southerners yet completely open for restructuring. With astronomical high school drop-out rates, the highest rate of teen suicide in Canada, and other abysmal social indicators, change in education has been incremental and surprisingly slow. Piqqusilirivvik, while not housed within the Department of Education, has specific resistive value within Canada as a form of education whose emphasis is exclusively on Inuit people, language, and culture, rejecting even the physical layout of Western schools. If the program comes to fruition within the framework proposed by CLEY, it will be a strong statement by the GN that theirs is a territory moving into a future that will include the Inuit people and most of the skills that have shaped their relationship with the world to the present. Since time immemorial, Inuit have taught their children not only how survive, but to embrace, thrive, and flourish in the most brutal environment on earth. “Education” is a subjective word and it has only been in the last half-century that the legitimacy of Inuit knowledge has been compromised by outside forces. The interrogation of the Southern educational model and recognition by the GN that a meaningful cultural curriculum is absent in the North is an important step toward Inuit cultural self-determination in Nunavut.

The desire for a cultural “school” stems from pre-land claims concerns about the need to integrate Inuit cultural knowledge into the modern education system. Quoting from the Piquusilirivvik Status Report: “With the establishment of Nunavut, there was an immediate expectation and hope that Inuit knowledge and language could become a greatly increased part of the education system.”¹⁵ Piquusilirivvik is fundamentally divorced from the public education system, however, standing apart as an autonomous entity closed to the majority of the eligible population. While the concept behind the program is certainly admirable, the facility’s separateness projects the paradoxical message that within education there exist two spaces: one to be Inuk and to learn things Inuit and another for everything else but with some language. The twin goals of Inuit cultural self-determination and the preparation of young Inuit to be resilient, contributing members of their society with all of the skills needed for participation in the modern world is a cumbersome challenge. The important work being undertaken by CLEY to make Inuit cultural information prestigious is a reverse course from the Eurocentric ethos dominating education in Aboriginal communities across the continent for centuries. Piquusilirivvik has decolonizing value within Nunavut through (for now) conceptual embracement of the past as future. On the other hand, synthesizing Inuit knowledge with existing educational paradigms rather than separating the two will be crucial to the maintenance of a highly versatile Inuit society, fluent in the ways of two worlds.

The Inuit Language Protection Act and Education Act

As American presidential candidates battled for the White House in October 2008 thousands of miles to the South, Nunavummiut were gearing up for their own election. Ann Meekitjuk Hanson, the Commissioner and chief executive of Nunavut Territory had

dissolved the 2004 government upon request of Premier Paul Okalik in September. New representatives would sit in the sealskin upholstered seats of parliament come October. Eva Arreak, Nunavut's former Language Commissioner, was running as a legislative candidate for the Iqaluit East district at the time. At a public forum held for candidates running for Iqaluit's three legislative assembly seats on October 20, Arreak responded to a question posed by resident Mary Wilman, saying "Language and culture is very important to us. That is the reason that Nunavut was created. Sometimes we forget why Nunavut was created." Wilman pressed on, "We need more than just language. Where are the land skills programs? We've got to expand this beyond language."¹⁶ Arreak eventually won her bid as representative for the Iqaluit East district and went on to become Premier of Nunavut Territory, elected by fellow MLAs who simultaneously ended Paul Okalik's eight year reign. In recent years, language and culture issues have become prominent in the territory with increased pressure on the GN mounting by those who have not forgotten the fundamental reasons for Nunavut's creation. With the passage of groundbreaking language and education legislation in September 2008, however, the GN seems to be trying to realign itself toward the original vision of a homeland and society for Inuit by Inuit.

Until quite recently, Nunavut used education and language laws borrowed from the Northwest Territories and Alberta that did not meaningfully reflect the realities of Nunavut's Inuit population. Some inclusion of elders' cultural and historical testimony in the classroom and more Inuit language classes have paid lip-service to the expectation that measurable change would happen after 1999, but the wholesale reorganization of education to more specifically suit Inuit cultural needs has not been a serious project of

the GN until quite recently. It has taken nearly a decade for the GN to take comprehensive action in addressing the paucity of Inuit voices (literally and figuratively) in the education system of a territory comprised almost entirely of Inuit. All of that may soon change, however. On September 18, 2008, former Premier Paul Okalik's outgoing government passed the *Inuit Language Protection Act* (ILPA) and *Education Act* (EA), two pieces of legislation that seek to enhance representation of Inuit cultural realities in Nunavut. In June 2008, Nunavut's legislative assembly passed the *Official Languages Act*, adding the Inuit language to French and English as the territory's official languages. The subsequent two pieces of legislation passed in September strive to give literal rather than cosmetic meaning to that legal designation by infusing the Inuit language into nearly all sectors of Nunavut life.

The ILPA came to fruition as a result of Language Legislation Steering Committee consultation between NTI, the Languages Commission,¹⁷ and the GN beginning in 2004. The legislation aims to provide new measures of protection for Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun¹⁸ by a) confronting and attempting to reverse language shift in Nunavut through the education system, b) making the Inuit language accessible and fully functional within the public and private sector, and c) appointing a Minister of Languages to oversee the implementation of the articles of the Act. Down the hallway from Hugh Lloyd's office, I spoke with CLEY's department Director of Official Languages, Stéphane Cloutier, about the ILPA, which he had a hand in writing, and many of the issues surrounding language erosion in Nunavut. Cloutier outlined CLEY's priorities this way:

We want to insure that now Inuit have a firm or clear legal statement. That they have a right to use the Inuit language in full equality with the official

languages in this country... We are saying that when it comes to Nunavut, because the majority of the people in Nunavut are Inuit and the majority of the people that are Inuit don't have English or French as their first language, it should just be natural even for the federal – for everyone: the GN, municipalities, private sector administrations, and the federal government – to provide these services so people can have better access – equal access – to these services in Inuktitut.¹⁹

According to the 2006 Canadian census, 64% of Inuit in Nunavut reported being able to speak Inuktitut well enough to carry on a conversation, an 8% decline from the 1996 census which found 72% spoke the language conversationally.²⁰ While a high proportion of Inuit in Nunavut are proficient in the language, the territory's population is remarkably young and vulnerable to acculturative forces (especially television and the internet) that promulgate the popularity and false superiority of English compared to Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun. The ILPA is human rights legislation that seeks to provide equal access to the Inuit language in public schools, public and private sector businesses, municipalities, and regional Inuit organizations, offering a heretofore unprecedented amount of protection for an Aboriginal language.

Recognizing that the Inuit language is “a foundation necessary to a sustainable future for the Inuit of Nunavut as a people of distinct cultural and linguistic identity within Canada,” a key component of the Act is the institutionalization of the Inuit language as the language of instruction in Nunavut schools.²¹ Beginning July 1, 2009, children in the public education system will have the right to Inuit language of instruction from grades K-3 and for all other grades by 2019 with the goal of graduating students who are proficient (to be tested and determined by the Department of Education) in the Inuit language. The law furnishes Inuit with the right to use their language as a working language within the public service (GN employees) but not the private sector, where

customer service, signage, and advertisements must include Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun as official languages. Cloutier told me that Inuit language services are of real concern, especially for unilingual elders who can often miss important notices and letters sent to them through bilingual English and French post offices. Regarding enforceability, Nunavut's Language Commissioner will act as a mediator and investigator in instances of non-compliance. The Nunavut Court of Justice will settle disputes that the Language Commissioner is unable to resolve. Furthermore, the law mandates the creation of an Inuit Language Authority (Inuit Uqausinginnik Taiguusiliuqtit) comprised of an acting Board of Directors that will research, issue, and promote new Inuit language terminology to be standardized for the public.

The provisions of the *Education Act* buttress and build upon many of the goals set out in the ILPA, correlating those and the territory's educational objectives with fundamental principles of the NLCA in addition to broader cultural imperatives. A corollary to the EA acknowledges several unique GN obligations to Inuit under the NLCA, namely:

(a) the stated objectives and positive obligations of government concerning Inuit self-reliance, Inuit cultural and social well-being and Inuit participation in the governance and economic opportunities of their homeland, including participation in the public service to a representative level;

(b) the obligation to involve Inuit and to reflect Inuit goals and objectives when developing and delivering educational policies, programs, services and curriculum; and

(c) the mandate to implement and fulfill the objectives of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement in a timely, collaborative and accountable manner, consistent with its terms, conditions, spirit and intent;²²

The basis for an education that honors Inuit language bilingualism and cultural values, being intertwined with these core NLCA objectives, gives Inuit cultural prerogatives

overarching attention within the EA. Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ)²³ or “Inuit traditional values” are a prominent feature of the legislation, Part 1 (1) (“Fundamental Principles”) of which declares that “The public education system in Nunavut shall be based on Inuit societal values and the principles and concepts of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit.”²⁴ Within the act, the responsibility to carry out IQ rests with “the Minister, the district education authorities and the education staff” who will ensure that IQ is “incorporated throughout, and fostered by, the public education system.”²⁵ Key amongst these values:

- (a) Inuuqatigiitsiarniq (respecting others, relationships and caring for people);
- (b) Tunnganarniq (fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming and inclusive);
- (c) Pijitsirniq (serving and providing for family or community, or both);
- (d) Aajiiqatigiinni (decision making through discussion and consensus);
- (e) Pilimmaksarniq or Pijariuqsarniq (development of skills through practice, effort and action);
- (f) Piliriqatigiinni or Ikajuqtigiinni (working together for a common cause);
- (g) Qanuqtuurniq (being innovative and resourceful); and
- (h) Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq (respect and care for the land, animals and the environment).²⁶

The EA’s provisions are saturated with instructions for program development and administration of affairs using the IQ concepts. Part 3 (“School Program”) 7(3) of the act, for example, states that “A district education authority shall ensure that the school program is founded on Inuit societal values and the principles and concepts of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit and respect for Inuit cultural identity.”²⁷ Section 7(4) provides: “The Minister, the district education authority and the education staff shall ensure that the school program is delivered in accordance with Inuit societal values and the principles

and concepts of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and respect for Inuit cultural identity.” In the way of bilingual education, Part 4 (“Language of Instruction”) 23(1) of the act provides that “Every student shall be given a bilingual education and the languages of instruction shall be the Inuit Language and either English or French as determined by a district education authority with respect to the schools under its jurisdiction” with the goal of producing “graduates who are able to use both languages competently in academic and other contexts.”²⁸ In addition to language and culture provisions, the EA provides for a working relationship between school principals, parents, elders, and other community members to become active participants in their children’s education, sensitive to the fact that responsibility for the education of Inuit children had always rested with a broad range of community actors until midcentury.

The passage of the ILPA and EA are powerful statements by the GN that the lens through which Inuit children will understand the world will be an Inuit one. The acts are meant to cement the standing power of the Inuit culture in the future of the territory, the country, and the world. The legislation acknowledges that perfunctory language and culture programming will not be enough for the survival of the traits that make Inuit society unique – that changing contours in Inuit home-life require formal, sweeping intervention if the Inuit language is to survive. Change is what Inuit are up against not only in Nunavut but across the Circumpolar Arctic. Rapid changes in Inuit communities have come from the outside with unbelievable speed and almost impervious force, reconfiguring what it means to be an Inuk living in the Arctic. Television, the internet, and the incursion of Southern popular culture, goods, and ideas, if not mediated and balanced correctly, endanger Inuit culture and identity. The ILPA and EA are not without

their faults, however. It is uncertain whether Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun will be viable languages in Nunavut by 2019, the year that bilingual language of instruction will be offered through the twelfth grade. The scarcity of bilingual Inuit who are also teachers (and not just language teachers), a population that is predominantly young²⁹ and not using the language at home, and a high high-school drop out rate have created a perfect storm for continued language loss in Nunavut. In order for the ILPA to succeed, certified bilingual teachers must increase exponentially, and the allure of Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun will need to be packaged for a younger generation in a way that makes speaking the language “cool.” Furthermore, each of Nunavut’s twenty six communities speaks a slightly different dialect within the major dialects of Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun, and so for language to seep into all aspects of Nunavut society, a standard dialect for school materials, publications, and regular usage across the territory must come into effect.

