

*Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit and Knowledge Transmission in a  
Modern Inuit Community*

**Perceptions and Experiences of *Mittimatalingmiut* Women**

Eleanor Ayr Bonny

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**Master of Natural Resources Management**

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By

Eleanor Ayr Bonny

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of  
Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree  
Of Master of Natural Resources Management (M.N.R.M)

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the concepts of traditional knowledge, *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (Inuit traditional knowledge), and knowledge transmission. The work is based on my experiences during two field seasons working with women in Pond Inlet, Nunavut. From August to December, 2005, I conducted participant observation and unstructured interviews and coordinated a school program for youth to interview local elders about their knowledge and experiences with polar bear encounters. In the fall of 2006, I worked more intimately with three young women and three elderly women in a series of interviews, focus groups and photographic narrative exercises exploring perceptions and experiences in knowledge transmission. My work follows a micro-ethnographic approach and explores the process of knowledge transmission from the learner's perspective. The thesis documents young women's accounts of learning: it explores the ways that they make sense of their cultural knowledge and the roles that they play in filtering and adapting *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ) to be relevant in the modern context. In effect, it looks to discover what we can learn about people's understandings of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* from the ways that they talk about their knowledge and describe their experiences learning it. Ultimately, the accounts in this thesis highlight the role of individually and collectively constructed themes in shaping local understandings of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*. They reveal that *Mittimatalingmiut* women see IQ as a multifaceted and dynamic system that is characterized by ongoing balance between ecological and social elements, between past and present experience and between continuity with the past and innovation in the present. IQ is experienced not as a thing to be known, but as a process of coming to know. While the dynamics of this process differ in the community and institutional environments, both emerge as key loci for the evaluation, filtering and continual evolution of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*.

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As I come to the end of my graduate research, I realize that a great number of “thank you’s” are in order. Above all, I am grateful to the students involved in the Polar Bear Encounters Project, the community members who discussed their ideas with me, and the six women on whom this thesis is focused. I was continually impressed by your interest in the project, your willingness to engage in good discussion and your surprising openness in sharing yourselves so candidly. Elisapee Ootoova, Qamaniq Sangoya, Annie Peterloosie, “Malaya”, “Wendy” and “Leetia”, I’ve learned a great deal from you, not only about *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* and knowledge transmission, but also about family, gratitude for the things that we have and living good lives despite many challenges around us. Thank you for that.

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# CONTENTS

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ABSTRACT .....	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	II

## **CHAPTER 1 A RESEARCH PROJECT TO EXPLORE THE TRANSMISSION OF INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT** **1**

---

1.1 CONNECTIONS TO PARKS CANADA'S INUIT KNOWLEDGE PROJECT .....	2
1.2 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES.....	4
1.3 METHODS .....	4
1.4 ACADEMIC CONTEXT AND CONTRIBUTIONS .....	5
1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS: .....	8

## **CHAPTER 2 MITTIMATALINGMIUT, THEIR HISTORY AND THEIR KNOWLEDGE** **10**

---

2.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHANGE IN POND INLET.....	10
2.2 TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT IN NUNAVUT .....	15
2.3 TRANSMISSION OF INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT IN THE PAST.....	20

## **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODS** **26**

---

3.1 APPROACH TO THE RESEARCH .....	26
3.2 METHODS .....	28
3.2.1 FIELD SEASON I .....	28
3.2.2 FIELD SEASON II .....	32
3.3 ANALYSIS OF DATA.....	37
3.4 RESPONDENT VERIFICATION .....	39
3.5 LIMITATIONS.....	39

## **CHAPTER 4 LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF THREE INUIT YOUTH** **42**

---

4.1 MALAYA .....	44
4.2 WENDY .....	49
4.3 JOYCE .....	54
4.4 CONCLUSIONS .....	59

**CHAPTER 5 SIX LOCAL THEMES TO FRAME INUIT  
QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT**

**62**

5.1. INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT AS KNOWLEDGE SPECIALIZED TO THE ARCTIC ENVIRONMENT .....	65
5.2. FAMILY AS THE NUCLEUS OF INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT.....	68
5.3. INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT AS EXPERIENCE.....	70
5.4. KNOWLEDGE AS TIED TO ELDERS AND THE PAST.....	74
5.5. AN INDIVIDUAL'S KNOWLEDGE AS A JIGSAW PUZZLE .....	77
5.6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	83

**CHAPTER 6 WHERE LEARNING IS HAPPENING, WHAT IS GOING RIGHT? WHERE LEARNING IS NOT TAKING PLACE, WHAT IS INTERFERING?**

**89**

6.1 POSITIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES: LEARNING THROUGH INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS.....	91
6.1.1 GRANDPARENTS AND ELDERLY RELATIVES	92
6.1.2 ELDERS OUTSIDE OF THE FAMILY	94
6.1.3 LEARNING FROM PARENTS	96
6.1.4 LEARNING THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS AND SIBLINGS	97
6.1.5 LEARNING THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS WITH EURO-CANADIANS	98
6.2 LEARNING THROUGH INSTITUTIONALIZED PROGRAMS .....	99
6.2.1 PROGRAMS AS SUPPLEMENT TO OR SUBSTITUTE FOR LEARNING IN THE FAMILY	107
6.2.2 PROGRAMS TO BUILD INTER-GENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS	102
6.2.3 DYNAMICS OF LEARNING IN A PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT	103
6.2.4 STUDENT INTERVIEWS AND THE QUESTION OF ASKING QUESTIONS	105
6.3 DYNAMISM OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE CONTEXT OF CHANGING LIFESTYLE AND SHIFTING MEANINGS .....	108
6.3.1 A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO TRANSMISSION AND THE DYNAMISM OF KNOWLEDGE	108
6.3.2 THE CONTEXT OF CHANGING LIFESTYLES AND SHIFTING MEANINGS OF INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT	110
6.3.4 STRUGGLES WITH RELEVANCE AND SHIFTING MEANING OF INUIT KNOWLEDGE	111
6.3.5 A DISCERNING APPROACH TO LEARNING	113
6.3.6 YOUTH AND ELDERS, AGENTS OF DYNAMIC KNOWLEDGE	115
6.4 CONCLUSION.....	117

**CHAPTER 7 REFLECTIONS**

**121**

7.2 LINKAGES BETWEEN THEMES AND INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTS.....	1
7.3 REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS.....	2
WORKS CITED .....	9

- APPENDIX I INUKTITUT WORDS AND TERMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT  
 APPENDIX II RESEARCH LICENCES  
 APPENDIX III CONSENT FORM

## LIST OF BOXES

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BOX 1 - JAYKO PETERLOOSIE DESCRIBES KNOWLEDGE TRANSMISSION IN THE PAST .....	24
BOX 2 - SEQUENCE OF METHODS EMPLOYED IN POND INLET IN THE FALL OF 2006.....	34
BOX 3 - OOTOOVA DESCRIBES RELATIONSHIP OF FAMILY TO INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT .....	69
BOX 4 - WENDY COMPARES THE PROCESS OF LEARNING TO CONSTRUCTING A JIGSAW PUZZLE .....	78
BOX 5 - OOTOOVA AND SANGOYA OFFER THE SEAL OIL LAMP AS A METAPHOR FOR <i>INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT</i> .....	81

## LIST OF FIGURES

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FIGURE 1- LOCATION OF STUDY: POND INLET, NUNAVUT.....	11
FIGURE 2- FILTERING AND EVOLUTION OF KNOWLEDGE THROUGH THE TRANSMISSION PROCESS.....	116

## LIST OF TABLES

---

TABLE 1 - SUBJECTS OF PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN TO REPRESENT THE PEOPLE, PLACES AND THINGS ASSOCIATED WITH LEARNING <i>INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT</i> .....	90
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# CHAPTER 1

## ~ A Research Project to Explore the Transmission of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* ~

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*“The Inuit knowledge: It’s still alive, you know – I mean from the elders. They still have it, but we don’t have it, most of us. The Inuit values and stuff like that. I think that’s how I see it...I think their values are so strong. Not only strong, but they’re alive. I mean they’re good for us, ‘cause we live in the north and it suits us, living here...When it comes to skills: yeah, I think I have it. I can make mukluks. I made this amautik, you know, this kind of stuff. And when it comes to raising my daughter, I try my best what I learned from my grandfather, to raise her in a traditional way...And the fact that I’m half white and I’m so into modern stuff now. That’s what I think, you know. But at the same time, I try to go into traditional stuff too. I try to balance them.” (Malaya, 2006) [Original in English]*

These words, offered by a 21-year old woman in Pond Inlet, portray a good deal about the state of cultural knowledge in the Canadian arctic. This woman is not unlike other youth in that she is aware of the terms *traditional knowledge* and *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ), but struggles to explain what they mean to her. She clearly values IQ as something that “suits” northern people, and recognizes that it is still very much alive amongst older generations. As a modern mother, Malaya learns sewing skills from her grandmother and childrearing advice from her grandfather. She tries to raise her young daughter in a traditional way but is unsure if she truly *has Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* herself. Malaya’s words reveal an element of tension and uncertainty in her efforts to live in a way that reconciles global influences and modern technology with the legacy of values and knowledge passed down by her ancestors. This thesis focuses on the experiences of young women like Malaya. It explores their perceptions and understandings of *Inuit*

*Qaujimajatuqangit* and the themes through which they explain and make sense of that knowledge. It further examines young women's accounts of learning in order to build an understanding of the process through which knowledge is transmitted and adapted across generations, recognizing that the themes that young people use to frame IQ play a role in shaping their experiences of the transmission process<sup>1</sup>.

### **1.1 Connections to Parks Canada's *Inuit Knowledge Project***

My interest in this area arose through my involvement with the Parks Canada, Nunavut Field Unit's *Inuit Knowledge Project* (IKP). The project was initiated in 2004 as one of six Ecological Integrity Projects for Parks Canada. The IKP strives to increase capacity and action towards protecting the ecological integrity of national parks in Nunavut. It also specifically addresses Parks Canada's First Priority Commitments to actively involve Aboriginal people and traditional ecological knowledge in National Park Management. The objective of this 4 year project is to systematically integrate *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* in Parks Canada's ecological integrity programs in three northern parks by compiling previously documented knowledge; developing frameworks for the use of IQ; developing databases, archives, research protocols and training courses; articulating IQ research plans with northern communities; researching knowledge related to the environment; and developing products including monitoring programs, park resource descriptions and education and communication products (Nunavut Field Unit, 2004).

The IKP emphasizes the Nunavut Field Unit's (NFU) goal "to preserve traditional Inuit culture, language and understanding of the environment for future generations" (Nunavut Field Unit, 2004:4). Therefore, alongside efforts to compile and document IQ, the NFU is looking to promote continued knowledge sharing and transmission to younger generations. This objective follows the logic that knowledge should be researched and documented, but in order to maintain IQ as a dynamic living system, it must also continue to be passed to young generations and applied to modern activities and decisions. As such, the IKP includes the goal: "to actively facilitate transmission of Inuit knowledge to youth and communities" (Nunavut Field Unit, 2004:4). It looks to involve

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<sup>1</sup> The terms *traditional knowledge*, *Inuit knowledge* and *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* are defined and discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

students of local communities in research activities and to develop communication products (including web-based and video products) that bring traditional knowledge of the environment into the classroom.

My own involvement in the IKP addresses these priorities related to transmission and learning. It focuses on building connections between park offices and schools, involving students in IQ research, documenting and archiving local IQ, developing multimedia products to communicate such knowledge and promoting knowledge sharing between generations. I have spent 2 field seasons in Pond Inlet, Nunavut, one of two communities located adjacent to Sirmilik National Park, on the northern shores of Baffin Island. The first field season focused primarily on designing and coordinating the *Polar Bear Encounters Project*, in which local students were trained and assisted in interviewing 14 hunters and elders about their knowledge of human-polar bear interactions. The second season involved a series of focus groups and in-depth interviews directed more specifically at exploring young women's experiences learning *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. My work in Pond Inlet has generated several outputs including transcripts, video and audio records of interviews about polar bear encounters, as well as a multi-media CD communicating IQ, beliefs and stories related to polar bear encounters. This thesis further reflects on my work in Pond Inlet with particular focus on local women's perception of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* and the process of knowledge transmission.

I have approached this thesis from the perspective that if the Nunavut Field Unit is to work effectively with knowledge holders and apply IQ to its activities, it should look to understand what that knowledge system means to local people and how it is understood by the individuals who are to be involved in park management. Further, as the NFU partners with local schools and community members in developing programs to promote knowledge transmission, it will be critical to have an appreciation for the process by which knowledge is being acquired, adapted and applied by the modern generation of youth.

## 1.2 Goal and Objectives

The primary goal of this thesis is to support Sirmilik National Park in promoting the transmission of knowledge by exploring local women's perceptions of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* and developing an understanding of the process by which modern youth acquire such knowledge. Specific objectives are as follows:

- 1) To document the learning experiences of young Inuit women in order to answer the questions:
  - **What is it like to be a young woman learning *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* in Pond Inlet in 2006?**
  - **What are young women's attitudes towards incorporating traditional knowledge into their lives?**
- 2) To build an understanding of what *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* means to the individuals who are sharing and learning it, by addressing the following question:
  - **How do *Mittimatalingmiut* (Pond Inleters) women define, perceive and talk about *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*?**
- 3) To draw on young women's experiences to answer the following questions:
  - **Where learning is taking place, what is going right?**
  - **Where learning is not happening, what is interfering?**

## 1.3 Methods

I have addressed these questions through a qualitative, micro-ethnographic (Berg, 2004) research approach. Over the course of 2005 and 2006, I spent a total of seven months living in Pond Inlet and working with local people to develop an understanding of their cultural knowledge and the means through which it is perpetuated. Specific research tools are discussed in detail in Chapter 3, but include participant observation, in-depth interviews, photographic narrative, focus groups and the coordination of a youth-elder program (the *Polar Bear Encounters Project*) in the local school.

My research was shaped throughout both seasons by input from a number of local groups and individuals. The focus of my research was most notably influenced by the three

elders, Annie Peterloosie, Qamaniq Sangoya and Elisapee Ootoova who served as both advisors and participants in my work. These women taught me a great deal about *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* and influenced me to broaden the scope of my work from a focus on specifically ecological kinds of knowledge to a wider, interconnected range of Inuit values, skills, beliefs, rules and practices. The Sirmilik National Park Inuit Knowledge Working Group (IKWG) and the Pond Inlet District Education Authority (DEA) offered additional support, meeting with me on several occasions to review my research plans and provide assistance, direction and formal approval for my work.

This thesis draws heavily from individual accounts shared during formal and informal interviews and focus groups. What follows is my understanding and interpretation of the ideas and experiences that were recounted to me during my time in Pond Inlet. I believe it also reflects the women's journeys to explain and make sense of phenomena that they had lived, but not yet articulated and discussed.

#### **1.4 Academic Context and Contributions**

The analysis and discussion of my experiences in Pond Inlet are largely informed by the emerging literature on *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* and discussions of knowledge transmission in the traditional knowledge literature. I also draw concepts and references from anthropologies of learning (Tulloch, 2004), enculturation (Briggs, 1998), and language acquisition (Taylor and Wright, 1989).

The discussions in this thesis connect to, and build from the existing literature on traditional knowledge and traditional knowledge transmission. Though a great deal of attention has been paid to documenting traditional knowledge content, comparatively little of the traditional knowledge literature addresses the means by which such knowledge is perpetuated. Key exceptions include Ruddle and Chesterfield (1977), Cruikshank (1998), Legat (2007) and Ohmagari and Berkes (1997). Ruddle and Chesterfield (1977) were among the first to document "informal" transmission of traditional skills among Venezuelans of Guara Island. Their work effectively demonstrates that traditional pedagogical approaches, far from informal, are often highly

conscious, structured and systematic. Omagari and Berkes (1997) build on Ruddle and Chesterfield's (1977) model of sequential transmission of task complexes, studying the acquisition of traditional bush skills among James Bay Cree Women. This quantitative study suggests that while many skills continue to be acquired by young generations, the processes (teachers, ages and modes of acquisition) of knowledge transmission have changed over time. Cruikshank's (1998) work, based on her relationships with several elderly Gwich'in women, explores the "social lives of stories", or Gwich'in oral history. Her work illustrates the central role of oral narrative in transmitting cultural knowledge and shaping its meaning in the modern context. Legat's (2007) dissertation addresses the meaning of being and becoming knowledgeable among the Taicho Dene of the Northwest Territories. Her work depicts an individual's knowledge development as a lifelong process of discover and re-discovery she listens to stories and later experiences those stories for herself.

Outside of the traditional knowledge literature, a number of relevant contributions to the concept of knowledge transmission have come from anthropologists dating as far back as Mead (1978), Spindler (1974), and Sapir (1934). In a 1987 discussion on the history of the "anthropology of learning", Wolcott describes transmission as a two-sided coin, with transmission (or knowledge sharing) on one side, and learning (or the reception of knowledge) on the other. He suggests that more attention has conventionally been paid to what instructors are trying to transmit than to what learners are actually learning. In 1934, Sapir described the learner's experience as a process of "gradually and gropingly" discovering her culture. Wallace (1970) later argued that "Much of everyday culture must be literally re-discovered in every generation because of the impossibility of describing, and therefore communicating" (p. 109).

Cruikshank's work (1998), which explores traditional knowledge transmitted through stories in the Yukon, draws almost entirely from her relationships and dialogues with Gwich'in elders. My work, like that of Omagari and Berkes (1997), approaches the discussion of knowledge transmission from the other side of the coin: from the perspectives of young learners. I look to understand the process through which young

Inuit women gradually (and perhaps gropingly) re-discover their cultural knowledge – how they access and interpret their traditional knowledge, and how they select, adopt and adapt that knowledge to make it relevant in their modern lives.

The literature on specifically Inuit ways of knowing – or *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* - represents a relatively new body of work that has emerged since the development of the term in 1998 (WGTK). To date, academic discussions of the concept have focused primarily on clarifying definitions of the concept (Oosten and Laugrand, 2002), and on the Nunavut government's progress in applying "IQ Principles" in territorial governance (Arnakak, 2002), research and wildlife management (Wenzel, 2004). My work looks to move beyond formally articulated definitions of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* to consider how the concept is understood by youth and elders engaged in the process of knowledge transmission. I explore what young women's lived experiences can reveal about the deeper values and meanings that underpin the concept of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. I therefore draw on an analysis of individual and collective themes used to frame IQ in order to add a layer of local understanding to this emerging discussion of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*.

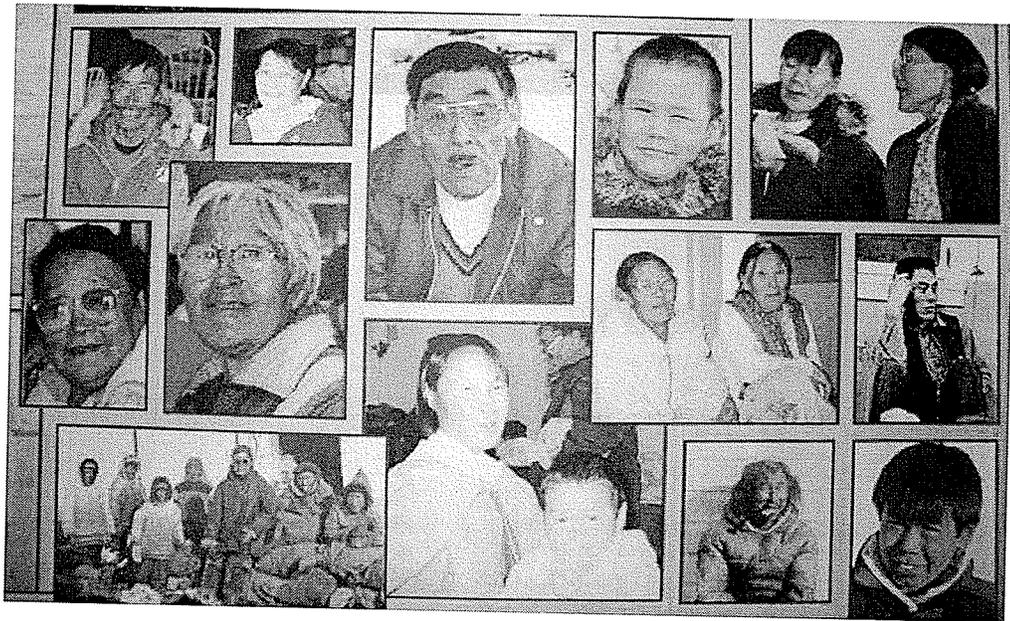
My understandings of knowledge transmission among Inuit are informed to some degree by culturally specific descriptions of how Inuit adults (Briggs, 1998; Condon, 1987), elders (Ekho and Ootookie, 2000) and educators (NTECE, 1996b) approach the transmission process. However, the only studies that focus directly on attitudes and learning among young Inuit relate to Inuktitut language acquisition (Taylor and Wright, 1989; Tulloch, 2004) evaluations of cultural education programs (Hanson, 2004), and a yet un-published examination of learning in the classroom and the home (Targe, 2006). Wachowich (1993) documents a three-generational life story including personal accounts of a young woman in Pond Inlet. Her work helps to set the context for my research but does not offer any specific analysis with respect to knowledge transmission. My own work follows on Wachowich's approach to detailed work with a small number of *Mittimatalingmiut* women, to learn more about their perceptions of IQ and knowledge transmission.

As a discussion focused primarily on women's perceptions of knowledge, this thesis also addresses the gendered nature of traditional knowledge. The kinds of knowledge held by women are distinct from those of men not only in terms of skills practiced, but also in vocabularies, symbolism and processes of learning (Berkes, 1999). Collignon (2006) offers evidence that men's and women's knowledge is in fact constructed differently. She explains that men and women move differently through physical space and, therefore, establish different cognitive connections among places, experiences, resources, memories and oral histories. While academics recognize gender distinctions in ways of knowing, the literature on gendered knowledge, particularly that of northern aboriginal women, is not well developed. Notable exceptions include Parlee's (2006) analysis of Gwich'in and Denesoline women's perceptions of ecological change, Ohmagari and Berkes' (1997) examination of skill acquisition among women of the James Bay Cree, and Ekho and Ottokie's (1998) documentation of traditional childrearing practices. Beyond such studies, the bulk of traditional knowledge work continues to focus on understanding and documenting the knowledge of male travelers and resource harvesters. Similarly, the emerging literature on *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* has not yet addressed issues of gender and knowledge. This thesis is therefore offered as a contribution to discussions of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* and traditional knowledge transmission from the gendered, local perspectives of young female learners.

### **1.5 Organization of the Thesis**

The remainder of the document is organized as follows: **Chapter 2** provides context for the research by describing the modern community of Pond Inlet and the social change that has taken place over the past 100 years. This chapter also discusses the origin and existing definitions of the term *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*, and summarizes information from a number of sources describing how such knowledge was transmitted in the past. **Chapter 3** provides further detail on the theoretical approach and methods employed in this study. It describes research conducted during the first and second field seasons and explains how each contributes to ideas and understandings that I forward in this thesis. The **4<sup>th</sup> chapter** attempts to illustrate what it is like to learn IQ in the modern community

of Pond Inlet. Here, I introduce three young women with whom I worked, summarizing my own understanding of the learning experiences and the pedagogical relationships that they described to me. In **Chapter 4**, I address the second research objective by reflecting on the ways that Inuit talk about the subject of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. I present six themes that participants used to frame the concept of IQ and explore what these themes portray of the values and meaning associated with Inuit perceptions of their knowledge system. **Chapter 6** builds on the accounts presented in the previous chapters, exploring the relationships and programs through which the young women see themselves learning. I discuss the role that these women play in shaping their knowledge and explore the transformation from the knowledge that elders recall, that they share, that youth adopt and that they ultimately apply to their lives. The **final chapter** reflects on the interplay between themes describing *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (presented in Chapter 5) and individual accounts of learning experiences (discussed in Chapters 4 and 6). I also comment on the role of the research process in shaping local perceptions of phenomena. The thesis closes by exploring the implications of this work for promoting the on-going transmission and transformation of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*.



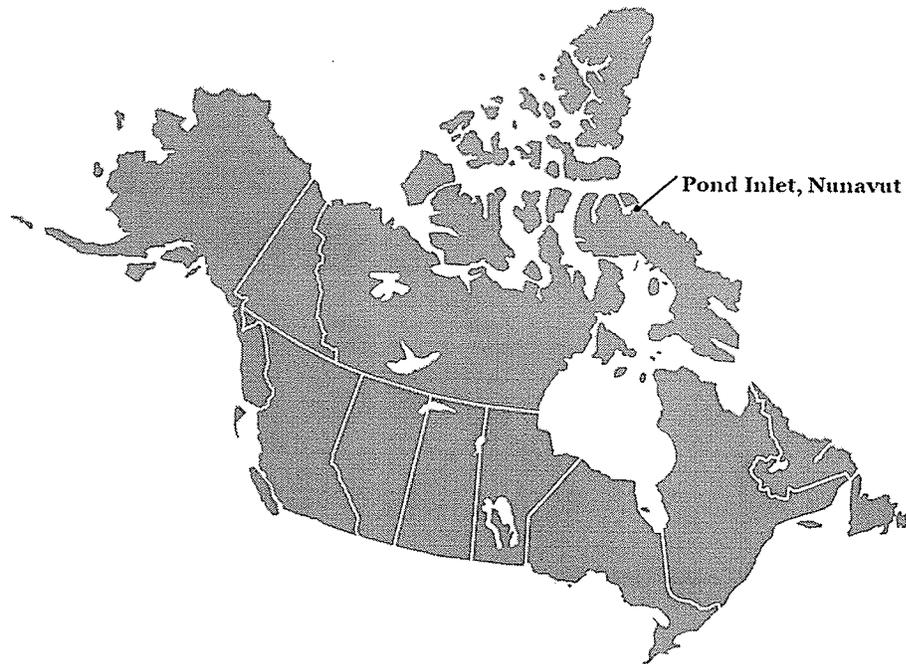
## CHAPTER 2

~ *Mittimatalingmiut*, their History and their Knowledge ~

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### 2.1 A Brief History of Change in Pond Inlet

The community of *Mittimatalik*, also known as Pond Inlet, is located on the north shore of Baffin Island, at  $72^{\circ}41'57''\text{N}$ ,  $77^{\circ}57'33''\text{W}$  (see Figure 1). On the shores of Eclipse Sound, south of Bylot Island, Pond Inlet sits in a region of 4,000 years of continuous human occupancy. Modern *Mittimatalingmiut* (Pond Inlet residents) are descendents of the Thule people who arrived in the region in 1,000AD.



**Figure 1- Location of study: Pond Inlet, Nunavut**

Prior to contact with western cultures, Inuit were semi-nomadic, traveling seasonally to follow available game animals. Seasonal camps were generally made up of several nuclear families related by birth, marriage or other kinship ties. Families lived in skin tents in the summers, traveling by foot or by kayak to access game. Harvesting in spring and summer months focused on seal, narwhales, beluga, arctic char, caribou, berries and tundra plants. In the winters, Inuit would aggregate into larger camps, and pass the dark season living in *qarmait* (semi-interred sod houses) or igloos. Warmth and light were provided by seal or caribou-oil *qullit* (lamps) that were tended by women throughout the day and night. In the winter months, Inuit hunted primarily seal and polar bear and traveled with *kamutiit* (sleds) pulled by dog teams. Clothing, hunting supplies and family items were largely constructed from animal skins, sinews, bladders, bones, stones and driftwood. Inuit oral histories depict life prior to European contact as relatively peaceful, and content, though at times dangerous (Dorais, 2001). The rhythms of life followed those of the land, and patience and psychological strength were seen as virtues helping Inuit to withstand food shortages, storms and long dark winters. Contacts with the supernatural were mediated by shamans who performed festivals and rituals and healed

those who had broken the taboos (or customs) that addressed many aspects of Inuit life (Dorais, 2001).

Inuit first came in contact with European explorers in the 1500's, with increased contact as British and American vessels arrived in search of the Northwest passage. Writers like Marie-Rouselliere have found evidence of these early encounters in both expedition records and Inuit oral history (Mary-Rouseliere, 1991). Inuit interaction with outsiders increased again with the growth of the whaling industry in the eastern arctic in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Inuit were employed as seasonal workers at whaling stations and provided the whalers with meat, skins and clothing in exchange for ammunition, metal tools, flour, sugar, tea and tobacco. In their interactions with Scottish whaling crews, Inuit also developed skills in bannock-making, square dancing, fiddling and accordion-playing (Ross, 1975). Though whaling in the region ceased in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, these Scottish influences are still evident in modern communities.

As the whaling industry declined in the early 1900's, a new wave of traders and explorers-turned-traders arrived in the region. The first independent trading post was established in Pond Inlet in 1904, primarily in search of Arctic fox pelts to supply the growing American and European markets (Matthiasson, 1992). The original post was bought by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1920, and by 1923, the death of a Newfoundland-born trader inspired an RCMP trial and the establishment of a detachment in Pond Inlet (Grant, 2002). In 1929, two English Anglican and two French Roman Catholic missionaries arrived in the new settlement, introducing western religion and written syllabics to the local population. By the 1930's, most Inuit had converted to a mixed subsistence and trapping economy and, though they continued to travel seasonally, movements revolved around the general vicinity of the trading post. Aside from introducing trade goods to the region, whalers and traders also introduced the first epidemics of measles, tuberculosis and smallpox to the Arctic. Records show hundreds of deaths in Arctic communities during this period, and many contemporary elders have stories and photographs from evacuations to southern hospitals in the following decades (Wachowich, 1993).

In the years following WWII, the Canadian government adopted a policy of paternalism towards northern aboriginal peoples. Government schools were introduced in the arctic in the 1950's, with a local day school opened in Pond Inlet in 1960. At the time, school attendance was mandatory for all children, and a hostel was built to house those whose families remained on the land. In the 1960's, many families moved seasonally between outpost camps and the new settlement. However, with their children in school, and healthcare, social services and government housing available in the settlement, more and more families took up permanent residence in the community. The last families to leave their outpost camps arrived in Pond Inlet in 1971 and 1972 (Wachowich, 1993).

