

Inuit Art, Knowledge and “Staying Power”:
Perspectives from Pangnirtung

by

Alena Rosen

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the relationship between Inuit art making, knowledge, and the process of cultural continuity or resilience, beginning with a review of relevant theory and literature focusing on concepts of voice, location and representation, and ending with an analysis based on interviews with art makers in Pangnirtung. I argue that through their creative practices, Panniqtuumiut and other Inuit artists are actively involved in the production and transmission of Inuit knowledge, an action that supports the process of cultural resilience. Specifically, this occurs as knowledge is materialized in works of art, circulated, and transmitted/interpreted. This project explores a critical approach to the interpretation of works of Inuit art, and the place of Inuit voice in that process.

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CHAPTER I

Theory, Method, Methodology

The first thing most Qallunaat¹ who have visited Pangnirtung say is, “Isn’t it beautiful?” Potentially one of the most magnificent community settings in the Arctic, it is hard to forget the classic view of mountains, looking down the fjord. While the land is hard to ignore, this thesis is about Panniqtuumiut, the people of Pangnirtung, and specifically the thoughts of carvers, graphic artists, printmakers, tapestry weavers, clothing designers and craftspeople. The thesis consists of my interpretation of Panniqtuumiut art makers’ ideas and experiences shared with me. I argue that through their creative practices, Panniqtuumiut and other Inuit artists are actively involved in the production and transmission of Inuit knowledge, an action that supports the process of cultural resilience. This project is about a critical examination of the interpretation of works of Inuit art, and Inuit voices in that process.

Colonialism (Theory)

Colonial Discourse

The production of Inuit art takes place within the context of colonialism. The following pages review anchoring concepts and theories informing this thesis, drawing on post-colonial theory, Indigenous thought and critical theory. As this thesis deals with visual and material embodiment of knowledge, the analysis of colonialism will be focused on thought and ideology.

Colonial discourse serves to reinforce and perpetuate European colonialism, specifically through its representation of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples became

¹ Qallunaat (sing. qallunaaq) is the Inuktitut term commonly used to refer to non-Inuit, and particularly to people of European ancestry.

known to the West through the process of “Othering”² (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p.156; Smith, 1999, pp.58-9). Knowledge about Indigenous peoples is gathered, organized, and integrated within Western systems of thought and presented back to the both the West and Indigenous peoples, now colonized subjects (Smith, 1999, pp.1, 42-3). Colonial discourse serves to reinforce ideas about the superiority and centrality of the colonizer’s culture (Ashcroft, 2007, p.37; see also Blaut, 1993). European cultural hegemony is asserted through the idea of European culture and identity being superior to all other cultures. Said calls this the “flexible *positional* superiority” of the West (1994, p.7).

It was the control of the means of representation rather than the means of production that confirmed the hegemony of the European powers in their respective empires. Economic, political and military dominance enabled the dissemination of European ideas [...]. (Ashcroft, 2007, p.207)

This determination of the means of representation bears on the discussions taking place throughout this thesis concerning the ways art embodies ideas or knowledge .

² One way in which Indigenous voices are silenced is through the process of ‘othering’. The process of othering serves to justify the colonial project by establishing particular representations of the “other” which support the premise of European superiority and right to conquest. An important aspect of othering is its dialectical nature, in that it serves to construct a representation of the ‘self’ through defining an antithesis in the ‘other’ (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p.156; Smith, 1999, p.22). As Said argues in reference to the othering of the Orient, this is both a way of thinking founded in a binary opposition, and more significantly a “strategy of domination”, a political and ideological device used to establish Western authority over the ‘other’ (Said, 1994, p.2-3).

Said argues that Orientalism is one of the most powerful Western discourses about the ‘other’, which grew in strength and power following the late 18th century. Orientalism is the way the West manages the Orient, the East, and gains control over it, “by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, by settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient” (Said, 1994, p.3). Importantly, Orientalism informs the West’s understanding of its own identity and gives it power by defining an alternate self. Representation is the main product of the Orientalist, the external observer of the Orient and, “the exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself it would” (Said, 1994, p.21). Western discourses about Indigenous peoples and specifically Inuit peoples function similarly.