Education as a Political and Cultural Determinant

I remember leafing through my American history textbook in high school, looking for evidence that the 1890 Wounded Knee massacre had actually happened. The murder of over three hundred unarmed Sioux men, women, and children by the U.S. army was described in one short, albeit grisly paragraph. Native peoples were conspicuously absent from the remainder of the text, disappearing from history and, by implication, the present. If American Indians were given only subliminal attention in that and other texts, Alaska Natives were entirely absent. The message was not difficult to discern: Native peoples have no history and no future; they have contributed nothing of value to the world. When Aboriginal peoples across the continent talk about suicide, sexual and drug abuse and other virulent social problems, it is imperative that education be considered. The

classroom is a battleground for Aboriginal self-determination because it is in that space that our children bring their identities to be developed. To be Iñupiaq in my urban middle school was to be destined for a life of alcoholism, academic underachievement, and certain homelessness from the perspective of many of my non-Native classmates and even some teachers. When Aboriginal voices are silenced in the classroom, society has free reign to invent them. To have dignity, honor, and respect for ourselves as Aboriginal peoples, our stories must be embedded in the lessons expounded in our own communities.

As Alaska Natives, we have literally bought into the idea that in order to be successful, our young people must master facts and ways of behaving that are antithetical to the kind of future we *say* we want to provide for our children. This is deeply disturbing. Something as fundamental as the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act is hardly taught in community classrooms and its termination of significant rights is barely understood by most young adults. In Nunavut, I expected that a class about the NLCA and the structure and responsibilities of government would be a basic and recurrent staple of the education system. This is not the case, however, and young Inuit who wield a comprehensive understanding of their land claim are most likely government or Inuit organization employees or alums of the Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS) program. NS is an eight-month program based in Ottawa designed to teach recent high school graduates about Inuit history, organizations, land claims and other issues relevant to their future careers in Nunavut. While alums of the program that I spoke to in Nunavut gave it fabulous reviews, it is odd that like Piquisilirivvik, access to this information is treated as supplementary, exclusive from, or outside the capacity of a public education.

It is important – perhaps most important – that Native peoples, whether in Nunavut, Alaska, or elsewhere have a sense that our perspectives matter – that we have had and still possess agency and power; that the world can benefit from our unique insight. Part of the promise of Nunavut was a new jurisdiction for Inuit people, culture, and language – that the new territory would have its own identity and way of doing things that could *re-*empower Inuit. So far, this has not necessarily been the case. Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun are not yet the working language of government and with a scarcity of bilingual Inuit bureaucrats Nunavut continues to lag behind schedule in achieving truly representational government. The duality within education in Nunavut is symptomatic of the larger struggle for balance within Inuit society. As Anna, the young government employee explained to me:

My dream isn't "let's go back and live on the land," my dream is that my children [and] grandchildren will be able to have the [same] opportunities and to know that they can eat the food and its safe... That it's not contaminated by climate change, PCBs... That they can eat and enjoy those foods. I just want to know that each generation has the same if not more than the generation before, but still having the benefits of travelling, seeing other cultures, sharing – having opportunities but knowing where they come from, and knowing that they always have that to be a part of. How do you find that balance?

In order for a significant form of cultural self-determination to gain inertia in Nunavut, the Inuit in charge must begin nurturing and re-cultivating an ethos of Inuit self-reliance. This would mean, above all things, investing heavily in the physical, mental, and spiritual well being of Inuit, which are tied to cultural resilience. The opportunity for future generations to be Inuk should not be hampered by school curricula and social projects that emulate Southern society, eliding over the need for Inuit culture in Inuit classrooms. “They’re [the GN] so focused on the federal government. Their eyes are on Ottawa, and

when are they going to look back and start looking at the people again?” Anna rhetorically asked. “They were so into the people when Nunavut was created... In the bigger picture they are doing what they’re supposed to be doing, but do they have enough sense of a connection to the community?”³⁰

I was very interested in asking Nunavummiut what an ideal Nunavut Territory would look like in 2019. Everyone I asked made it clear that the Inuit culture would be stronger and more prominent than it is now, using language as a primary indicator, and that overall, people would be happier and healthier. One part of Natan Obed’s answer in particular resonated with me:

All of the things that Canada wants for us I think are possible without sacrificing our identity, our culture, and our language. I think it’s possible, but you can’t do it without people that think it’s possible. Right now we have too few people who think it’s possible. In ten years I’d like for that perspective to change... From the beginning of settlement until now we’ve tried all sorts of things, but we haven’t tried massive investments in families and communities. We’ve done the exact opposite. I would love for there to be more of real investments in Inuit society and Nunavut.

There is still considerable optimism for Inuit cultural self-determination in Nunavut, but it is roundly acknowledged that fundamental changes need to take place. The territory is young and its older leaders come from a generation who grew up regularly confronting the idea that the Inuit culture was antithetical to progress. The GN has the power to turn that message on its head and to seriously pursue the reverse, because the mere *existence* of the GN today represents progress. Positive steps toward educational reform indicate the desire to accomplish this goal, yet Nunavut’s steps forward are still shaky and uncertain, like walking on thin ice.

¹ “Anna,” Personal Interview (January 6, 2009)

² Inuit Tapiriisat of Canada, *Political Development in Nunavut* (September 1979) On file with author.

³ Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and the Government of Nunavut, *Iqqanaijaqatigiit: Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated Working Together* (May 2004) RVD
<<http://www.gov.nu.ca/english/iqqanaijaqatigiit/>> May 31, 2009

⁴ Started in 1998, Nikaitchuat Ilisagvait is a private language immersion preschool in Kotzebue, AK that teaches approximately twenty students a year in the Iñupiaq language. The all-day program’s students are between three and five years old. Though the school would eventually like to expand programming through the twelfth grade, it is limited by space and funding.

⁵ Natan Obed, Personal Interview (January 8, 2009)

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Inuit Statistical Profile* (2008), pp. 10 RVD <<http://www.itk.ca>> February 10, 2009

⁸ Statistics Canada, “Secondary School Graduates Survey; 2002-03,” (2005), RVD
<<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/050202/dq050202b-eng.htm>> April 16, 2009

⁹ Natan Obed, Personal Interview (January 8, 2009)

¹⁰ Paul Ongtooguk, *Remarks of Mr. Paul Ongtooguk: Alaska Native Education Summit* (November 2001) RVD <http://www.alaskool.org/native_ed/PO-ANES-speech.htm> April 8, 2009

¹¹ Government of Nunavut, *Pinasuaqtavut 2004-2009* (2004), pp. 17 RVD
<<http://www.gov.nu.ca/english/pinasuaqtavut/>> May 10, 2009

¹² Hugh Lloyd, Personal Interview (January 6, 2009)

¹³ Hugh Lloyd, Personal Interview (January 6, 2009)

¹⁴ Government of Nunavut, *Piqqusilirivvik Status Report* (2008), pp. 8 On file with author.

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 6 On file with author.

¹⁶ “In Iqaluit, it’s seven against one on Oct. 27,” *Nunatsiaq News* (October 24, 2008), On file with author.

¹⁷ The Nunavut Languages Commission was formed pursuant to the passage of the 2008 *Official Languages Act* and is responsible for monitoring the GN and Legislative Assembly’s implementation of the Act’s terms.

¹⁸ Inuinnaqtun is spoken in four western Nunavut communities and Inuktitut is spoken in the east. While Inuinnaqtun relies on a roman orthography, Inuktitut is written in a syllabic alphabet. While its strength has waned in recent years, Inuktitut is more widely spoken in the territory.

¹⁹ Stefan Cloutier, Personal Interview (January 6, 2009)

²⁰ Statistics Canada, “Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census: Inuit,” (2006), RVD <<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/analysis/Aboriginal/language.cfm>> May 29, 2009

²¹ Government of Nunavut, *Inuit Language Protection Act* (2008), pp. 1 RVD <http://langcom.nu.ca/en_index.html> May 6, 2009

²² Government of Nunavut, *Education Act* (September 2008), pp. 1 RVD <<http://www.gov.nu.ca/education/eng/>> May 31, 2009

²³ The challenge (some say impossibility) of synthesizing “Inuit traditional values” into core, governing principles that can be implemented and abided by will be given specific attention in the next chapter.

²⁴ Government of Nunavut, *Education Act* (September 2008), pp. 2 RVD <<http://www.gov.nu.ca/education/eng/>> May 31, 2009

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Government of Nunavut, *Education Act* (September 2008), pp. 8 Retrieved from <http://www.gov.nu.ca/education/eng/> on May 31, 2009

²⁸ Government of Nunavut, *Education Act* (September 2008), pp. 15 Retrieved from <http://www.gov.nu.ca/education/eng/> on May 31, 2009

²⁹ The median age range in Nunavut is 20 compared to 40 for the total Canadian population (Source: Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, *Nunavut’s Health System* (2008), pp. 7 RVD <<http://www.tunngavik.com/category/publications/social-and-cultural-development/annual-reports-on-the-state-of-inuit-culture-and-society/>> May 31, 2009).

³⁰ “Anna,” Personal Interview (January 6, 2009)

Chapter 3

Who Runs the Government? Inuit Employment and the IQ Project

In Iqaluit, I stayed at the Nunatta Residence Hall, a massive green military barracks built next to an airplane runway on the outskirts of town. Once the temporary living quarters of the American military during World War II, the building now houses students attending Nunavut Arctic College, which offers two year diplomas and certificates in anything from dogsled building to early childhood education and environmental technology. While there, I met Inuit from all over the territory, often watching hockey on television in the building's lounge or reading e-mails from home. After striking up a conversation with one man, I learned that he was a carver from Cape Dorset. After we had been done talking for some time, he sheepishly beckoned me over to where he was sitting and showed me his carvings for sale on a gallery website that I had happened to see and admire some months before: brilliant jade and soapstone masterworks of guitars, skateboards, ice skates, and other contemporary objects rendered from stone by his skilled hand. He only smiled when I remarked how wonderful they were. This encounter made me think about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) (literally "that which Inuit have long known") or "Inuit traditional values." I wondered if a non-Native New Yorker would have reacted to my inquiries in the same way, seemingly reluctant yet silently proud to show me carvings that required tremendous skill, dozens of hours, and decades of experience to make.

Each culture takes its distinction from the values that have shaped it and Inuit are no different. There are certain ways to behave as an Inuk that flow from thousands of years of trial and error in the Arctic. Broadcasting achievement and ability is part and parcel of

upward social mobility in the South, for example, but this kind of behavior is considered anathema to the Inuit culture in many Arctic communities where the way a person regards achievement and handles notoriety is often more important than the accomplishment. As a child, I quickly learned that in Native social circles, an air of pretentiousness and a large vocabulary got you nowhere. Western institutions, on the other hand, place a high premium on individuals' capacity to vocalize and articulate opinions well, interrogate evidence and argue points, even confrontationally.

Working within the confines of an imposed parliamentary democracy, the GN has made closing similar disjunctions between Inuit and Southern value systems an official project. By attempting to integrate the unique characteristics of Inuit society into the basis of all government decision making, the GN hopes to better reflect and be more responsive to the population it serves – in other words, to be a more authentically Inuit government. In undertaking to shift the ideology and operational values of governance, however, the GN must at the same time contend with the fact that the majority of GN employees are Southern whites. Most Members of the Legislative Assembly are Inuk, yet the majority of GN employees carrying out the legislature's mandates are not, creating an awkward stumbling block for the implementation of vaguely and only recently articulated cultural values. Analysis of the IQ project is therefore linked to the GN's struggle to achieve a level of representational government that reflects the eighty-five percent Inuit majority in Nunavut in compliance with principles laid out in Article 23 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. This Article, "Inuit Employment within Government," is inseparable from discussion of Inuit self-governance in Nunavut.