The new settlement contained a mixed economy, with residents taking part in commercial hunting, trapping and subsistence hunting, as well as taking up labour positions in the post, RCMP detachment, student hostel and, later, with the Hamlet, Co-op store, schools and health centre. Increased interaction with non-Inuit residents, southern school curricula and, later, the introduction of radio and television media all increased the influence of Euro Canadian values and worldviews in Pond Inlet (Matthiasson, 1992). The 1970's and 80's saw an expansion of government infrastructure as well as the construction of a new nursing station, school, gymnasium and a new air strip in Pond Inlet. The Toonoonik-Sahoonik Co-op opened alongside the Hudson's Bay Company store (now the Northern Store), offering groceries, hardware, clothing, hotel and other services. In 1983, the European Economic Community placed an embargo on importing sealskins, which substantially reduced the profitability of commercial hunting in the region (Wachowich, 1993). *Mittimatalingmiut* history through the 20<sup>th</sup> century is characterized by a progressive increase in the role of southern goods, technologies, economies, ideas and institutions in the lives of local Inuit.

The life stories that Wachowich recorded in 1993 depict *Mittimatalingmiut* as having strong memories, values and family relations, but also torn between Inuit and Euro-Canadian lifestyles. Her then 19 year old informant, Sandra Katsak, described the challenges faced by young people navigating issues of education, drugs, suicide, cultural

identity and personal identity. Six years after Wachowich's work, Nunavut was designated as Canada's third territory and an instrument of self-government for Canadian Inuit. Following a de-centralized approach to territorial governance, a government building was constructed at the South end of Pond Inlet, along with a new neighborhood to house government employees. The government building currently employs a number of local Inuit as well as non-Inuit in the departments of Community and Government Services, Qikiqtani School Operations and Economic Development.

Sirmilik National Park, established in 2001, covers all of Bylot Island, to the north of Pond Inlet, as well as portions of Baffin Island to the east and northwest of the community (totaling 27, 258 km<sup>2</sup>). The park is administered out of a local office with five full-time personnel and receives policy direction and support from the Nunavut Field Unit located in Iqaluit. Sirmilik National Park follows a cooperative management model and is guided by a Joint Park Management Board consisting of three representatives appointed by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association and three appointed by the federal government.

When I conducted my fieldwork in 2005/2006, Pond Inlet consisted of approximately 1300 people (more than 90% Inuit). The community contained over 250 homes, a hamlet office, two schools, two churches, a nursing station, a Northern Store, the Co-op, two small hotels, a skating rink, curling arena, radio station, RCMP station, community learning centre, library and visitor centre, two gift shops and a community hall (with a new community centre under construction). Internet, southern music and satellite television were widespread in the community; Inuktitut was the primary language of most children; kamiks, amautiks and homemade parkas were the prevalent outdoor wear; and youth were taking part in throat-singing and Inuit games alongside volleyball, music and soccer programs. The territorial government had made a commitment to apply *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* in all of its activities (Nunavut, 1999). The department of education was developing new culturally relevant school curricula. Environmental Assessment panels were placing increasing weight on traditional knowledge, and Parks Canada had initiated the *Inuit Knowledge Project* as a means to integrate IQ into park management

activities. My work, therefore, took place in the context of widespread efforts to articulate Inuit values and knowledge systems. Schools, governments and resource managers alike were working to make sense of how Inuit culture and ways of knowing could be reflected in modern institutions.

## **2.2 Traditional Knowledge and *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* in Nunavut**

Traditional knowledge has been used, transmitted and communicated as long as Aboriginal cultures have existed. Because it was generally learned through experience, observation and story-telling, traditional knowledge was not documented in writing until relatively recently. Even before it was defined as such, Inuit traditional knowledge has played a substantial role in the work of northern ethnographies, harvesting and behavioral ecology work and land use and occupancy studies (Wenzel, 1999). More recently, land claims negotiation, the establishment of Nunavut Territory and growing interest in the field of traditional knowledge have all contributed to increased attention to the knowledge of Inuit.

There is currently no single, accepted definition of traditional knowledge (Berkes, 1999). One of the most encompassing definitions of the term, however, was developed by the Traditional Knowledge Working Group of the Northwest Territories which defines it as:

*knowledge that derives from, or is rooted in the traditional way of life of Aboriginal people. Traditional knowledge is the accumulated knowledge and understanding of the human place in relation to the universe. This encompasses spiritual relationships, relationships with the natural environment and the use of natural resources, relationships between people; and, is reflected in language, social organization, values, institutions, and laws. (Legat, 1991: 1)*

The term *traditional ecological knowledge* has also been used to refer to the subset of traditional knowledge that relates to the natural world and human interactions with nature. Berkes (1999) defines traditional ecological knowledge as:

*a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief evolving by adaptive process and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationships of living beings (including humans) with one another, and with their environment.*

These definitions are complementary in that they each recognize traditional knowledge as generational knowledge composed of factual, explanatory, practical and spiritual elements. Such knowledge can take the form of stories, facts, oral histories, songs, narratives, skills or rules. Authors Bielawski (1992) and Stevenson (1996) emphasize that the meaning of traditional knowledge is highly dependent on the context in which it is communicated. Stevenson (1996) adds that the term *traditional* knowledge also promotes the misconception that such knowledge is a static collection of past knowledge. To the contrary, he argues that indigenous knowledge is an on-going contemporary process through which communities use modern information to help them apply the cumulative knowledge and experience of past generations to contemporary problems. Though rooted in the past, traditional knowledge is dynamic and evolving such that lessons of the past remain relevant in the present (Kublu *et al.* 1999; Stevenson, 1996). Under such definitions, traditional knowledge emerges not as an assemblage of skills and information, but rather as a process of using, learning, adapting and perpetuating traditional ways of knowing. The concept of traditional knowledge is, therefore, not about knowledge content per se, but about knowledge processes. It is about ways of knowing and ways of coming to know.

In the past several decades, traditional knowledge has come to play an increasing role in development, governance and natural resource management: communities have recruited researchers to document knowledge in order to intervene on issues they felt were not being adequately addressed by government or industry (Usher 1993, in Weinstein, 1996); biologists have employed traditional knowledge to help explain natural phenomena in the north (Fox, 2003); traditional land use and occupancy studies have been used to demonstrate aboriginal people's use and knowledge of land (in the context of land claims negotiations) (Freeman *et al.*, 1976; Riewe 1992); and northern communities have increasingly carried out studies for their own cultural and educational purposes (Kublu *et al.*, 1999). One of the results of this work has been an increased recognition amongst academics and governments of the Inuit knowledge and resource management systems.

Despite growing recognition of traditional knowledge, a number of authors remain critical of efforts to incorporate such knowledge in management and decision-making forums (Nadasdy, 1999; Cruikshank, 1998). Nadasdy focuses his critique on the power relations between traditional and western knowledge systems. He argues that western knowledge, as the dominant system, assumes that the beliefs and practices labeled as traditional knowledge will conform to western conceptions of knowledge. Traditional knowledge is thereby simply incorporated into western systems as new 'data' rather than as a separate and legitimate system of knowing (Nadasdy, 1999). Cruikshank (1998) has further expressed concerns that traditional knowledge loses depth and validity and can be easily misinterpreted or misused when it is taken out of its cultural context and employed in western institutions. Both Nadasdy and Cruikshank describe organizations which have attempted to consider traditional knowledge but have failed to capture the full context and complexity of Indigenous knowledge systems.

The Canadian Inuit - apparently in response to the very concerns expressed by Nadasdy and Cruikshank (Wenzel, 2004) - have chosen to re-define their cultural knowledge using the term *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ). The concept emerged from a 1998 conference organized by the Nunavut Social Development Council (an arm of Nunavut Tungavik Inc.), in which elders from each of Nunavut's Inuit communities were asked to discuss traditional knowledge in the territory. The outcome of this initiative was the term *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* which, literally, means "that which are long known by Inuit." The Working Group defined *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* as:

- *The long-practiced tradition of passing Inuit knowledge, values and teachings from the Elders down to the younger generations.*
- *Inuit knowledge in all areas of life.*
- *A philosophy and a way of living and thinking that is difficult to put into a few words in a short period of time.*
- *The knowledge of wildlife, hunting techniques and an understanding of animal life, biology and migratory patterns.*
- *A knowledge of survival skills without the use of modern technology, such as, but not limited to making clothing appropriate for the climate, how to make and use traditional tools and weapons, weather forecasting and navigation skills.*
- *A knowledge of traditional healing and counseling methods and a system of dealing with fellow Inuit who need help that is based on trust and love.*

- *An understanding of complex family relationships that is explained by Inuktitut kinship terminology. Every family member has a special word or term to explain his or her relationship to each other.*
- *A system of laws, values and consultations before making important decisions that affect the community (WGTK, 1998).*

The concept of IQ was discussed further at a government-wide workshop in 1999, and *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* was subsequently adopted as the guiding directive of the Government of Nunavut (Nunavut, 1999). *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* has since been identified as a key component Nunavut's educational curriculum; as a necessary component of environmental impact assessments (Usher, 2000); as 13 guiding principles in the Nunavut Wildlife Act (Nunavut, 2003); and as critical to National Park management in Nunavut.

While Arnakak (2002, p.39) asserts that "the philosophy of IQ is not to dole out punishment for Nunavut's ills, nor is it our intent for it to be a reaction against perceived injustices, real or imagined", Wenzel (2004) argues that the term was a concerted effort to free Inuit cultural knowledge from the narrow confines of conventional traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) studies. In a brief review of Northern traditional knowledge work, Wenzel (2004) illustrates a disconnect between TEK studies which have focused on facts about the land and anthropological studies that have investigated Inuit beliefs and values. It is evident that many northern projects have fallen short of addressing the values, beliefs and world views that underlie the Inuit's knowledge of natural systems and wildlife species (Wenzel, 2004).

*Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* was certainly developed, in part, to promote culturally relevant governance in Nunavut. As Oosten and Laugrand (2002) suggest, the new term also provides a means to replace and broaden the concept of traditional knowledge. This re-definition of Inuit traditional knowledge also offers Inuit a means to rearticulate, reclaim and re-validate their cultural knowledge. Even the choice of an Inuktitut phrase to represent the concept allows Inuit to assert ownership over what is now referred to as *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*.

Over the last decade, there has been a considerable increase in outside awareness and recognition of Inuit cultural knowledge. As well, substantial progress has been made in applying IQ to shape culturally appropriate governance and decision-making in Canada's newest territory. However, a number of challenges remain in representing *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* in writing, research and institutional processes. Definitions of the term, for instance, still fall short of capturing the entirety of Inuit ways of knowing. As was articulated in the original 1998 definition, *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* represents "a philosophy and a way of living and thinking that is difficult to put into a few words in a short period of time" (WGTK, 1998:14). As well, many non-Inuit researchers, managers and officials, though open to the concept of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, struggle to understand what it is and what it can offer to their work. Even Inuit leaders continue the struggle to incorporate IQ in arenas and institutions conventionally dominated by western thought (Arnakak, 2002).

In 2002, Arnakak forwarded a discussion about the Inuit term itself. He argues that *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, which literally means "that which are long known by Inuit," is a misnomer. He argues that the existing term, using the infix *-jaq-*, connotes passivity. It thus implies that IQ is something historical, and therefore fails to recognize contemporary reality or to include the values of modern Inuit. Instead, Arnakak forwards the term *Inuit Qaujimanituqangit*, suggesting that the infix *-niq-* presents the concept in a more abstract manner. He argues that this version of the term fits more closely with the department of Sustainable Development's definition of IQ as "the past, present and future knowledge, experience and values of Inuit society" (p. 35). While I continue to use the original term in this thesis<sup>2</sup>, Arnakak's words highlight the nature of IQ as something that is dynamic and continually negotiating relationships between the experience of historical and contemporary Inuit. This point resonates well with Stevenson (1996) and Kublu (1999), both of whom emphasize traditional knowledge as an ongoing process of connecting past and present.

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<sup>2</sup> I have chosen to use the term *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* to refer to the Inuit knowledge system because it appears to be the term most commonly used in Pond Inlet, and by those who participated in my work.

My research joins this on-going discussion around articulating, understanding and applying *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* by exploring how Inuit cultural knowledge is understood at the local level. My work moves beyond formal definitions of the term to explore what women's accounts of their lived experiences can tell us about the values, meanings and symbols that shape local perceptions of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. Subsequent chapters explore the ways in which Inuit women talk about their cultural knowledge, as well as the process through which knowledge is transmitted from older to younger generations.

### 2.3 Transmission of Knowledge in the Past

This thesis looks to understand how *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* is transmitted in the modern community of Pond Inlet that is described above. Of course in discussing the recently introduced concept of IQ, we must recognize that Inuit have long held concepts of knowledge and knowledge acquisition that differ from those of western culture. According to Trott (2007, personal communication), Inuit recognize several different kinds of knowledge and several modes of transmitting such knowledge. The Inuktitut terms *isuma-*, *qaujima-*, and *sila-* are used to refer to different kinds of knowledge. *Isuma-*, which relates to the western concept of "reason" describes an individual's ability to solve problems in a logical manner (using an Inuit model of logic). *Qaujima-* which comes from the root word for "light" refers to an understanding of the world reached through personal experience and reflection. It is thus comparable to the English term "enlightenment". Finally, *sila-*, which Trott translates as "wisdom", refers to an individual's accumulated *qaujima-*, experience, and *isuma-*.

In addition to these multiple concepts of knowledge, Trott (2007, personal communication) identifies Inuktitut terms referring to several different modes of learning. The phrase *isumaksaijak* describes a process by which a young person builds reason through personal, practical experience. *Iliniaqtuq*, on the other hand, refers to learning through listening to oral accounts. This method of leaning provides concepts and ideas, but does not link them to a learner's own experiences. The third concept of learning, implied by the verb *ajuqtuq*, refers to the development of personal competence,

presumably from modeling one who leads a good life (Trott, personal communication). While the term IQ is based on the root *qaujima-*, Inuit have, for generations transmitted and acquired a way of knowing that they describe as *sila-*, *qaujima-*, and *isuma-*.

Given the two-year timeframe of the project, it is clearly not possible to make first-hand observations of how learning may have changed since times before contact, or before settlement in the community. Fortunately, a number of oral histories and ethnographies recount instances of learning and cultural transmission, thus providing some picture of how these processes occurred in the past.

Most fundamentally, Inuit pedagogical approaches were shaped by beliefs related to name sharing and the cycling of human spirits. When an Inuit child is born, he or she adopts the soul of a recently deceased community member and is named after that individual. The namesake's soul manifests in the child through personality traits, aptitudes and physical appearance. The child also takes on the knowledge and wisdom of the namesake (Pauktuutit, 2006). A child's education is, therefore, not a matter of "filling" the child with knowledge, but rather of helping her to build the *sila-*, *qaujima-* and *isuma-* that are already inherent in her (Nuttall, 1992).

Because children carry the spirits of previous adults and elders, they are generally offered a great deal of respect and autonomy (Condon, 1987). Inuit do not focus on treating children equally, but rather on allowing each child to develop at her own pace according to her own aptitudes (Pauktuutit, 2006). Children are corrected using facial expressions or subtle tones of voice. They were rarely scolded in the past (NTECE, 1996b). If a child failed to behave as expected, he was not described as being "bad" but as not yet having learned to listen (Condon, 1987). In the past, parents had primary authority and responsibility over their children, but any adult could instruct, nurture or reprimand a child. In the context of life on the land, a child would generally be related to everyone in the camp either by blood, adoption, marriage or naming practices (Dorias, 2001). As such, young people would almost always be learning from their own kin.

Traditional skills were most commonly taught by parents with young boys observing and following the examples of their fathers and young women watching their mothers. Children were encouraged to learn by watching adults and mimicking them to produce miniature igloos, ropes, harnesses and clothing (Pauktuutit, 2006). For instance, young women would be given bone dolls and encouraged to make clothing for them. Once an item was complete, a young girl would show it to the women in her camp and receive feedback. Many elderly women remember being instructed to pull their early sewing projects apart and begin again (Qamaniq Sangoya). Once they had mastered basic skills, girls would be asked to make clothing for other children, and later for women and then hunters. In this way, youth were able to develop skills (or *ajunngittuq*/competence) incrementally, all the while making valuable contributions to household operations (Ekho and Ottokie, 2000; Pauktuutit, 2006).

Inuit also have a strong oral history of legends, stories and individual experiences which were used to entertain, influence and educate youth. Legends, shared by the elders, taught youth about the origins of species, relations between physical and spiritual beings and Inuit values (Kublu *et al.* 1999). For instance, youth were taught that animals were sentient beings, able to hear the thoughts and speech of humans. Hunting was described as a social act through which a hunter linked the human and non-human worlds with which he related. For boys to become successful hunters, they must understand and learn that hunting success reflects not simply the skill, but the attitude and intent of the hunter (Stairs and Wenzel, 1992). Other stories were intended to prepare young people for experiences that they might encounter later in life. For instance, they would be told of their ancestors' experiences with polar bear encounters, storms or starvation, so that they could respond appropriately when faced with similar conditions (Jayko Peterloosie, personal communication). As Trott suggests, this verbal mode of knowledge-sharing would be described by the Inuktitut verb *iliniaqtuq*.

When today's elders were young, in the 1930's and 1940's, they were regularly introduced to new tools and instruments. Inuit saw no negative consequences in applying modern techniques or implements to traditional skills, as long as the tools were

advantageous (Kublu *et al.* 1999). Even at that time, social change was not new. In fact, elders in Pond Inlet remember their own parents and grand parents telling them how different life had been when they were young.

Box I contains a quote that Jayko Peterloosie, a Pond Inlet elder, offered at a focus group meeting that he attended. His words illustrate a number of points summarized above and highlighted in parenthesis throughout the text.

**BOX 1- Jayko Peterloosie describes knowledge transmission in the past [Original in Inuktitut]**

*We didn't just do things by our own, but basically we were told by our fore-fathers about what to expect in our future. For example, even when we were very cold, they never asked us, "Do you want to go home now? Or are you cold at all? ...They used to tell us to run around so we can warm our feet. And when our hands are too cold, we have to put them inside our parkas and try to warm up - exercise. And basically everything was verbal. We were taught verbally. And because we didn't know how to survive as we were learning these things, but only by our parents, they keep telling us, and from their teaching we were able to learn.*

*Male and female have different tasks and that's probably why they were taught different things, because of certain tasks. They were not necessarily told that it was teaching. The mother makes things and the daughter watches. Only after observing these things, then she starts yearning to make things on her own. And the same thing with males too. These things that their fathers are doing, after observing for a while, they start wanting to do things themselves. For example, we were traditional Inuit, and we were told to loosen the thongs of the dog team – to untangle them. And if there was an ice berg, we were told to pick up a certain ice that we could carry...Then once we are capable enough, when we are told to do something, we will know what to do... But we observe people building igloos, and even though we're not told, we try to build miniature igloos on our own. Whatever we see, or whatever is talked about, even though we're not told, we try to do things without being told. And things that we don't know about, or things we can't handle ourselves, while the father is building them, you start to find out...So that's the way we were treated... We'd try not to do things automatically like an experienced person because that's not how we were raised. But only things we can do gradually they start letting us do these things until we're able to achieve a certain task. Some times it was impossible at first but persistence pays off... Gradually we were able to accomplish making these things..*

*For example, when the father doesn't have anything to do, they start telling stories about things in the future, things we haven't even experienced yet. For example, he's telling a story – some stories can be very brief... The reason for that is that he might die at any time and they want to pass their knowledge onto you while they could. So they'll be capable and if these conversations were not handed down to you, you won't know. Because they were taught these things, mainly about manly things, hunting and whatnot, because we were male. They didn't really teach us anything about woman stuff. It was basically a man-to-man talk, father to son talk And the woman for example, the mother is teaching her certain tasks and things she will experience in life, and how do you scrape the seal skin; how do you prepare the caribou skin; and how to cut the patterns...So, that's how it was. That's my experience.*

Peterloosie's words describe his experience acquiring what he now refers to as *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. His narrative illustrates examples of learning through experience, listening and observation. He describes learning as gender-specific, incremental, and embedded in experiences constructing miniatures of adult objects, helping with family chores and listening to stories and lessons from his elders. Considering the significant social changes that have taken place over the last 50 years in Pond Inlet, how will the learning experiences of modern youth compare to Peterloosie's narrative? In the modern context of schools, extracurricular activities, *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* projects and global media, how do youth see their cultural knowledge, and how do they acquire it? How can we go about understanding their individual perceptions and experiences of the transmission process?



## CHAPTER 3

### ~ Research Approach and Methods ~

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This research focuses on building an understanding of how people from another culture make sense of their own cultural knowledge, and how they see themselves acquiring it. The research process must therefore be sensitive to cultural differences, relationship building and the considerable challenges of communicating personal perceptions and meaning. This chapter describes the approach that I took to living, working and building dialogue with *Mittimatalingmiut*. It chronicles my activities over two field seasons and describes the methods through which I developed my understanding of knowledge transmission in Pond Inlet.

#### 3.1 Approach to the Research

I have approached my fieldwork and analysis with a reflexive micro-ethnographic approach that is attentive to the human capacity for symbolic interaction. This interactionist approach draws from ideas introduced by Herbert Blumer and George Mead. Symbolic interactionism assumes that humans live in a world of *objects* that include people, things, images and concepts (including a thing called IQ, and a process of knowledge transmission). The shared symbols, gestures and languages that surround

these objects are both a product and process of human communication, conceptualization and reflection. Individuals cannot properly consider an object until there is a language with which to speak and think about it. Prus (1994) explains that this language, and the often varied meanings associated with it, are collectively negotiated through social interaction and dialogue. The resulting language and symbols become a means of gaining shared perspective, as well as a framework through which individuals understand, interpret, act and represent their lived experiences (Prus, 1996). People's meanings and perception are certainly subjective, but they are the reality through which individuals experience their worlds, and are thus real and valuable accounts of the world. My research seeks to understand the various meanings that Inuit women have for *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* and the ways that they transmit this knowledge. The theory of symbolic interactionism explains that young Inuit understand and portray their learning experiences by drawing on a host of socially constructed language, symbols and meanings.

Unlike conventional anthropological *macro*-ethnographies which seek to understand entire cultures and ways of life, this *micro*-ethnography (Berg, 2004) focuses on one specific phenomenon: knowledge transmission. The goal of my fieldwork was to take part in people's lives and to work with them to build an understanding of their perceptions of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* and their experiences with the transmission process. My work draws heavily on focus groups and interviews, but my residence in the community, participant observation and fieldnotes all provided the cultural context that is crucial for understanding and interpreting my transcripts and observations.

In the chapters that follow, I discuss local meanings, perceptions and experiences in IQ transmission, with attention to the social and cultural context in which Inuit women experience, acquire and share their knowledge. However, like the participants in my work, I also exist in a social-cultural-historic world and cannot help but produce a subjective account of my findings (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2005). I am ultimately one individual interpreting other individuals who are also busy interpreting the world (Prus, 1994). My descriptions of their perceptions are inevitably influenced by my own

position as a young Euro-Canadian woman and an academic who is sympathetic to Inuit cultural preservation efforts. What I present in this thesis is not a direct account of Inuit perceptions of knowledge transmission – it is my own understanding of the manner in which the participants interpret their experiences in sharing, learning, adapting and applying *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*.

### **3.2 Methods**

The discussions in this thesis draw from my experiences during 6.5 months of fieldwork in Pond Inlet, Nunavut during the fall months of 2005 and 2006. The qualitative research techniques that I employed in these two field seasons are described below.

#### **3.2.1 Field Season I**

The first field season took place between August and December of 2005. A good portion of the work during this period focused on cultural acclimatization, gaining local approval of the research project and scoping local concerns and priorities related to *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, youth and transmission. Research approval was gained both formally and informally from Sirmilik National Park (SNP), the Nunavut Impact and Review Board, the University of Manitoba Human Ethics Review Board, the Pond Inlet Hamlet Council, the Pond Inlet District Education Authority and the local Hunters and Trappers Organization. A formal research agreement was also developed and signed with the local District Education Authority (DEA). The primary research methods that I employed in 2005 were participant observation and the coordination of a school-based knowledge transmission program called the Polar Bear Encounters Project (PBEP).

#### ***Participant Observation***

Participant observation and written fieldnotes provided a structured means of consciously reflecting on what I learned in the field. Because my research seeks to understand a phenomenon which is part of everyday life, it was important that I develop an appreciation and understanding of cultural norms and social life in the community (Bernard, 1988). In my work, participant observation involved spending 7 months immersed in the community and culture that I was studying. I made an effort to establish

rapport and take part in daily activities and events in the community, while remaining conscious of what I was learning. I then documented and reflected on my observations by typing fieldnotes on my computer each night. My fieldnotes follow the reflexive approach recommended by Emerson et al (1995) and address a wide range of interpersonal interactions, daily activities and community events. Many of my entries reflect on informal conversations and observations that took place while visiting with friends, eating poutine in the local co-op, berry-picking, ice-fishing or seal hunting. Others reflect on my experiences working with youth as a substitute teacher, soccer coach, organizer of a mural-painting project and the PBEP. The fieldnotes document concerns and priorities identified during informal interviews with members of the DEA, the elementary school principal and junior high teachers. I also attended several community events including a workshop of elders, parents and educators addressing the incorporation of Inuit culture in formal education. The fieldnotes offered a forum for me to systematically and reflexively document my interactions with local people; their behaviors, comments and concerns; as well as my own interpretations and preliminary analyses of this information. The understandings that I gained through participant observation certainly shaped my interactions with participants, the format of the meetings and activities that I organized and the questions that I asked through the research process. Most importantly, these understandings have provided the cultural context with which I have interpreted local accounts and presented my research findings.

### ***Polar Bear Encounters Project***

The Polar Bear Encounters Project was a school-based IQ project that I organized in order to promote and observe knowledge transmission in an institutional, or programmed, environment. It was modeled after, but elaborated upon, two youth-elder interview projects that had been carried out in the school in previous years. The project design was also influenced by similar initiatives at Nunavut Arctic College (Kublu *et al.* 1999), by Orr and Orr (1995) and Marles *et al.* (2000). The PBEP involved introducing young people to semi-structured, oral history interview techniques and engaging them in carrying out interviews with local knowledge holders. Human-polar bear encounters were selected as a topic of focus based on suggestions by the Sirmilik National Park

(SNP) Inuit Knowledge Working Group that bear numbers and incidents of encounters had increased in recent years.

The project took place over 6 weeks and involved students from the grade 10 Northern Studies class at Nasivvik high school. The class consisted of ten core students – 3 males and 7 females – who ranged from 16 to 22 years of age. Two weeks of training introduced students to the Parks *Canada Inuit Knowledge Project*, SNP's bear management activities, oral history interviewing techniques, mapping protocols, transcription skills and the use and operation of recording equipment. The students hosted a phone-in show on the local radio to collect stories of encounters with bears and conducted interviews with 12 hunters and knowledge holders. For each interview, one student acted as the interviewer, one operated a digital camera, another had a video camera and the remainder took written notes. The interviews were conducted almost entirely in Inuktitut with translation for myself and the classroom teacher.

This initiative allowed me to become a participant-observer in a school-based learning context. Though this was not a teacher- or community-generated program (I coordinated it myself), it nevertheless allowed me to observe interactions between youth and elders as they shared knowledge in the institutional environment of the local high school. I was able to document the kinds of knowledge that hunters and elders choose to share with young people and the manner in which they approached and emphasized key teachings. Aside from receiving on-going oral feedback from students, I had the students keep individual journals to explore their areas of interest with respect to *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. They wrote short entries about personal experiences with elders, as well as their reactions to and reflections on the interactions that took place during our interview sessions. The students also completed several assignments to practice their interviewing skills and learn to draw themes out of multiple interviews. The project concluded with a final survey designed to determine the young peoples' responses to the program as a whole.

### *Transition to the Second Field Season*

My experience with the PBEP provided me with an opportunity to observe the process of knowledge transmission in the school environment. It also provided insight into the young participants' interests and anxieties related to *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* and interactions with elders. Moreover, my work in the school allowed me to become familiar with many local youth and to build relationships with Inuit and non-Inuit instructors engaged in bringing IQ into the school. My activities outside of the classroom highlighted a number of community concerns related to youth-elder relations, language and cultural erosion and knowledge transmission. However, much of the commentary that I documented reflected the opinions of parents, elders and educators, rather than young people themselves. Even the community workshop on incorporating *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* into education, which included more than 50 individuals, had no young representatives to present their perspectives. It was not clear if the priorities and perceptions articulated by the adults were in fact shared by local youth. While my fieldnotes documented my own observations of learning events and of young people's reactions to them, neither they nor the student journals offered a clear picture of how youth value and make sense of these experiences. The learners' perspectives represented a clear gap in the community dialogue around *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* and knowledge transmission.

When I visited Pond Inlet again in the fall of 2006, I decided to focus my work specifically on documenting the experiences and perceptions of young people in the process of acquiring *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*. I also focused this field season on working outside of the school environment so that I could build a better understanding of the processes through which knowledge is transmitted in the family and community setting. While the student journals from the PBEP had provided some indication of young people's interests in and attitudes towards IQ, it was clear that if I was to develop a proper understanding of young people's perspectives, I would have to develop a greater level of intimacy, spend more individual time, and engage in longer, more in-depth discussions with the participants than I was able to do during the PBEP. It was at this point that I decided to work with only three young participants and to involve them in a

series of interviews and focus groups through which we could explore ideas in both individual and group settings.

The choice to work with all female participants in the second field season was influenced by two factors. The first was my awareness of the trend among traditional knowledge studies to focus on male informants and men's knowledge. I was not aware of any work in Pond Inlet that had focused specifically on women and female ways of knowing. I was interested in beginning to address that gap in the literature. The second factor in my choice to work with female participants was the role that I had already established as a young female researcher in the community. Given my age, gender, and the relationships that I had developed in the previous field season, I felt that it would be easiest, as well as most socially acceptable, to develop the kind of relationships that I was interested in with young women instead of young men. This is where Malaya, Wendy, Joyce, and their elderly relatives, Qamaniq, Annie and Elisapee came into my work, as described below.

What ultimately emerged from my work with these women was a strong story that shed light on women's perceptions of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. The strength of their personal accounts and group discussions compelled me to focus my thesis on the gendered perceptions and experiences of young women involved in acquiring IQ. The first field season continues to be a key part of my work, as it provided an orientation to the community, an overview of community concerns related to knowledge and culture and an understanding of the process through which IQ is acquired in the school environment. However, the bulk of the discussion in this thesis revolves around my work with *Mittimatalingmiut* women, which took place between August and November of 2006.