“Othering: describes a dialectical process that establishes difference, creating a subjugated other. This way of understanding establishes a binary, paralleling the division between colonizers and colonized. The analysis of colonizer/colonized is heuristically useful in understanding the historical epistemological and ontological frameworks propelling European imperialism. As a binary, it is problematic in application, and specifically in this thesis, since it does not allow room for the great variety of interests and relationships that cross in both directions the 'boundary' between colonizer/colonized or Qallunaat/Inuit and ultimately subvert such a boundary.

Through producing this thesis, I enter one such transgressive relationship. I am a non-Indigenous, female researcher working within the field of Indigenous research. I grew up in a liberal, middle-class, non-religious home located in a large urban centre, Toronto, in the national territory of Canada. The route that led me to undertake this project began during my undergraduate studies at the University of Toronto, where I majored in socio-cultural anthropology and philosophy. I took a course titled 'Indigenous Spirituality', taught by Dr. David Turner, with sections focusing on Australian and the Canadian Arctic contexts. The discussion relating to the Arctic included looking at themes of shamanism in Inuit art. Up to this point in my life, I had very little exposure to any Indigenous cultures. I finished my degree, and some time later attained a position at the fairly new Museum of Inuit Art (MIA) in Toronto. Working at MIA was exciting and challenging. At the time I began, there were only a few other employees, and I was privileged to be able to observe many aspects of the running of the museum and gallery attached to it. I began to be very interested in how museums worked, the relationships between Indigenous peoples and museums, and the ways in which Inuit art was being presented. I saw an overall lack of Indigenous voices, and particularly Inuit perspectives. I decided to return to school and pursue graduate work on the subject as a result of these experiences. I was encouraged by my former professor to pursue my studies with at the

University of Manitoba's Department of Native Studies. This move in turn brought me into relationship with the community of Panguit through the summer school program run there each year. I enter into these relationships from a location informed by my particular life positioning and experiences, and determined the approach I took in conducting the research. The relationships I have developed over the past three years will continue, as my responsibility within those relationships continues.

Qallunaat Representations of Inuit

A sub-discourse of the greater colonial discourse about Indigenous peoples, with its own complex character, is the discourse existing around the North. Explorers, missionaries, and anthropologists, amongst others, collectively created a Western system of knowledge about the North and Northern peoples. Historical representations of Inuit are problematic. It is important to note that the imagined "Eskimo" takes a different shape than the imagined "Indian" (see Francis, 1992)³. The differences will not be examined in depth here. This difference is principally due to different historical circumstances of colonial encounters. As Trott points out, "Combined with their geographical and economical marginalization, the Inuit have never represented a threat to Western colonial expansion and have been treated very differently [than First Nations] through government policy and Western charity" (2001, p.173). As a result, government interest in the North intensified only in the mid-20th century. Nationalism and the vision of Canada as a Northern nation also contribute to the discourse around Inuit (cf. Grace, 2001; Hulan, 2002).

Earlier ethnographic representation of Inuit envisioned Inuit society as essentially patriarchal, revolving around the 'masculine' vocation of the hunt, and depicts the arctic as "a world in which the exigencies of survival explain most social practices" (Hulan,

³ The use of the term "Eskimo" is in the context of western representations of Inuit.

2002, p.58). Western discourse naturalized and historicized the Eskimo. Europeans tend to see Eskimo peoples as “a less sophisticated model of themselves” (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, p.xvi). The popular romanticized Eskimo lives in an igloo, roams around hunting seal and eating it raw with a friendly, clever and happy-go-lucky disposition all the while. This image is often applied broadly to all Northern peoples, which as Fienup-Riordan notes, the material culture in this example misrepresents a great majority of circumpolar Arctic peoples. This stereotype continues to be upheld, and to proliferate in images of “Eskimos” found in advertising and popular media (1990, pp.1, 5; cf. Sinclair, 2004; Keene, 2011; Qiviq, n.d.).

By representing Inuit in a romanticized, idealized way Inuit are denied the ability to change and articulate their own “authentic” Inuit identity. As pointed out in Ashcroft, et al. (this essentialist position, through evaluating cultural practices as either “authentically Indigenous” or “hybridized or contaminated” denies cultures to be dynamic, to change and remain intact (2007, p.17; cf. Berkhofer, 1978; Francis, 1992; Young Man, 1992). Renee Hulan states that the typical anthropological perspective presents Inuit culture as disappearing, where from an Inuit perspective, Inuit culture is continuing (2002, p.76).