Inuit Qaujimatangit

Mr. Speaker, I continue to be disappointed that internally, government business was run as usual like any other government to which we had ever been associated with. Mr. Speaker, our government was not supposed to be the same. It is supposed to be different, melding the best of contemporary system and Inuit ways.

MLA Jack Anawak, 2003

The GN's 2004 *Pinasuaqtavut* mandate introduced eight IQ guiding principles "that are particularly relevant to the way our Government should deliver its programs and services," which are identical to those articulated in the 2008 *Education Act*.¹ Since division of the Northwest Territories in 1999, Nunavut's leadership has sought better ways to integrate Inuit culture into governance in what Henderson has called "the chief effort to create a shift in the political culture of the eastern Arctic."² The vigorous push within the last four years to see Inuit values integrated into the way the government makes decisions and delivers services suggests that IQ principles lend important degrees of cultural authenticity to the GN. IQ has therefore become indispensable to any analysis of governance in Nunavut as anthropologists Kral and Idlout point out: "Many Inuit see the conscious incorporation of IQ as a tool for decision making as critical to the success or failure of Nunavut in aboriginal self-government."³ Searles has termed the IQ movement "the guiding ethical and intellectual template for building a new government and society" which many Inuit believe is "a formula for both cultural preservation and greater self-determination."⁴ As early as February 2000, Member of the Legislative Assembly Enoki Irgittaq called on his fellow MLAs to make the preservation of IQ a first priority and emphasized the disappearance of traditional land skills:

Before all our elders pass away, we must get from them knowledge on how to maintain traditional values and principles...A lot of parents today have to worry about trying to make ends meet and because of this we are

not teaching our children. It is our responsibility to teach our young children about hunting skills and traditional skills and knowledge like sewing, skinning and making garments of traditional clothing. This is how our ancestors lived and how we coped with the harshness of the weather...So we must push ahead because a lot of elders are passing away quickly and we are losing a lot of their knowledge. I feel this is a very important issue. This should be our first priority.⁵

The amorphous nature of human values within a rapidly changing society has created substantial roadblocks for the implementation of IQ principles, however, and nobody I spoke with in Nunavut expressed complete satisfaction with IQ. IQ as it is currently articulated means different things in different circumstances within which Inuit politicians have given themselves license to interpret Inuit societal values for themselves. On one hand, IQ is rooted in the past and especially in the land skills and environmental knowledge possessed by older generations of Inuit. At the same time, IQ can mean a specifically Inuit view of the world: a way of doing business, making decisions, and working with others in ways originally born from experience on the land. While the pragmatic Piqqusilirivik program, in working to confer real Inuit land skills and attendant values onto young people, and a new public educational structure that is more open and inviting to Inuit knowledge may possibly succeed at implementing IQ, integration of the concepts is much more challenging in the public work force.

In 2003, an elders' advisory council called Katimajitit was created within the Department of Culture, Language, Elders, and Youth (CLEY) to provide advice to the government on how to use IQ and how to incorporate Inuit language and culture into its operations.⁶ The council decided on the eight core principles outlined in the previous chapter. Responsibility for the implementation of IQ rests with a working group called Tuttarviit, comprised of delegates from each government department who participate in

the group's bi-weekly meetings and oversee IQ implementation within their respective departments. To the extent that IQ is visible in government, the way it has been interpreted and used by some politicians has gained widespread criticism. In 2008, Iqaluit MLA Hunter Tootoo and the GN Integrity Commission took MLA David Simailak to task for violating a number of *Integrity Act* provisions.⁷ In an October 28, 2008 op-ed for *Nunatsiaq News* ("Inuit traditional beliefs misused by politicians?"), an anonymous GN employee criticized Peter Kattuk, the former MLA for Sanikiluaq "who refused to vote against Simailak, saying it's not the Inuit custom to vote against another Inuk."⁸ The author of the article points out that had Inuit avoided accountability and confrontation at all costs in the past, Inuit survival would have been impossible. The author continued, "So Kattuk seems to have come up with his own Inuit traditional belief, which I hope will not be the new trend, because it is not a true Inuit traditional belief at all."

What constitutes "true" Inuit traditional beliefs is the subject of much contention with failure to identify and agree on specific values resulting in overarching ones that are ripe for individual interpretation. The "official" values such as "being innovative and resourceful" and "respecting others, relationships and caring for people" almost seem endemic to any properly functioning government. The GN risks camouflaging its actions with a thin tapestry of "Inuit culture" rather than creating a paradigm shift in governance with enough balance of the old and new to allow IQ to flow naturally from those who govern. In a 2003 incident, former Rankin Inlet North MLA Jack Anawak was voted out of his Cabinet position by parliament after heavily criticizing Premier Paul Okalik's role in transferring several government jobs from Rankin Inlet to Baker Lake as a part of Nunavut's commitment to decentralize government jobs. Enoki Iqittaq drew on IQ in his

heavy criticism of the motion: “if we’re doing it in this way, the younger people according to the cabinet members are removing the sole elder in the cabinet. You call this Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. Those people who say they know about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, you don’t know what Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is and I’m trying to explain it to you.”⁹

Anawak, a former representative to the NWT prior to territorial division, used the time allotted to him for testimony to launch an introspective critique of governance in Nunavut:

85% of the people we serve are Nunavut Land Claims Beneficiaries. I watched only with true, keen interest when it came to the subject to [*sic*] Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and the issues of the term that resulted in the Department thinking, an IQ event was a barter to you, snowmobiling, picnic?

I saw no real political will demonstrated to move IQ to the agenda, top of the agenda, with top level support and fast tracking initiatives to insure it would happen. To this day, Mr. Speaker, there is no specific agency within the GN assigned to make Inuktitut as a language of Government a reality.

No agency within Government has decided to make Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit reality either, because we have been too small in setting up the bodies to do this. I watched this fail to develop Inuktitut Language Training and emphasis as a first priority.¹⁰

Many GN employees’ experience with IQ is limited to “IQ days,” or days spent on the land with fellow employees participating in “traditional” Inuit activities such as ice fishing or storytelling. Anna, the GN employee mentioned in the last chapter, shared her impression of IQ: “I think what happened, again, is that IQ just became, sort of, a department in the government...’We have an IQ day,’ it’s not a lifestyle, it’s not a way of being...It’s sort of put in an office.”¹¹ In order to fundamentally change the way government operates, it is going to take much more than simple advocacy of certain principles. For IQ to truly become the governing philosophy of Nunavut, the structure of government must change to better reflect a homegrown Inuit perspective with the assent

of Nunavummiut. A century ago, the advice and direction of community elders would have been taken as law, likely without question. Today, creative compromises must be made if the Inuit culture is to have stature within the modern Canadian territory. Guy d'Argencourt, the Manager of Claims Implementation for the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs, explained that there may be ways to deliver existing services that meet Southern criteria and Inuit expectations:

If you take a look at IQ, one of the principles of IQ is self-reliance. Inuit...in general in the past were self-reliant – independent. Their outcome was based on the effort they put into their preparation, planning, efforts, activities. It's almost contradictory to be a government that has a good social assistance system for Inuit who are supposed to be self-reliant. Yet government has that basic responsibility: to insure that the public at large has their basic needs fulfilled. And it won't benefit anyone to help them not do anything. To meet that Southern criteria is just to address its basic functions. If you don't meet that criteria you will have a system that doesn't work. But if there is an input in a social and cultural perspective then it won't work regardless of how well it functions. So you need input from the people that you're assisting in what would be more effective and efficient use of social programs. Maybe they may not need specifically money to live. Maybe they do need training. Maybe their situation is where they're a person who hasn't had the opportunity to be educated in how to hunt...to effectively be a good hunter – be it man or woman – you need to learn how to prepare, proper conditions for hunting, being ready for any possibility; something like that might be a benefit in terms of education and training. If they were to learn how to hunt properly, they'd be able to provide for a family more effectively than just getting a hundred bucks a month, cash, just as an example. If you're to take a look at that kind of model in terms of social assistance, that's integrating IQ and Southern-based criteria.¹²

Both Inuit and non-Inuit GN employees receive a packet of information about IQ developed by the Department of Culture, Language, Elders, and Youth and are expected to use IQ in the workplace and in the design and implementation of new programs and policies.¹³ Social theoretical questions abound as to whether or not learning culture objectively rather than acquiring and “doing” culture naturally and for extended periods

of time is possible. Deciding what is “traditional” let alone which “traditional values” should be emphasized in the administration of government programs and services seems highly arbitrary while examples of MLAs reinterpreting IQ for their own purposes are numerous. “It’s a huge challenge though because it just should be,” a frustrated Natan Obed told me at his NTI office. “The concepts of society should be engrained in the people who are working here, and then everything they produce is a reflection of that society. You can’t expect the majority of the workforce to produce work that reflects the society when they’re not from it and they’re not given the tools to understand it and to work within it. I think it’s impossible.”¹⁴ At NTI, I spoke to a young employee (“John” to preserve privacy) who echoed Obed’s skepticism:

In my view, [IQ is] very much a token – the government is doing something – thing to put in the workplace. A lot of it is for the staff. Some departments have an IQ coordinator who you would go to for some advice on Inuit perspective... There’s been a lot of talk about – when we’ve gone to the communities to talk to, especially the elders, they always talk about this word IQ... It’s become this thing where, ‘Okay, we’re going to have an IQ day,’ where everyone gets their skidoos for the day, goes out fishing, comes back, and they do that once a year... I don’t think there’s enough even to say that it’s really made a difference. It’s kind of like they’ve made staff retreats into IQ day.¹⁵

In John’s opinion, the Department of Justice has earned high marks in its use of IQ, however. The Department has used traditional knowledge concepts to design and implement alternative sentencing programs, for example, including “on-the-land” programs for both young and adult offenders meant to inspire self-esteem through learned survival skills.¹⁶ In many ways, self-esteem may be the root cause of the GN’s identity crisis. For years, the young GN employee Anna reminded me, past generations of Inuit were told by authoritative Canadian figures that they would amount to nothing without

full acculturation into Southern society. Ten years is not a long time to finally be in charge after half a century of federal condescension and paternalism. The way that education and language have been delivered in Nunavut and the timidity with which IQ has been wielded may very well stem from a lasting inferiority complex within the legislative assembly. Furthermore, a high incidence of suicide (88 per 100,000 between 1993-1997 compared with 15:100,000 in the western Canadian Arctic and 13:100,000 for Canada as a whole), high rates of alcoholism and its attendant problems, and low high school graduation rates have spread the government thin beyond its ability to meet what may be idealistic public expectations.¹⁷ Having worked so hard to create a territory and official homeland in which the Inuit people and culture can flourish, however, the Inuit leadership and GN seem to give cultural issues less attention¹⁸ than expected, resulting in dwindling credibility among Nunavummiut. “When I started learning a lot about the GN and how it was supposed to work, I was really intrigued of [*sic*] the Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit aspect of it,” a young GN employee and graduate of the Nunavut Sivuniksavut program told me over coffee. “I can say today that the whole point of IQ was so that the government can be authentically Inuit, but I can say that it’s not.”¹⁹

Nunavut was not supposed to be a jurisdiction within the Canadian federation where the people in charge happened to be Inuk. It is, as Jack Anawak said, supposed to be different. IQ has become the primary symbol delineating Nunavut from other jurisdictions, yet it is neither one that has been sufficiently taken into account or clearly articulated in ways that make it sufficiently influential. IQ is in the public frame of reference, yet its vague definitions make the concept unwieldy and even meaningless in application. It represents one way of giving authenticity to a government that has in most

ways remained almost identical to the Northwest Territorial Government until quite recently. A more pragmatic way for the government to reflect its constituent base is to employ Inuit in government, which has proven far more challenging than anticipated but seems to stand for a more measurable form of legitimacy. How the goal of Inuit employment interacts with IQ and other social factors is crucial to understanding Nunavut's distinct model of Aboriginal self-governance.