### **3.2.2 Field Season II**

The three young women who participated in my second season of field work are all in their early 20's. They come from a range of family and financial backgrounds, and as two grade 12 students and one high school graduate, these women represent a relatively well-educated subset of local youth. I have changed their names to Malaya, Wendy, and Joyce for reasons of confidentiality. I should be clear that these individuals are not a

representative sample of youth, or young women in Pond Inlet. When I approached them to participate in my work, I was primarily looking for young women who would be willing to reflect on their learning experiences and engage in in-depth discussions about the concept of knowledge transmission. I had asked a number of local friends, leaders, teachers and a social worker to identify young women who were insightful, well-spoken and might be interested in the project. I then phoned each of the women to explain my work and later met with them to discuss and confirm their participation.

I also involved three elderly women in this phase of the work, each of whom is related to one of the young women. The elderly women were identified partly for their relations to the young women, but also because of their status as respected community elders with experience raising, counseling and instructing young people. Elisapee Ootoova is a long time educator, language specialist and advocate for preserving IQ. She received the Governor General's Award in 2002 for her work as an educator and role model for youth across Nunavut. Annie Peterloosie speaks and performs regularly at community gatherings in Pond Inlet and serves as an advisor on traditional healing and justice in the community's court. Qamaniq Sangoya is a highly accomplished sewer, caregiver to sick and grieving people, midwife and grandmother to more children than she was able to count for me. She is also a recipient of the Caring Canadian Award (2002) and Wise Women Award (1999) for her work in the community.

I worked with these women over the course of six weeks, using a combination of focus groups, individual interviews and photographic narrative exercises. Specific events took place in the sequence shown in Box 2. All interviews and focus groups were recorded with a Sony mini-disc recorder. Interviews with the three young women were conducted in English, while the focus groups and interviews with elders were done in Inuktitut with a local interpreter. Full English-language transcripts were subsequently developed for analysis of all interview and focus group session. I continued to keep detailed fieldnotes of my daily experiences including observations of non-oral communication and interactions during individual interviews and focus groups.

**BOX 2 - Sequence of methods employed in Pond Inlet in the fall of 2006**

- I. Individual interview with each elder (September 13-16)**
  - identified key issues, concerns and priorities
- II. Focus group meeting #1 (September 17)**
  - discussed of research project/process, and the concept of IQ
- III. Individual interviews with young woman (September 20-24)**
  - documented biographical information and discussed interests in IQ
  - introduced photographic narrative exercise
- IV. Photographic narrative interviews (October 1-4)**
  - discussed photographs taken by young women
- V. Focus group meeting #2 (October 5)**
  - continued discussion of key issues
- VI. Individual interview with one young woman (others not available) (October 7)**
  - discussed experiences learning on the land and in school, as well as challenges facing modern youth
- VII. Focus group meeting #3 (October 13)**
  - discussed specific questions that young women had for the elders
- VIII. Individual interviews with young women (October 18-26)**
  - filled gaps in information and discussed preliminary interpretations
- IX. Focus group meeting #4 (November 2)**
  - presented and discussed preliminary findings

***Focus Groups***

I conducted a total of four focus groups, each of which brought the young and elderly women together to discuss key aspects of knowledge transmission. The general themes of these meetings are summarized in Box 1. The focus group meetings generated dialogue on *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* and knowledge transmission, and allowed the women to share experiences with one another. The meetings also provided an opportunity for learning to take place as the elders shared their knowledge with the younger participants.

The dynamics of the group were clearly influenced by kinship ties, age and differential social power between the elders and the young women (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2007). The fact that individuals were related to each other meant that most participants were

quite comfortable in the group. The only significant challenge related to group dynamics was tendency of the young women to defer authority to the elders (according to Inuit customs of respect), listening carefully, but speaking little during the meetings.

A significant advantage of the focus group technique was its effectiveness in disrupting the power dynamics of a conventional researcher-participant relationship (Berg, 2004). Rather than guiding discussions as I may have in individual interviews, I was able to introduce general themes like “*Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*”, “youth-elder relationships”, or “learning on the land” and allow the participants to engage in a dialogue amongst themselves. Without my continual questioning and probing, the women were able to highlight the issues that they felt were most important and frame those discussions as they saw fit (Berg, 2004). Because they were talking to each other, I was able to observe how Inuit articulate and discuss learning amongst themselves as well as how they occasionally re-phrase their ideas to make sure that I understand (Berg, 2004). Jackson (2003) suggests that participants often learn from each other over the course of focus group discussions. In this case, elders were sharing knowledge and addressing the young women’s questions during the meetings. Although this was not an entirely spontaneous setting, it nonetheless allowed me to observe knowledge transmission as it was taking place. In fact, I had originally planned to hold only two focus group meetings with the elders present, but extended it to four at the request of Joyce and Malaya who stayed after the first meeting to ask if we could schedule others.

Berg (2004) asserts that one of the key functions of focus groups is to generate meanings and answers that are socially constructed, rather than individually created. The synergistic nature of groups allows them to brainstorm new ideas, issues, topics and solutions to problems. The result is a socially negotiated collective understanding of the phenomenon under discussion. The synergistic effect emerged in my own work as the negotiation of collective themes with which to frame and describe IQ and the transmission process. These narratives are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

### *Interviews*

In-depth semi-structured interviews provided a space for both the elders and the young women to reflect on their experiences and share their individual perceptions, opinions and explanations of knowledge transmission. In individual interviews, we were able to discuss the details and context of their experiences without interruption by other participants, or issues of group confidentiality. The women's accounts are inherently subjective, but each is valid as a social event, relevant in the physical, social and political context in which it was shared (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2005). These accounts not only provide information about the events and experiences that they describe, but also about the women's values, priorities and perspectives.

The primary drawback of the interview data that I collected is the prominent role of my own voice in the transcripts. When I spoke with the elderly women, I was able to ask open-ended questions and allowed them to direct and frame their responses. The young women, on the other hand, were significantly less confident providing long narratives. As a result, I had to probe with considerably more questions, and feel that I inevitably directed our conversations to some degree in that process. On a number of occasions, I inadvertently asked blatantly leading questions, but have been careful to account for the biases that I introduced in my analysis and presentation of the women's accounts.

The young women also used individual interviews as a place to reflect on and respond to comments made by others in the focus group meetings. Since the young women spoke relatively little during group meetings, the individual interviews were particularly useful for accessing their impressions of the interactions and discussions at the group level. The interviews ensured that all six voices contributed to the larger discussion of knowledge transmission.

### *Photographic Narrative*

Another key technique in my fieldwork was the use of photographic narrative. This technique involves research participants taking photographs of their worlds and subsequently explaining their photographs in oral or written narratives (Beckley, 2002).

The exercise of having participants compose photographs enables them to convert cognitive perceptions, ideas and images into physical photographs. The photographs then offer a means to discuss the cognitive images that gave rise to them (Pink *et al.*, 2007). In this case, I gave the women disposable cameras (though one used her own digital camera) and asked them to take pictures of the people, places and things that they associate with learning *Inuit Qaujimagajatuqangit*. I then interviewed each woman about her photographs, asking her to explain why she took each one, and what it was meant to represent. This exercise allowed us to situate a rather obscure discussion of knowledge transmission in specific events, relationships and locations. The open-end nature of the approach allowed the women to focus on the learning experiences that were most meaningful to them, and to discuss their priorities using their own language, terms and categories. It therefore drastically reduced the amount of bias that I could contribute to the interviews as a researcher (Emerson *et al.*, 1995).

Interestingly, because of logistical issues around developing prints, I interviewed two of the three young women without copies of the photographs present for me to see. The quality of the narratives that came out of these interviews suggests that the presence of actual photographs is not absolutely necessary to this method. The simple act of taking pictures requires participants to reflect on, prioritize and then represent social phenomenon. Even before a young woman had finished pressing the shutter-button on her camera, she had already converted her cognitive understandings into an image that she could describe orally. In fact, the narratives that emerged to describe these absent photographs offered a good deal of insight into local perceptions of transmission, even when the photographs themselves were not available.

### **3.3 Analysis of Data**

Analysis of the data that emerged from these techniques took place throughout the research process. The on-going written fieldnotes provided a preliminary forum for analysis and have contributed to much of what appears in this thesis. My extended stay in Pond Inlet allowed considerable time for re-reading and working with the interview and focus group transcripts. I constructed analytical fieldnotes (Emerson *et al.*, 1995) to

identify emerging categories, key issues, contrasting accounts and accounts that evolved over the course of the research. A number of these analytical notes were written following conversations with my interpreter who would come by with interview transcripts and stay to discuss her interpretation of the content. Other interpretations emerged as I mentioned findings to friends over the phone and responded to their questions. These analytical fieldnotes played a role throughout the research process. They helped to focus my attention to specific aspects of the inquiry, to identify lines of questioning, and to shape my final analysis and presentation of the research outcomes.

Upon returning from the field, I began to elaborate and refine the insights in the fieldnotes through a more systematic analysis. I selected a number of core themes that represented underlying local understandings and issues that seemed most significant to the participants. Fieldnotes and transcripts were coded according to these themes and theoretical linkages built around them. I made a concerted effort throughout the analysis to reflect on how the social context of my interactions influenced the accounts that I recorded. In the case of focus group transcripts, some comments were made clearly for my benefit, while others were intended to share knowledge with the young women. My individual interviews were likely very much shaped by my personal relationships with the women and their respective understandings of what my research might do to publish or generate responses to their concerns.

The discussions in this thesis are the result of this gradual process of analysis. The subsequent chapters focus largely on my work during the second field season (the 2006 interviews) but also make a number of references to the Polar Bear Encounters Project. What may not be explicit in the text is the extent to which I have relied on observations, experiences and conversations from the first field season to frame my understanding and analyses of the interview and focus group materials that are presented herein. Though the thesis places a good deal of emphasis on examples from the second field season, it does represent my understandings as they were shaped by two field seasons, and six and a half months in Pond Inlet.

### **3.4 Respondent Verification**

Data and interpretations were presented to the participants on a number of occasions to assess their validity. Students in the Polar Bear Encounters Project were asked to review a typed draft of their personal journal entries prior to the end of the project. During the final interview with each of the young women in 2006, I shared my understanding of her experiences and the key messages that she had articulated in recounting them.

Information drawn from the group processes was addressed in our final focus group meeting. I used this meeting to present my preliminary interpretations of the data as a whole and solicit feedback from all six group members. I have since emailed each of the young women with sections of the thesis that draw specifically from their accounts. The participants have thus been able to correct misinterpretations or incorrect details, and reaffirm their consent to publish the information. In this project, respondent validation was primarily intended to correct errors in translation and transcription of participant accounts. While participant responses to my analyses are valuable in gauging the local acceptability and applicability of my work, they can neither verify nor refute my overall findings (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2005). The analyses presented here represent my own account of knowledge transmission in Pond Inlet and touch on some aspects of the phenomenon that participants themselves are only partially conscious of.

### **3.5 Limitations**

While the combination of techniques in this project represents a form of methodological triangulation (Creswell, 2007), the thesis draws heavily on solicited accounts recorded during interviews and focus groups. This focus on the oral accounts of a small number of individuals conveys a number of limitations for the scope and applicability of the research results.

First, in-depth interviews and focus groups are inherently limited to discussing phenomena that participants are either consciously or semi-consciously aware of (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). Anthropologists have described cultural learning at a number of levels of awareness, using terms such as *conscious*, *unconscious*, *concomitant* and *latent* learning (Wolcott, 1987). If learning takes place at multiple levels of

consciousness, then the learning documented in my interview and focus group transcripts is likely only part of the multiple kinds of learning that these individuals experience. For instance, interviews about knowledge transmission have dealt extensively with transmission through formal institutions and through elders inside and outside of the family. What are conspicuously absent in these accounts are detailed descriptions of learning from parents in the home. This gap is discussed further in Chapter 6 but suggests that much of the learning that takes place in the home (particularly at a young age) represents these less-conscious forms of transmission. The research methodology has thus focused the discussions that follow primarily on the realm of conscious processes of transmission.

It is also important to recognize that there is often some discrepancy between what individuals say is important to them, and the factors that actually influence their day to day actions. My experiences as a participant observer offer some insight into contextualized interactions. However, my heavy use of oral accounts focuses the discussion not only on the transmission experiences that participants are aware of, but also on those that they choose to recount in interviews, photographic narratives and focus groups discussions. In some instances, member's comments may represent idealized, edited or only partial accounts of their lived realities.

Finally, there is the problem of generalizing research findings that draw heavily on the accounts of a small number of informants. The experiences of the young participants cannot be applied across Pond Inlet youth, and another study would be required to compare the experiences of young men to those of the young women that are described here. Moreover, learning in other Inuit communities is almost certainly influenced by social, cultural and environmental factors distinct from those in Pond Inlet. While my research findings are not widely applicable, they offer a detailed view into the lives of a few learners in an important social, historical and environmental context. These accounts are presented with a view to building understanding of the contextual realities of the transmission of a modern kind of knowledge in a modern community. Though these findings cannot be used to generalize across Inuit communities, they illustrate the

relationships, motivations and frustrations that shape knowledge transmission in the lives of several young Inuit. They thereby offer insight into similar processes that may be underway in other communities. Ultimately, the discussions that follow attempt to provide a few pieces in the puzzle of understanding how Inuit experience, understand and give meaning to the process of IQ transmission.



## CHAPTER 4

### ~ Learning Experiences of Three Inuit Youth ~

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The first objective of my research was to document the learning experiences of the three young women who participated in my work. The stories and ideas that Malaya, Wendy, Joyce and I recorded during our interviews not only illustrate their attitudes towards *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, but help to build an understanding of what it is like to acquire IQ in a modern Inuit community. In this chapter, I introduce each of the three young women, sharing some of their personal accounts in order to create a picture of their lived experiences with *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. The details of these accounts shed light on the activities, institutions and rhythms of life in the modern hamlet of Pond Inlet. Each woman's stories also build an appreciation for the personal circumstances, relationships and personalities that set the context for her perceptions and ideas. This chapter draws almost entirely from my interviews, focus groups and visits with three young women in their early twenties. In a few instances, I also include information from discussions with the girls' parents and grandparents. What follow are the accounts of the women's learning experiences as I came to understand them over the course of our work together.

I present the accounts here with minimal analysis in an attempt to create a picture, or *show* rather than *tell* about their experiences. It is my intent that the details of these individual, often multi-faceted lives will provide a framework with which to appreciate and understand the discussions and ideas explored in Chapters 5 and 6.

Before I proceed, I will make brief comment on the kinds of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* that the women report learning. Although I had initially intended to discuss the transmission of knowledge related to the natural environment, the accounts below depict learning *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* in a more holistic sense. They discuss the relationships and activities involved in learning sewing techniques, skin preparation, survival skills, family values, sharing practices, local history and child-rearing skills. This is clearly a much wider scope of topics than I had anticipated. I believe that our interviews expanded beyond *ecological* kinds of knowledge for a number of reasons. First, as the themes in Chapter 5 will illustrate, Inuit perceive the various facets of their knowledge as complex, interconnected and mutually relevant. If the way that a mother disciplines her young son affects his future relationships with wildlife (Ootoova), then a young person who learns child-rearing skills is also learning about Inuit cosmology and about survival on the land. Because the young women understand this knowledge as holistic, they find it quite difficult to speak of learning *environmental* knowledge at the exclusion of other kinds of knowing.

A second reason for the de-emphasis on environmental knowledge in these accounts stems from the reality that these women spend little time on the land. While some young Inuit men are taken hunting throughout the year, most females participate in only occasional family outings in the summer and early fall. As such, their interests in *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* tend to revolve around activities in the family and the community, rather than on the land. Young women may be quite familiar with knowledge of how to prepare and use harvested animals, but are generally less able to talk about learning to predict weather, travel on the ice or harvest animals. Of course, this is not necessarily a function of social change. As Collington (2006) emphasizes, women's roles have traditionally not required them to have detailed knowledge of either navigation or

harvesting activities. In fact, it may even be an advantage for young women (and the transmission of women's knowledge) that they can practice traditional activities without having to leave their homes or communities. Because men's knowledge, on the other hand, is closely tied to routes, features and places on the land (Collingnon, 2006), boys may be more reliant on land-based excursions to build their *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*.

Although my sessions with *Mittimatalingmiut* women did not follow the ecological focus that I had anticipated, they are nevertheless relevant to the discussion at hand. The accounts that follow communicate how young women learn holistic *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* in a modern Inuit community

#### **4.1 Malaya**

Malaya is 21, confident, smiling and engagingly sociable. She has graduated from high school and now stays with her parents, looking after her 10-month old baby, Carla. She and her boyfriend are second on the community waiting list for their own house and poised to settle as a new family. Her passions and current interests in traditional knowledge are unmistakable: fashion, her daughter and her relationship with her boyfriend.

Biologically, Malaya is half-Irish. However, her mother met and settled with her Inuk step-father several months before Malaya was born, so she has grown up in an Inuit household. Her mother tells me that she had initially planned to adopt her daughter out, and while she certainly loved her, she left her with much more freedom than the other children. As a result, Malaya spent a good portion of her childhood playing in the community and visiting with elders, including her maternal grandparents. She cannot remember a time when she did not feel comfortable or accepted by the elders. Even as a little girl, elders would stop and say hello, calling her by her Inuktitut name, "*Arnakuluk*".

When it comes to IQ, Malaya's grandfather sits prominently among her teachers. Malaya is very open with her grandfather about her life and personal concerns and often sits and talks with him. She finds that he offers advice more than she gets the chance to ask for it.

He gives her that advice in the form of long stories where the message is only clear at the end: “*Like started from this little thing and it goes all the way, all the way, all the way, all the way. And just back to there*”, [she gestures, running her finger in an arc out from a starting point but stops before she makes a full circle]. “*and that’s when I have to go, or that’s when my grandma asks for help.*” Malaya’s only regret is that their visits are often interrupted, and they do not always have the chance to bring the stories full-circle. Her grandfather is quite active in the community and often speaks at the school and community events, trying to apply his Inuit traditional values to the community’s modern concerns:

*He always tells me what he’s going to talk to the public. Like, he calls me to see if it sounds good – if it’s going to be helpful. That’s how we communicate. He always has things to tell me before he do stuff... For some reason, before he does it, he gives himself a day to think about what he’s going to do – mix it into a modern way, in the Inuit values way. And he’s got lots of dreams too.*  
[Original in English]

Though she says she rarely suggests changes to her grandfather’s speeches, it seems that he is using her as a sounding-board to evaluate the appropriateness of his traditional knowledge in the modern context. The learning in this relationship clearly flows both ways. In fact, when I asked Malaya if she knows of anything that she has taught her grandfather, she answered:

*Yeah, I think one thing. I’m not too sure, but I think in a coping way, something like, you know when we do something wrong or we say a bad thing or a bad word to someone, we ask God for forgiveness, but we don’t ask that person for forgiveness [We apologize to God, but not to the person we offended.] I think that’s the thing I made him kind of think. He kind of got it. I think I kind of gave him a click or something. I told him that it would be even better for our lives, not only for God, but to the person who we did something to.*  
[Original in English]

Here, Malaya is not talking strictly about IQ, but she demonstrates how conversations with her grandfather allow each of them to share ideas, and each of them to learn from the other. When Malaya talks with her grandmother, she sometimes hears about life on the land, but more often talks about fashion and clothing design. The two of them recently designed a wedding dress for a cousin’s wife and generally consult each other for pattern and design advice before they start on new sewing projects. When she was 16

years old and arguing with a boyfriend, Malaya sat crying with her grandmother's support. These days, she says she gets support from a combination of her friends, boyfriend and grandparents. "But when it goes to deep deep deep problems, I go to my grandparents. They give me time to talk. They're really good."

Malaya's grandparents are not the only elders who she visits and is able to learn from. In fact, she is interested in learning to make small *kamiks* for her daughter, so that she can improve her skills as the little girl grows. She plans to ask for instruction from an elder who she has come to know and already learned a fair bit from through a community prenatal group (for expectant women and young mothers) that she attends twice a week. Malaya also has several elders who she calls her "buddies" who she befriended while working for two summers as a coordinator with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Her job was to help organize and attend a two-week camping trip with 15 elders, designed to get elders out on the land and allow them to visit significant sites, such as, where they lived as children, or where deceased loved ones last went camping. Malaya brought me a stack of photographs from the camp and talked of accompanying the elders as they traveled, fished, cooked and remembered the past. Though she used to go camping every spring with a group of families, Malaya says that there are certain skills, like learning to make a seal rope, or even learning to light a seal-oil lamp (her parents use a Coleman stove), that she was not exposed to until she spent time on the land with the elders.

Malaya also recounts learning a number of travel and survival skills through her involvement in the local Cadets program. The program itself was run by a southern high school teacher, one who took care to bring in local experts and to teach Inuit approaches to Arctic travel and survival. For instance, Malaya and 50 other young people built igloos and slept in them to learn what size and construction would keep them warmest through the night. She also remembers learning how to memorize cracks and formations in the ice, in case a fog came in while they were traveling and the ice was the only clue for navigation.

Of the three girls I worked with, Malaya is most familiar with Inuit values, practices and the elders. However, she is also very much aware of standing at the divide between traditional and modern ways. Malaya sees herself as very modern: she wants to have a comfortable home with a sizable TV; she speaks English with her boyfriend and eats 3 meals a day, in the “southern” style. When it came to our interviews, she and I could not meet on Thursday nights because *America’s Next Top Model* was on TV, and when I asked who she would identify as a role model for local youth, she answered:

*Oprah Winfrey is a good role model for me. I love Oprah, seriously, she’s a good model for me, like the way she does things, and she does a lot for people. She helps people, and at the same time she’s always learning.*  
[Original in English]

This is an interesting answer, considering that Oprah’s message often revolves around the types of values and knowledge (from a non-Inuit culture) that support a good life, positive initiatives and healthy relationships.

Regardless, Malaya is still interested in and wants to maintain traditional elements in her life. Country food, camping trips and Inuit food sharing practices were givens in the family that she grew up in. She now realizes that they may not be givens in the family that she creates with her boyfriend, who was raised by a Caucasian father in a less traditional household. When we met as a group, Malaya’s questions for the elders revolved around these issues of bringing traditional values into her relationship and bridging the differences between her more “Inuit” and his more “southern” culture. One example that she mentioned was her family’s practice of allowing the grandmother (who is not lactating), or a close friend who is lactating, to breast-feed a baby. The practice is intended to provide the child with intimacy and security from several different care-givers. While Malaya thinks nothing of allowing her child to nurse from its grandmother, the practice strikes her boyfriend as bizarre and somewhat inappropriate. This example presents one small difference in parenting strategies, but one that leaves Malaya balancing between not only the traditional and the modern, but also between things Inuit and things southern. Her ultimate goal is to raise her baby to be bilingual and close to both sets of grandparents. She also hopes that the child will

continue to eat country food, wear home-made kamiks and parkas and learn cultural values from her Inuit grandparents.

Malaya's interests in fashion also seem to straddle the line of traditional and modern. She owns five different *amautiks* (two of which she made herself), wears traditional *kamiks*, and plans to make a pair of matching parkas as soon as she and her baby can walk together. She comes to visit me in a beautifully-made *amautik* that she calls "classic white" (with pink and purple trim) because in the old days there wasn't any colored fabric available to sew with. Underneath, she wears a loose knit low v-neck sweater in thick bright blue stripes, with a thin camisole underneath. Another day, Malaya shows me another rather un-conventional *amautik* that she made. It is a dark blue, almost shimmering coat, without the front and back "tails" of a traditional *amautik*, and with a zipper running right up the front. Malaya's sewing, though often modern in style, still fills the traditional role of providing for and showing love for her family and friends. She has made warm clothing for herself, her boyfriend and her baby. She has helped friends design parkas and sewn graduation dresses for girls in the community. In her sewing, Malaya is clearly combining northern and southern fashions, natural and synthetic materials and traditional and modern sewing techniques. The products that she develops and her motivations for sewing also seem to balance somewhere between obviously traditional and purely modern.

Malaya certainly has a good network through which to learn Inuit ways. She has close relationships with her grandparents and her aunt, all three of whom are among the most active leaders in the community. Her mother is also a well-respected Inuk woman who, according to the grandmother, was raised in the proper Inuit way. Malaya has not expressed any frustration in her dealings with elders and cannot remember a time that she wanted to learn something but could not find a way to do it. She is clearly comfortable in our group meetings, listening and speaking easily when she has a question. Malaya is also a modern young woman, not unusual in her interest in fashion, relationships and her child. It seems that Malaya's primary challenge will be to balance traditional and modern

lifestyles in a way with which she is comfortable. It is ultimately her choice what she learns, how she applies it to her life and, in turn, how she passes it down to her daughter.

#### **4.2 Wendy**

Wendy is 22 years old. She is a strong, out-spoken young woman who has a way of weaving even the simplest experiences into slow, suspenseful stories. She is an avid hockey fan, wearing her team's colors most days of the week and changing her hair color no less than once a month. At the time that we worked together, Wendy was four months away from her high school graduation. She was single and considering a career as a flight attendant with First Air.

Wendy's parents work intermittently but also get out hunting and camping by boat as often as they can. When she was younger, Wendy would go out on the land with them, camping and even learning to hunt seal with her father's help. These days, she gets seasick when she rides in the boat and prefers to stay at home. When she is not at school, Wendy keeps busy watching her younger sister, doing homework, chatting on "High 5" (an internet social network), visiting friends and occasionally sewing with help from her mother.

Both of Wendy's parents were born in outpost camps near Pond Inlet, and three of her grandparents still live in the community. Though she visits them occasionally, she is not close to them. She tells me that her father raised his children to be independent of their grandparents after suffering terrible grief at the death of his own grandmother. When Wendy has a question about life in the past or is looking for an elder's advice, she is more likely to visit either an elder who she knows from his volunteer work in the schools or an elderly woman whose husband is Wendy's namesake. On occasion, Wendy has attempted to approach other elders with specific questions, but has been somewhat discouraged by their responses. In fact, Wendy told me several times of the following speech that she delivered to a group of elders with whom she sits on a local working group:

*And then after first five meetings I just stood up and said, "I've been having so much hard time trying to connect to elders, or trying to communicate with elders, and there are a lot of stuff I don't know. I've been told that it should be us, the youth, who go up to the elders and ask. Since I was told that and a lot of youth have been told that: 'Whenever you have any questions just come here.' They would say that. And if we tried to go up to the elders and we didn't know what is the right time and the wrong time or something, we would ask them questions if we see them out in public, or go visit them. I've had hard time communicating, and I was thinking about this for a long time. Whenever I have any questions, I don't want to be just rejected, or something, or just be ignored. I want answers because you, the elder, had told us, the youth, to ask questions, as many as possible. You told us that there's no stupid questions. Whenever we try to do that, sometimes they would answer us clearly but [other times not].... So if you want us to be more careful or ask more questions, how come you guys are not letting us do that?" They just say "I don't want to talk about it." It hurts our feelings so much because they've encouraged us to ask them questions. And then when they encourage us, we think that they're going to answer every question that we want to know.[Original in English]*

Wendy tells me that she has heard other young people express similar frustration with elders who they are intimidated to approach, and who seem unwilling to answer their questions. Though it was difficult for her to address the group so confrontationally, she says, "I had this really huge thing inside me that I needed to get out. Plus I cried because it hurt so much". Wendy also admits to sometimes feeling judged or self-conscious, worried that, if she goes to visit an elder, she will be accused of only visiting when she wants something from them.

Though she does not have close personal relationships with any elders, Wendy is certainly proud to be a descendant of people who she describes as strong and resourceful: "I love being an Inuk because my ancestors had so hard time, like some of them can starve to death or they would do something and they would work really hard. If it wasn't for them I wouldn't be here. I'd say I'm proud about it." When I asked her what sorts of traditional skills she has, she told me of her hunting and camping experience and of a parka and a few pairs of seal skin and beaver hide mittens that she has sewn. These days, Wendy is particularly interested in oral histories about the origin and development of the settlement in Pond Inlet. "We have to know where we come from before we can keep going ahead," she told me.

When we talked about the places that Wendy learns Inuit traditional knowledge, she described the way that teachers and elders in the schools have taught her skills in a step-by-step manner. For instance, she first learned to thread and use a wool needle in grades 2 and 3, moved on to cross-stitch in big plastic frames and then progressed to working with skins and making mittens at the high school level. Though she learned most of her sewing at school, Wendy once made herself a parka at home under the supervision of her mother, who is a competent seamstress. During the course of the interviews, Wendy was also enrolled in the high school Inuktitut class and spoke several times of things she was learning there. She was quite enthusiastic about Anna Atagootak's (a local elder's) life story that the class was reading. She was enjoying learning about past lifestyles, and the book tweaked her interest in understanding the local history of the community. Wendy also spoke several times of having been given a tape recorder and assigned to interview a local elder. She went to the woman whose husband she is named after and asked the elder to talk about traditional bedtime stories. The elder said that she didn't remember the bedtime stories well enough and instead talked about the preparations that she would have made in an outpost camp in preparation for fall and winter. On another occasion, Wendy spoke of learning through a student exchange program where she first hosted, and then went to stay with a student from Guelph, Ontario. Before leaving to fly south, Wendy and the other local students met with elders to learn more about their culture. The elders spoke of local history, taught traditional Ajaajaa (lyrical) songs and encouraged them to practice throat-singing and drum dancing. For Wendy, this was an opportunity to explore her local history and identity and to learn skills that she tends not to be exposed to in her daily life.

While Wendy was excited about these learning opportunities, she commented that she often feels pressured to learn traditional knowledge. She is interested in learning some things from the past, but wants to learn at her own speed, as her interest grows and as lessons become relevant in her life.