Article 23: Inuit Employment within Government

The NLCA is a modern treaty between the federal Canadian government and NTI, recognized and affirmed under section 35(1) of the 1982 *Canadian Constitution Act*. Under this arrangement, the federal government is legally obligated as an NLCA signatory to work with the GN to help insure, within its responsibilities, that the terms of the agreement are being fully implemented. As with any contractual agreement, failure to do so is grounds for litigation. On December 6, 2006, NTI issued a press release announcing that it would be filing a \$1 billion lawsuit against the Government of Canada in the Nunavut Court of Justice for multiple breaches of contract, especially relating to Article 23, "Inuit Employment within Government."²⁰ Section 23.2.1 of the Article states: "The objective of this Article is to increase Inuit participation in government employment in the Nunavut Settlement Area to a representative level. It is recognized that the achievement of this objective will require initiatives by Inuit and by Government."²¹ "Representative level" is defined in the same section as "a level of Inuit employment within Government reflecting the ratio of Inuit to the total population in the Nunavut Settlement Area."

Because approximately 85% of the territorial population is Inuk, the same proportion of public employees should also be Inuk. The Nunavut Implementation Commission (NIC)²² recommended that 50 percent of jobs at all levels of the Government of Nunavut be filled by Inuit at the time of territorial division with representative levels to be achieved by 2008.²³ Department of Human Resources data show that the GN has fallen short in achieving this goal. Inuit employment was at 44% when Nunavut became a territory in 1999 and progress has moved painfully slow since then, and the goal of 85% Inuit employment by 2008 has been extended by the federal and territorial governments to 2020. As of June 2008, Inuit occupied only 52% of the 2,925 filled public service jobs.²⁴ Taking into consideration that over 924 government jobs potentially filled by Inuit are vacant, however, that number stands at 39% of the total 3,849 available public service jobs. Between June 1999 and June 2007, Inuit employment increased from 44% to 51%, a growth rate of 1% every year.²⁵ Hypothetically, if all variables remain the same, representational government will be achieved in 2042, thirty three years from today.

NTI's charges center primarily on the lack of adequate federal funding needed to carry out the terms of Article 23. Under section 23.2.1 of the Article, "Government" means the federal Canadian government, which is primarily responsible for funding the current policies and practices of Nunavut. These charges against the federal Canadian government include:

- Failure to cooperate with NTI in the development and implementation of employment and training under section 23.2.1;
- Failure to cooperate with the Nunavut Implementation Training Committee (NITC) in undertaking a detailed Inuit labor force analysis within six months of the NLCA's ratification under section 23.2.2 subsequently resulting in
- Failure to cooperate with NTIC to create Inuit employment plans to increase and maintain the employment of Inuit at a representative level under section

23.4.1 as well as the specific measures required to be undertaken in Inuit employment plans under section 23.4.1;

- Failure to carry out a second independent five-year review of the Inuit employment plans.²⁶

As a result of these shortcomings, NTI has placed the loss of direct employment income for Inuit at \$130 million per year since 1993. The significance of Article 23 to this paper is threefold. First, Nunavut's low high school graduation rate means that post-secondary degree holding Inuit are scarce, which has created dependence on a predominantly Southern workforce. The GN must make educational success for Nunavummiut the most important priority of government in order to seriously address these shortcomings. Education is a dynamic topic, however, and serious attention must be given to social variables that contribute to and limit educational success. The new *Education Act* may contribute significantly to representative government in this capacity. Second, IQ has an awkward and arbitrary place in a government whose decision making professionals are primarily Qallunaat. IQ could likely be treated more seriously and implemented more successfully within a representative bureaucracy that has had at least cursory and natural lifelong exposure to the concepts imbedded within IQ. Article 23 is therefore of substantial interest to the success of the IQ project. Third, it has become almost customary to refer to the GN as a form of *de facto* Inuit self-governance. This is true if the legislative assembly is given exclusive consideration, where fourteen of nineteen MLAs are Inuk. The fact that Inuit hold only 39% of the government jobs available to them calls into question whether or not Inuit self-governance is taking place at all in Nunavut. Most frustrating is that of the jobs actually held by Inuit, the bulk of them are administrative support (411) and paraprofessional (716) positions. This means that only

392 or 13% of the government workforce are Inuit holding professional (254), middle management (84), senior management (34), and executive positions (18) in the territory.²⁷

Furthermore, the majority of the GN's 924 vacant jobs require post-secondary education.

So while Inuit MLAs develop the laws and policies of Nunavut, the bulk of

implementation is being carried out by white Southerners. d'Argencourt ties these

interrelated challenges together well:

So when you talk about Article 23 and the opportunity for governing a territory, the opportunity is there but the opportunity is such that unless we make fundamental changes in the territory – by making changes to the education system and, for example, changes to housing and changes to issues that are dealt with at home – we will continue to struggle as a territorial government through opportunities for Aboriginal employment and specifically Inuit employment.²⁸

NTI appears to have built a strong case against the federal government, but litigation must not come at the expense of serious territorial introspection. If real progress is to be made in Inuit employment, the GN and NTI must attack deeper social issues and the territory's high school graduation crisis. Unless Nunavut society is physically, emotionally, and spiritually healthy with access to a culturally embracing, effective bilingual education system that Inuit can take full advantage of, representative government will not be possible, regardless of federal funding for employment plans. In that vain, it is worth noting that the guideline for an Inuit employment plan outlined under section 23.4.2 of Article 23 does not refer to education or educational performance, which is tied to broader social issues. In 2005, Thomas R. Berger was appointed Conciliator by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to resolve the Inuit employment impasse between NTI, the Canadian government, and the GN by

recommending new approaches for the implementation of the NLCA. In his report titled “The Nunavut Project,” Berger observes that the problem of Inuit employment “is one of supply, not demand,” noting that in 2001, 83% of unemployed Inuit between the ages of 20 and 45 had not completed high school. By comparison, 92% of Inuit who had some university education were employed, building on the case that “education is the key to moving toward fulfillment of the objective of Article 23...Until the emphasis is placed on increasing the *supply* of qualified Inuit, the objective of Article 23 will elude us.”²⁹

The NLCA is a binding contract from which the Canadian government cannot simply walk away. The federal government’s continued refusal to work with NTI and the GN toward implementation even after the tabling of Berger’s Conciliation work effectively forced litigation. The second major dimension to the problem is the scarcity of qualified Inuit to fill professional positions for which the GN as overseer of public education and NTI as policy consultant must take partial responsibility. It took the GN nearly a decade to pass an education and language law that seriously acknowledges the 85% Inuit majority living in a territory premised on insuring Inuit control over institutional instruments of cultural continuity. It is good that NTI assert its constitutional rights within the context of Article 23, yet as the organizational representative of Inuit, NTI must also take itself and the GN to task for the slow process of dismantling and rebuilding the attitudinal, political, and legal status-quo carried over from the Northwest Territorial Government. It is quite significant that in 1999 with the creation of the territory, Nunavummiut expected their territory would offer them the greatest improvements in “Respect for Inuit values” (81.2%) and “Teaching of Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun” (76.5%) followed by “Education programs” (63.8%). It is not surprising

then that since 1999, faith in government has steadily declined. In 1999, 85.9% of 814 Inuit adults surveyed agreed with the statement “Nunavut opportunity for all to govern lives better,” compared to 79.3% in 2001 and 76.5% in 2004.³⁰

The GN is by far the largest employer in Nunavut and its unsatisfactory levels of Inuit representation draw into question how much better off Inuit in the territory are today than they were in 1993. A May 1, 2009 *Nunatsiaq News* article (“Many expectant moms in Nunavut stressed, abused: Statscan”) reported on new *Statistics Canada* data highlighting the stress and abuse suffered by many pregnant women in Nunavut. “There are issues beyond our control, the social factors, the lack of employment, overcrowding, the stress and violence in homes,” Dr. Geraldine Osborne, the assistant director of public health in Nunavut reported. “All these issues have a huge impact, and it's not an easy thing for health to deal with alone.” Osborne continued: “If we had a well-educated population who were fully employed and recovered from the many issues they have historically [faced], then our job in public health would be a lot easier.”³¹ Nunavummiut are suffering serious social and health problems right now. Things as basic as eating healthy foods are enormous problems, according to several individuals with whom I spoke. Teen pregnancy, suicide, domestic violence – progress in Nunavut cannot be made in any of these areas unless the society is healthy. The goal of representative Inuit employment outlined in Article 23 should therefore be viewed not as a panacea to Nunavut’s virulent social problems, but as an added impetus to seriously address them.

Concluding Thoughts

Richard Paton, the Director for Inuit Employment within the GN’s Human Resources Department, explained that despite the Inuk face of the Legislative Assembly “you’ve got

a drop in the number of opportunities within the most senior level of positions within government – senior management and executive – who make decisions at the end of the day. I would say about 20% of the total number of positions that are out there are filled by beneficiaries who are making key decisions as it relates to policy and program developments.”³² This small percentage cannot give expression to many of the GN’s far reaching policies alone, which necessitates a higher percentage of high level Inuit employment within the public service. Will the language rights afforded by the *Inuit Language Protection Act* be consequential in the long term if the only people utilizing its provisions in the public service are administrative support staff members? If GN department executives continue to think and communicate in English, will bilingual Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun speaking employees speak in English with their superiors in casual settings because it is easier than finding an interpreter, defeating the purpose of the act? How will the approximately 80% Qallunaat decision making body continue to interpret IQ and if they do manage to surmount the challenges to utilizing it, will it be in a way that is more or less effective than an Inuk in the same position? These and other serious questions surround Article 23, emphasizing its importance as the most tangible indicator of whether or not the GN is working for Inuit. This is because the level of Inuit employment within the public service is a critical indicator of Inuit educational achievement, which has everything to do with the overall social health of the territory.

Before Paton thoroughly explained Inuit employment policy in Nunavut to me, I had never really questioned that the dark haired, brown eyed Inuit majority sitting in the Legislative Assembly was the face of government. Article 23 is critical to analysis of governance in Nunavut because it forces people to look past the Legislative Assembly

and to question the authenticity, validity, and capabilities of a primarily white Southern bureaucracy entrusted to carry out the laws and policies of a mostly Inuk legislature. At the same time, this same group is expected to make decisions based on cultural values that they have not grown up with. During my short time in Nunavut, I heard carefully considered and convincing arguments both confirming and denying the existence of Inuit self-governance in the territory. Natan Obed made the analogy that a colonial government may rely on the local population to carry out its dictates, but it is ultimately still in charge of the population. The idea that the GN would inevitably collapse without a Southern workforce does not sit well with Inuit, however. The Inuit of Nunavut do not want to have to rely on anybody but themselves in determining the future of their territory, yet in order to reach that point a number of momentous challenges must be overcome. In my view, Inuit self-governance in Nunavut is like a swinging pendulum. If the policies being created by the GN are conducive to shaping the unique jurisdictional space for Inuit cultural florescence originally envisioned by Inuit land claimants, then I believe self-governance is happening. Recent indications suggest determined movement in this direction, yet it will be some time before marked social change begins to take place in Nunavut. At this early stage, it is most important that Inuit are still in the driver's seat of this process in their capacity as legislators, for it is a dangerous path that they will have to navigate carefully in order to achieve measured autonomy as a culturally distinct, self-governing Aboriginal society while at the same time enjoying all of the services and benefits of modern Canadian.

Notes

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- ² Ailsa Henderson, *Nunavut: Rethinking Political Culture* (UBC Press, 2008), pp. 190
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- ⁶ Natalia Loukacheva, *The Arctic Promise: Legal and Political Autonomy of Greenland and Nunavut* (University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 66
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- ¹¹ “Anna,” Personal Interview (January 8, 2009)
- ¹² Guy d’Argencourt, Personal Interview (January 6, 2009)
- ¹³ Edmund Searles, *Critical Inuit Studies*, ed. Pamela Sterna and Lisa Stevenson (University of Nebraska Press, 2006), pp. 198
- ¹⁴ Natan Obed, Personal Interview (January 8, 2009)
- ¹⁵ “John,” Personal Interview (January 8, 2009)
- ¹⁶ Edmund Searles, *Critical Inuit Studies*, ed. Pamela Sterna and Lisa Stevenson (University of Nebraska Press, 2006), pp. 98
- ¹⁷ Michael J. Kral and Lori Idlout, *Critical Inuit Studies*, ed. Pamela Sterna and Lisa Stevenson (University of Nebraska Press, 2006), pp. 59
- ¹⁸ It is noteworthy that the Department of Culture, Language, Elders, and Youth is the smallest of Nunavut’s ten departments.
- ¹⁹ GN Employee, Personal Interview (January 9, 2009)
- ²⁰ Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, “NTI Launches Lawsuit Against Government of Canada for Breach of Contract,” Retrieved from www.tunngavik.com on May 5, 2009

²¹ Canada, *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement: Agreement Between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada*, (1993), pp. 191

²² Article 4 of the NLCA established the Nunavut Political Accord, which was a working relationship between NTI, GNWT, and the federal government to create Nunavut (the *Nunavut Act*). The Accord established the NIC, which was the federally appointed body responsible for preparing Nunavut for division from the Northwest Territories between 1993 and 1999. John Amagoalik served as the NIC's chairman.

²³ Thomas R. Berger, "Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Implementation Contract Negotiations for the Second Planning Period 2003-2013: Conciliator's Final Report," (March 1, 2006), pp. 18 Retrieved from <http://www.tunngavik.com/?s=berger> on May 31, 2009

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²⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 19

²⁶ Government of Nunavut, "Statement of Claim in the Nunavut Court of Justice between: *The Inuit of Nunavut as represented by Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated* and *The Queen in Right of Canada as Represented by the Attorney General of Canada*," (2006), pp. 4 RVD <<http://www.cba.org/nunavut/main/home/>> May 31, 2009

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Chapter 4

It is Beginning in Nunavut: Re-Centering Alaska Native Priorities

Director Mark Sandiford's 2007 film *Qallunaat! Why White People Are Funny* takes a satirical look at white Canadian society from the perspective of Inuit. Whites are presented as recent arrivals in the Arctic: befuddled, impatient buffoons, assumptive about a culture they do not fully understand. In the film, dialectical variance in the English language, food and eating habits, social customs and greetings are all the subject of formal study by the fictitious "Qallunaat Studies Institute" located in Nunavut. The "Department of Qallunaat Affairs" is responsible for assigning numbered dog tags to whites – once official Canadian policy in Inuit communities – to replace hard-to-pronounce given names, and plans are formed to launch voyages of exploration overseas to bring Qallunaat from around the world into the fold of Inuit civilization. Sandiford weaves serious historical accounts and testimony by Inuit about relocation and community settlement into these and other humorous scenarios, effectively providing Inuit a space to talk back to the academy and Canadian government. The film's primary message is that Inuit society has staying power in a modern world and continues to be unique and relevant within the global community. It forces viewers to consider the importance of cultural pluralism and the regimes of power – often taken for granted – that whites have historically used to smooth over cultural differences. Finally, Sandiford's film asks viewers to confront their own prejudices by highlighting fundamental differences between Inuit and Southern society and the importance of maintaining these differences for Inuit.

For all of the film's humorous commentary, Sandiford's presentation of Inuit as autonomous and self-governing within Nunavut, despite its satirical overtones, can be linked to the GN's contemporary political ambitions. As the last three chapters have

demonstrated, the GN has sought to reemphasize Inuit rather than Qallunaat ways of thinking and behaving in the way it does business. This goal is immediately complicated by the nature of Western hierarchical power in Nunavut and the government's sometimes tenuous relationship with NTI. Together, these regimes must find a way to cooperatively look after the social and cultural welfare of Inuit, who are the bulk of territorial residents, while also finding solutions to the problems that keep many Inuit living in third world conditions. There is a major difference between legislators and bureaucrats who simply happen to be Inuit and a government whose structure facilitates the values that Inuit are familiar with. This final chapter directly addresses the unique nature of Inuit self-governance in Nunavut, including the drawbacks and benefits arising from the GN's relationship with NTI. Additionally, I expand the analysis to examine the way my Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act regional corporation has dealt with issues that are also important in Nunavut, thereby demonstrating the diverse routes toward self-determination that Inuit have taken, how they intertwine, and where they are leading us as Inuit people.

The Convoluted Meaning of “Inuit Self-Governance”

Addressing the first ever meeting of Nunavut's Legislative Assembly on April 1, 1999, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien pointed out that “You have the added advantage of being able to draw the best from both worlds. Traditional Inuit teachings and values that have passed down through the ages and a modern government structure with access to state of the art technologies.” Drawing on and reconciling Inuit approaches to power and governance within a parliamentary democracy has not been an easy task for the GN. In the past, Inuit leadership was meritocratic and based on the exemplary hunting abilities, precise environmental knowledge, and strength of character that have aided Inuit in their

survival for centuries. Inuit did not choose their leaders in the way that they do today – there were no elections or debates. Community leadership positions were assumed by older men who possessed superior knowledge of their surroundings and were capable of directing other hunters towards optimal hunting locations.¹ Camps were usually made up of extended family members who followed a predetermined seasonal subsistence round, and it was the job of the leader to decide when to move, what and how much to hunt. Inuit running for seats in the legislature and convincing the public that they are qualified and capable of assuming leadership roles therefore belies the idea that Inuit in government are ever participating in a culturally legitimate structure. To talk about self-governance in Nunavut, then, is limited to the ways Inuit have taken ownership of and transformed the political apparatus available to them to suit their needs within a public territory, albeit with special rights.

Despite the *de rigueur* attention given to the topic by legal scholars, Inuit “self-governance” and “self-determination” are not mentioned within the NLCA. This signals acceptance that cultural autonomy would have to occur internally, within the body of the new government rather than at its foundational pillars. More careful language is employed to describe the purpose of the land claim in the document’s introduction: “to encourage self-reliance and the cultural and social well-being of Inuit.”² This wording puts safe distance between NTI, the GN, and sovereign First Nations, whose rights to tribal self-government derive from international treaties with the Crown based on an existing Aboriginal title.³ On the other hand, NTI negotiated the constitutionally entrenched NLCA “in exchange for surrender of any claims, rights, title and interests based on their assertion of an Aboriginal title,” and the creation of Nunavut.

Jurisdictionally, Nunavut is unlike the Yukon and Northwest Territories because of the constitutionally entrenched status of the NLCA, which affords significant opportunities for Inuit involvement in government but also some unforeseen and significant negative consequences.

In 2004, the GN and NTI released a document called *Iqqanaijaqatigiit: Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated Working Together*, which was intended to “enhance the relationship between the GN and NTI so that they serve the people and interests of Nunavut.”⁴ Article 4 of the NLCA instated dual political regimes in Nunavut when it set out the creation of the territory through the Political Accord, which is separate from the “tribal” birthright corporation, NTI. While NTI negotiated the NLCA and essentially created the GN and Nunavut Territory, the GN is only bound to NTI by the terms contained within the NLCA. The tension that has arisen between NTI and the GN is one of the largest pitfalls in the quest for Inuit self-governance in Nunavut, creating a painfully ironic, tenuous political relationship in which two Western institutions claim legitimacy as true representatives of Inuit. Speaking with Natan Obed, I observed that it seems the GN should take its mandate for governance from the 85% Inuit population and by default from NTI, which officially represents Nunavut’s Inuit population and interests.

He responded:

That’s the question we get asked all of the time. ‘Well, you represent Inuit but we represent Inuit so how are we wrong and how are you right?’ That’s the question we get from government all the time. Or, ‘I don’t understand why this is a government perspective. Why is it that NTI is saying that we need to consult with them to get the Inuit idea rather than just consulting with our constituents in our communities.’ That’s the biggest problem with the land claim agreement. This idea that you have the same population being represented by two different, competing organizations, and the territorial government will win every time because they actually have the money, the power, and authority to do the work,

whereas we just can represent [Inuit] and say what we think their interests are.

Now, we mostly say its perspective. We don't feel that the Government of Nunavut can have the same perspective because their masters are completely different than ours. We're almost like the official opposition. We're not bound by the political realities that the GN is. We can speak openly about issues and problems that the Government of Nunavut usually would never touch, because they would see it as outside of their political interests to talk about problems of the territory, whereas we have full – we have the incentive to talk about the problems because we want them fixed.⁵

Article 32 of the NLCA (“Nunavut Social Development Council”) does theoretically furnish NTI with the right to participate in “the development of social and cultural policies, and in the design of social and cultural programs and services, including their method of delivery, within the Nunavut Settlement Area.” The territorial government’s obligations under this article include:

- (a) providing Inuit with an opportunity to participate in the development of social and cultural policies, and in the design of social and cultural programs and services, including their method of delivery, in the Nunavut Settlement Area; and
- (b) endeavoring to reflect Inuit goals and objectives where it puts in place such social and cultural policies, programs and services in the Nunavut Settlement Area.⁶

The problem is that *an opportunity to participate* is not nearly the same as contractual rights and guarantees. Under these conditions, NTI may meet in consultation with the GN and *offer* the organization’s “Inuit perspective” as constructive input, but the GN is not obliged to seriously consider those views in crafting policy. The *Iqqanajjaqatigiit* document is not overly optimistic in this sense, recognizing that “agreement may not be achievable on all issues. In the event of this occurring, each Party shall respect the position of the other.”⁷

NTI's recent lawsuit against the Canadian federal government perfectly captures this fascinating confluence of tribal and territorial rights and powers. While at odds some of the time, the GN and NTI both represent Inuit in their respective ways. Then Premier Paul Okalik was quoted in a January 24, 2008 CBC News article as saying "We do not want to be defendants because we agree in a lot of ways with NTI that the federal government has to come to the table and do their part in implementing the land claim agreement."⁸ The GN may become a reluctant co-defendant in NTI's \$1 billion lawsuit anyway, reports a May 15, 2009 *Nunatsiaq News* article ("Don't make us sue GN too, NTI urges").⁹ At the time of writing, the federal counsel is in the process of appealing a May 2008 denial to have the GN named co-defendant in the lawsuit, arguing that only the territory has jurisdiction over setting employment and procurement policy. NTI will surely argue that the GN had not been created yet and was therefore not an NLCA signatory. In any case, the lawsuit is an instance in which both organizations have the interests of Inuit in mind and want to keep the GN outside of litigation.

Jack Hicks, a social scientist and Iqaluit resident, helped me put NTI into perspective within the context of Canada's four Inuit regions. Unlike the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation representing the Inuvialuit of the western Arctic, Maikivik Corporation in Nunavik, Quebec, and the Nunatsiavut Government in Labrador – all of which represent Inuit who are ethnic minorities within larger territorial and provincial jurisdictions – NTI is "a wealthy, constitutionally protected Inuit organization which has relatively few responsibilities but all kinds of rights and privileges, which represents eighty-five percent of the population."¹⁰ As a prominent, powerful actor within Nunavut, the unique relationship between NTI and the GN can be cumbersome but it also has the potential to

be advantageous in ways unavailable to the other three Inuit regions. NTI's high profile and political status within Nunavut means that it practically functions as a de facto second spokesman for the territory's entire population. This gives NTI certain liberties and advantages over the GN when it comes to federal negotiations and lobbying, as Obed illustrates:

An Inuit organization going to the federal ministers or going to the Prime Minister and making demands and talking about what needs to be happen – very different than what a Premier could do. So strategically it's great; something that we haven't tapped into yet...We can go [to the federal government] as completely separate organizations. We can say things that the GN could never say but it would never reflect badly on the GN that we said them...If you had people who did not care about credit or about whose organization is more important, and you just had people who said 'Okay, we're going to work together to insure that we implement this land claim as best as we possibly can and insure the territory and government is running as good as it possibly can,' it would be an amazing governance structure to work within. But it just as easily is an almost impossible governance structure when you have people who won't work together because the GN has all the real power and NTI's soft power means nothing if we're at odds.¹¹

While Inuit are the overwhelming majority in Nunavut today, NTI's relationship with the GN could certainly change if outsiders flooded the territory in the next half-century and outnumbered Inuit. Perhaps then the GN would fully recognize NTI as an important voice for Inuit. This is not an unrealistic possibility with vigorous natural resource exploration and development underway. The thawing Arctic is opening up previously frozen shipping lanes and the new sea traffic may lead to the development of ports and other infrastructure, drawing outsiders from around the world.¹² Nunavut's dual regime system brings us back to the question of cultural legitimacy and raises the question of whether or not the GN can fully represent the interests and perspectives of Inuit.