Wendy also spoke a good deal about her position as a youth representative on the Pisiksik Working Group (the group to whom she addressed the speech above). This group of elders and hunters was assembled by environmental consultants in order to guide the traditional knowledge component of an environmental impact assessment (EIA) for a proposed iron ore mine at Mary River, between Pond Inlet and Igloolik. One of Wendy's closest friends and informal mentor is a Euro-Canadian woman, Shelly, who is involved in the EIA, and who encouraged Wendy to apply for the position. Wendy tells me that she was interested in being the youth representative because:

*I thought of the youth here, to help them out. I was more thinking about the elders because that was my chance to learn more about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, Inuit knowledge. And since I have experienced that I have a really hard time communicating with elders. I chose that road because that first road didn't work out, maybe second one will do. [Original in English]*

Apparently Wendy saw the position on the working group as an opportunity connect with elders who she had struggled to connect with outside of that program. Despite the confrontation described above, Wendy feels that the group has taught her a great deal about understanding, traveling and living on the land: how to hunt, how to predict the weather, which hunting tools were used in the past and how they used to travel. Of course, the working group is by no means training Wendy to control a dog team or predict oncoming weather, but she still learns from the comments and stories that they share during their group meetings. Wendy says that she is also being exposed to the more complex, specific and nuanced Inuktitut terms that she has not had the chance to learn through daily life in the community. It seems that Wendy's position on the group has also allowed her to become comfortable enough with these individuals to express some of the frustration that she has encountered in her attempts to communicate with elders.

Wendy's friend Shelly is also a significant force in her life. Not only is Shelly involved in organizing the Pisiksik group, but the two have also been friends for six years. Wendy visits Shelly's house four or five times a week for tea, homework help and personal and family advice. Shelly is very much a conscious mentor, continually encouraging Wendy to finish her high school, helping her to interpret disturbing dreams and offering supportive advice by telephone when she is out of the community. Wendy

identifies Shelly as the first person she goes to when she has a problem, but also feels that she has learned a great deal about her own culture from her relationship with Shelly:

*And if the interpreter [in the working group] is saying something in English that they said, she would kind of understand it, but later she would go up to me and ask me to clarify it. Or if the elders were talking and the interpreter was interpreting what the elder is saying, and if I don't understand it, I would go up to Shelly and she would make me understand it. Because there are really wise words in our language that I don't understand, but it's an easier way to understand it if the interpreter made it clearer in English... We've been good friends since 2000. If she has any questions, she would go up to me. But if I don't know the answer, I would go up to elders whenever I have the time to ask. It's like she's kind of helping me too. [Original in English]*

This quote is particularly interesting in that it captures Wendy's awareness of the give and take involved in her learning experience: she is a teacher of her culture as much as she is a learner. Over the course of our meetings, Wendy also put together her own theoretical model representing her experience in learning Inuit traditional knowledge (This metaphor is further explored in Chapter 5):

*Wendy: "Life is like a puzzle. You just have to put it into pieces, but you have to make sure which piece is going to another piece. You can't just take all the pieces and try to put them in all their places at once. You can't do that. You have to take one piece and try to figure out which pieces it fits in to".*

Elly: "Now maybe this stretches the metaphor too far, but the pieces that an elder can give you are their experiences in their lives."

*Wendy: "I'll take it. I'll take that piece, and then when I get home, I would think about it – try to figure out which side of that puzzle can fit with that piece."*

Elly: "It's what they did in the past, and you bring it into today and your life. They can tell you what it meant in their life and their time, but what the heck does it mean now, to you?"

*Wendy: "Yeah. If you put it in there, you will see the puzzle. It's not finished yet though, but you can kind of understand it. But if there's a piece missing, your puzzle won't fit good. You have to look for that piece. Me. I see my life as a puzzle. When I was first born I started making that first bottom edge of the puzzle. From that edge, I go up, not around, for example. I see it that way. If I forget one of the sides on that puzzle, I would fall. I have to make it equal in order for me not to fall....Not all, but some that I learned from myself. Just by watching. And if I see one piece from this person, and from another person and those pieces are in small pieces. And I'll try to figure them out, like I said,*

*combining them. And then when the piece in the puzzle is the right amount, I would try to put it in."*

Elly: "While you're busy building your own puzzle, are you busy passing pieces down to your sister?"

*Wendy: "Or I'm passing couple pieces, a copy of it, not cutting the pieces in my puzzle to her."*

Elly: "Is there a top? Is there somewhere where you would be done?"

*Wendy: Yeah, I guess so. When I die, I'll be finished my puzzle. That's what I think.*

[Original in English]

### **4.3 Joyce**

Joyce is 21 years old, and very friendly, though not as confidently outgoing as the other two girls. She wears dark-rimmed glasses, long bangs, and straight low pony tail. Her hair is often pulled forward over her shoulder to keep it out of reach of Anna, her 10 month old daughter who rides in her *amaulik* (and, incidentally, was born on the very same day as Malaya's Carla).

Joyce grew up from a childhood interrupted by drug and alcohol use, parental separation and the suicide of an older sibling while she was still very young. She has lived in several different communities, with one parent or the other, but has now been in Pond Inlet for the past five years. Joyce has finished grade 11 in high school and plans to return for grade 12 when her baby is old enough to be left in day-care. She and her daughter live with her grandparents near Pond Inlet's beach on Eclipse Sound. When I first visited the house, there was a ski-doo and a four-wheeler parked outside the house. Seal hide was stretched to dry on a rack leaning up against the house, and a caribou skin lay over a box by the stairwell. Beside the entrance were about half a dozen ice berg pieces, their curved surfaces showing glacial blue. Inside, the house was orderly with one big window looking out towards the ice berg that was stuck for the winter in front of town. There was a scope balanced on the windowsill, presumably for spotting seals and narwhales out in the Sound. A TV sat in one corner of the room, tuned to APTN with the

volume turned down low. An 11 year old boy was playing hockey with a rubber puck in the kitchen and giggling with his 3 year old cousin until they were shoed outside to play. When we began to talk about her experiences learning *Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit*, Joyce spoke primarily about her grandparents. Theirs is a household where traditional activities take place on a regular basis. Her grandfather and uncle hunt caribou and seal; her grandmother sews mittens and boots for grandchildren (she gave up on counting when I asked her how many); and they are involved in food sharing networks and eat country food on a daily basis. Joyce has learned a good deal in this environment, both from watching her grandparents and from helping them with specific small tasks. For example, she has been given the responsibility and taught to help with several steps in the process of making seal-skin clothing. If her grandfather and uncle bring home a seal, Joyce's grandmother will skin the animal and scrape the fat off the skin before soaking the hide to remove the hair. Next, she will give the skin to Joyce and have her string it up on a frame to stretch and dry. When it is sufficiently dried, Joyce takes the skin and spends about an hour softening it by stomping on it and moving it around on the floor. Joyce's grandma currently makes *kamiks* (seal-skin boots) for half a dozen of her grandchildren every year. As she no longer has any teeth, she enlists Joyce's help to chew skin from bearded seals to soften it for use on the soles of the boots. Joyce spent 10 days this fall chewing soles for her grandmother:

*I started doing that, this was maybe three or four years ago. I never ever did that before. The first time I must have looked really ridiculous: I didn't like the smell and the taste, and I covered it in plastic bags and my grandmother was just laughing at me. But over time I got used to it and I'm not like that anymore. I even enjoy doing it now. I feel like I've done something fulfilled or something, I've done something for my grandmother.* [Original in English]

Joyce has watched her grandmother sew *kamiks* enough times to know all of the steps involved, but hasn't yet tried to make them herself. She does, however, often help out by preparing food for the family. When I asked her to take pictures of the places that she learns IQ, Joyce took a picture of her stove, with a pot of caribou stew sitting on top. "It just looks so delicious to me", she said, explaining that she learned to prepare stew, "just by watching my grandmother make it. You can add just about anything. It's almost like pizza. You can put anything in pizza."

Joyce and her grandmother have become quite close over the five years that they have lived together. Joyce's grandmother is one of a few midwives in the community. When Joyce was in Iqaluit, wondering if she might be in labour, she waited until she knew that her grandmother would be awake and phoned home for advice. After the child was born, her grandmother sent down an *amautik* to bring the baby back in and then sewed a brand new *amautik* when Joyce decided to keep the baby. "Yes. She has taught me a lot about things," says Joyce, referring to her grandmother, "how you're supposed to do things, with seal skin, and the baby. She talks. Just teaching me about life." When I asked if her grandmother often offers her advice, she said,

*Yeah, she does a lot. And when my grandma notices that I'm making a mistake, she tells me. I don't have to listen to her but she'll tell me what's right and wrong, and she'll let me use what road I want to use...She won't get mad if I don't listen, because she already knows that I know. So if I take the bad road and something bad is at the end of that road. Eventually I'll meet it and I'll learn from it. When I tell her that I didn't listen to her she says "I tried warning you but you didn't listen, so you'll just have to learn the hard way [laughs]. [Original in English]*

Joyce's words suggest that while her grandmother often offers personal advice, Joyce feels neither pressured nor obliged to follow it. If she chooses to follow "the bad road" and a negative experience results, her grandmother simply expects her to learn from that experience. Joyce recounted a few of her grandmother's stories about the tuberculosis epidemic in Pond inlet, but otherwise doesn't know a great deal about her grandparents' experiences. Both Joyce and her grandmother admit that they don't often take the time to talk about family history or her grandmother's life prior to settling in the community. Though both would like to, their conversations tend to be dominated by the little urgencies of daily life.

When I met with her grandmother alone, she gave her perspective on Joyce's experiences learning Inuit traditional knowledge:

*Joyce started living with me in her early teens. If she had moved to her grandmother's earlier or lived with me for a little while when she was younger I probably would have passed on some traditional knowledge to her. There is some*

*traditional knowledge that I cannot pass onto her now because of her age.*  
[Original in Inuktitut]

She believes that Joyce missed out on acquiring some fundamental knowledge and coping skills because her childhood was complicated by substance abuse, suicide and divorce. But there are still things that Joyce can learn as a young woman. Her grandmother wants to teach her the Inuit values that guide a person's interactions with other people and with the environment, those values that underlie skills like preparing stew and working with skins. She talks of trying to teach Joyce by offering advice when she feels that her granddaughter is open to it: in the times when she is happy and has few distractions in her life. The months that I was in Pond Inlet, she told me, were the right time for Joyce to learn: she was happy, focused on her baby and living at home with few distractions. "Yes," said her grandmother, "When a person is happy and when they are being taught. That's the best way."

Joyce was indeed enthusiastic about learning and interested in our project as an avenue to do that. At our first group meeting, the elders spoke about the family values that they learned as young women, the importance of emotional closeness between a mother and child and their experiences moving from their own to their in-laws' families. After the meeting, Joyce asked if we could schedule additional group meetings, and if we might meet on Saturdays, so that we would have all day if we wanted to keep talking. Later, when I asked what she was thinking during that first meeting, she answered:

*I was thinking that it really is different. It's so different today. When they were talking, it kind of surprised me. I didn't know all these stuff, and now that I do know some part of it, it's so interesting and I want to get to know a lot more, and, like, WOW. It made me want to learn a whole lot more. 'Cause that was only like the tip of the ice berg...They really did treat family members equally. They tried to do that. There wasn't anyone left out. Everyone chipped in a little bit and everyone did get a little bit back.* [Original in English]

Joyce was quite quiet during our meetings, but this comment clearly expresses her interest in learning what she could from the elders. It suggests that she had heard relatively little about life in the past prior to our meetings but quickly became interested to learn more about her grandmother's life and her family history. She is proud of her background and wants to identify with a history of Inuit, her relatives in particular, living

on the land. As she articulates below, Joyce also sees her grandmother as a successful parent and hopes that her grandmother's experience can offer some lessons for her own life:

*If she told me that she used to do this to her children, and the result of this was that they grew up to be like that, and that's because she raised them a certain way. Seeing her children right now, they're all successful. Seeing other people in the community and looking at our family, they are successful. My grandmother, or my grandparents must have did something right. It's not that we don't have any problems but they did do something right because all of her children are successful now.* [Original in English]

In our second group meeting, I encouraged the young women to come with questions that they would like to ask the elders about *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*. Joyce shyly asked just one question: how best to raise her daughter to be a good person. Later, Joyce showed me pictures of her baby, a pregnant woman and a woman with a baby in her *amaulik*. She explained that the pictures were meant to represent the things that she has learned from having her baby and the relevance that motherhood has brought to IQ related to children, families and Inuit identity. Joyce admits that her pregnancy was un-planned, and until the day that she gave birth to Melina, she had every intention of adopting the child out to her mother. "But as soon as she came out of me," Joyce remembers, "Ahh, from that moment I knew how to take care of her. I knew her right away. I knew right away what she wanted. It's a really good gift." She has now stopped drinking alcohol, focuses on eating well and is raising her baby according to Inuit values. Joyce relies on her grandparents for a place to live and for regular country food, but she looks after the baby herself. She tells me that her parenting is guided in part by her own instincts, in part by her grandmother's advice and also by lessons from the elders who run the local prenatal group. Like Malaya, she attends the group twice a week to spend time with other young mothers, to cut out patterns, learn cooking skills and ask advice from two elders who run the program. At one of our meetings, Elisapee even praised Joyce for her parenting skills, saying "I've heard that you take very good care of your baby. And that is something you need to be proud of". Though the child was unexpected, she seems to have placed Joyce in a traditional family role – one that has provided her with not only a

new sense of purpose, but also an interest in learning Inuit perspectives on family, discipline and child psychology.

When I ask Joyce to name the people from whom she has learned the most, her grandmother and her daughter are at the top of the list, but she also reported learning a good deal from her cousin Marsha. Marsha is 10 years older than Joyce, and lives in Pond Inlet with 6 children. Joyce has been visiting and babysitting for her cousin several days a week since she moved to Pond Inlet. She identifies Marsha as her role model, saying, "I just like her personality a lot, and her style and the way she does things. She's fun and she has great common sense." If Joyce has a personal problem, or is looking for advice, her cousin is the first person she talks to. Her cousin provides support and ideas for her parenting, but the two also discuss how Joyce should react to the challenges and relationships in her life. Interestingly, Marsha was also raised by Joyce's grandmother. She moved in with the grandmother at quite a young age and was apparently much easier to teach the traditional ways. Now, it seems that in supporting her younger cousin, Marsha is helping to pass on some of the traditional values and coping skills that she learned from her grandmother. This older cousin communicates knowledge from a younger, more modern perspective and, thereby, seems to serve as a sort of intermediate mentor for the lessons that Joyce is not able to learn from a grandmother whose advice sometimes strikes Joyce as a little too old-fashioned to be useful.

#### **4.4 Conclusions**

In our early meetings, I asked Malaya, Wendy and Joyce to define *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* and all three struggled to explain the concept. The quote with which I opened this thesis was one response to that question. In that quote, Malaya listed traditional skills like sewing, preparing hides and managing a family. She also referred to Inuit practices like keeping children in the *amaulik* while visiting. The other women listed personal characteristics like independence and mental toughness as being part of IQ. Ultimately, none of the three seemed satisfied with their explanations. If the young women had difficulty defining IQ, their personal accounts offer much evidence of their experiences living, considering and acquiring it.

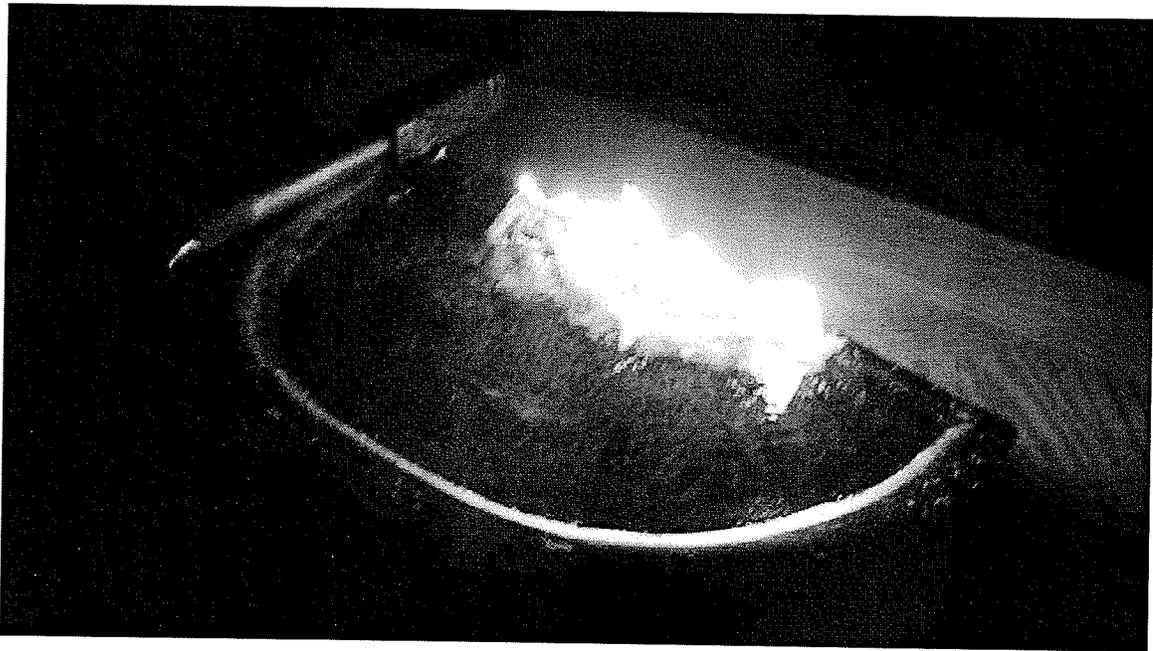
While Malaya, Wendy and Joyce are demographically quite similar, their accounts reveal three very distinct perspectives and experiences in learning *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*. There is a clear contrast between Malaya, who carries herself confidently, but respectfully in the presence of elders, and Wendy, who is hesitant for fear of being dismissed or suspected of having ulterior motives. Similarly, Joyce lives in a household where traditional values, foods and activities are learned as a part of every-day life, whereas Malaya is contemplating how she will maintain and transmit Inuit ways in a new family with her more modern partner. Each of these accounts is flavored by the specific context of the personalities, family dynamics, relationships, interests, opportunities and responsibilities of the participants. Though all three are high school educated women in their early twenties, the details of their accounts highlight the diversity and uniqueness of individual learning experiences.

Though their experiences differ, it is evident that all three young women are interested in at least some aspects of IQ, and that all three see themselves learning in different ways from a number of different individuals and programs. Their stories illustrate that while elders and community leaders are concerned about transmission of IQ, at least some aspects of this knowledge *are* being acquired by modern youth. Joyce tells how living with her grandmother has taught her coping strategies and practical skills. Wendy is enthusiastic about community history and has joined an IQ working group to learn what she can from local experts.

At the same time, the women's accounts paint a picture of knowledge transmission that reveals tensions, compromise and potential contradiction between Inuit and non-Inuit, traditional and modern ways. There is a clear juxtaposition between accounts of learning from family members and community elders, and others of learning through structured classroom activities. There is an element of tension between the interest that the women show in some aspects of IQ and the anxiety that they describe feeling in approaching elders. There also appears to be evidence of struggle in discovering what of the past will be applicable in the future. How do young people navigate this context of modern and traditional influences? How do they reconcile the contrast between role models that

include local elders alongside celebrities like Oprah Winfrey? What do the women's experiences reveal about the modern process of knowledge transmission? Further, if they cannot articulate what IQ is, what can the women's accounts tell us about the ways that they perceive and make sense of it?

Chapters 5 and 6 draw from these accounts and other ideas shared during interview and focus group sessions. They explore the ways that these women make sense of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* and the processes through which they acquire it in both the community and institutional contexts.



## CHAPTER 5

~ Six Local Themes to Frame *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* ~

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If we hope to fully understand the young women's experiences with *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, it is important that we develop some appreciation for how they perceive and express that knowledge. The term *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* has been defined by a number of panels and committees (WGTK, 1998; Nunavut 2003) and an academic literature is beginning to develop around the term (Chapter 2; Wenzel, 2004). It is clear that *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* represents a complex of spirituality, epistemology, practice and observation that are innately interconnected and linked to the Inuktitut language. Arnakak (2002) also emphasizes that the concept includes not only historical knowledge, but also incorporates the values and experiences of contemporary Inuit. The women with whom I worked were all familiar with, and used the term *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. Their understandings of the concept may be partially informed by published descriptions that they have encountered as students and members of formal working groups. The primary meaning that the participants ascribe to IQ comes, however, not from written definitions, but from their own lived experiences learning, sharing and living in the socio-ecological context of North Baffin Island. The existing literature communicates how IQ has been articulated for applications in government, management and research, but does not capture the full meaning that it has for the people with whom I worked. What, then, does *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* mean to women who are

in the process of sharing and learning it? How do they define, perceive and talk about it? I have approached these questions by entering into dialogue with young and elderly women with the goals of building mutual understanding of this knowledge, and of finding ways to talk about *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* that are appropriate to the individuals who are on the front lines of transmission.

Although continued transmission of cultural knowledge is an expressed priority in Pond Inlet, I am told that the community, and youth in particular, do not often find occasions to contemplate, verbalize and share their understandings of IQ. As a researcher, I was able to create opportunities for some of these reflections to occur: the Polar Bear Encounters Project (PBEP) and youth-elder focus groups encouraged generations to come together to share knowledge; the student journals and individual interviews provided opportunities for young people to reflect on their learning experiences; and group meetings became a space for youth and elders to express, reinforce and create understanding together. The result was the development of an extended dialogue with youth and elders on the topic of IQ. What emerged were a series of themes - some old, some new – all helping to frame local women's perceptions of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. While none of these themes capture the entirety of the concept, each offers some insight as to how *Mittimatalingmiut* perceive, value and make sense of their cultural knowledge. Each of the themes forms one part of the socially-negotiated language that Inuit are using to understand, explain, discuss and give meaning to IQ and knowledge transmission. As an English-speaker, I could not appreciate the Inuktitut words that Inuit use in reference to *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, but the metaphors and concepts that comprise these themes are comprehensible across the language barrier. They offer places to begin building an enhanced understanding of the multi-faceted concept of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. Several of the themes are commonly used in the community, while others were developed in working group discussions or by individual informants. In creating representations of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, these themes not only shed light on how knowledge is perceived, but also on the means by which it is acquired. Six of these themes are presented below in hopes that they will help to build a richer understanding of Inuit ways

of knowing and offer new ways to frame and engage in community discussions on the nature and future of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*.

In entering the community of Pond Inlet, my goal was to observe and reflect on the transmission of IQ in its spontaneous forms. I also aimed to create spaces for learning; to encourage youth to reflect on, interpret and describe their learning experiences; and to create opportunities for group dialogue on the topic of learning. My intent was to work with local women to build some mutual understanding of Inuit traditional knowledge and the learning process, but I was not intentionally looking for specific themes describing IQ. Rather, the themes presented below emerged in the analysis of transcripts and field notes from interviews, focus groups and discussions in the community. The themes were not identified through extensive coding or with computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, but arose gradually from various interviews and discussions over the course of the study. The first theme that I became aware of was that linking *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* to the arctic environment. I picked up on this theme after hearing a friend, an interpreter and Joyce all explain that IQ was necessary for survival in the arctic. I was intrigued by this explanation of IQ because it seemed to resonate with what I had assumed was an erroneous southern stereotype of the hardy Eskimo struggling to survive in a hostile environment. It was as I was reflecting on this approach to framing IQ that Elisapee Ootoova and the young women started to discuss the second theme, of family as central to understanding IQ. It struck me that these two themes presented *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* in very different lights. On the one hand, IQ was being framed by environmental processes of the landscape, and on the other by social processes of the family. From that point, I became quite attentive to the themes, justifications, and metaphors that Inuit used in discussing IQ. By the end of my fieldwork, I had identified another four themes which framed the concept from yet more perspectives: as individual lived experience, as a legacy from the past, as a traditional seal oil lamp, and as a modern jigsaw puzzle. These six themes are described and discussed below. Each is an individually or socially constructed representation of IQ and each contains elements of a locally shared meaning of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*.

### 5.1 Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* as Knowledge Specialized for the Arctic Environment

The most widespread and frequently expressed theme that I identified among *Mittimatalingmiut* is that of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* as the specialized knowledge system related to the natural environment of the Arctic. This theme was either implied or explained overtly at one time or another by almost everyone with whom I worked. In describing their cultural knowledge, the participants stressed that the people, technology and knowledge of the region are all irrevocably shaped by and adapted to the climate, landscape and wildlife of the north. The cultural knowledge of the Inuit is, therefore, essential for both physical and psychological survival, in the sometimes dangerous arctic landscape<sup>3</sup>.

The idea emerged in Pond Inlet when my translator, Rachel Ootoova, began to reflect on the tsunami of 2004. She mused:

*We are so dependent on the south here. What if a catastrophe happened where people had to go back to making shelter and living outside the comfort of their homes - like the tsunami? What if planes couldn't come here for months and power ran out? Could we go back to living on the land? Would enough people still have the old skills to survive?* [Original in English]

From her words, it is evident that Rachel Ootoova sees IQ as the knowledge necessary for survival on the land, as well as a source of Inuit independence from southern technology, institutions and governance. This theme of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* and Arctic conditions was evident again when I asked the young women what types of IQ they thought would still be strong when they were elders themselves. All three listed technologies like the *amautik*, skin parkas and mitts, explaining that Inuit clothing is warmer and more economical than anything that can be bought in the stores, and that country food is more satisfying than anything that they could buy at the Co-op. "I don't think I would be able to live without country food. I'm so used to it. One time I didn't eat country food for about a week. I felt really really hungry but there wasn't any sort of food that would satisfy my hunger. But as soon as I ate caribou, it satisfied me very

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<sup>3</sup> An element of this same narrative is evident in the 1998 Traditional Knowledge Working Group definition which includes the statement that *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* is "A knowledge of survival skill without the use of modern technology, such as, but not limited to making clothing appropriate for the climate, how to make and use traditional tools and weapons, weather forecasting and navigation skills".

well,” said Joyce. Similarly, when Jayko Peterloosie was being interviewed by the PBEP students, he explained to them that Inuit technology both comes from the land and is suited to it. “Back then every camp had dogs. Polar bears do not like the smell of dogs... Slowly, there have been polar bear sightings in that area where there had never been polar bears. Polar bears kept away from dogs. It was the dogs that attacked polar bears,” he recalled, explaining that dog teams offered a means of transportations, physical protection, and even food security and skins if country food became scarce.

Beyond shaping technologies and survival skills, the potentially dangerous arctic environment also gives shape to the attitudes of its inhabitants. For instance, when I asked Malaya what she felt was the most significant difference between her and the young women she met during her exchange to Guelph, she told me it was a difference in approaches to life planning. Over the generations, Inuit have adapted to uncertainty in weather and food supply. As a result, they have learned to be flexible, allowing environmental and social conditions to drive their actions, instead of rigid schedules. Today, Malaya says, young women do not plan a sequence of finishing school, getting a job, finding a husband and then having a baby the way southerners do. Instead, they live their lives one day at a time. Malaya did not expect to get pregnant, but the surprise did not upset her. She just took it in stride. Another local woman told me that when she was pregnant, her own mother had refused to make an *amautik* until the grandchild was born. She reasoned that if the infant happened to die, it would be easier on her daughter if they were not overly prepared and expecting the child.

As *Mittimatalingmuit* use the theme of Inuit traditional knowledge and the arctic environment, they reiterate a sense of pride in a heritage of people who not only survived, but flourished in the arctic. This theme roots the practical value of IQ in its ability to enable survival on the land and emphasizes the independence that IQ once meant for Inuit who were not reliant on imports or finances from the south. It also offers a way to frame the many different facets of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (skills, beliefs, stories etc.) and draw them together, through the unifying lens of the natural environment.

The arctic environment theme has further implications for the process of knowledge transmission and learning. During the PBEP, the hunters and elders who came to the school clearly emphasized the importance of skills related to survival in the arctic environment. The students asked them about traditional stories, animal populations and polar bear behavior. The answers that they received focused on teaching skills associated with preventing encounters, recognizing behaviors of dangerous bears and using self defense techniques for survival in the case of an attack.

The interviewees went beyond survival skills to communicate the attitudes and relationships that Inuit should have towards a landscape characterized by dangerous animals and extreme weather conditions. They highlighted the need to be flexible when out on the land - to avoid over-planning and to let weather, not a schedule, direct their activities. Jayko Peterloosie spent almost half an hour explaining the need to be prepared for danger at all times, and recounted memories of his family being woken by bears in the night. The interviewees also used the theme of "*Inuit Qaujimaqatunangit* from the arctic environment" to reinforce the importance of balancing confidence in one's knowledge with constant respectful fear of the land. In personal discussions, these same hunters recounted stories of hunters who poke polar bears in the anus or pull their back legs out to tease them. One hunter talked about a man who got a rush out of touching each bear's belly fur before he shot it. These stories were never told in front of the students. Instead, the stories for the young people emphasized safety, precaution, respect and preparedness in dealing with bears. The hunters told students time and again, "We're scared of polar bears. We're scared of all of them, and we don't want to be close to them or walk up to them" (Charlie Innuaraq); and, "Just keep in mind to always respect polar bears. Don't harass them, and keep your camp area clean. Always be on the lookout for polar bears too" (Brian Koonoo).

These same values of respect for climate and wildlife emerged when the elders offered childrearing advice to young women. Several times, the elders gave advice about not spoiling children, boys in particular, because it might cause them to be attacked by bears, walrus or other animals. On no occasion did the women explain the connection

between upbringing and wildlife encounters, but is clear that even knowledge of childrearing practices (which might appear tangential to knowledge of the environment) reinforces important values related to relationships between Inuit and the land.

Although this theme ties Inuit traditional knowledge to northern climates and landscapes, it does not imply that such knowledge is only useful or relevant in that environment. In fact, Wendy asserts that she would be just as much an *Inuk* and that her cultural knowledge would be just as relevant if she were to move south and take on southern fashions and technology. Even as socio-economic changes bring southern ideas and products northwards, the arctic climate will remain severe. In fact, local elders believe that climatic changes are making it even more dangerous to travel on the land without proper knowledge to predict weather and safe travel conditions. IQ will therefore continue to be important in shaping the attitudes, skills and technologies necessary for survival in the arctic landscape. “It suits us, you know,” Malaya told me. “Where we are, and who we are, it suits us.”

## **5.2 Family as the Nucleus of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit***

A second theme explaining the interconnection of various types of IQ emerged in the first focus group meeting of 2006. At the time, we were trying to develop a mutual understanding of what we meant when we talked about *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, or rather, what it was that we were talking about “transmitting” and “learning”. Not surprisingly, none of the group members were comfortable attempting to encompass the entire concept in a single definition. Instead, the elders began to talk about various aspects of Inuit cultural knowledge: the use of kinship terms, the importance of family values, the value of coping skills and necessity of sewing. In my own mind, I was looking for a way to connect some of these streams of knowledge together. Recalling definitions of traditional knowledge as assemblages of empirical knowledge and skills “nested” in layers of institutional, paradigmatic and cosmological knowledge (Kalland, 1994; Stevenson, 1996; Berkes, 1999), I asked if perhaps some areas of IQ serve as foundations for others. I wondered aloud if knowledge of coping skills, values, and ways of relating to other beings and the land might be considered foundational knowledge that,

once acquired, would *position young Inuit to learn and execute practical skills in a culturally relevant way*. “No. That’s not it,” Elisapee Ootoova answered, “They’re all equal.” She went on to articulate what became a key framework for understanding how these various “fields” of knowledge come together (see Box 3 for direct quote).