A Question of Legitimacy

Nunavummiut have not really pursued a structure of governance that mirrors the way Inuit made decisions and worked together in the past. This would indicate that Inuit are comfortable with the idea that their own approaches to leadership and governance can be subsumed within a Eurocentric, colonial framework if it were not for the discourse surrounding IQ. Inuit are therefore pursuing cultural autonomy in Nunavut from within a formal colonial regime, and that is what makes the territory an interesting undertaking for an Aboriginal people. That the tribal organization representing Inuit can be and often is marginalized from the decision making table by government adds an interesting wrinkle to this challenge. The Mohawk political scholar and intellectual Taiaiake Alfred places strict restrictions on the definition of Aboriginal self-governance and self-determination, which in no uncertain terms are “founded on an ideology of indigenous nationalism and a rejection of the models of government rooted in European cultural values.” This, he says, involves “an uneven process of re-instituting systems that promote the goals and reinforce the values of indigenous cultures, against the constant effort of the Canadian and United States governments to maintain the systems of dominance imposed on indigenous communities during the last century.”¹³ Although not always called ‘colonialism,’ Inuit leaders’ desires to take charge of their own affairs in the sixties and seventies sprung from the need to resist Canadian power and colonialism. By the time a public territorial government had been tabled, the discourse had shifted away from resistance to cooperation and an opportunity for cultural pluralism and measured political autonomy within a new jurisdiction.

For a government seeking to earn degrees of cultural authenticity and legitimacy through the IQ project, directly modifying Nunavut’s government structure in order to

help give Inuit ways of decision making default expression has surprisingly remained untested. Doing so could help ease tensions between the GN and NTI by putting the two regimes on the same page in terms of the legitimacy that both claim to possess. Currently, the GN's consensus-based, non-partisan governance structure, carried over from the GNWT, does reflect important Aboriginal sociopolitical attributes. Every five years, MLAs elect a Premier and Cabinet ministers from amongst themselves in a secret ballot. MLAs who are not chosen to be Cabinet ministers function as the de facto government opposition in lieu of political parties. This allows each candidate to bring his or her own unique ideas to the Legislative Assembly and to be held personally accountable by his or her constituency. In this system, new legislation requires a majority of individuals' support in order to become law. Consensus rather than party representation is in keeping with the individual decision making powers exercised by Inuit for centuries. Arctic life required full community cooperation, and an individual's unruly behavior could jeopardize others. Leaders did not have to be followed, but survival was always contingent on working together, which required consensus. Although this model of representation is unique, a more radical departure from partisan politics was considered prior to 1999.

The federally appointed Nunavut Implementation Commission (NIC) was responsible for guiding the transition of government responsibilities from the GNWT to the GN between 1993 and 1999. Shortly after its creation, the NIC recommended to the GNWT, NTI, and the federal government that the Nunavut Legislative Assembly consist of equal numbers of men and women using a system of ten or eleven two-member constituencies, each electing one male MLA and one female MLA.¹⁴ Under such a

system, each voter would receive two ballots, one for each sex, on the day of elections, ensuring that each constituency was represented by one man and one woman. In a May 16, 1997 *Nunatsiaq News* article (“Plebiscite on gender parity is world first”),¹⁵ then polar ambassador Mary Simon¹⁶ pointed out that “Men and women in traditional times were always equal; neither could survive without the work performed by the other.” The measure was firmly endorsed by the NIC and supported by the federal government and NTI, but the GNWT (including Inuit MLAs) voiced their opposition, demanding that the decision go to a public plebiscite within the Nunavut Settlement Area. In the frenetic milieu that followed, the NIC chose not to root its argument for gender parity within a historical context, choosing to emphasize gender inequality in Canadian politics generally and the valuable difference in perspective offered by women. Hicks and White synthesize the competing views that developed leading up to the plebiscite:

Where supporters saw a unique opportunity to implement a vision of a more balanced political system, opponents saw a plan that insulted women’s abilities to get elected if they chose to run. Where supporters saw a gender equal legislature as a return to the values of traditional Inuit society, in which families were built on an equal division of labor between men and women, opponents dismissed this view as a romanticized retelling of history. Where supporters saw a way to achieve a new partnership between men and women, opponents were insulted by a proposal that would “send women back to the stone age.”¹⁷

On May 26, 1997, a majority of voters in the then Nunavut Settlement Area rejected the NIC’s proposal for gender parity within government. In the recent past, Inuit men and women were interdependent, working together to survive and gain the confidence of a sentient animal world. Women outfitted families with warm clothing so that hunting and survival in cold weather was possible in addition to sewing hides for kayaks and skin boats. They fished and prepared stores of food for winter caches in addition to bearing

and raising children. Men caught the food needed to feed, clothe, and house families, and communities honored those catches in special ways to insure their reincarnation and future return. The historic restructuring of democratic institutions to suit the unique attributes of Inuit society would have been a clear statement to the world that Nunavut Territory would operate as a democratic jurisdiction unlike any on earth. Within a model of public territorial governance whose structure should be considered arbitrary if not antithetical to Inuit culture, Nunavummiut chose a system that would not ensure equal contributions to society by both men and women.

The way is still open for Inuit to design a wholly new kind of government whose structure could enrich legislation coming out of the Legislative Assembly. The 1993 *Nunavut Act* that created the territory leaves room for creativity, section 13 of which states “There is hereby established a Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, each member of which is elected to represent an electoral district in Nunavut,” and section 14 provides that “The Legislature may make laws prescribing the number of members of the Assembly and describing and naming the electoral districts in Nunavut.”¹⁸ The opportunity left open by the *Nunavut Act* to modify the current government structure could help make IQ innate and workable rather than subjective and ambiguous. Eva Arreak, the sole female MLA elected to the Legislative Assembly in 2008 publicly endorsed revisiting the proposal in an October 29, 2008 CBC News Article (“Reconsider gender parity, says lone female Nunavut MLA”).¹⁹ The creation of an elected elders’ board that would sit in the Legislative Assembly and provide advice and consultation on as many issues as possible, for example, or even elder parity in government are both ideas that – although surely cumbersome – would truly belong to Inuit.

In the March 2009 issue of *Up Here* magazine (“Nunavut Comes of Age”), reporter Brent Reaney visited Nunavut for the territory’s tenth birthday and wrote a retrospective about the last decade under the GN. The article points out that some things have changed since 1999 (most notably a burgeoning Inuit middle class) but that most people still face hard times. Pangnirtung resident Davidee Arnakaq is quoted in the article complaining that prior to 1999, Inuit “were fed all these fine promises, basically. Self-government and our culture would be used and implemented and available and strong. It was kind of overlooked how much work it was going to be.”²⁰ Strengthening the Inuit language and culture are goals that by default resist the totalizing powers of the Canadian state which until recently sought to obliterate both. It should not be forgotten that insuring the longevity of language and culture was a crucial reason, if not the main reason, Nunavut was created. In a June 29, 1977 *Nunatsiaq News* interview (“Amagoalik responds to Territorial Council’s attack on Nunavut”), John Amagoalik spoke about laying the groundwork for a new government that would include “the type of changes necessary to ensure that our culture and language survive.”²¹ These changes would include the introduction of an Inuit language protection bill that would also sweepingly reform education, Amagoalik said. That was thirty-two years ago. If positive social change continues to happen at a snail’s pace in Nunavut, public dissatisfaction could ultimately culminate in the abandonment of the public territorial model of governance for Inuit. Theoretically, because Inuit retain a tribal land base (approximately 217,470 square miles), the way remains open for NTI and the federal government to amend any part of the NLCA. Obed explained what this scenario could look like:

The Inuit of Nunavut still have the right to self-government. Luckily, the Crown didn’t go after that in the settlement of the claim. They went after

their Aboriginal rights... Say this generation, the people who are younger now, grow up in this exact same social, cultural, political, economic realities that we're in right now. There's going to be just as much frustration as there was at the time people said we need a land claim agreement and we need a gateway to a better life. Depending upon how well self-government goes in Nunatsiavut and Nunavik in the next ten, fifteen years, the political establishment in Nunavut may say, 'It seems as though they have hit on a much better solution than what we thought we were hitting on with the creation of a public government.'²²

In this most extreme case, Inuit could pursue an ethnic rather than de facto public form of self-governance. NTI may not be able to amend the *Nunavut Act* or eliminate the GN altogether, but that does not prevent the organization from completely reorienting its political ambitions. Any part of the NLCA can be amended on agreement between NTI and the federal government, which in addition to signifying the unique leverage that Inuit have in Nunavut through the NLCA, delineates the rights of Inuit in Nunavut as completely unique from those of non-Inuit, Yukon, and NWT residents. This means that Inuit are voluntary participants within the territory even though they make up the majority: they are molding it to fit their needs. The *Official Languages Act*, *Inuit Language Protection Act* and *Education Act* if fully funded and implemented by the federal and territorial governments, together with similarly progressive legislation and government structural reform, could help to make Nunavut the different jurisdiction that it was *supposed* to be rather than an eastern branch of the NWT. Recently the GN has been moving in this direction, but it is far too early to predict whether or not a cultural fluorescence and economic self-reliance can result from legislation alone.

Is Inuit Self-Governance Happening in Nunavut?

I posed this question to a number of Nunavummiut and got as many answers. There are certainly diverse ways to approach this question, the most obvious of which would be to answer in the affirmative, point out the predominance of Inuit in the Legislative Assembly and move on. But this question gave pause to many individuals, who, not seeing a government operationally different from the GNWT in structure or praxis, interrogated its legitimacy. For very pragmatic reasons, Inuit land claims negotiators, with the blessing of Nunavut Settlement Area residents, traded their Aboriginal title for a basket of constitutionally protected rights, a public territory, and cash. Political sovereignty (read: nationhood) was not an aspiration for Inuit land claimants at that time: the creation of Nunavut was meant to give Inuit a voice and real decision making power *within* the framework of the Canadian federation of territories and provinces. Colonialism is not an antiquated series of occurrences suspended in animation. It manifests daily as practice, saturating Aboriginal societies psychologically, materially, and forcefully. Colonialism has its roots in power, or more specifically what the intellectual Michel Foucault has famously termed “discourses of power.” These discourses of power, Foucault argues, flow directly from institutions, including the academy and State, and manufacture normative truths (e.g. the socially normative idea in Canada and the United States that a Western education is fundamentally good).

The Government of Nunavut is an indirect byproduct of colonial paradigms at work. Its creation signaled concession by Inuit that a Westminster parliamentary democracy transplanted from England is innately more valuable than indigenous exercises in self-governance spanning several millennia. When Inuit negotiated the NLCA, the onus was placed on them not only to justify their land claim and the opportunity for self-

governance, but to prove use and occupancy of their ancestral lands, occupied for hundreds of decades. It is patently discriminatory and incredibly disturbing that an immigrant government formed in 1867 and probably not even aware that Inuit existed at the time should have assumed supreme hegemony over a land and people never conquered in war. In light of the federal government's role in subverting the Inuit culture through relocation and the education system, the creation of Nunavut should hardly be considered an act of Canadian benevolence. The creation of Nunavut was justified by simple virtue of the fact that Inuit are the Aboriginal people – the first and original people – within their homelands, extant to the present day. All of this is not to derogate from the nearly unparalleled access to power that Inuit in Nunavut have in the context of the North American Aboriginal community. As a governance model, Nunavut is definitely a unique Aboriginal experiment on the continent, most nearly resembling the Greenland Home Rule Government. Like Nunavut, the Greenland Home Rule Government represents an overwhelmingly Inuit constituency, but unlike the territory, is not pursuing the indigenization (read: decolonization) of transplanted Danish government structures.

Right now, Inuit self-governance is not taking place in Nunavut, but the GN is on the right path. In order for Inuit self-governance to take place, the GN must take its legitimacy from the people it was created to represent, not from Southern Canada. The latter approach pigeonholes the territory into mimicking a political culture that it can never fully emulate as a distinct Aboriginal society. The GN was not established as an ethnic government but it does take its mandate from an almost ethnically homogenous Inuit population who I believe truly desire not just decision making power as Canadian

citizens, but the sorts of decisions that give validation and standing power to the society that for much of the last half century they were encouraged to leave behind. The IQ project right now is, in a sense, a decolonizing gesture. Decolonization does not mean, as Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains, “a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge,” but is about “centering our concerns and world views.”²³ IQ in government is meant to center Inuit concerns and worldviews and in doing so rejects the notion that Inuit values (thought, language, behavior, decision making processes) should have a space outside of politics, trumping the assumption that an unmodified colonial governance structure is capable of facilitating Inuit goals. The GN must change its current stance and go further, however, and consider structurally tailoring both the Legislative Assembly and bureaucratic decision making processes to reflect rather than merely harbor a worldview. This is no easy challenge but it is one that I think Nunavummiut sincerely believe in. In 2006, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP conducted an independent five year review of the implementation of the NLCA, examining the status of each article. In addition to reviewing documents and data, reviewers interviewed approximately one hundred Inuit beneficiaries of the NLCA. The executive summary of the report stresses the centrality of Inuit Qaujimagatunangit in their conversations with Inuit:

The development of this term is a very important step in enabling Inuit culture and values to drive government decision-making and activity. In almost all aspects of our work on this review, we have heard about the importance of IQ. We note that in almost all cases, people also reported that IQ has not been fully or effectively incorporated into the government process... The pervasiveness of the term, and the fact that it is defined, suggests that people are at least aware of what needs to be achieved, even if they do not fully know how to achieve it...

Throughout our review we repeatedly heard that IQ was not taken into account sufficiently, tangibly or effectively in the setting of priorities and policies and in the design and delivery of programs. Having a concrete definition to such a heady concept is a key first step. *Now it needs to be implemented in a concrete in-depth way by the three Bodies, so the public truly feel that they are an intricate and crucial part of the decision-making process.*²⁴

These findings confirm not only that IQ is crucial to Inuit perceptions of government but it suggests that its successful implementation is concurrent with public participatory governance and thus Inuit-self governance. Despite increased dissatisfaction with IQ, Inuit values and the legislation that they give critical expression to is what will allow Nunavut to truly stand apart from the rest of Canada socially and culturally. The Government of Nunavut will always remain inextricably linked to the federal Canadian government as a public territory created by an act of Parliament. This fact does not bar Inuit from self-governance in the sense that Inuit are beginning to use their federally delegated power in the legislature to draft legislation meant to secure the foundations of their society. Historically, Inuit have quickly adapted to the changes that have entered our Arctic world. We have exchanged many aspects of our material and religious culture in exchange for goods and beliefs that we believed would make our lives easier. In my view, the NLCA and the (re)creation of Nunavut were acts of adaptation in a history colored by adaptation. From my conversations with insightful Nunavummiut, I got the overwhelming sense that IQ has the potential to be valuable and empowering, but that the ten year old government is not yet sure how to accomplish meaningful integration. Stacey Aglok MacDonald, a young Inuk graduate of the Nunavut Sivuniksavut program pointed out that “In some ways it’s not surprising, in one sense, that it’s taking us so long to get there because we’re trying to develop everything from scratch. We still have so

many issues to deal with first and they're not being dealt with and that's why it's taking us so long to get there."²⁵

The GN is the site of a fascinating clash between the old and the new that mirrors the ongoing experience of the territory's predominantly Inuit society. This is no more apparent than in natural resource development on Inuit owned lands, which constitute approximately 217,470 square miles (or 18%) of Nunavut's 1.2 million square miles. Both the GN and NTI support responsible natural resource development for the sake of economic self-reliance. This would seem to blatantly contradict the IQ principle of Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq (respect and care for the land, animals and the environment), but it seems readily consistent with the principles of Pijitsirniq (serving and providing for family or community), and Qanuqtuurniq (being innovative and resourceful). In September 2007, NTI announced the conditions under which the organization would support uranium exploration and mining on Inuit owned lands.²⁶ In December 2008, a Vancouver based exploration company signed a memorandum of understanding with NTI, granting the company permission to explore Inuit owned lands near the community of Baker Lake, Nunavut's only inland community.²⁷ "John," the young NTI employee quoted in the previous chapter, had this to say about the clash of Inuit values inherent in the project:

I was raised by my mother and I spent a lot of time with my grandfather who always told me 'you have to respect the land'... That's such a traditional, strong Inuit value... But when you have things like uranium mining being something that an Inuit organization who says that they bring in the values of Inuit into the work that's being done with the mines – you know they signed onto this mine even though we're not a corporation – when [NTI] signed on [to uranium mining] I was very close to quitting.

We had conversations with a lot of the people [in Baker Lake] and a lot of the people were for it because they weren't told maybe the really bad effects it can have. And also, there is such a huge unemployment rate there, that it was just taken without all the considerations. And even speaking to one of the well respected elders there, I tried to explain to him what my thoughts were, and he said that his views were that a lot of the men don't work there and they're not proud that they can't supply for their families. So it was a very traditional view for the person.²⁸

These are tough questions that Nunavummiut must engage if they wish to seriously pursue the IQ project. The newness of the territory is and will continue to be a significant roadblock not only to Inuit self-governance but for overcoming many of the virulent social problems with which individuals contend on a daily basis. Nunavut is still evolving: a decade is a remarkably short period of time from which to expect momentous social changes. In the process of its evolution the GN and NTI must find balance between the past and present while at the same time moving forward. IQ in government is not synonymous with cultural continuity but its use is a critical building block in fomenting truly representative government for Inuit on Inuit terms.

It is beginning in Nunavut

I started this thesis by talking about the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) and how it sparked the imaginations of Inuit leaders across the Circumpolar Arctic. In much the same way that Inuit watched closely as Alaska Natives did legal battle with the United States federal government for our own land claim, we must take serious stock of Nunavummiut's efforts to preserve their language and culture. When we settled ANCSA in 1971, Alaska Natives were paid \$965.2 million in federal monies. Additionally, we were allowed to select and be conveyed fee-simple title to forty-four million acres (or 68,750 square miles, an area roughly the size of Missouri) of federal

land as compensation for Congress's permanent extinguishment of our Aboriginal land title, hunting and fishing rights. Under the terms of the act, the cash settlement was used to create twelve private, for-profit Alaska Native regional corporations and over 200 local village corporations, to which we became shareholders. Only through landed corporations, many Alaska Native leaders believed at the time, could we secure a land base to continue our hunting and fishing lifestyle in addition to private ownership of our natural resources for economic self-reliance. The centrality of economic development in land claims negotiations is evidenced by the fact that the final version of ANCSA passed by Congress took no action to protect Alaska Native subsistence uses of fish and game, our Aboriginal languages, and cultures. Because ANCSA lands (about 10% of the state) are subject to state jurisdiction, Alaska Natives exercising their right to subsistence hunting and fishing must abide by state fish and game laws. In comparison, Article 5 of the NLCA gives Inuit "free and unrestricted right of access," with few exceptions "to all lands waters and marine areas within the Nunavut Settlement Area," to practice subsistence hunting and fishing without a license.²⁹ Article 5 also guarantees at least fifty percent Inuit organization representation on the nine-member Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, which manages all Nunavut Settlement Area lands together with federal and territorial appointees, who may also be Inuit.

The Alaska Native regional and village corporations have had varying degrees of success as private economic entities. It is difficult to gauge their collective affect on the living standards of Alaska Natives or our subsistence way of life. Probably the regional corporations that pay significant annual dividends have made life easier for some Alaska Natives. Certainly, regional corporation jobs and dividends have aided the maintenance

of our subsistence lifestyle in many places, providing needed cash for expensive fuel and hunting equipment. At the same time, I believe a major and detrimental psychological shift took place in Alaska after 1971 that has rapidly led to the impoverishment of Alaska Native languages, which are at the core of what it means to be a unique, culturally resilient people. I am a shareholder with the NANA Regional Corporation located in the Northwest Alaskan Arctic. Our region is home to Red Dog Mine, the largest zinc mine in North America, and in 2008 NANA's annual revenue was \$1.2 billion, a nearly unconscionable sum that exceeds the entire ANCSA cash settlement. NANA will not keep all of this money due to ANCSA's 7(i) revenue sharing provision, however.³⁰ By all means, NANA has fared better than most regional corporations and it has made wise investments into the wellbeing of shareholders, yet fantastic wealth has not necessarily translated into cultural resilience. A 2005 survey conducted by the Robert Aqqaluk Newlin, Sr. Memorial Trust and Native Village of Kotzebue found that only 14% of the region's residents understand the Iñupiaq language fluently with over 92% of fluent speakers over the age of 65.³¹ If large measures are not taken to place the Iñupiaq language at the center of community life and education in the Northwest Arctic, it is headed for imminent extinction within my lifetime.

In 2008, the prominent Iñupiaq land claims leader and former NANA Regional Corporation president William Iggiagruk Hensley published his autobiography, *Fifty Miles from Tomorrow: A Memoir of Alaska and the Real People*. In it, he devotes an entire chapter to the role he played formalizing the Iñupiat Iḷitqusiāt or Iñupiat values, during the 1980s. "Knowledge of language" is first on a list of seventeen values that continue to be mentioned whenever possible in NANA's corporate literature. Hensley

writes that “We had agreed upon the ancient values that we must now infuse into the school curriculum, into the ways the tribe and the corporation do business, into the message of the churches and other institutions. We now had a means to reinforce who we are.”³² Hensley’s summation is more idealistic than realistic, however, and these values have yielded few if any discernable results in the Northwest Arctic. Like IQ, they remain vague and unwieldy, yet unlike in Nunavut corporate institutions have made no effort to permanently imbed them into the work that they produce. The Iñupiaq language is offered approximately one hour per week within Northwest Arctic School District schools, and it is about the same on the Arctic Slope.³³ The Northwest Arctic’s Iñupiat Language Commission, formed in 2005, made its most dramatic contribution to language revitalization by creating a Rosetta Stone language CD-ROM in 2007, yet at \$200 these learning materials are probably outside the price range of most shareholders. In Alaska, young Iñupiat from my region are certain to learn more about Greece than Greenland despite our overwhelming numbers and 10,000 year residency in the Northwest Arctic. It is all so surreal and confusing. More alarming still, the Northwest Arctic region of Alaska has had the highest rate of suicide in the state for the last decade.³⁴ I hypothesize that high rates of suicide correlate with our collective failure to teach young Iñupiat that they have a rich culture, language, and history to be proud of inside and outside of public classrooms; that we come from a bloodline that the outside world should *envy*.