**BOX 3 - Ootoova describes relationship of family to Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit*** [Original in Inuktitut]

*“Inuit values and sewing can go together... If a woman has a husband and whatever her husband catches while he is out on the land – even if she is tired – if he caught a seal, his wife should want to clean it because she is proud of him. He will feel good about it. He won’t talk about it, but he will think that “if I catch a seal, it will be taken care of”. Because the things he catches will be cleaned the hunter is proud that his clothing will be made. Even if he never mentions it, knowing these things he will know that his wife is proud of him. He will know that he is well taken care of. And when this happens he knows that he is loved even if he is tired and has walked a long way. I know that Qamaniq can make things well and has lived long because she and her husband love each other well.”*

As soon as Elisapee Ootoova finished her explanation, Joyce and Malaya switched from speaking Inuktitut to English and took about 5 minutes to make sure that I had properly interpreted what she had said. Ootoova explains that all knowledge revolves around families. When a man goes out to hunt, he does so because he loves his family and wants to provide for them. When he comes home with a seal, the woman shows her love by making the animal into something useful – clothing and food - and does not let anything go to waste. Family, according to Elisapee Ootoova, is the nucleus of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. Skills of traveling, hunting, preparing hides, and sewing, are all means through which to support and reinforce Inuit family relations.

Looking back through my interview transcripts, I realized that Elisapee Ootoova had tried to explain this concept to me when she and I met at our initial interview. Through some ambiguity in translation, I had missed her point until she repeated it with the two younger women present to add their explanations. It is not clear to me if Ootoova developed this concept during our encounters, or it was something that she had formulated, and possibly articulated previously (I suspect the latter). Unlike the “arctic environment” theme, which was expressed across the community, this representation came specifically from

Ootoova. Though they had not heard it articulated before, the young women responded quite positively to Ootoova's explanation. They understood it, and felt it significantly important to make sure that I had also understood and recorded it correctly.

This concept of family as the nucleus of IQ became one of the dominant themes for framing discussions in my subsequent work with the women. The theme was brought up again at another group meeting, and on several occasions emerged in interviews with the young women. For instance, when Malaya explained her interest in improving her skills sewing with skins, she described her motivation as wanting to care for and show love for her daughter in an Inuit way. Though Ootoova's theme was less widespread than that of the "arctic environment", the fact that the girls understood and adopted it so readily suggests that her perception also relates to the ways that young women understand their cultural knowledge. The concept seems to be acceptable to at least a few young people and provided them with a lens through which to reflect on and articulate their experiences in learning.

This theme of the family as the nucleus of IQ may also shed some light on potential motivations and processes for learning. It reflects the strong value that Inuit women place on family relations. It also suggests that if a young person is to fulfill traditional family roles of spouse, parent, provider and grandchild, and is to show love for her relations, she must learn the skills necessary to fill these roles in the family. The skills that Joyce has developed around cooking and working with skins, for instance, were learned primarily in the context of being a good granddaughter. Her comment, "I even enjoy doing it now [chewing soles for kamiks]. I feel like I've done something fulfilled or something, I've done something for my grandmother," suggests that motivation and satisfaction in learning can be closely tied to this nucleus of family relations.

### ***5.3 Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit as Experience***

The third theme, IQ as experience, was never explicitly articulated during my work in Pond Inlet, but was demonstrated continuously by the way that individuals presented their own knowledge and expressed respect for the knowledge of others. According to

this widely implied theme, personal life experience provides the basis for an individual's knowledge, as well as his or her authority as a knowledge holder. This does not mean that individuals are respected as knowledgeable elders simply because they have lived many years. Rather, the expertise of elders recognized by the community is based on the depth of experience that they have to offer on various topics.

This system of authority in experiential knowledge has been widely recognized among arctic researchers and educators (GNWT, 1996; Cruikshank, 1998; Loewen and Tagalik, 1998; Kublu *et al.*, 1999). In Pond Inlet, Inuit experts are clearly identified based on their experience with a given subject. Qamaniq Sangoya for instance (now in her 70's), has made hundreds of *kamiks* and supported countless families in grieving for lost relatives. She is consequently considered a local expert in sewing and grief counseling. Similarly, when I asked elders on the local Inuit Knowledge Project Working Group to recommend experts for the PBEP, they provided me with a list of a dozen men, all experienced hunters, as well as one recreational hunter who grew up on Devon Island where bear encounters are much more commonplace than in Pond Inlet. During the classroom interviews, these men regularly answered questions, taught and gave advice by recounting their own experiences. When a hunter had not experienced a particular scenario directly, he would *reply* "I don't know 'cause I've never been there" (Ham Kadloo) or else share a story that he had been told of someone else's experience. In cases where the informants drew on the experience of others, they were invariably careful to indicate that it was not their own and would clarify the source of each memory. For instance, when a student asked how she should defend herself if she was attacked and did not have a gun, Moses Koonark referred to the following story:

*If a polar bear were to be coming towards me, I would just run away. And if there were two of us, I would run with the person if we have no rifle. And this is what I have also heard from the late Jayko Sangoya. A polar bear was running after him and the two of them started running. The polar bear was coming closer. The two of them separated: one ran to the left. The other ran to the right. The bear was still following. The polar bear became confused on which to attack, so the polar bear just stopped. This is what I have heard. If I was with another person and a polar bear started running towards me, we would start running in one direction and separate. [Original in Inuktitut]*

Here, Koonark is telling the students that he does not have any personal experience with such an encounter, and is deferring to the authority of another man's experience. While the informants did occasionally draw on stories of other hunters' experiences, most were quite careful not to extrapolate beyond what they had seen themselves. Several of the questions on the students' interview guide inquired about changes in numbers of polar bears and frequency of encounters over time. The vast majority of informants responded that they see more bears and have many more encounters now than they did as youth in the 30's, 50's and even 90's. Individuals suggested a number of possible reasons for these changes including fewer dogs in camps (Jayko Peterloosie), reduced harvesting activities (Brian Koonoo, George Koonoo, Jayko Alooloo), changes in currents and ice movement (Brian Koonoo, Moses Kyak) and changing numbers of bears in the area (10 of 14 informants). When I followed up to ask several of these men if they believed that bear populations had increased across the north, or just locally, each answered that he could not say. While the hunters were confident that there has been an increase in numbers locally, none of those whom I asked were willing to speculate if the change is part of a larger change in migration or populations, or simply a local phenomenon. The men's responses seem commensurate with the theme of knowledge as experience. Each man is knowledgeable and confident about what he has witnessed, but makes no claims to knowledge beyond what he has experienced or heard first-hand from others.

Young people also displayed respect for experience as knowledge. For example, when Malaya asked the elders for advice on how to bring Inuit and non-Inuit customs together in her new family, they responded by sharing personal accounts of how, as young women, they had at first disagreed with some of their in-laws' practices but later realized advantages in the ways that their new families approached childrearing and household chores. After the meeting, I asked Malaya if she had been satisfied by their response. "Oh yes." She said. *"That's what they had experienced - that every family is different. It's always different, you know. And never hate your in-laws: just learn their things that you like."* Here, Malaya indicates that she accepts the elders' memories as a source of knowledge, and has no trouble interpreting the advice that she should be open to the benefits of new ways of living. *"They've seen so much"* she told me another time, *"They*

*can just talk and talk and talk. They could go all night if we stayed. It's how they do it. Maybe when I'm an elder - I'll have lived so much, seen it - I'll talk and talk and talk."*

Malaya evidently understands that the personal experience of the elders gives them authority to share their knowledge. As a young woman, she is hesitant to express her ideas at length, but imagines that her own lived experiences will one day give her the confidence and authority to offer her own experiences as advice to others.

What does this tell us about the process of learning? Primarily, it tells us that acquiring knowledge is a process of acquiring experience, and that learning is a process of experiencing. It is this perception of learning as experience that underlies the strong community support for on-the-land learning opportunities including school field trips, youth-elder camps, and other programs that take young people out on the land to experience traditional activities. This does not imply that Inuit feel that there is nothing to learn in the classroom, or from written and oral accounts. To the contrary, Inuit culture has long been transmitted through oral traditions of legends, bedtime stories, sharing experiences and recounting memories. As Moses Koonark's quote illustrates above, individuals can also gain knowledge from stories and memories of other's experiences and use that knowledge to inform their own actions and decisions. In my interviews with her, Wendy also spoke of learning from written biographies and local histories at school, and the students in the PBEP reported learning about bears, even though nearly the entire project took place inside the local high school. When I presented a draft CD based on the PBEP, community members were enthusiastic, saying that young people could certainly benefit from locally based, IQ-oriented media. Among the photographs that Wendy took of the people who have taught her, was a picture of her mother's photograph of a group of elders, several of whom have passed away. *"I learn from them too. They shared their memories with other people, so we can still tell the stories - we still learn from what they knew."* As these various examples illustrate, oral transmission and, increasingly, written and media publications, all function as key avenues for learning. However, the emphasis on knowledge as experience, and on learning as doing continue to emerge in discussions around youth-elder excursions, apprenticeships, sewing classes and other knowledge transmission programs in the community.

#### 5.4 Knowledge as Tied to Elders and the Past

Another theme that emerged from observations and interviews with Inuit women was the perception of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* as something innately tied to elders and to the past. This is a complex theme – one that young people struggle to express. Youth know that their cultural knowledge is rooted in the wisdom of previous generations and sometimes have difficulty talking about IQ as something of the present or future.

Berkes (1999) comments on the challenges posed by the word *traditional* in the term *traditional knowledge*. While traditional knowledge is rooted in the past, he points out that it is also evolving and modern. Berkes, therefore, takes care to define the word *traditional* as emphasizing a connection to the past, but by no means inhibiting the continual modernizing of indigenous knowledge systems. From my work in Pond Inlet, I am led to believe that this concept of *traditional* knowledge is often as difficult to comprehend for northern youth as it is for southern academics.

When I initially spoke with the young women about their cultural knowledge, our conversations focused nearly entirely on relationships and interactions with elders. I suggested the idea of Inuit traditional knowledge as something evolving, rooted in the past, but transforming into a modern culture that is distinctly Inuit. All three of the young women agreed with the idea that I presented and picked up on it at times. Malaya responded to the idea by saying:

*Right now, these days, it's kind of hard to find a traditional thing. Yeah, it's still there. Things are similar, there are similarities. There are a lot of similarities the modern way and the traditional. It's just the modern way now. There are so many similarities.* [Original in English]

This comment suggests that as traditional practices are integrated with contemporary knowledge and values, they retain traditional elements but also adapt to become *just the modern way*. As Malaya implies, Inuit practices can, therefore, be considered simultaneously modern and traditional.

Despite our mutual agreement that *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* could be something modern and evolving, our conversations continued to revolve around the lives and experiences of elders - how they used to live - and we found it difficult to talk about modern incarnations of IQ. Learning about the past is certainly a key aspect of understanding IQ, but it becomes problematic if youth cannot talk of anything but the past, or see its relevance to the present. It became evident that youth do learn from their parents, sibling and friends, but some of these examples only came up when I asked specifically for them. Otherwise, my interviews with the young women tended to revolve around elders and young people's relations with them. Again, in the PBEP, students were somewhat nervous, but eager to work with hunters and elders. After several interviews with knowledgeable hunters in their 50's, the youth began to ask, "When will we get to talk to the real elders?" (Grade 10 student). We did meet with a few "real elders" over the course of the project, but in the final project evaluation, several students commented that they would have preferred to interview more people in their 70's and 80's.

It is not clear to me why this project became focused so heavily on relationships with elders and knowledge "from the past." There are several possible reasons:

1. Our first focus group meeting included a dialogue about youth and elder relationships, and this may have set a tone that caused subsequent interviews to revolve around similar issues.
2. Knowledge 'from the past' may have emerged naturally because elders remain the primary community sources of Inuit traditional knowledge. They have a great deal of personal experience and admit that many of their own children were turned over to the school system and failed to learn many important traditional skills and values from their parents.
3. Elders are also highly respected in Inuit society. The focus on them in the PBED project may have reflected the esteem in which modern youth hold their grandparents and elders.
4. Spindler (1973) has also suggested that the sorts of learning that take place at home through parents is often subtle and unconscious. It is likely that most of the

young women's IQ is woven into their daily lives and is, consequently, hard for them to pinpoint. Direct advice and stories from the elders, on the other hand, are easier to identify and discuss as learning experiences.

5. The emphasis on elders may also have emerged because modern Inuit culture and knowledge are difficult to tease apart from southern knowledge and culture. IQ is a difficult thing to isolate, making it easier for youth to talk about things that are more clearly "Inuit", from a time when Inuit lived on the land year-round and there was less outside influence on Inuit culture.
6. Finally, the association of IQ with the past may have occurred because, as Krupnik (1993) suggests, the ideal Inuit is seen as a (pre-contact, male) hunter living on the land and providing for his family. Though there are still many subsistence hunters in the north, they now hunt and live under the influence of southern technologies. As a result, modern youth are left with an antiquated and idealized image of the past, but with little perception of what a successful, culturally grounded, contemporary Inuk should look like.

Our heavy focus on the past was likely due to a combination of the factors above. It could be problematic if, as Krupnik (1993) suggests, youth are unable to take ownership of their cultural knowledge as a historically rooted, but modern and evolving way of knowing. On the other hand, it seems quite positive that youth respect elders' experiences as a key source of knowledge and recognize the continuity between their own knowledge and the experiences of previous generations. Indeed the young women's interest and attention for oral history suggests that they place considerable value on the lived experiences of their ancestors.

Regardless of the reasons behind the perception of IQ as tied to the elders, it remains a strong theme amongst youth in Pond Inlet. Young people clearly recognize their cultural ties to generations past and identify elders as the primary teachers of cultural knowledge. Young Inuit learn a good deal of culturally-based knowledge from other sources, but the strength of this theme underscores the value that youth place on oral history and the importance of maintaining positive relationships and effective communication between

generations. Such relations are important not only for the knowledge transmission that they facilitate, but also for the apparent importance they hold for youth who associate a large portion of their cultural heritage with the lives and experiences of their grandparents' generation.

### **5.5 An Individual's Knowledge as a Jigsaw Puzzle**

The fifth theme draws directly from my interviews with Wendy and as far as I am aware, reflects the perceptions of just one Inuk youth. Wendy represents an individual's knowledge as a puzzle, and the learning process as the activity of gathering puzzle pieces (lessons) from a variety of sources and finding ways to tie them to previous knowledge and experiences in such a way that the puzzle fits snugly, and knowledge builds over time.

Wendy developed this metaphorical model over the course of our meetings together (see Chapter 5). Each time we met, I urged her to reflect on and articulate the ways in which she learns. After several meetings where she described relationships with instructors and isolated learning experiences, Wendy began to look for ways to tie it all together for me. I believe her goal in developing this narrative was to represent her experiences as a whole in a way that she and I could both understand and discuss. Box 4 contains Wendy's narrative about her jigsaw puzzle model of learning as she first described it to me during an interview. In the audio recording of the interview, you can hear both of our voices rising in pitch, humored by this bizarre metaphor and excited to find how well it models and frames our previous discussions

**BOX 4 - Wendy compares the process of learning to constructing a jigsaw puzzle [Original in English]**

*Wendy: Life is like a puzzle. You just have to put it into pieces, but you have to make sure which piece is going to another piece. You can't just take all the pieces and try to put them in all their places at once. You can't do that. You have to take one piece and try to figure out which pieces it fits in to.*

Elly: Now maybe this stretches the metaphor too far, but the pieces that an elder can give you are their experiences in their lives.

*Wendy: I'll take it. I'll take that piece, and then when I get home, I would think about it – try to figure out which side of that puzzle can fit with that piece.*

Elly: It's what they did in the past, and you bring it into today and your life. They can tell you what it meant in their life and their time, but what the heck does it mean now, to you?

*Wendy: Yeah. If you put it in there, you will see the puzzle. It's not finished yet though, but you can kind of understand it. But if there's a piece missing, your puzzle won't fit good. You have to look for that piece. Me. I see my life as a puzzle. When I was first born I started making that first bottom edge of the puzzle. From that edge, I go up, not around, for example. I see it that way. If I forget one of the sides on that puzzle, I would fall. I have to make it equal in order for me not to fall....Not all, but some that I learned from myself. Just by watching. And if I see one piece from this person, and from another person and those pieces are in small pieces. And I'll try to figure them out, like I said, combining them. And then when the piece in the puzzle is the right amount, I would try to put it in.*

Elly: While you're busy building your own puzzle, are you busy passing pieces down to your sister?

*Wendy: Or I'm passing couple pieces, a copy of it, not cutting the pieces in my puzzle to her.*

Elly: Is there a top? Is there somewhere where you would be done?

*Wendy: Yeah, I guess so. When I die, I'll be finished my puzzle. That's what I think.*

In subsequent interviews, Wendy and I were able to use the “knowledge as a puzzle” framework to discuss other aspects of her learning. When I asked if she ever feels

pressured to learn too much at once, she drew on the metaphor again and illustrated her answer as follows:

*Wendy: "You can't just take all the pieces and try to put them in all their places at once. You can't do that. You have to take one piece and try to figure out which pieces it fits in to."*

Elly: "So maybe if you learn too much all at once, you might forget a lot of it, because you wouldn't have the time to sit and think about it and figure out where it fits."

*Wendy: "Yes. And it'll be a lot harder for me. I would have to go back to the beginning and "okay, after I listened to that beginning..." - And then I would try to figure out which would be the best to fit in, which side. If that piece is not going to fit anywhere in that level, if I think that it might be up at the top or the middle, I won't put that in. I'll just put it aside."*

[Original in English]

Another time, as we talked about local elders, Wendy reflected on how elders might experience their own learning. "I see them in a puzzle too," she said. "They're just a little further up than I am. That's what I see when I try to think of something."

The jigsaw theme worked to provide a framework through which we could talk about Wendy's learning experiences. The metaphor helped Wendy to draw her ideas together, and anchored our conversations to a model that each of us could imagine. This theme also illustrates her understanding of her own knowledge as drawing from an elaborate combination of modern and traditional sources, even combining multiple sources to develop an understanding of certain subjects (or puzzle pieces). The model highlights Wendy's need to be able to relate what she learns to other areas of her life: "or else I'll just have this piece, and not know what to do with it." Finally, Wendy's metaphor stresses the importance of learning at her own pace, as her interests evolve, and as she is able to reflect on, and place each new piece of knowledge into her puzzle.

This theme represents the perceptions of only one young woman, but it offers valuable insight into her understanding of the composition of her knowledge and the processes through which she learns. We did not find time to present this particular narrative to the other youth involved in the project, but it may prove to be a useful tool that other young

women can understand, give meaning to and use to discuss their successes and struggles in developing *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*.

### **5.6 A Qulliq (Seal Oil Lamp) as a Metaphor for *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit***

The final theme speaks to the value that Inuit ascribe to *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* and the importance that they place on the transmission of that knowledge. The metaphor of IQ as a *qulliq*, or seal oil lamp, was articulated at the final group meeting of my fieldwork. I had presented my preliminary findings to the three elderly and three young women, and we followed with a discussion of the emotional and psychological challenges facing modern youth. The idea came up that we might produce a poster with a message that would encourage young women to draw on IQ resources to address modern challenges. When I asked what the women imagined seeing on this poster, or what they felt was the most important message to pass to young people, Elisapee Ootoova offered the metaphor of the *qulliq* (Box 5).

**BOX 4 - Ootoova and Sangoya offer the seal oil lamp as a metaphor for Inuit**

**Qaujimajatuqangit** [Original in Inuktitut]

*“For example, we usually have a lighting ceremony whenever there are big functions. I wonder why they use qulliq for the lighting ceremony. The seal oil lamp was valuable to our lives because you needed the qulliq to dry your child’s clothing or make water. Qulliq was the most valuable item. It was the only source of light. If people stopped harvesting seal and there was no blubber then you would get very cold. The father collected it because he had to go out hunting. That was the only source of drying things. It was the most important thing we owned. We tried to ensure the wick was short. You tried to limit the light – as small as possible while you are sleeping because you don’t want to be out of oil when you wake up in the morning. You would diminish the light and the house would cool a little bit. Once we wake up, we will light it up again properly. I think the women realized that. There were other women who stayed up all night and tried to observe that the oil didn’t run out while the others slept. I mentioned these two types of people. So there were a lot of things that we had to observe. Even though Qamaniq is quiet, I know she agrees with me because I was always beside her and that’s how I knew these things. In the morning they would pound the blubber using a container... You always had to make sure that everything was prepared. For example, if we’re talking about a poster, the qulliq can be a good example. Nowadays whenever we have ceremonial functions, we light the qulliq and then I have to tend it and people just observe it as a ceremonial object but it was very vital. My mother’s, my grandmother’s, and another, there were three soapstone lamps – and so usually there were four different types of qulliqs to be used for different purposes... They were our only source to keep things dry and people ensured that they didn’t smoke. You have to make sure that there’s not smoke coming out or the whole house would turn black, even your nostrils. There were some people - you could see their utensils were all covered in soot. But she and I were raised where people tried to keep clean. We got dirty too but we tried to ensure that we were not dirty for long because our qulliq has some oil you maintain a clean house. Maybe that’s something we can use for a poster: the qulliq. The values of a qulliq.” (Elisapee Ootoova)*

*“Every now and then when I go out camping I bring my qulliq so that I don’t have to keep the Coleman stove lit all the time. Once you have the qulliq lit, you can use it for making tea, or... even though it’s been raining outside, nothing will get wet once you have the qulliq on. I was raised where we had the qulliq all the time, and after you played outside, you would go back in the tent and you’d see the qulliq, and it was very relaxing. If you make the qulliq lit properly, you can run it forever. It doesn’t run out of fuel like the Coleman stove. Once you wake up in the morning, all you have to do is re-light it properly. It’s very convenient. It still works.” (Qamaniq Sangoya)*

Fortunately, I left my recorder running after the meeting and managed to capture the young women's response to the *qulliq* metaphor:

Malaya: *What do you think of that qulliq idea? I think it's a really good idea.*

Elly: *Yes, so keeping the qulliq going is like keeping traditional knowledge going?*

Malaya: *Yes, both. It's a metaphor*

Joyce: *I just love that idea.*

Malaya: *Same here. Can you imagine it?*

Elly: *I like how she said that people think that it's just ceremony, but it's part of your life – the qulliq. So it's the same with traditional knowledge. It's not just about doing a drum dance for a ceremony. It's really part of who you are.*

Joyce: *Yes.*

Malaya: *I've got the picture [for a poster]: the background is black, with the qulliq light. Maybe a rock with the light, and the words on the outside.*

Elly: *it could say something about a qulliq and the same thing about traditional knowledge. Like one sentence about the qulliq and the exact same sentence about traditional knowledge.*

Malaya: *Yes, like that. That qulliq thing is a very good idea.*  
[Original in English]

Perhaps *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, as Ootoova suggests, is also one of the most important things for modern Inuit to have. It takes effort to tend it and keep it going, but is ultimately essential to look after each other properly – to keep warm, dry, and healthy in the social, political and ecological landscape of the modern arctic. This comparison of IQ to the *qulliq* identifies it as the most important thing that modern Inuit should have. It also emphasizes the value that Inuit ways of knowing carry for Inuit survival, integrity and community determination.

The theme of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* as a *qulliq* is certainly a new theme, expressed for the first time days before I left the community. However, like with Ootoova's perception of family as the nucleus of knowledge, it seemed to strike a chord with the young women who

heard it. Malaya and Joyce both stayed to talk with me after our meeting and again made sure that I had understood what Ootoova was implying. The fact that this representation was conceived by an elder, but also spoke to youth, suggests that it carries meaning across generations. The *qulliq* may, therefore, be a useful metaphor with which to engage other Inuit women cross-generational discussions of transmission, or to work from in building new knowledge-sharing programs.

### **5.7 Discussion and Conclusions**

The *qulliq* and the other five themes emerged in my research as oral embodiments of the models and metaphors that *Mittimatalingmiut* use to frame their experiences learning IQ, and to explain their understandings of that knowledge to me, and to one another. Such themes are central to the transmission process, offering means for both teachers and learners to frame the knowledge that they are sharing. They allow individuals to draw different facets of knowledge together and understand them through the perceptual lenses of the *qulliq*, the arctic environment and the Inuit family.

As negotiated community constructions, these themes may not be appropriate to all Inuit, or even to all *Mittimatalingmiut*, but they represent aspects of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* as this group of informants saw it. Some of the themes are quite common and have likely been expressed and used for years. The concept of *knowledge as experience*, for example, as *tied to elders and the past* or *to the arctic environment* were voiced in conversations and meetings across the community and can be considered *community-wide themes*. In fact, references to knowledge as experience appear in literature on other Inuit communities (GNWT, 1996; Loewen and Tagalik, 1998; Kublu *et al.*, 1999; Legat, 2007), and similar perceptions have been identified with respect to traditional knowledge in other aboriginal cultures (Ruddle and Chesterfield, 1977; Ohmagari and Berkes, 1997).

In contrast, several other themes appear to have been developed directly by the group of Inuit with whom I worked. These *group themes* include the metaphor of knowledge as a *qulliq*, which was certainly an original production of our focus group. Although it may or may not have been a novel concept, Ootoova's description of family as the nucleus of

*Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* was not expressed outside of my conversations with the project participants. These *group themes* seemed to be appropriate representations for the group with whom I worked, but were not exposed to a wider audience. Wendy's *personal theme*, likening an individual's knowledge to a jigsaw puzzle was employed specifically to frame discussions between Wendy and me. While these themes have not been vetted by a wide audience of Inuit, they offer insight into the ways that six local women make sense of their cultural knowledge.

Each of the themes described in this chapter presents IQ through a different lens, but within the six, three pairs of 'lenses' become apparent. The first pair of themes, as highlighted in the introduction to the chapter, clearly juxtaposes the environmental and social aspects of IQ. The concept of knowledge as tied to the environment describes IQ as both shaped by, and shaping the ways that people interact with the land. The fact that both Malaya and Joyce articulated this concept suggests that IQ continues to be intrinsically linked to the land, even for women who live primarily inside a modern hamlet. Ootoova's concept of family as the nucleus of IQ, on the other hand, reveals knowledge as highly social, as well as environmental. For modern mothers, granddaughters and wives, IQ is key to maintaining the social networks through which Inuit culture thrives. By framing *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* in terms of family, place and technology, these two themes reveal how IQ ties individuals to their physical place, their community and their history. For instance, if knowledge is adapted to, shaped by, and intrinsically linked to the natural environment, then by having knowledge – or by knowing – an individual also becomes connected to the land. Ootoova's narrative of family as the nucleus of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* further explains how employing traditional practices, values and beliefs can reinforce kinship relations and community integrity. The meaning of IQ is, therefore, very closely tied to its ability to connect modern Inuit to their traditional territory, their ancestors and to each other. As such, the women's discussions IQ and knowledge transmission are very much tied to their sense of place in the physical, spiritual, human and non-human worlds in which they live.

The next two themes, describing knowledge as experience and as tied to the past, frame IQ as the accumulated experience of Inuit past and present. The perception of knowledge as experience emphasizes the role of personal lived experience as a source of IQ, while the concept of knowledge as tied to the past frames IQ as part of the history and legacy of the Inuit. When considered together, these two concepts give authority to the lived experiences of all Inuit, past and present. The idea of knowledge as experience suggests that becoming an expert in the modern world of IQ is not about acquiring college degrees, but about gaining understanding through personal experience. This concept of learning seems to fit with the Inuktitut phrase, *isumaksaijak*, which Trott (personal communication) describes as the development of reason through practical experience. As Ingold (1999) explains, such experience is translated into knowledge through the process of building context-specific memories of the learning experience. The act of applying that knowledge is a process of simultaneously drawing on memories (or knowledge) already constructed, while building new memories of the present experience (Ingold, 1999). As Legat (2007: ii) explains, the “past is continually pulled through to the present by experiencing occurrences that originated in the past and [are] shared through stories with social descendants”. The theme of IQ as something connected to the past also recognizes the value of lived experiences but focuses on the experiences of previous generations. This theme identifies oral history, or as Trott explains, the concept of *iliniaqtuq*, as the means by which past experience is shared and perpetuated. The process of translating oral history into knowledge is also explained through Ingold’s (1999) description of knowledge production as a process of memory-building. For instance, when an elder shares her experiences, her knowledge is not simply copied into the learner’s mind through the text of her narrative. Instead, as the learner listens to the narrative, she builds her own memory (a memory of her experience of hearing the story) in the social-ecological context in which it was told. The act of sharing oral history is, therefore, one of transforming the experiences of past generations into the knowledge of modern ones.

The final pair of themes in this chapter presents two very different metaphors for understanding IQ: Wendy’s image of a jigsaw puzzle, and Ootoova’s seal-oil lamp. There

is an interesting juxtaposition between Ootoova's choice of a traditional *qulliq* to represent Inuit *Qaujimagatuqangit* and Wendy's use of the jigsaw puzzle. While the elder draws on Inuit imagery, this young woman portrays her experience learning Inuit cultural knowledge using a decidedly non-Inuit representation. It is possible that she chose the metaphor of a jigsaw puzzle in an attempt to appeal to my own southern understandings. However, her choice of imagery certainly reveals the degree to which young Inuit have learned to navigate, and in this case integrate, influences from both Inuit and non-Inuit culture. Though strikingly different, the two metaphors together seem to capture the tension between tradition and innovation that emerged in the accounts in Chapter 4. The *qulliq* metaphor speaks to continuity with Inuit tradition and a need to tend to the transmission of knowledge as one must tend to a seal-oil lamp. While transmission in the past likely contained both conscious and unconscious modes of teaching, the concept of 'tending' seems particularly applicable in the contemporary era, when IQ is often consciously transmitted through formal cultural programs. Wendy's jigsaw puzzle, on the other hand, illustrates the element of innovation involved in applying traditional knowledge to modern lives. Wendy describes the process of building her own knowledge as one of innovatively gathering and piecing together knowledge from a multitude of traditional, modern, Inuit and non-Inuit sources. Her jigsaw puzzle metaphor suggests that for modern women, the process of 'tending' IQ is a personal journey characterized by both tradition and innovation.