Nellie Cournoyea, an Inuvialuk (pl. Inuvialuit) and former Premier of the Northwest Territories before the establishment of Nunavut, described ANCSA in these words: “The Alaskan Act was based on a very conscious and articulated philosophy of integrating Alaskan Natives into mainstream America.”³⁵ Analysis of my own regional corporation

reveals that integration has so far succeeded fabulously. As Alaska Natives, we must look eastward to our polar neighbors in Nunavut, where public discourse often revolves around the inextricable link between the Inuit language and culture. Part of what I find intriguing about Nunavut is that many people have not forgotten what will matter most if theirs is to remain a distinct and culturally rich albeit small society within Canada. The GN is still uneasy about behaving differently from Southern Canada – an intimidating symbol of change for much of the last century. However its recent actions indicate that it is regaining some of the independent spirit and confidence that helped Inuit negotiate the largest Aboriginal land claim in the world. As Alaska Natives generally and Iñupiat specifically, we have much to relearn and remember about what it means to be different and why maintaining distance between our culture and the rest of the United States is centrifugal to its continuity. We must never settle for less than what we deserve. Money can contribute to our well being if it is invested wisely, yet right now we are depriving our future generations of full access to the cultural knowledge that they own and deserve as a birthright. Many of the Nunavummiut I spoke with explained that in no uncertain terms, the vitality of the Inuit language and culture are tied to the success or failure of Nunavut and therefore represent urgent priorities. The Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik are institutional apparatuses that Inuit are using to turn urgency into action, and that has been incredibly empowering and moving for me to witness and learn from. Since the creation of their own territory, Nunavummiut have emerged as the clear leadership in the international Inuit community. The kind of society that Nunavummiut have endeavored to create sets higher standards for circumpolar Inuit. Alaska Natives showed Inuit that comprehensive land claims – modern treaties – were possible in the

1970s. That is a lesson that began in Alaska. How Alaska Natives can and should use the opportunities and resources that our leaders worked tirelessly for, in order to maintain our sense of dignity, honor, and self-respect – what we *should* be prioritizing – is a lesson that is beginning to take shape in Nunavut.

Conclusion

As the airplane angled toward the sky and oriented itself in the pink glare of the setting sun, I reflected on what I had learned from the individuals I spoke with during my short stay in Iqaluit. I had learned that the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Land Claims Settlement Act are no less imperfect than the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. I had come from Alaska frustrated that many Alaska Native leaders have lost sight of the most important elements of our cultural survival. I saw Nunavut as a kind of Arctic monument rising out of a bleak history of colonial contact but radically departing from Southern norms. I learned, however, that many young Inuit are just as frustrated with their government and representative Inuit organizations as I am with Alaska Native corporations. At first, this seemed quite dismal to me; I wondered if it would ever be possible to create a space in the Arctic in which we can finally reconcile our rich past with an uncertain future while fully utilizing the wealth of both worlds. Then I realized that dissatisfaction with the status quo is not necessarily a bad thing. Frustration leading to productive dialogue and action can and has served Aboriginal peoples well for as long as we have done battle with colonial power. Across North America, tribal peoples have not been complacent when our diverse cultures have been threatened. Despite what we were told by explorers, missionaries, school teachers, and national governments, we have generally maintained that being the original peoples on this continent is inherently

valuable; that though we may have been forced to accommodate colonial power, we have never completely capitulated to it. It is therefore enlivening that the majority of the individuals I spoke with in Iqaluit were able to envision and articulate a better future for Nunavut Territory, suggesting that many more people realize a large margin for growth exists and are concerned with how it should be achieved. Those conversations suggest that people know they deserve better, and as Aboriginal peoples that is something that we often forget.

As Inuit generally, we face the double task of maintaining or revitalizing the cultural knowledge at the center of our identities. At the same time, we seek to acquire the educational and professional expertise that will help us fully engage Western institutions as equal, albeit culturally and politically distinct partners, and improve the lives of our peoples. This requires that we perform a precarious balancing act in which our cultural histories, languages, and skills receive the same degree of attention and respect in Aboriginal classrooms and homes that dominant colonial narratives and languages do. It involves rewiring our thought processes to fully rather than cosmetically value our cultures and histories; it means exerting twice the energy and effort that it will take to become successful in both worlds. It has to be this way. The nature of Inuit self-governance in Nunavut reflects this enormous challenge in miniature. Currently, the Inuit Qaujimagatunqangit project best articulates Nunavummiut's desire for a government that is able to balance the best of both worlds by imbedding an Inuit world-view into its structure, the legislation that it produces, and the way it reaches decisions, because that is what true Inuit self-governance should look like. That said, IQ represents not just a set of arbitrary values, but the decolonizing attitude and approach to setting priorities that I

believe Inuit bargained for in 1999. The GN has the unparalleled opportunity to change the way Inuit think about themselves in relation to the world; it has the chance to begin undoing a half-century of active colonialism. It therefore behooves the Government of Nunavut to pursue these goals not for the sake of political experimentation, but for the dignity, honor, and self-respect of all Inuit.

I believe that for the most part, Inuit parents in Nunavut would like to see their children graduate from high school and go on to earn post-secondary college degrees; they would like to see their children happily employed, making healthy decisions, and living fulfilling lives, but not at the expense of the skills, language, and knowledge that form the foundation of their cultural identity. In Alaska, we have bought into the idea that the role of Native languages, knowledge, and history are supplementary to the main and supposedly most important body of knowledge: Western knowledge. The notion that learning about who we are, where we have been, and where we are going as peoples should happen outside the spaces where “ordinary” learning takes place has unfortunately become normative. Overall, we continue to use a rubric for success that is not our own, celebrating degrees earned and high level employment. These things can be critical to securing Aboriginal peoples’ staying power in the modern world, but they are not essential to and should not be pursued at the expense of who we really are. The Inuit of Nunavut have not yet forgotten this, but as the allure of natural resource development builds and the GN and NTI continue to negotiate the litany of social problems eating away at Inuit society, the territory is vulnerable to becoming sidetracked. If Inuit are to retain their former political and cultural distinction as a self-reliant, autonomous people, it is essential that they continue to practice who they are in order to know where they are

going. The future of Nunavut has the potential to be a bright one, building off of a creation story that is no less than epic in the history of the modern world. But in keeping with Abraham Okpik's sagely observation stated at the beginning of this thesis, the Inuit of Nunavut must move forward together as snow geese, working in unison and in balanced formation, carefully choosing what aspects of the Qallunaat world they stand to benefit from at a measured distance, yet never forgetting the incredible journey that has brought them to their present position. From off the land and into settled communities, from caribou skin parkas into wool suits, from far flung Arctic communities into city courtrooms, and finally, into the sealskin upholstered seats of their very own government, Inuit have travelled magnificent distance in the last several decades to insure control of their own destiny. With determination and willpower, a numerically tiny people changed the map of Canada, achieving what at times must have seemed an impossible goal. Now, the Aboriginal world watches with quiet anticipation, waiting for the next exciting chapter of this unparalleled experiment in Aboriginal self-governance to unfurl.

Notes

¹ John Bennett and Susan Rowley, *Uqalurait: An Oral History of Nunavut* (McGill-Queens' University Press, 2004), p. 95

² Canada, *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement: Agreement Between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada*, (1993), pp. 1

³ Aboriginal title remains ambiguously defined under Canadian law. For the purposes of this paper, it is the existing and inherent Aboriginal right to the use and ownership of ancestral lands established through historical use and occupancy of a specific geographic area. Proof of "historical use and occupancy" remains a controversial topic, however. Many Aboriginal peoples find it unsettling that the historical use and occupancy of ancestral homelands should require State authentication. The *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project* described in the first chapter established the geographic boundaries of the NLCA.

⁴ Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and the Government of Nunavut, *Iqqanaijaqatigiit: Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated Working Together* (May 2004)

⁵ Natan Obed, Personal Interview (January 8, 2009)

⁶ Canada, *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement: Agreement Between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada* (1993), pp. 223

⁷ Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and the Government of Nunavut, *Iqqanaijaqatigiit: Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated Working Together* (May 2004), Retrieved from <<http://www.gov.nu.ca/documents/iqqanaijaqatigiit/>> May 31, 2009

⁸ “Don’t draw us into NTI lawsuit: Nunavut premier,” *CBC News* (May 15, 2009), RVD <<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/north/story/2008/01/23/okalik-int.html>> May 18, 2009

⁹ Chris Windeyer, “Don’t make us sue GN too, NTI urges,” *Nunatsiaq News* (May 15, 2009), RVD <http://www.nunatsiaq.com/news/nunavut/90515_2170.html> May 18, 2009

¹⁰ Jack Hicks, Personal Interview (January 8, 2009)

¹¹ Natan Obed, Personal Interview (January 8, 2009)

¹² See Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, *Impacts of a Warming Arctic: Arctic Climate Impact Assessment* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, *What if Winter Doesn’t Come?: Inuit Perspectives on Climate Change Adaptation Challenges in Nunavut – Summary Workshop Report* (2005), Retrieved from <http://www.tunngavik.com> October 5, 2006

¹³ Taiaiake Alfred, “From Sovereignty to Freedom: Toward an Indigenous Intellectual Discourse,” *Indigenous Affairs* n 3 (2001), pp. 22-34

¹⁴ Jack Hicks and Graham White, *Nunavut: Inuit Self-Determination Through a Land Claim and Public Government?*, ed. Jens Dahl et al. (International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2000), pp. 46

¹⁵ Annette Bourgeois, “Plebiscite on gender parity is world first,” *Nunatsiaq News* (May 16, 2009), RVD <<http://www.nunatsiaq.com/archives/back-issues/week/70516.html>> May 20, 2009

¹⁶ Simon was recently unchallenged to a second term as president of Canada’s national Inuit organization, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

¹⁷ Jack Hicks and Graham White, *Nunavut: Inuit Self-Determination Through a Land Claim and Public Government?*, ed. Jens Dahl et al. (International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2000), pp. 48-49

¹⁸ Canada, *Nunavut Act* (1993), RVD <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/showdoc/cs/N-28.6/bo-ga:s_1::bo-ga:s_2?page=2> May 20, 2009

¹⁹ “Reconsider gender parity, says lone female Nunavut MLA,” *CBC News* (October 29, 2008), RVD <www.cbc.ca/canada/north/story/2008/10/29/nunavut-women.html> May 20, 2009

²⁰ Brent Reany, “Nunavut Comes of Age,” *Up Here* (March 2009), RVD <www.uphere.ca/node/380> May 20, 2009

²¹ Gilda Mekler, “Amagoalik responds to Territorial Council’s attack on Nunavut,” *Nunatsiaq News* (June 29, 1977), RVD <www.nunatsiaq.com/archives/april0199/nvt90401_06.html> May 19, 2009

²² Natan Obed, Personal Interview (January 8, 2009)

²³ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (University of Otago Press, 1999) pp. 39

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- ²⁴ PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, "Independent Review: Implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, 1998-2005," (Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, Government of Canada, 2006). On file with author. Italics mine.
- ²⁵ Stacey Agnok, MacDonald, Personal Interview (January 9, 2009)
- ²⁶ "Nunavut Inuit group announces uranium mining policy," *CBC News* (September 19, 2007), RVD <<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/north/story/2007/09/19/nu-uranium.html>> May 29, 2009
- ²⁷ Guy Quenneville, "NTI signs a second uranium deal," *Northern News Services Online* (December 22, 2008), Retrieved from http://www.nnsl.com/frames/newspapers/2008-12/dec22_08nt.html May 29, 2009
- ²⁸ "John," Personal Interview (January 8, 2009)
- ²⁹ Canada, *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement: Agreement Between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada* (1993) , pp. 48
- ³⁰ Section 7(i) of ANCSA stipulates that seventy percent of the net profits which come from timber and mining shall be divided among the twelve regional corporations every year. In 2008, NANA paid \$122 million of Red Dog royalties to the other Native corporations.
- ³¹ Retrieved from www.aqqaluktrust.com/pages/language.html on May 20, 2009
- ³² William L. Iggiagruk Hensley, *Fifty Miles from Tomorrow: A Memoir of Alaska and the Real People* (Sarah Chrichton Books, 2009), pp. 220
- ³³ Northwest Arctic School District, Personal Correspondence (February 2008)
- ³⁴ Kyle Hopkins, "Suicide leaves everyone asking why," *Anchorage Daily News* (May 16, 2009), RVD <<http://www.adn.com/life/health/story/798383.html>> May 31, 2009
- ³⁵ Nellie Cournoyea, *The Voice of the Natives: The Canadian North and Alaska*, ed. Hans-Ludwig Blohm (Penumbra Press 2000) pp. 191-192

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