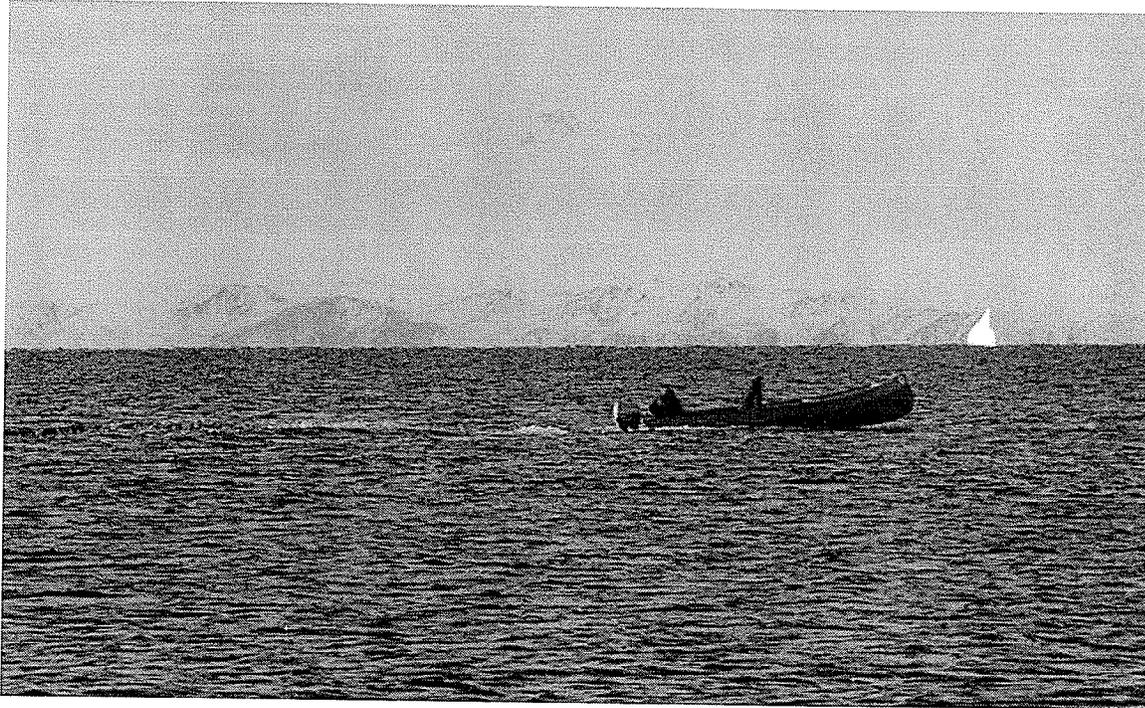
Taken together, the three pairs of themes that emerged from my work suggest that *Mittimatalingmiut* women understand IQ as a holistic knowledge system that is at once traditional and innovative, emerging from experiences past and present, and is linked to the physical, spiritual, human and non-human worlds of local communities. The six themes offer a local (and female) layer of insight to our understanding of IQ. Unlike definitions articulated for use in government and management arenas, the themes articulated here reflect the ways that people express their knowledge at the community level. They represent ways that *Mittimatalingmiut* have found to talk about their cultural knowledge amongst themselves, or in this case with, as Ootoova referred to me, "*one little Southerner*". If existing definitions struggle to provide lists of knowledge content,

themes that tie such knowledge to the arctic environment and the Inuit family help to illustrate the relationships that exist between these various content elements. For example, Ootoova's narrative of family as the nucleus of IQ is not dissimilar to the Traditional Knowledge Working Group's (1998) statement that IQ includes "An understanding of complex family relationships that is explained by Inuktitut kinship terminology. Every family member has a special word or term to explain his or her relationship to each other." While the formal definition highlights kinship terms and family relations as part of IQ content, Ootoova's narrative illustrates the central significance and meaning of kinship terms and kinship relations in connecting and reinforcing other aspects of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. Family is, therefore, not only a kind of knowledge to be included in IQ, but also a critical institution in shaping and perpetuating that knowledge.

The apparent contrast and tension that exists amongst the six themes provide a reflection of the living, dynamic nature of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. The 1998 Working Group on Traditional Knowledge identified IQ as "a philosophy and a way of thinking that is difficult to put into a few words in a short period of time" (1998: 14). Indeed, a static definition is limited in its ability to capture a way of thinking and of knowing that is continuously merging past, present, tradition, innovation and social-ecological processes. As a living system, IQ represents a moving target that is characterized by ongoing adjustment as the context of the present shifts perpetually forward – continuously unfolding new scenarios in which to apply understandings from the past. IQ content is changing today just as it was when Ootoova, Peterloosie and Sangoya were girls, and as it was generations before that. The themes and lived experiences that these women offer do not provide knowledge content per se, but evidence of the processes through which knowledge is acquired, adapted and perpetuated as a dynamic bridge between past and present.

Chapter 6 turns to reflect on the experiences shared by Malaya, Wendy and Joyce. I draw on the women's narratives and group discussions to explore the process through which

young women acquire *Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit*, how they make sense of it, and how they integrate tradition and innovation in the construction of their own knowledge.



## CHAPTER 6

### *Where Learning is Happening, What is Going Right? Where Learning is not Taking Place, What is Interfering?*

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In 1993 19-year old Sandra Katsak of Pond Inlet wrote the following:

*Today, there's so much of the old ways in us.* (Wachowich, 1999, p. 212)

*A lot of times I really don't know what to do. I think about a career, about having a family, about acting Inuit or acting Qallunaat. I really don't know what I'll do.*

(Wachowich, 1999, p. 212)

Thirteen years later, Wendy, Joyce and Malaya's accounts echo many of Katsak's sentiments. All four women are keenly aware of a tension between Inuit and non-Inuit influences. As Inuit learners have done for generation, these women are consciously negotiating a balance between the tradition and innovation that characterize their cultural knowledge. Each of Wendy, Joyce and Malaya's accounts offers a worm's-eye view into the context and details of one young woman's experience learning *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*. As a unit, the three stories highlight a number of common

experiences: relationships with grandparents and elders; transmitting knowledge to young children and siblings, learning Inuit skills in modern schools and extra curricular programs and combining traditional and modern technologies and ideologies. Students in the PBEP also focused on youth-elder dynamics and expressed both excitement and trepidation as they worked with different knowledge-holders. Like Sandra Katsak, many young Inuit today struggle to balance traditional and modern ways of knowing in the context of a modern Inuit settlement. As well as relaying their learning experiences, the women's accounts also reflect their individual values, priorities and understandings of the transmission process. Taken together, the reflections of these young learners provide significant insights into the transmission of IQ in the modern context.

In this chapter, I explore the process of transmission from the learners' perspectives by reflecting on what these accounts offer in addressing the two final research questions: Where learning is happening, what is going right? Where learning is not happening, what is interfering? I begin by highlighting the value that these young women place on interpersonal relationships in the learning process and describe the key relationships through which they see themselves learning. I then turn to accounts of learning in institutionalized programs and compare the processes of learning in the community and programmed environments. The final portion of the chapter examines how these young women shape and adapt their cultural knowledge in response to changing lifestyles and shifting meanings in the contemporary settlement - in effect, how they negotiate the balance of past and present, tradition and innovation.

**Table 1 - Subjects of photographs taken to represent the people, places and things associated with learning *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit***

	<b>Grandparent/ Elderly Relative</b>	<b>Other Elder</b>	<b>Parent</b>	<b>Peer/ Sibling</b>	<b>Non- Inuit</b>	<b>Infant</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>Other</b>
Malaya	5		1			1		1
Wendy		2		1	1			
Joyce	2					1	2	2
							<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

### 6.1 Positive Learning Experiences: *Learning through Interpersonal Relationships*

My primary approach to exploring positive learning experiences was through a photo-narrative exercise during the 2006 interviews, as well as through other discourse in individual interviews and focus groups. I asked each of the young women to take pictures of the people, places and things that she associates with learning IQ and then explain her reasons for taking each photograph<sup>4</sup>. This approach created a very open-ended forum, where each woman could focus on the aspects of transmission that were most relevant to her and could frame her explanations in a manner that she felt was appropriate (Emerson et al., 1995).

Interestingly, there was a great deal of commonality in the women's responses to the exercise. Of the 19 photographs that they took, 14 were images of people from whom they have learned, with the remaining photographs depicting themselves practicing traditional skills (cooking stew, stretching, and softening animal skins). As Table 1 shows, the pictures of people included grandparents, elderly relatives, elders to whom the women were not related, babies and infants, teenaged friends and even one of a Euro-Canadian woman. In all but one case, the narratives that the women articulated to explain the pictures focused on interpersonal relationships and the roles that they associate with those relationships. Although each subject was photographed in a place, the locations of the images themselves were not emphasized, nor were the specific methods of instruction.

Similar priorities emerged in my conversations with Elisapee Ootoova and Annie Peterloosie. Both of these elders emphasized intimacy between child and care-giver as critical to helping a child develop her values, emotional strength and coping skills. The following quote from Annie Peterloosie illustrates the role that a strong relationship played in guiding her own education as a little girl:

*... my grandmother – she would be very watchful and she would watch me for my mental stability. Even if I thought I was doing well, my grandmother would notice things. Like if I was chipping away some ice with an ice pick, the way that I picked the ice. If she noticed that I was just trying to break down the ice, just acting out on the ice, my physical actions spoke of my mental instability. I would sometimes start acting out when I needed to cry...*

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<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed description of this technique, see the *photographic narrative* section of Chapter 3.

*My grandmother would recognize this and would take action to alleviate this. Mental stability was really required for your own skills to develop. If your mind is not at peace with your physical stability then even what you're trying to make will not be properly made. You will make mistakes and it will not look good. This balance had to be enforced in order to have a healthy lifestyle. This physical, spiritual, emotional well-being – the elders were really adamant about keeping this balance. That is the way I was brought up. [Original in Inuktitut]*

The relationships highlighted by Malaya, Wendy and Joyce are discussed in the following pages. With the exception of parent-child transmission, the relationships are presented in the order of those most emphasized to those least mentioned and least discussed.

### **6.1.1 Grandparents and Elderly Relatives**

According to the young women's accounts and photographs, the primary sources of IQ are grandparents and other elderly relatives. In Joyce's case, she has learned a good deal through living with her grandparents, modeling their skills and helping them with work around the house. While Malaya does not live with elders, she talks of learning through frequent visits, stories, collaborative sewing and regular conversations with her grandparents and an elderly aunt. In both cases, the young women and their grandparents have developed close relationships characterized by respect, trust, comfortable proximity and reciprocity.

Feelings between grandparents and grandchildren or between instructors and learners are described in Inuktitut using the words *nagligusuk-* and *illirasuk-*. *Nagligusuk-* refers to the type of love that a teacher feels for her pupil – a love that incorporates an air of pity and a desire to nurture the recipient. *Illirasuk-*, on the other hand, is the respectful, almost intimidated affinity that a grandchild feels for her grandparent (Briggs, 1998). Similarly, the Pauktuutit (2006) explain that Inuit youth were traditionally taught to respect and listen to anyone older than themselves, with the highest level of respect directed towards community elders. That strong sense of respect is still clear in the way that Malaya and Joyce interact with their grandparents. During our focus group meetings, the young women sat quietly, listening to the elders. They were careful not to

interrupt and asked only the occasional question. Though the girls do not always agree with the elders' advice, they are tactful in explaining their differences of opinion. In one of our group meetings, for example, Malaya's aunt suggested that families should work to stay together, even through incidents of abuse and adultery. When Malaya later explained her differing opinion to me, she was careful to not simply dismiss the elder's comment. Instead she expressed respect for the knowledge associated with her aunt's lived experience, implying that their disagreement is the result of a difference in their personal experiences:

*She said what she has experienced....Yeah, cause we say what we have experienced, like when we're trying to help somebody, you gotta talk about what you experienced, you know? I think that's how she meant it. She never experienced any relationship come to adultery or abuse. She's saying what she knows. [Original in English]*

In addition to respect, an element of trust is evident in Joyce's story of phoning her grandmother when she was in labor in Iqaluit. It is also evident in the comfort that Malaya found as a teenager, crying to her grandmother about a lost boyfriend. Malaya and Joyce both say that they welcome, but rarely solicit the advice that they receive from elders. Though they sometimes ask a specific question, the two women describe learning from elders to be primarily a matter of proximity. That is not to imply that youth simply learn by osmosis in the presence of knowledge-holders<sup>5</sup>. Rather, regular interaction (proximity) allows opportunities for youth to actively observe a grandmother cooking, to listen to a grandfather's story about the past or to begin to model skills by helping around the house. Time spent together also allows elders to observe young people and offer suggestions and advice as they see fit. As Kublu *et al.* (1999:7) explain, "Generally children did not ask elders to instruct them, but the elders took the initiative in preparing and advising them whenever they thought it appropriate." The women told me that elders offer them a lot of advice, but while youth in the past were expected to obey elders unquestioningly, relationships are different today. These days, Joyce said, advice is just advice: "and when my grandma

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<sup>5</sup> Spindler (1973) has depicted cultural learning as a process of "osmosis". While his description is effective in conveying the pervasiveness of cultural influences, it fails to recognize the active role that learners take in shaping their own cultural education

notices that I'm making a mistake, she tells me. I don't have to listen to her but she'll tell me what's right and wrong, and she'll let me use what road I want to use."

Oosten and Laugrand (2000) explain knowledge transmission as part of a reciprocal exchange between teachers and learners. The girls' relationships with their grandparents also offer evidence of such reciprocity. By helping around the house with cooking, softening seal skin and chewing soles for *kamiks*, Joyce is able to give back to the people who teach and support her. Malaya also helps her grandmother by designing sewing patterns and selecting fabric with her. When Malaya's grandfather consults with her over his speeches, she not only hears his messages for the community, but also helps him to make knowledge from the past relevant in the present. In each of these cases, knowledge is not simply imposed on a young learner, but instead is built through a reciprocal exchange of skills and knowledge embedded in a trusting, respectful interpersonal relationship.

### ***6.1.2 Elders Outside of the Family***

Beyond learning in the family, Malaya and Wendy both gave examples of soliciting knowledge and learning from elders outside the biological family. For instance, when Malaya wants to make *kamiks* for her daughter, she will consult with an elder she has befriended through the pre-natal group, thus accessing expertise beyond what is available in her own family. In the past, Inuit lived in bands made up of individuals related either by marriage or by blood (Dorais, 2001). In that environment, the vast majority of learning would have taken place from kin. In modern settlements, young people may live in close proximity to a number of elders to whom they are not biologically related, but who may have expertise in areas that interest them. The accounts in the previous chapter suggest that while relationships with family members represent primary avenues of transmission, learning in the modern community is not constrained by family ties. In fact, Malaya, Wendy and Qamaniq Sangoya all suggest that when it comes to learning traditional skills, as opposed to learning values or coping mechanisms, young people often prefer to learn from someone outside of the family. They find themselves to be more patient and gracious accepting criticism from those who are not relations.

Positive relationships between youth and elders with whom they are not biologically related seem to embody the same characteristics of trust, respect and reciprocity as those between grandparents and grandchildren. What is most notable about learning from elders outside of the family is the manner in which these relationships form. My conversations and observations in Pond Inlet point to two main sources of relationships with elders outside of the biological family: community programming and traditional naming practices. All three of the young women identified elders with whom they have become comfortable through work, school activities or other programs in the community. During the Polar Bear Encounters Project, students remarked on feeling most comfortable learning from elders with whom they had already established relationships, but clearly welcomed the opportunity that the project offered for building familiarity with other community elders.

Interestingly, Malaya and Wendy also identified elders with whom they felt comfortable because of naming practices<sup>6</sup>. The elder who Wendy talked about most frequently and identified as the person she would be most comfortable approaching with questions about IQ is the wife of her deceased namesake. She regularly refers to this woman by the kinship term *nuliaq* (wife) and also calls the man's children *panik* (daughter) and *irniq* (son) on occasion: "still now, her kid's been calling me Ataataa [father]." When I spoke with Malaya about relationships with elders, she also brought up the topic of naming. In fact, she says that she has felt comfortable and accepted by elders since she was a little girl. Malaya is named after a well-liked woman, and remembers elders smiling and greeting her as *Arnakuluk* (sweet little *Arnaq*) since she was a child. "They say hi to me, since I was just little, since they got to know me. "Hi *Arnakuluk*". I'm always interactive with the elders - since I was just a kid."

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<sup>6</sup> Among northern Inuit, babies are traditionally named after a recently deceased family or community member (Pauktuutit, 2006; Nuttall, 1992). Nuttall (1992) explains that this naming practice transfers a "name soul" from the deceased namesake to the child. The child not only takes on the name of the deceased, but may exhibit some of her character traits, and also takes on the social relationships that the namesake had with other people in the community (Pauktuutit, 2006). The child is therefore born into a social network and may refer to the deceased's wife as "*nuliaq*" (wife) and be called "*uik*" (husband) in return.

Both Wendy and Malaya's stories illustrate the power of Inuit naming practices to bring young Inuit into social networks and the power of those relationships to make youth comfortable and confident. For these girls, relationships with their namesakes' families also offer an important source of learning in the modern settlement. From an Inuit perspective, a namesake's family represents a form of kin. While learning from such individuals can be considered 'outside of the biological family', it is more likely regarded as learning 'in the family'.

### *6.1.3 Learning from Parents*

Notably absent among the women's photographic narratives were references to experiences learning from parents. This was a rather unexpected result, considering works by Briggs (1998) and Ekho and Ottokie (2000) which suggest parents as primary childrearsers and key agents of cultural transmission in Inuit society. When I asked the women specifically about learning from their parents, Wendy and Malaya were able to provide only a few examples (at the time of our interviews, Joyce had not lived with her parents for over 7 years). Wendy recounted stories about hunting and camping with her family as a young teenager and of enlisting her mother's help in sewing her first parka. Malaya told me how her mother encouraged her to do crafts as a girl but, like Wendy, she struggled to identify exactly what she had learned from her parents and how she had learned it. Both women continued to identify elders as the primary source of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*.

When I suggested to the elderly women that they had been identified as the dominant teachers of IQ, they expressed surprise. Qamaniq said that she had assumed that parents, not grandparents, would play the strongest role in building knowledge among youth. Elisapee Ootoova added that while the girls' parents do not have all of the nuanced knowledge and skills of the elders, they still have *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* and are important vehicles of cultural transmission. She then emphasized the importance of parent-child relationships with the following narrative:

*When our children are very small we will start teaching them – very small as a child. Especially teaching them to go to the bathroom. The mother will know everything about the baby... The small child would feel wanting to go to the*

*bathroom even before it was one year old. The small child is in amautik she/he will learn to say "hahaa" [those small signs – a way of breathing] that means wanting to go to the bathroom...As the child is learning with her mother this is the most important to me. Learning from her mother. [Original in Inuktitut]*

It seems probable that parents play a small role in these young women's accounts simply because parent-child teaching often occurs at an unconscious level. Briggs (1998) for example, describes scenes of "serious" play in which a young child is asked questions like "who's your aunt?" or "why don't you kill your baby sister?" The questions serve to build and test the child's knowledge of kinship and values, but it is clear in Briggs' descriptions that the child is not consciously aware that he is learning. In fact, Wolcott (1987) suggests that the enculturating influence of parents is such that the parent herself is often not aware of the knowledge that she is "transmitting" to her child.

Because Malaya and Joyce are both young mothers, I asked how they would transmit knowledge to their own daughters. Malaya replied that she planned to raise her daughter in an Inuktitut-speaking environment, feed her country food from an early age, sew traditional clothing for her and encourage the little girl to forge relationships with and learn from her Inuit grandparents (Malaya's mother and adoptive father). When I asked Joyce how she would feel if her daughter chose not to eat country food, she simply answered: "I don't see how it could be like that. I really don't think it would be like that. We eat those things every day in this house. That's how she will live, and that's how she'll be." These straight-forward answers suggest a good deal about the ways that parents help to build their children's knowledge: by example, through childrearing practices, by exposing children to traditional lifestyles, by encouraging them to build relationships with knowledgeable kin and by offering advice that reinforces traditional values.

#### ***6.1.4 Learning Through Relationships with Peers and Siblings***

My conversations with the young women also highlighted a few instances of learning from peers. When I asked Wendy to take pictures of the people she associated with her learning, the first one that we discussed was a shot of two friends from school. "She kind of told me about what she heard, or asked about the clothings, and how they sew it or

what thread they use, or all kinds of sewing stuff,” she said, pointing to one girl and explaining how she and her friends relay the information that they learn from their grandparents. Malaya also spoke of helping friends to learn sewing skills, but she focused more on the role that other young people play in re-enforcing Inuit values as they confide in and advise one another: “like if I’m having a problem getting along with someone, she’ll say ‘maybe you should be more patient’ -something like that. That’s a value, about how to treat other people, you know?”

Another example of peer learning is that which takes place between Joyce and her cousin, Marsha. In fact, when I spoke with the three girls, Marsha was the only non-elder who was listed as a primary source of learning. This woman clearly communicates Inuit values and coping skills to her younger cousin and acts as a sort of intermediary between Joyce and her grandmother. Because of her age, Marsha is able to present her grandmother’s lessons in a more modern light, reframing IQ to be more relevant to Joyce than the grandmother’s more traditional approach.

The role of other siblings and peers in transmitting IQ through relaying, re-framing and re-enforcing Inuit ways is nothing new in Pond Inlet. The following story, told by Joeseph Koonoo during a working group meeting for the *Inuit Knowledge Project* suggests that youth have long been learning from their young peers. Here Koonoo describes how he learned from the personal experience through which his older brother showed him to warm his hands in cold weather:

*I was about 10/11 and went out with my older brother. He used to make me untangle the dog lines. He’d tell me to do this hard thing. It was impossible. I told myself when I was older I’d never do it again. I’d wear mitts and my hands would be very cold, but by the time I finished my hands were very warm. I thanked my brother. If I’d just done what I wanted to do I’d have froze my hands. [Original in Inuktitut]*

### **6.1.5 Learning Through Relationships with Euro-Canadians**

A final interesting point arises in Wendy’s case, where interactions with southern culture, individuals and institutions have inspired reflexive learning about her own culture. This seems to be the case in her relationship with Shelly where she learns by explaining Inuit practices and the meaning of elders’ comments to a non-Inuk friend. It is also the case in

the Pisiksik working group, where a proposed mining development has generated a forum in which Wendy is comfortable communicating with and learning from elders. In the case of the exchange program to Guelph Ontario, Wendy not only learned local history and culture prior to departure, but her pride in that culture was clearly reinforced when she and others students performed their cultural songs and dances to a gymnasium of southern Canadian students:

*It was their first time seeing, or hearing that. And then after we performed they came up to us and said, "This is the best performance we ever had. This is the best performance we ever had". We asked them why. They said "Whenever we have assemblies or presentations or something, kids won't stop talking or yackity-yack". They were quiet. No one was talking. Not even one person. You know when you're up on stage you can hear someone talking but you don't know what they're talking about? It was all quiet. It was a good experience. [Original in English]*

Though neither Malaya nor Joyce spoke at length of learning in such a manner, both elders and youth expressed appreciation for the opportunity that my own cross-cultural research provided for them to discuss issues of communication and to share the kinds of knowledge that equip a young mother for "womanhood"<sup>7</sup>. Though management boards and research groups are far from traditional settings for knowledge transmission, they nevertheless represent opportunities for participants to share and find meaning for their knowledge and experiences: "It's good that we are talking about these things. We need to talk about them. Even though she is just one little southerner [referring to Elly], she has brought us here for good things." (Elisapee Ootoova)

## **6.2 Learning Through Institutionalized Programs**

In contrast to these less formal<sup>8</sup> modes of knowledge transmission, young people also described experiences learning through institutionalized programs. The Polar Bear Encounters Project, which took place in a local school, represents one example of a programmed approach to learning. Other examples that emerged in my work with the

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<sup>7</sup> Ohmagari and Berkes (personal communication, 2005) also comment on the power of an outside researcher's interest in Cree bush skills to build interest and motivation among local women to learn those very skills. Wendy's experience certainly fits with these observations.

<sup>8</sup> Though learning in the community has been referred to as "informal" transmission (in contrast to "formal" institutionalized education), Ruddle and Chesterfield (1977) illustrate that communities often transfer traditional skills through systematic, structured and age-specific methods.

young women include learning through elementary and high school sewing (Wendy), Inuktitut class (Wendy), extra-curricular involvement in Cadets (Malaya), a throat-singing group, the pre-natal programs (Malaya and Joyce), the student exchange to Guelph (Wendy), paid employment (Malaya) and a position on a resource advisory board (Wendy). These programs all represent conscious institutionalized efforts to promote inter-generational communication and knowledge transmission.

There is an element of paradox in having *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* transmitted through formal institutions, particularly through the public school system. As explained in Chapter 2, the operation of the federal day school in Pond Inlet was a primary factor in moving families from nearby outpost camps to the permanent settlement (Matthiasson, 1992). The school system thereby disrupted traditional lifestyles and traditional education practices. With more time spent in school and less on the land or with their families, young Inuit were (and still are) less exposed to knowledge holders and traditional pedagogical approaches. The western school system has also been criticized as promoting social norms and inter-relational processes that are counter to Inuit kinship principles (Douglas, 1998). It is clear that many Inuit have mixed feelings towards formal education. Elders express regret at having handed their children over to schools in the 1960s' and 1970's (Elisapee Ootoova and Annie Peterloosie, personal communication; Oosten and Laugrand, 2000). On one hand, they despair that schools kept their children from spending time with family members from whom they would learn Inuit ways of living. On the other hand, they are supportive of modern schools in their efforts to incorporate Inuit values and subjects in the school curriculum. It seems that despite the cultural disruption caused by the education system as a whole, schools are now part of the social fabric of Inuit communities. Leetia, Wendy and Joyce all referred to schools, to some degree, as a place where they had acquired *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*.

When the young women first discussed learning in schools, it was not clear to what degree knowledge transmission in that environment represented an imposed institutional process, or if Inuit had in fact remolded the education system for the promotion of Inuit values and skills. There is certainly evidence of Inuit efforts to adapt schools to be more

culturally relevant. In Pond Inlet, students are taught in Inuktitut until the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. In the high school, Inuktitut, sewing, shop and *Aulajaaqtut* (personal and social development) classes all focus on teaching Inuit language and skills. During my work in 2005 and 2006, the Nunavut Department of Education was consulting Inuit across the territory in developing a culturally relevant curriculum for Nunavut schools. In Pond Inlet, the elementary and high schools held a community in-service to discuss means of further incorporating Inuit culture into the schools. However, despite these efforts, parents at the in-service commented that there continues to be a disjuncture in pedagogical and disciplinary approaches between the school and local homes. The principal of Pond Inlet's *Ulaajuk* Elementary School explained to me that incorporating Inuit values in modern schools is a significant challenge when the only models of formal education programs are "southern". He added that even Inuit teachers (who are expected to bring cultural content into the classroom) completed their training placements in conventional schools and remain unsure how to move away from that model. Schools in Pond Inlet are increasingly hiring Inuit staff, bringing elders into the classroom and teaching IQ content. However, the pedagogical approach and learning environment are still very much influenced by the institutional structure in which they are situated. Conscious IQ programming through local schools, clubs and other organizations is supported by community members, but appears to fill a different role, and generate a slightly different process of transmission than that described in the community context.

### ***6.2.1 Programs as supplement to or substitute for learning in the family***

Malaya, Joyce and Wendy all conveyed positive perceptions of organized IQ programs. While Joyce and Malaya talked primarily about learning in the family or through personal relationships in the community, they both identified some learning through community programs. Both girls talked of learning parenting skills and associated values through their involvement with the pre-natal program. Malaya also spoke of learning to build shelters and to travel on the ice in the local Cadets club, as well as interacting a great deal with elders in the camps that she organized while working for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. However, while Joyce and Malaya cited these experiences as secondary to learning in the family, my discussions with Wendy focused primarily on

programmed learning. Wendy and I discussed elementary and high school classes, the Pisiksik Working Group and the exchange to Guelph, Ontario. Joyce and Malaya, on the other hand, have finished grades 11 and 12 respectively, and neither of them chose to recount experiences learning *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* in school. In fact, while Wendy told me of learning to thread and use a wool needle in second and third grades, Malaya had already learned to use a regular needle at home and had begun to sew small gifts for her second grade teacher. Malaya also took part in the exchange program that Wendy spoke of, but did not cite it as an opportunity to acquire IQ. Instead, she explained the trip primarily as an opportunity to spend time with her boyfriend enjoying shopping malls and movie theatres in Ontario. Apparently, the pre-departure training that so impressed Wendy was nothing outstanding or new to Malaya who grew up spending a good deal of time with elders. It seems then, that IQ programming in Pond Inlet is useful in supplementing learning for those young people who, like Malaya and Joyce, have strong relationships with elders in their families, or community. While they are supplemental learning opportunities for some youth, these programs also act as key arenas for learning for youth, like Wendy, who do not have access to the same types of knowledge in the family.

### ***6.2.2 Programs to Build Inter-Generational Relationships***

Another significant function of institutionalized programs, beyond transmitting knowledge, is providing youth and elders with opportunities to interact and become more comfortable with each other. During the PBEP, two students listed their favorite part of the exercise as “getting to socialize with elders and other people.” Several of the students were nervous before knowledge-holders came to the class. They would sit, sheepishly quiet at the beginning of the interviews, but often relax, laughing at stories and asking simple questions by the end of the afternoon session. The elder Wendy is most comfortable with (aside from the wife of her namesake) is a man who she has encountered regularly at the school, who she sees presenting at community gatherings and who now also sits on the Pisiksik working group:

*It's just that when I was younger I used to listen to him whenever he was talking about the stories... if I see him around in public, I would ask him. Or if he's just at school or in public, he is open to questions, and him and his wife would go up*

*to the stage and start singing Ajaajaa, or he would go up and start drum dancing or something. I've seen him doing that a lot during Christmas or at special occasions. That's when I started pushing myself to ask more questions to him.*  
[Original in English]

Wendy indicates that repeated public interactions with this elder, as well as his welcoming demeanor, have made her comfortable approaching him if there is something that she wants to learn. Even Malaya, who has been close to her grandparents and great aunt from the time she was a child, has made several “buddies” among the elders from her involvement with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and the pre-natal program. Evidently, these institutionalized learning opportunities not only generate knowledge sharing, but also facilitate relationship-building which, in turn, supports further learning in the non-institutionalized community context.

### ***6.2.3 Dynamics of the Learning Process in a Program Environment***

In discussing programmed approaches to knowledge transmission, it is important to consider the dynamics that emerge in these ‘un-natural’, or ‘contrived’, and often urbanized learning environments. Inevitably, interpersonal relations and pedagogical processes are altered when instruction moves out of the community and family sphere and into more formal, institutional environments.

Qamaniq Sangoya substitutes for the school sewing teacher and explains that teaching in that environment is more deliberate than teaching in the home. The student to teacher ratio in a school sewing class can be up to 15:1, whereas at home it would be just 1:1. Qamaniq says that some students are interested in learning, while others are not, and the 1.5 hour time slot constrains classes, such that they are, “too short for some students and too long for the ones who aren’t interested”. If she were to teach a young person at home, the young person would continue at a task with intermittent instruction until the task was completed or until the student’s interest waned. Traditionally, Inuit youth were allowed to develop skills at their own pace and according to their own interests and aptitudes. They were encouraged to try to produce small objects (dolls, clothing, sleds) on their own and seek assistance where they had problems, or when they had finished the object (Pauktuutit, 2006). Sangoya suggests that school and extra curricular programs

tend to alter this process by limiting learning to particular time periods and by moving groups, rather than individuals, through new concepts and skills<sup>9</sup>.

My own observation of the PBEP in 2005 and the much less formal focus group meetings in 2006, suggest that the interactions between teachers and learners are somewhat different in the institutional and community environments. In fact, the young women's accounts of learning in the school place considerably less emphasis on interpersonal relationships than their accounts of learning at home. As Qamaniq describes, students in a programmed environment are often un-related to the instructor and may not have established a close personal relationship with that individual. This was often the case in the PBEP, where we interviewed the grandfathers of two students, but often had informants who were not closely related to any of the young interviewers. In her discussions of oral history among Gwich'in, Cruikshank (1999) emphasizes the personal dialogue that takes place between a speaker and her audience. She explains that a story-telling event should be interpreted both in terms of what the story *says* (the content of text of the story) and what it *does* (what the speaker is specifically intending to communicate to her audience). For instance, when Malaya asked the elders in a focus group for advice on balancing her own parenting style with that of her partner, the elders responded with stories of their own experiences as young women. What the stories *said* were their experiences as young women adapting to new in-laws. What they *did* was communicate a personal message to Malaya about how to approach her own partner's family.

As an outsider with only a partial understanding of the women's relationships with their grandmothers, I could not always understand the personal messages embedded in our focus group conversations, but I was aware of a number of times when the elders' comments seemed directed towards one young woman's situation. In the institutional environment of the PBEP, on the other hand, I was not aware of any such personal messages being communicated. With audiences of 5 to 10 students, the hunters certainly articulated their experiences to communicate messages of respect, fear, composure and

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<sup>9</sup> The 1996 Dene Kede curriculum produced in the NWT represents one attempt to implement a child-centered school curriculum in which performance and progress evaluations are not standardized, but rather reflect the developmental stage and aptitudes of each individual student (NTECE, 1996).

safety with respect to bears. However, I believe that these sentiments were communicated as general public messages, rather than private ones. The dialogue that developed between learners and teachers in the school environment was thus more public, and less personal than dialogues that took place during the women's focus groups. I imagine that this distinction between formal and informal processes of knowledge transmission is a direct result of the kinds of time constraints and student-teacher ratios that Qamaniq describes above. Likely, the dialogues that take place in the true community context of the women's own homes are even more intimate than those to which I was exposed in the focus group.

When I asked the research participants about the importance of having emotional intimacy in a school environment, they assured me that emotional intimacy is not necessary for the sort of skill development and knowledge exchange that takes place in a cadets program or a shop class. Elisapee Ootoova and Annie Peterloosie emphasize, however, that close interpersonal relationships are critical in supporting youth in developing emotional, spiritual and cosmological kinds of knowledge. It seems that while relationship dynamics are less personal in programmed environments, *Mittimatalingmiut* women do not consider it to be a shortcoming of such programs. Learning in the school is simply seen as different from learning in the home.

#### ***6.2.4 Student Interviews and the Question of Asking Questions***

Another notable difference in the dynamic of transmission in and outside of local institutions is the role of questions in dialogues between teachers and learners. In 1999 Kublu *et al.* described the process of asking questions as problematic to the dynamics of transmitting IQ in programmed environments. These researchers were involved in a program at Nunavut Arctic College (NAC) which, like the Polar Bear Encounters Project (PBEP), engaged young Inuit in interviewing knowledge holders in order to access and document oral history. In an introduction to a series of books produced from the NAC program, Kublu *et al.* (1999) explain that Inuit young are conventionally taught to respect elders and to refrain from asking them direct questions unless invited to do so. "The interview situation was by no means a natural situation: as elders are held in great

respect, students were not accustomed to subjecting them to long lists of questions” (p 3). During the PBEP, in Pond Inlet, the students specifically practiced asking open-ended questions and conducting semi-structured interviews so that knowledge-holders would be allowed to direct the content of interviews as much as possible. However, as in the NAC program, students were still hesitant to act as interviewers, and only the bravest few volunteered for the position.

Despite this hesitancy, the scenario of interviewing and being interviewed was not entirely foreign to either the students or the hunters involved in the PBEP. Indeed, even since 1999, Pond Inlet elders have been interviewed for oral history projects, community studies, land use studies and other research projects. Many students have also been exposed to interviews through school projects like that in Wendy’s Inuktitut class and two others upon which the PBEP was modeled. It seems that anthropological inquiry, oral histories and traditional knowledge research projects have introduced, and even normalized the question-centered, interview-based approach to documenting traditional knowledge. The question that emerges is: What is the appropriate context of question-based knowledge transmission? Interviews seem to be well accepted in the context of academic and community research, and elders encouraged young interviewers in the educational environments of the PBEP and the NAC program. But are questions appropriate outside of these contexts? Elisapee Ootoova’s comment during the NAC project, “you shouldn’t be wary of asking us any questions as we are not at home” (Kublu *et al.*, 1999: p 4), suggests that elders may see the process of knowledge transmission as somewhat context dependent.

When Joyce and Malaya described learning at home from elders, they suggested that knowledge is most often offered in the form of unsolicited (though not unwanted) advice and small corrections from their elderly relatives. These descriptions seem to fit well with accounts of traditional teaching practices recorded by Pauktuutit (2006) and Kublu *et al.* (1999). However, when Wendy expressed her frustrations in interacting with elders, she tended to frame it as a matter of elders not answering her questions, saying,

*Whenever I have any questions, I don't want to be just rejected, or something, or just be ignored... They just say "I don't want to talk about it." It hurts our feelings so much because they've encouraged us to ask them questions. And then when they encourage us, we think that they're going to answer every question that we want to know. [Original in English]*

Wendy did not explain where or how she was encouraged to ask the elders specific questions, but it is clear that several of her interactions in the context of school activities have involved interviewing or otherwise asking questions of elders. She also expressed enjoying her position on the environmental working group because "they're all elders except me. If we're talking about IQ, and if I have any questions, they would answer me clearly. They help me a lot. They help me to understand more about my ancestors."

It appears that while approaching elders with questions is considered appropriate in the school, or even in the environmental working group, elders may not see it as part of the process of transmitting knowledge outside of those institutions. This point offers further evidence of a distinction between the processes of transmission in and outside of formal programs. Evidently, the institutional transmission process is characterized by relationships that are less intimate and not based on kinship ties; messages that are presented publicly for a general (and mixed gendered) audience; and by distinct norms of behavior which allow for modes of questioning that are not appropriate outside of that context. While Joyce, Wendy and Malaya identify both school and community as avenues of learning, their experiences suggest that they are engaged in different learning processes in the two environments. It seems that Malaya and Joyce are able to navigate both of these processes. Wendy, on the other hand, is comfortable in the programmed environments of her school and working group, but as she explained in her personal accounts, she remains uneasy interacting with elders outside of formal programs. Perhaps some of Wendy's struggles are emerging from her efforts to transplant an approach to learning that she has acquired in an institutional environment into the context of community relations (where that method is not considered appropriate). In effect, she appears to be confusing these

two distinct modes of transmission as a single process, and thus failing to meet the behavioral norms of the community-based learning environment.

### **6.3 Dynamism of knowledge in the context of changing lifestyle and shifting meanings**

Beyond the process of interacting and acquiring information from knowledge holders, the young women's accounts also convey moments of challenge and frustration as they try to make sense of what has been shared with them and to apply traditional teachings to their lives. At an academic level, a consideration of the complications associated with knowledge transmission leads us towards two apparently contradictory (or, at best, confusing) discourses. On one hand, definitions suggest that traditional knowledge is something dynamic; rooted in the experience and knowledge of past generations; and continually incorporating new information and expertise as it evolves in the present (Berkes, 1999; Stevenson 1996). On the other hand, we hear repeated concerns that traditional knowledge is being lost as knowledgeable elders pass away. Oral history projects aim to document this threatened body of knowledge, and elders express concern that youth are not learning the ways of the past. How can we reconcile these two discourses? Is IQ being lost, or is it evolving to address modern realities while maintaining continuity with the past? Where do Malya, Wendy, Joyce and their grandmothers fit in these discourses?

It is these questions that have led me to explore the challenges and responses associated with changing lifestyles and the shifting meaning of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. The remainder of this chapter looks at what insight Wendy, Joyce and Malaya can offer on the process through which knowledge is perpetuated and adapted in the face of change.

#### ***6.3.1 A Theoretical approach to transmission and the dynamism of knowledge***

The ideas of Ingold, Sapir and Stevenson offer a lens through which to understand the dynamic nature of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. Stevenson (1996), who has engaged in discussions around the definition of traditional knowledge, emphasizes that the traditional knowledge of aboriginal people cannot be teased away from local, modern and even

western forms of knowledge. Because traditional knowledge continually incorporates new information and experiences, and because knowledge from the past is continually applied to modern challenges, the knowledge system is constantly in flux and always maintains continuity with the past.

When it comes to learning, Sapir (1934) has warned against representing knowledge as a “neatly packed-up assemblage of forms of behaviour handed over piece-meal...to the passively inquiring child.” (p414) Instead, he explains cultural knowledge as something to be “gradually and gropingly discovered” by each individual learner. Ingold (2000) offers a more recent perspective on how traditional knowledge is “discovered” by learners. He suggests that youth learn by building memories that are rooted in knowledge from the past, but are unique to the social-ecological contexts in which they learn. Experienced individuals do not simply pass their knowledge to young learners as a corpus of intact knowledge, but rather guide them in the development of their own time- and place-specific memories (knowledge). This perspective fits well with the Inuit understanding that a child is born with knowledge and wisdom conferred through naming practices (Pauktuutit, 2006). The role of a ‘teacher’ is, therefore, to guide a young person in building the knowledge and skills that are already within her. Ingold (2000) also stresses the importance of social-ecological context in the learning process. The context in which a young learner builds her memories will always be different, and thus yield different memories than those of the experienced teacher who acquired her knowledge in a different context. It is this constantly changing social-ecological context, Ingold explains, that drives the evolution of traditional knowledge.

Considering the dramatic shift that has occurred in the social, political and even biophysical environments of Arctic in the last 50 years it is important to discuss young people’s approaches to learning in the context of the changing lifestyles to which their communities are adapting.

### *6.3.2 The Context of Social Change and Shifting Meanings of Inuit Qaujimaqatunqangit*

The broad context of social change in Pond Inlet is provided in Chapter 2. Alongside the social, political, and ecological changes discussed previously, a number of distinct changes have been noted in the context and meaning of knowledge transmission over the past half-decade. “Our parents used to be our TV” explains Qamaniq Sangoya, suggesting that changes in Inuit lifestyles have interrupted opportunities for youth to learn by watching and modeling adult behavior. When Qamaniq was young, she traveled and lived in a small family group. She learned by observing her family every day as they sewed, cooked, followed travel routes and located fishing sites. Since the *Mittimatalingmiut* settled in the community in the 1960’s and early 1970’s, children live in large multi-roomed houses, socialize outside the family unit, attend school during the day and participate in sports and community dances in the evenings. All these factors deter learning through concentrated observation of adult behavior. As one parent argued in during an in-service on incorporating Inuit culture into local schools, “Kids spend so much time in school these days. They don’t have time for community events and culture.” Of course, it is not just the youth who are busy these days. When Malaya and her grandfather have to stop a story midway, the interruption is as often a result of his responsibilities on working groups or advisory committees as it is of Malaya’s own commitments.

The Pauktuutit (2006) suggest that the time that modern children spend involved in schools, technologies and entertainment that convey influences from around the world “has placed limits on the effectiveness of traditional methods of childrearing, as these relied heavily upon maintaining close and more exclusive contact between parents and children.” (p.27) This sentiment was echoed by both Elisapee Ootoova and Annie Peterloosie. Both women suggested that many young families do not exhibit the same closeness that Elisapee described between a mother and child, or that Annie explained having with her own grandmother. One of the reasons that Inuit in Pond Inlet are supportive of youth camps and other opportunities to learn on the land is that they eliminate the majority of modern distractions. There, young people have the chance to strengthen their interpersonal relationships with knowledge holders and to focus on

learning through observation and modeling as traditional activities are carried out in their presence.

### ***6.3.3 Struggles with relevance and shifting meaning***

Even where youth have strong relationships and are interested in IQ, they seem to struggle at times to find the meaning and relevance of traditional lessons in the modern context and in their own daily lives. It is no surprise that Malaya, Joyce and Wendy - three women in their early twenties - are most interested in knowledge related to relationships, fashion, sewing and child-rearing. Knowledge associated with skinning seals, sharing meat and preparing food is still important in Joyce's daily life, but making seal-skin ropes, hearing stories from the past or learning to survive on the land are not as relevant. A good deal of what was necessary knowledge for daily life in the past is now an optional knowledge set. Traditional skills and knowledge can contribute to livelihoods, lifestyles, identity and hobbies if young people are interested, but are no longer necessary for survival in a modern community. Ohmagari and Berkes (1997) have reported similar results among Omushkego Cree communities where skills no longer essential for livelihoods are transmitted less frequently and less completely than they were in the past. Dorais (2001) explains that when Inuit lived in small camps on the land, all Inuit of one gender had a relatively similar set of skills and interests. Since settlement in larger communities, labour has become more divided, and sub-cultures have emerged amongst individuals with similar interests (eg. sewing groups, sports teams, hunters' guilds). As Elisapee Ootoova explains, traditional coping skills, family values and relationships with the environment are still relevant to most young people, "but not every boy needs to learn nuanced hunting skills because not every boy will become a hunter in the modern community."

Even young people who are interested in traditional skills may have different motivations for learning them than their grandparents had several decades ago. For instance, all three of the female elders, and even my interpreter, said that they remember crying while painstakingly trying to sew their first *kamiks*. However, all four persevered because good sewing skills were part of what it meant to be a mature woman, and they knew that

having warm boots was a matter of survival. Today, Malaya wants to learn to make *kamiks* as a means of connecting to the past, of caring for her daughter, of being Inuit and of being fashionable, but the words “survival” and “necessity” do not factor into her motives.

It seems that the meaning that IQ carries for an individual is also changing with time. This first became evident to me during a casual conversation in which Malaya raised the topic of traditional Inuit bedtime stories. These stories were traditionally told to children before bedtime in order to entertain and teach them cultural values and appropriate attitudes and to reinforce relationships between Inuit and the land. According to Annie Peterloosie, when the missionaries came to the region, they discouraged Inuit from telling the stories that they felt were counter to the Christian worldview. Despite the missionaries’ attempts to dissuade the telling of these stories, Annie says that her grandmother would still recite them because she felt that they were necessary to teach her grandchildren about the Inuit ways and Inuit understandings of the world. I asked Malaya if she would be able to, or want to tell them to her own daughter. She answered, “Not really. It’s hard... I remember a few of them but, maybe later on when she’s like 7, 8. Later on.” Malaya evidently values the stories as cultural items, and would like her daughter to hear them at some point, but said that they were not a priority at the moment. “We don’t believe what they used to believe, so it’s not important. I mean it’s important, but we’re living in a different way.” It seems that while Malaya still values the stories, their meanings, from her perspective, are shifting from being necessary components in learning to live a good Inuit life to being interesting, but non-essential cultural artifacts.

The elders with whom I worked grew up when a church, an RCMP station and a trading post were the only structures in Pond Inlet, and Inuit lived in outpost camps around the settlement. Even then, the women learned in a context quite different from that of their own parents and grandparents. They learned and adapted IQ accordingly, incorporating southern tools and ideas that had not previously been available. Now, in 2006, youth have grown up in a modern community with schools, grocery stores, the concept of climate change and satellite TV’s – a drastically different socio-ecological context than

that of their grandparents. While Inuit culture has doubtless always been dynamic, a truly substantial qualitative shift has taken place in the social and ecological context of the Arctic over the past 50 years. Reflecting on an elders' teachings about the preparations that Inuit families once made in the transition from fall to winter, Wendy commented that she is grateful for what the elders have to share, but is unsure of how this information can fit into the puzzle of her knowledge,

*If that piece is not going to fit anywhere in the level that I'm at, it might fit at the top or the middle somewhere. I won't put that in. I'll just put it aside. Maybe I can use it later on, or maybe I won't use it.* [Original in English]

Is it possible that the context of learning has shifted so drastically that young people like Wendy are left looking at some of the "puzzle pieces" from the past, and struggling to find any relevance or meaning for them in the present? Or is Wendy simply describing the time that it takes her to make sense of – or come to know – the teachings that she has heard?

#### ***6.3.4 A Discerning Approach to Learning***

While changing lifestyles and shifting meanings of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* represent considerable challenges in transmission, they also appear to represent a driving force in the dynamism of such knowledge. My experiences with Wendy, Malaya and Joyce suggest that both the youth and the elders with whom they associate are remarkably adept at shaping *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* to keep it relevant in their contemporary lives. My sense is that, in time, Wendy will find places for the majority of the puzzle pieces that she puts aside.

The young women with whom I worked were interested in *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, but were by no means uncritical of what they were being told. While all three women aspire to incorporate certain "traditional" elements in their lives, they see themselves as modern women, living lives distinctly different from those of their grandparents. I asked Joyce one day if in talking with elders, she often heard advice that she disagreed with, or that seemed too old fashioned to be useful these days. "Yeah, yeah, most of the time", she

answered laughing, “but some of them are very useful still. But some of them I really don’t like.”

In some cases, the young women wish to adopt existing traditional practices, in some cases reject them all together, and in other cases, (like Malaya’s approach to sewing) they to begin to mix old and new ways. While Joyce wants very much to maintain family food sharing and support networks, she has no interest in embodying traditional relationships of husbands and wives. When it came up that men were traditionally considered the heads of their houses, and that when asked to do something, a woman would begin right away, even if she was in the midst of another chore, Joyce’s response was decisive: “No. I completely disagree with that. I believe that all people should be treated equally. People are just the same. Just because you’re a man...I completely disagree with that.”

Another example of the girls’ discerning approach to IQ arose after a meeting where Annie Peterloosie and Elisapee Ootoova presented conflicting advice on how to deal with a child who is reaching for things that he or she should not touch. In short, Annie suggested slapping the child lightly on the wrist, while Elisapee felt that slapping a child may make it more likely to resort to physical violence. When I met with the girls following that particular meeting, both Malaya and Joyce mentioned the discussion around discipline, weighing both points. Ultimately, both girls decided that they respected Annie’s opinion, but wanted to follow Elisapee’s advice in reprimanding their own children.

Wendy was not present when that particular discussion arose, but she also expressed a selective approach to adopting traditional ways. “It’s my life,” she told me as she explained her learning puzzle:

*I’m the only person who has control of that puzzle. If I want to put that piece in there, then I will. Or in one piece, if I want to combine the elders and my friends’ [knowledge], I would combine it so I understand it more. But if in one piece I just want elders’ stories or elders’ experiences, I would just put it in. Or just my friends’. Some of them I will combine if I think I have to, but some of them I’ll just leave as they are. [Original in English]*

Wendy's comments, as well as Malaya and Joyce's accounts illustrate that these women are far from passive recipients of transmitted knowledge. On the contrary, they are (sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously) continually filtering, evaluating, and selectively adopting and adapting knowledge from the past as they build their own knowledge and memories. These women are thereby playing an active role in driving the dynamism of IQ. Whether they realize it or not, these young learners are ultimately helping to shape what *Inuit Qaujimagatunangit* is, and what it will become in the future.

### ***6.3.5 Youth and Elders, Agents of Dynamic Knowledge***

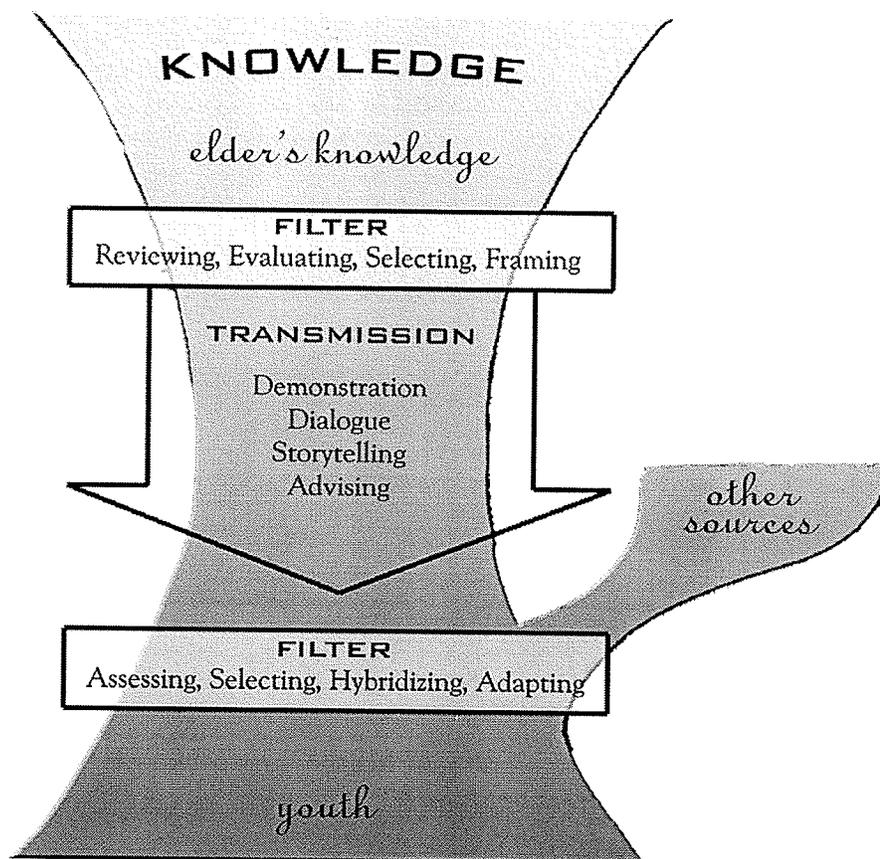
I should note that the elders with whom I worked had no objections to the young women's critical approach to traditional lessons. Though they stress the importance of keeping Inuit traditional knowledge alive, the elders understand that young people now live in a very different world than the one in which they lived as young women. Like Ingold (2000), these women recognize the role of context in shaping the learning process. "Times have changed," Qamaniq says, joking that if she tried to arrange marriages for her grandchildren, or was as strict as her mother was with her, "they would probably beat me up". Elisapee also encouraged the young women to develop both Inuit and Western knowledge and find ways to draw from both sources. "We now know as elders that our forefather's rules and traditions were not all perfect, because they didn't know, because there were very few within the community, and not all of their values were good," she told the girls, "but now you are getting all of this knowledge along with the southern education system. You can use both of these to live a good life."

While youth play an active role in determining the kinds of knowledge that they learn and in directing the evolution of IQ, we should not underestimate the influence of elders in this process. Pettit (1946) describes a child's education as "a constant challenge to elders to review, analyze, dramatize and defend their cultural heritage." Transmission then becomes a moment in which elders both consciously and subconsciously select what information to pass on to the next generation and choose how to frame that knowledge so that it will be relevant in young people's lives. The elders in the Interviewing Inuit

Elders (NAC) program were observed to be evaluating and re-contextualizing their knowledge in this manner. The elders not only shared their customs and practices, but connected their descriptions to the practices and values of modern society (Kublu *et al.*, 1999). This dynamic, which emerged in a similar manner in my own work, led Kublu *et al.* (1999) to comment:

*We have to assume that this is a “traditional” practice. This is exactly what the “production of knowledge” aims at: relating the ideas and practices of the past to the situation at hand, and making them relevant to a new generation which will face new problems and challenges.*

In effect, traditional knowledge is always about the present, and is continually re-defined and re-framed as knowledge holders seek to make connections between their own lived experiences and those of young learners. From the examples above, it is evident that Malaya, Wendy and Joyce are also (perhaps only somewhat consciously) sampling, evaluating, claiming and modifying those elements of IQ that are most relevant to their modern lives. It seems, then, that there is a kind of double-filtering embedded in the transmission process where both teachers and learners are actively transforming and applying knowledge to make it relevant in the context of on-going social change. In fact, when Malaya and her grandfather confer over his speeches (“He always tells me what he’s going to talk to the public. Like, he calls me to see if it sounds good – if it’s going to be helpful.”), the two are working together to discover contemporary meaning and applications of time-tested Inuit values and customs. This grandfather and granddaughter illustrate the process of transmission as a dynamic dialogue between generations (and between individuals), in which both teachers and learners are critically evaluating, adapting and applying knowledge from the past such that it remains useful in a modern context. Figure 2 provides an illustration of the double-filtering that takes place as an elder’s knowledge is shared and subsequently adopted as the knowledge of a young learner.



**Figure 2 - Filtering and evolution of Inuit knowledge through the transmission process.** Here the colored background represents knowledge as it moves from that of an elder to that of a young learner. As an elder interacts with a young person, she selectively filters and frames specific lessons to be relevant to the interests, understandings and social-ecological context of the learner. The learner also filters what she it taught. She selects, adapts and integrates information from other sources in developing her own modern body of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*.

## 6.4 Conclusion

*Where learning is happening, what is going right?*

*Where learning is not happening, what is interfering?*

These questions illuminate modern IQ transmission as a process characterized by change, adaptive innovation and continuity with the past. The constantly shifting social-ecological context of the Arctic provides the driving force for changes in both the content and meaning of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* over time. This evolution of knowledge occurs through the combined efforts of knowledge holders and learners, each of whom is

actively reviewing, assessing, adapting and adopting aspects of traditional knowledge to ensure that it retains relevance to guide modern lives and decisions.

It is not only the content and meaning of knowledge that change with time. The processes of knowledge transmission – the relationships and activities through which knowledge is shared – are also dynamic in nature. One of the most significant and apparent changes to learning in Inuit communities has been the introduction of formal education and other institutionalized approaches to knowledge transmission. Such programs have reduced opportunities for youth to learn through traditional methods of observation and modeling in the family, but have also introduced a new process through which to acquire IQ. Despite the divergence from traditional methods of instruction, Malaya, Wendy and Joyce all portray formal programs as environments in which to acquire IQ (supplemental to that learned in the community), as well as to forge and strengthen relationships with knowledge holders. Their accounts reveal institutional processes of knowledge transmission as distinct from community-based processes in terms of relationships, interpersonal dialogue, and norms of behavior.

In contrast to learning in institutional environments, informal learning in the community appears to adhere much closer to traditional Inuit learning strategies. The narratives and accounts of the three young women with whom I worked reveal inter-personal relationships as central to their positive learning experiences in the community. Their descriptions of relationships with friends, parents, southerners and elders suggest that different kinds of relationships facilitate different kinds of knowledge sharing. Though every individual relationship is unique, it appears that siblings and peers tend to relay, re-frame and reinforce traditional knowledge and values gained from older knowledge holders. Learning from parents is a much less conscious process of learning by example, advice and exposure to Inuit lifestyles. In their interactions with southerners, youth learn through their roles as ambassadors who are challenged to demonstrate and explain their culture to newcomers. By far the greatest emphasis in young people's accounts was placed on relationships with local elders, both inside and outside of the family. In Inuit society, elders have long served the functions of professors, judges, law-makers and

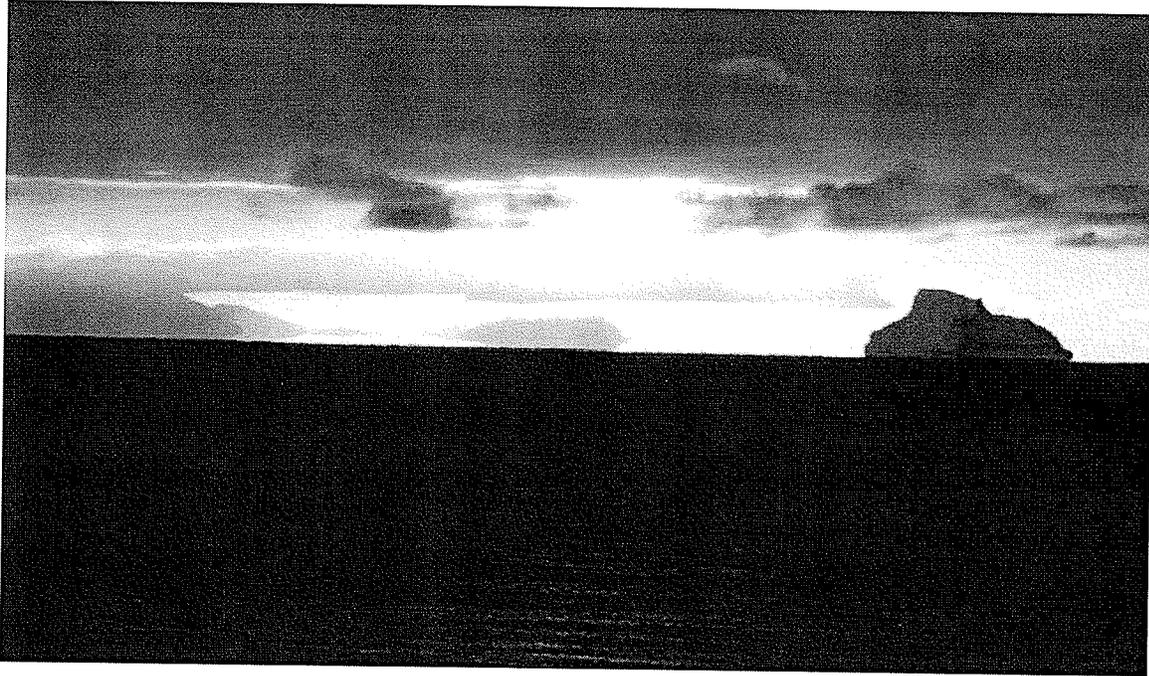
social workers. Advising, counseling and learning from these individuals are mediated through relationships and kinship ties. Within the community, the process of knowledge transmission is firmly rooted in interpersonal relationships, particularly connections between elders and younger generations.

The women's accounts suggest that relationships with elders are largely based on kinship ties (both biological relations and traditional naming practices) and friendships forged through institutionalized programs. These accounts underscore the importance of the Inuit kinship system and traditional naming practices for supporting the process of knowledge transmission. In fact, in the very first group discussion about *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* in the 2006 field season, the elders spent a good deal of time discussing the declining use of Inuit kinship terminology and encouraging the young women to take up using kinship terms (even where elders themselves were failing to use them). It has only occurred to me in writing this thesis that elders were well aware, during that discussion, that kinship terminology is more than just a kind of knowledge. The use of kinship terminology amongst community members represents an indicator of the degree to which Inuit are recognizing and fulfilling their kinship relationships. Those same kinship roles also provide young people with the motivation to acquire knowledge in order to fulfill the responsibilities associated with their roles as mothers, daughter-in-laws, and granddaughters. Moreover, the Inuit kinship system is an integral element in creating and reinforcing the relationships through which knowledge transmission takes place.

Although the majority of learning experiences described by the young women involved learning from kin, they also provided numerous examples of learning traditional skills from individuals outside of their families. Ohmagari and Berkes (1997) report similar results in a study of transmission of bush skills among Omushkego Cree. The women involved in Ohmagari and Berkes' (1997) work, as well as those in my own research all reported learning primarily from female knowledge holders. However, while women were the dominant instructors, the women also provided accounts of learning from a grandfather (Malaya), an older brother (Wendy) and elderly men (Wendy, PBEP

participants). While the Pauktuutit (2006) state that the bulk of knowledge transmission in the past was gender-specific, it was not unheard of for a man to take his daughter hunting, or a boy to be close to his grandmother. In fact, the interpreter who told me of crying as she learned to make *kamiks*, also learned to hunt from her father. Today, at 50 years old, she is the only female polar bear hunter in Pond Inlet. The presence of co-ed IQ programs in modern communities (such as school classes and cadets programs) may be increasing the amount of knowledge transmission that takes place through male-female dialogues, but cross-gender transmission does not appear to be a new phenomenon in Inuit pedagogical processes.

The accounts of these three young women ultimately reveal knowledge transmission, particularly that in the community context, as rooted in interpersonal relationships between learners and knowledge holders. Where learning was taking place, young and old Inuit were engaged in strong relationships through which they could discuss, filter, adapt and apply their cultural knowledge. In these instances, the discourse of knowledge as something dynamic and evolving held true. Where the discourse of perpetual knowledge-loss dominated, youth spoke of frustrations in social interactions with knowledge holders. In these cases, young people were either unable to access traditional teachings or were not able to make sense of them in ways that applied to their own lived experiences. Successful transmission is, therefore, not just a process of passing on knowledge, but of continually responding to social-ecological change by reshaping and redefining cultural knowledge. It is a process through which youth and elders continually review and evaluate knowledge, discovering parallels and negotiating connections between the knowledge of past and current generations.



## CHAPTER 7

~ Reflections ~

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The Inuktitut language has three words, *isuma-*, *qaujima-*, and *sila-*, each of which represents a different kind of human knowledge<sup>10</sup>. In the last decade, another term, *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, has emerged to describe the Inuit traditional knowledge of all aspects of Inuit customs, skills, values, cosmologies and relationships. This thesis has been an investigation into the ways that young Inuit women experience, think and talk about this concept of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. It has explored their accounts of sharing and learning in order to build an understanding of the processes through which IQ is transmitted, transformed and applied in a contemporary Inuit community.

In the opening lines of this thesis, 21-year old Malaya tries to define *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. Like the other young women with whom I worked, Malaya struggles to define or describe her cultural knowledge. She refers to skills of sewing *kamiks* and *amautiit*, and to expressions describing norms of Inuit behavior. In their attempts to describe IQ, Malaya, Wendy and Joyce all began by listing elements of knowledge

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<sup>10</sup>The meanings of these terms are discussed in Chapter 2 and summarized in Appendix 1.

content. However, as we begin to explore the ways that these women talk about and experience their cultural knowledge, IQ emerges as something richer, more complex and more dynamic than a corpus of knowledge content.

In Chapter 5, I explore six themes that *Mittimatalingmiut* women use to frame their discussions of IQ. An analysis of these themes suggests that we can learn a good deal about how participants value and make sense of Inuit *Qaujimaqatuqangit* from the words, symbols and metaphors that they use to talk about it. The themes that these women articulated suggest that while they may try to define IQ as a list of knowledge content, they in fact perceive it as a holistic way of knowing. When combined, the various themes depict IQ as an ongoing process of integrating relationships with the human and non-human, past and present, and tradition and innovation. Through the lenses of these themes, a concept like kinship terminology becomes more than a simple example of knowledge content. It also identifies family and kin as concepts linking multiple kinds of knowledge; it connects an individual's identity to her social network; it creates kinship roles and obligations through which she gains an interest in learning; and it represents a critical institution providing the relationships through which past and present experiences are translated into knowledge. The metaphorical themes of Ootoova's *qulliq* and Wendy's jigsaw puzzle further emphasize IQ as a living bridge between continuity and change. Together, they highlight the living, dynamic nature of knowledge and present the act of "knowing" as a process of simultaneously tending to tradition and innovatively negotiating its modern applications.

The young women's accounts of their lived experiences with IQ offer a contextualized understanding of the process through which this multifaceted IQ is tended, innovated and transmitted. Again, while these women find it difficult to define or talk specifically about IQ as a *thing*, their stories reveal continual experiences of IQ as a *process*. In group discussions, the emphasis was not on knowing how to make *kamiks*, for instance, or having the specific skills to do so. Instead, IQ was about the process of coming to know these skills: building the relationships through which to learn and crying with frustration as stitches were sewn and re-sewn. It was about translating the experience of sewing into

knowledge and about advancing from making *kamiks* for children, to making them for adolescents and then for hunters. It was a process of applying such knowledge, innovating new designs and using skills to reinforce family relations and to care for loved ones. Ultimately, the women's experiences reveal IQ not as a collection of things to know, but as a constant process of experiencing, applying, adapting and making sense. IQ is more than knowledge per se – it is a process of coming to know.

Figure 2 provides a general representation of the process by which youth and elders collaboratively negotiate the meaning and application of IQ. The figure illustrates the dialogue through which IQ is acquired as well as a key process through which it adapts to changing social-ecological context. The figure shows a simplified relationship between the knowledge of one elder and one young person. Of course we must recognize that IQ is not only acquired by youth, nor is it shared only by elders. In fact, an individual's process of translating oral history and personal experience into knowledge begins as a young child and continues throughout life. Malaya's account of her grandfather discussing his community speeches with her is a clear example of the ways that even elders continue to assess the relevance of their knowledge to modern realities. They too are assessing, hybridizing and applying knowledge as they provide advice to youth, management boards and working groups and apply it in their own lives. IQ is only partly about life-long learning in the sense of constantly adding to a corpus of knowledge content. It is also a life-long process of evaluating, re-framing, adapting, making sense of and applying knowledge. As Wendy aptly suggested, even the elders are busy constructing their own jigsaw puzzles of learning.

The figure shows a knowledge holder reviewing, evaluating, selecting and framing her knowledge. However, the women's lived experiences emphasize that filtering occurs in a number of different ways. An elder may reflect privately on the value of her personal experiences, talk with other elders about the relevance of new information, discuss IQ in working groups and advisory panels or consult young people about their understandings of modern realities. She will continue to evaluate the applications of her knowledge as she engages in conversation and provides advice to friends, family members and local

youth. Ultimately, the advice and oral histories that an elder offers to young learners will have been shaped by private, public and interpersonal filtering processes, as well as by the institutional and community contexts in which her knowledge is shared.

Similarly, as is evident in accounts in Chapter 4, young people acquire knowledge from a range of sources. Sources of learning include personal experiences, as well as dialogue with parents, elders, peers and even non-Inuit. This filtering process also takes place through a range of individual and social processes. Learners will assess, select and hybridize knowledge in dialogues with knowledge-holders and friends, through personal reflection and even as they re-formulate knowledge to pass it on to their own children and young siblings. Wendy's description of her jigsaw puzzle of learning, for example, offers a model of how one young woman comes to understand IQ, to filter and piece her knowledge together through a combination of social interactions and individual reflection.

In fact, the jigsaw and *qulliq* metaphors both seem to reinforce the concept of *Inuit Qaujimaqatunangit* as a process of making sense and of coming to know. Ootoova's metaphor of knowledge as a *qulliq* does not focus on owning a *qulliq* (or having knowledge) but instead emphasizes the ongoing work required to tend and maintain the lamp's flame. Similarly, Wendy does not describe IQ as a matter of having puzzle pieces, but as a process of fitting each piece into the puzzle of her knowledge. For Wendy, IQ is experienced as a process of taking the information that is shared with her and translating it into her own knowledge. For Ootoova, it is a process of tending to knowledge to ensure that it is always useful in the present. For both women, the emphasis of *Inuit Qaujimaqatunangit* moves quickly away from the content of what is known: for these *Mittimatalingmiut* women, what is most critical about IQ is the process through which it is learned, filtered and applied as a way of knowing that is at once rooted in the past, and adaptive to the present.

## 7.2 Linkages Between Narratives and Individual Accounts

While I have addressed IQ and learning experiences in different chapters of this thesis, it is important to consider connections that may exist between young people's perceptions of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* and the accounts through which they describe their learning experiences. As discussed earlier, an individual's reality, or her understanding of that reality, is inevitably shaped by culturally mediated language and symbols (Prus, 1996). The themes presented in Chapter 4 offer explanations and metaphors that are themselves symbols (and kinds of language) which explain and give meaning to *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. The themes were constructed and shared in order to explain IQ to me, but I believe that they also helped the participants to make sense of their own knowledge. That is, the same themes likely shaped the young women's understandings of the learning process and helped them to interpret the interactions that they have had with knowledge holders. The ways that they interpreted, gave meaning to, and framed accounts of their learning experiences were doubtless shaped by culturally negotiated themes and symbols - possibly some of the same symbols represented in the six narratives of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*.

For instance, Joyce explained to me that she was motivated to learn traditional ways in order to help her grandparents around the house. This motive - or at least Joyce's description of her motive - fits very well with the narrative that Ootoova had shared several days earlier about family as the nucleus of IQ. Ootoova's narrative certainly reflects her understanding based on nearly 80 years of lived experience. But once it was articulated and adopted by the group, the narrative also seemed to have shaped Joyce's understanding of her own lived experience. This is not to imply that Joyce's motivations changed after the group discussed Ootoova's idea. She had likely never tried to articulate her motivations before I began to ask her about them. Ootoova's narrative simply offered Joyce a means to frame and to express her desire to learn. It may have also helped her to draw a stronger cognitive connection between Joyce's knowledge, her sense of family and her roles as a mother, grand daughter and cousin.

### 7.3 Reflections on the Research Process

The realization that my discussions with Joyce had been shaped by Ootoova's narrative has led me to consider how the process of carrying out this research and the interaction of different methods ultimately influenced my results and affected the way that participants were thinking and talking about knowledge transmission. As I explain in Chapter 3, the photographic narratives, interviews and focus groups were carried out over the course of six weeks in the fall of 2006. The ideas presented both by the individual participants and by the group as a whole appeared to evolve over this period.

In part, I believe that the time that the women and I set aside for interviews allowed them to reflect on their learning experiences in more depth than they are normally able to do. With interviews spread over six weeks, the women had considerable time to construct the accounts that they shared with me and develop explanations and analyses of their experiences. In fact, my continual efforts to understand the learning process must have rubbed off on Wendy, who eventually came up with her own metaphorical theory to describe her learning experiences. This young woman referred to her *jigsaw puzzle of learning* in several of our subsequent discussions, using it to draw connections between her ideas and experiences. This theme – developed through reflection in personal interviews – seemed to provide Wendy with a new way of thinking and talking about her learning experiences, even those that took place long before I arrived in Pond Inlet.

A number of ideas that participants generated through independent reflection and individual interviews were later shared in focus group meetings. One such example is Elisapee Ootoova's metaphor of *Inuit Qaujimajtuqangit* as a *qulliq*, or seal-oil lamp. While the *qulliq* is a central symbol amongst Inuit women, the concept of the lamp as a metaphor for knowledge began as a theme constructed by one individual participant. As it was shared in the group forum, Sangoya nodded and elaborated on it. Malaya excitedly described an image with which to communicate the metaphor. In effect, Ootoova's individual constructed metaphor was re-negotiated, re-articulated and claimed as a collectively held theme. It became a way of building collective meaning for the concept *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*.

Not only did individual ideas enter the group forum, but concepts negotiated by the group ultimately influenced the way that participants expressed themselves in individual interviews. Joyce's use of the concept of family as the nucleus of IQ provides an excellent example of this process. In my discussions with Malaya, she too referred back to Ootoova's ideas as a means of explaining her own interests and experiences with traditional skills. It seems that Ootoova's ideas were not only accepted by the group, but were adopted by these young women as a way to understand the value of IQ in relating to their own families.

The mutual influence and interaction of individual and group methods meant that rather than carrying out a series of unconnected interviews and focus groups, the participants and I effectively engaged in a six-week dialogue. The photographic narrative exercise and interviews created space for personal reflection, while group meetings provided an environment for sharing, learning and negotiating interpretations of personal experiences. The reflection, analysis and dialogue that were generated during the research process allowed these women to deepen their understandings and construct both individual and collective accounts of IQ transmission.

What emerged from this six-week dialogue was a series of themes and individual accounts that were used to explain and talk about *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* and knowledge transmission. The research process thus revealed a range of ways of understanding IQ including existing, novel, and individually- and socially-constructed concepts. According to a symbolic interactionist perspective, these themes, old and new, all make up part of the *language* that Inuit use to make sense of their transmission experiences. By generating several new themes to frame *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* transmission, I believe that this mixed-methods research process has in fact built new languages through which to talk and think about knowledge transmission. The research process did not just study IQ, but in fact generated new *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. When two of the three young women used a group theme to explain their interests in certain traditional skills, they were using that theme as a way to understand the value and meaning of IQ in their lives.

The emergence of these new themes and their subsequent use by the young women illustrates a key lesson emerging from my research experience: the process of doing research can generate new ways for not only researchers, but also for local participants to understand the phenomena that we study. In this case, the results that appear in this thesis do not represent the perceptions that these women had when I arrived in Pond Inlet. Instead, they represent the understandings that the women and I were able to come to over six weeks of reflection and dialogue. Davidson-Hunt and O’Flaherty (2007) describe this co-production of knowledge in terms of learning communities established by researchers and the indigenous people with whom they work. My own research has not only developed my understanding of knowledge transmission, but appears to have influenced the way that the three young women talk about and make sense of their lived experiences. Ultimately, the process of conducting this research has been a process of creating themes and languages through which both the participants and I can improve our understandings of knowledge transmission.

#### **7.4 Implications and a future for *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit***

This thesis documents and seeks to understand specific contextualized experiences of what it is like to be a young woman acquiring *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* in Pond Inlet, Nunavut in 2006. It explores the concept and process of knowledge transmission not from the perspective of those who strategically teach younger generations, but of those who strategically learn – those who constitute the next generation. Together, the accounts of the three young women and insights of their elderly relatives create a picture of a process of knowledge transmission at a specific moment in time in a community undergoing rapid social-ecological change. The sample size of this study is not large, nor are the participants intended to be representative of Inuit or even *Mittimatalingmiut* women as a whole. In effect, this thesis tells a small story. Nevertheless, these rich accounts offer insights into the modern reality and potential future of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, and Inuit culture.

The implications of understanding IQ as a process of coming to know became apparent at (of all places) a recent Cree cultural orientation workshop hosted by several Omushkego communities in northern Manitoba<sup>11</sup>. The elders who spoke at the workshop discussed their community histories, culture, and the social and ecological impacts of resource developments in their territories. Following the elders' presentations, a non-aboriginal participant raised a question that I have heard asked in various forms of Cree, Inuit and other aboriginal Canadians: *Do young people want to live more traditional lives, reconnecting to the ways that things were done in the past, or do they want to take on technological developments, southern values, and live in a modern way? What is it that they want for the future?* This man's questions refer more directly to *culture* than they do *knowledge*. However, given the overlap of these concepts in my discussions with the *Mittimatalingmiut*, as well as in the academic literature (Davidson-Hunt, 2003), I believe that an understanding of IQ can shed some light on these questions in the Inuit context.

First of all, the young women's depictions of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* highlight a mistaken assumption inherent in the questions above. As posed, these questions assume that youth need to choose either tradition or modernity. However, the accounts offered by Wendy, Malaya and Joyce suggest that these women neither want, nor could achieve either "traditional" Inuit or modern "southern" ways of life. In fact, their accounts highlight IQ as characterized by ongoing integration of past and present – of tradition and innovation. As individuals, and as a community, Inuit are continually adapting their cultural knowledge to reflect social, ecological, political, economic and technological change. Their knowledge is at once modern and traditional - *qulliq* and jigsaw puzzle. This integration of past and present does not appear to be a new phenomenon. Sangoya and Peterloosie's descriptions of incorporating technological advancements and of hearing their own grandparents discuss how much their ways had changed suggest that Inuit have long been building, adapting and hybridizing their heritage of knowledge to be relevant in the present. The future of their knowledge and culture is not a choice between tradition and modernity. It is - and has always been - both. As Malaya articulated "there

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<sup>11</sup> The workshop was organized in the summer of 2007 as a cultural awareness session for Manitoba Hydro employees who work directly or indirectly with aboriginal communities. I attended the event as an assistant to one of the elders presenting at the event.

are so many similarities between the old ways and the modern ways – it’s just the modern way now”.

Beyond identifying IQ as a merging of past and present, the women’s experiences show it as an ongoing process of negotiating, bridging, reconciling and applying knowledge. If we apply this understanding of the process of IQ to the question of what youth want for their future, we realize that young people have probably not yet formulated an answer. The future form of Inuit culture and knowledge will only emerge (over time) through a process of negotiating traditional teachings with modern experiences, information and social-ecological context. If given the opportunity to do so, young people will learn, hybridize, problem-solve and apply their knowledge to contemporary challenges. They will engage in interpersonal relationships, dialogue and reflection and ultimately innovate the future of IQ. What appears to be most important is that young people have the opportunity to engage in the process of acquiring and negotiating this knowledge. It is, therefore, critical that the process of IQ transmission continues and that youth are given the authority to determine their own futures.

At a very practical level, promotion of IQ as a process requires that communities find ways to support the relationships and institutions through which transmission takes place. Just as resource managers protect ecosystems by conserving the natural processes that create and maintain them (fire regimes, for example), *Mittimatalingmiut* can look to promote IQ by supporting the processes that sustain it. From the perspectives of young learners, institutionalized programs and family/community relations have both emerged as important loci for knowledge transmission. Though the two environments generate distinct processes of interaction and knowledge-sharing, the young participants have acquired knowledge and forged relationships in both environments. It is, therefore, advisable that every effort be made to promote knowledge transmission in both the institutional and community context. This research suggests that IQ programs in classrooms, youth positions on working groups and student involvement in oral history research can all generate dialogue between learners and knowledge holders. Such dialogues not only allow experienced individuals to share their knowledge, but allow

Inuit to work together in filtering and making sense of what is shared. These largely oral (and often question-based) interactions can be supplemented by land excursions, youth-elder camps and other skill-based programs. By watching, modeling and practicing in such programs, learners are able to supplement their knowledge of oral history by building memories from their own lived experiences

It is evident in the young women's accounts that knowledge transmission, particularly in the community context, is rooted in interpersonal connections. If the transmission process is grounded in social interactions, then the maintenance of inter-generational relationships becomes a key consideration in promoting *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*. Formal IQ programs should, therefore, be encouraged to help youth learn from people to whom they have kinship ties (without excluding youth who do not have access to knowledgeable kin). Community and school programs, like the PBEP should focus on sharing and documenting knowledge, but also on building the kinds of relationships through which young people will be able to continue learning after a program is finished. Grandparents, elderly relatives and parents are the most obvious knowledge-holders to involve in such programs, but the accounts in this thesis suggest that youth can learn through connections with knowledgeable peers, siblings and, occasionally, with non-Inuit. As social relationships are integral to the process of transmission, any efforts to build and strengthen interpersonal relations and kinship ties will contribute to perpetuating the process through which *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* is shared, learned and applied.

Ultimately, if *Mittimatalingmiut* are to promote the survival and use of their knowledge, they will need to preserve the processes that characterize and perpetuate IQ, as well as those that allow for its dynamic and evolving nature. As Oosten and Laugrand (2002:25) write, *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* "takes shape in the interactions between elders and younger generations." Joyce laughed when she told me that her grandmother's advice often sounds too old-fashioned to be useful these days. However, she went on to add that "some of them are very useful still," and described the moments in which her grandmother's advice has shaped her own approach to parenting. The objective, then, is

to promote those moments of interaction where youth and elders are able to share their knowledge, filter it and make sense of it together – the moments in which young people recognize such knowledge as “very useful still”. Those are the interactions through which knowledge will be perpetuated, through which lessons from the past will find relevance in the present and through which the future of a dynamic *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* will take shape.

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# APPENDIX I

## ~ Inuktitut words and terms used in the document ~

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### ***Amautik***

A traditional women's jacket. The jacket is sewn with a large hood and back pouch for carrying an infant. Traditionally, *amautiit* (plural) would be made from caribou skins. Today, they are sewn primarily from cotton, duffle and other imported fabrics.

### ***Ajuqtuq***

This verb refers to the concept of an individual's competency, and the learning process as one of building competency. The root *ajuq-* in fact refers to 'incompetence', but when expressed in the negative (*ajungittuq*) is used to describe a competent individual (Trott, personal communication).

### ***Illirasuk-***

The term is used to describe the emotion that a student would feel for her instructor, or a young person may feel towards an elder. It is an affectionate term associated with great respect and a degree of intimidation (Mallon and Kublu, 1999).

### ***Iliniaqtuq***

This verb refers to learning that occurs through oral or written transmission of knowledge that is not linked to personal experience. The root *iliniq-* is also used in the Inuktitut words used to describe the western school system and its students (Briggs, 1998)

### ***Inuktitut***

The language spoken by Inuit. The word literally means "like an Inuk" and refers to speaking like the Inuit.

### ***Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit***

This term was developed in 1998 as a way to distinguish *Inuit knowledge* from general discussions of *traditional knowledge*. The term translates literally to "That which is long known by Inuit." A full discussion of the origins and meaning of the term can be found in Chapter 2.

### ***Inuit***

The plural Inuktitut word for people of the eastern arctic. This word literally means "people".

### ***Inuk***

The singular Inuktitut word for a person of the eastern arctic. This word literally means "person".

### ***Isuma-***

This concept compares to the English concept of reason, or reasoning. It refers to an individual's ability to approach a problem logically and come to an appropriate solution (Briggs, 1998).

### ***Isumaksaijak***

Refers to the development of *isuma-*, or reason, through personal practical experience (Briggs, 1998).

### ***Kamik***

A Traditional Inuit boot sewn from seal and caribou skins. The sole of the boot is traditionally made from bearded seal skin which is softened by hours of folding and chewing. Kamiks are still made from traditional materials; however, the liners for the boots are now sewn from thick felt or wool. When speaking in English, Inuit often refer to a pair of the boots as "*kamiks*" (using the English grammatical form). However, in Inuktitut, the proper word for boots is "*kamiit*".

### ***Mittimatalik***

This is the Inuktitut name for the settlement of Pond Inlet. The literal translation of the term means "*the place where Mittima is buried*". Unfortunately, neither the local oral or written records provide clear information on the identity of Mittima.

### ***Mittimatalingmiut***

This term refers to the people of the Pond Inlet region. A simple English translation for the term is "*Pond Inlet-ers*". The suffix "*-miut*" refers to "*people of*" a given region. Prior to settlement in modern communities, Inuit were known by *-miut* groups specific to regions in which they traveled and lived. The current residents of Pond Inlet are descendants (and living members) of the *Tunnunirmiut*, who occupied the North Baffin region.

### ***Nagligusuk-***

Like *iliragusuk-*, this term refers to an affectionate emotion. *Nagligusuk-* expresses an affectionate pity, or desire to care for another. This term would be used to describe an adult's affection for a small child or an instructor's feeling for her young student (Mallon and Kublu, 1999).

### ***Qarmait***

Semi-interred sod houses that were used as the primary winter homes among *Tunnunirmiut*. Snow houses, or *iglus* were built as temporary shelters during travel or short stays in an area.

### ***Qaujima-***

This term refers to knowledge, or understanding. The root "*qau-*", which means "light", suggests that this concept is similar to the English idea of "enlightenment" (Briggs, 1998).

### ***Qulliq***

A semi-circular lamp used for heat and light. Prior to contact with outsiders, *qulliit* (plural) provided the only source of heat and light in arctic winter. *Qulliit* were traditionally carved from stone, and burnt seal or caribou oil using wicks made of arctic cotton fleece. The lamps are still used today for camping as well as for ceremonial purposes. Modern *qulliit* can be made of stone, metal, and clay – even from frying pans cut in half and flattened out on the cut edge. Many modern *qulliit* burn vegetable oil, but seal and caribou oil continue to be used as well.

### ***Sila-***

This concept is best understood as “wisdom” and is developed from an individual’s accumulated *qaujima-*, experience and *isuma-* (Briggs, 1998).

## **APPENDIX II**

**~ Research Licenses ~**

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## Research/Collecting Permit Parks Canada, Nunavut Field Unit

**Park/Site:** SIRMILIK NATIONAL PARK  
**Permit Number:** SNP-2005-007  
**Project Title:** What is the nature of the interaction between the knowledge of youth and elders? Inuit Qaujimagatuquangit (Inuit knowledge) of Sirmilik National Park  
**CEAA Registry #:** CSNP-05-07

Under the authority of the National Parks Act, this permit is granted to

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Fikret Berkes  
**of:** University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2, Canada  
**and to party members:** Eleanor Bonny  
**for the following research:** see attached project description  
**at (location):** NA - no active research will take place within the Park boundaries. (Research will be done from the community of Pond Inlet).  
**This permit is effective:** 01 July 2005 – 30 June 2006

Permit Conditions are attached.

Please sign and carry this permit with you in the field. For clarification on any matter, contact the Ecosystem Scientist, Nunavut Field Unit (867) 975-4677 (NunavutParks.Research@pc.gc.ca) or the Chief Park Warden, Sirmilik National Park (867) 899-8094 (carey.elverum@pc.gc.ca).

Permittee

Date

June 9/05

Superintendent  
Nunavut Field Unit

Date

June 1/05

Canadian Wildlife Service  
Nunavut

Date

6 Jan 05



---

**Nunavummi Qaujisaqtulirijikkut / Nunavut Research Institute**

Box 1720, Iqaluit, NU X0A 0H0 phone:(867) 979-7279 fax: (867) 979-7109 e-mail: slcnri@nunanet.com

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**SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH LICENCE**

LICENCE # 0205405N-M

ISSUED TO: Eleanor Ayr Bonny  
Natural Resources Institute  
University of Manitoba  
70 Dysart Rd.  
Winnipeg, MB  
R3T 2N2 CA

AFFILIATION: University of Manitoba

TITLE: Involving Inuit Youth and Inuit Knowledge in the Management of Sirmilik National Park

**OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH:**

The proposed project will involve high school students and elders in sharing, documenting and discussing their knowledge of the land and land-based activities around the community of Pond Inlet, and Sirmilik National Park in Nunavut. The initiative will cooperate with the Parks Canada project, Using Inuit Knowledge in Management, Research and Monitoring of Nunavut National Parks and will serve as a joint community-development and research project. The community-development portion of the project will affirm the knowledge and interest that young people have in Inuit knowledge, promote continued knowledge transmission, introduce youth to Inuit knowledge research, and engage them in documenting Inuit knowledge for use in the community and Sirmilik National Park (SNP). The research component of the project will consider the current state of knowledge amongst young people and identify direction for programs that encourage them to acquire further knowledge and research skills. It will also consider how the knowledge that is shared during the project can contribute to managing Sirmilik National Park.

**DATA COLLECTION IN NU:**

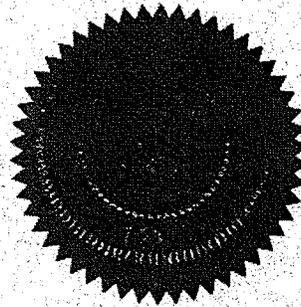
DATES: September 01, 2005-June 30, 2006

LOCATION: Pond Inlet

Scientific Research Licence 0205405N-M expires on December 31, 2005

Issued at Iqaluit, NU on September 15, 2005

 Earle Baddaloo  
Science Advisor



# **APPENDIX III**

**~ Consent Form ~**

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**Form I- Consent for Adult Participants**

"I \_\_\_\_\_ have been fully informed of the objectives of the project being conducted. I understand these objectives and consent to participate in the project. I understand that steps will be undertaken to ensure that my contributions will remain confidential unless I consent to being identified. I also understand that, if I wish to withdraw from the study, I may do so without any repercussions."

I wish that my identity and this interview remain confidential

OR

I wish that my identity be non-confidential and that the information I shared be attributed to me

I give my permission for the interviews and/or focus groups to be:

Audio-recorded

Video-recorded

Photographed

I give my permission for material from my interviews and focus groups (quotes, video or audio footage, photographs) to be included in research publications. If I wish that my identity remains confidential, my name will not be mentioned. Instead, I will be attributed a letter, for reporting purposes, to protect my identity.

**Participant**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Witness**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_