Voice(s) and Representation

A relationship between power and knowledge underlies this discussion, and is particularly important because of the ways in which Western imperialism has silenced Indigenous voices while establishing the Western positivist voice as the ‘only’ voice. Indigenous resistance to colonialism can take shape and space as an assertion of Indigenous voices. Tester and Irniq rightly place discussions of the application of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Inuit traditional knowledge) within the context of colonial power relations. Discussing Inuit opposition to the 1983 seal ban, they state:

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Inuit were still very much afraid of their “colonial bosses” and ‘talking back’ to those who claimed authority was, for many, a new and challenging idea. This was a form of resistance uncomfortable to many Inuit. (Tester & Irniq, 2008, pp.52-3)

Western production of knowledge is linked to power. The Western tradition of knowledge assumes authority, and asserts that there are universal truths, that knowledge can be objective, that it can form a single coherent narrative (Said, 1994, pp.9-10). As Smith (1999, p.58) observes, “knowledge and culture are as much a part of imperialism as[are] raw materials and military strength”. Knowledge is a commodity within colonialism, and the production and reproduction of the Western Eurocentric ‘standard of knowledge’ has had a devastating effect on Indigenous peoples (Smith, 1999, p.59). Making Indigenous voices heard, and talking back to the West is about beginning to address this relationship. In her introduction to the *Inuit Women Artists* exhibition catalogue, Minnie Aodla Freeman states, “We have never been asked to write about ourselves. We have always been written about” (1994, p.16). This thesis project is founded in recognition of that colonial history, and envisioning a world where Inuit are re-established as authorities of their own art narratives.

Indigenous and Western Traditions of knowledge

It is important to recognize differences between Western and Indigenous systems of knowledge – usually described as the former being about objectivity, and the latter about relationality (cf. Smith, 1999; cf. Eigenbrod & Hulan, 2008). Indigenous knowledge is an important element of this thesis⁴. In the past few decades, Western

⁴ There are various informal and technical terms surrounding the discussion of Indigenous knowledge (such Traditional Knowledge, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, etc.). The concept describes the whole body of thought, and ways of being and knowing that are expressed by Indigenous peoples, and specifically the relational character of this kind of knowledge. In this thesis, the terms Inuit knowledge, Inuit Qaujumajuqangit and Indigenous knowledge are used to describe these forms of knowledge as articulated in works of art.

scholarship has begun to pay attention to Indigenous knowledge as an important area of research, although McGregor asserts that treating IK “as an alternative knowledge base to Western science” (specifically in consideration of TEK) is a non-Indigenous way of looking at the meaning and value of IK and TEK (2004, pp.395-6). McGregor explains that it is essential to approach the study of IK from an Indigenous understanding of what is meant when “Indigenous knowledge” is spoken of. “Aboriginal people view TEK as a way of life, a relationship that requires doing”, which is a way of thinking that has extremely different consequences and boundaries (McGregor, 2004, pp.395-6).

Battiste and Henderson note that it is problematic to provide a definition of Indigenous knowledge, but that its characteristics can be outlined. A definition could paint Indigenous knowledge/s as a “thing”, an objective and homogenous body of knowledge across different peoples and nations. This would be inaccurate: Indigenous knowledge is variable, relational, and deeply anchored in person and place – it is a fusion “person, place, product, and process” (McGregor, 2004, p.391). Gregory Cajete states that Indigenous knowledge should be understood as a part of the process of maintaining relationships with the world or Creation (in McGregor, 2004, p.391). Process is integral to Indigenous knowledge, “coming-to-know” is as important as the “product” – what is known (Cajete in McGregor, 2004, p.404; cf. Eigenbrod & Hulan, 2008, p.10). Stephen J. Augustine (2008) notes that the authority of oral traditions is rooted in genealogy, in that it is the lived experiences in a particular place by relations who support it, and more broadly, in that Indigenous peoples occupy the same territory for hundreds or thousands of years.

In an Inuit context, this discussion revolves around Inuit Qaujimaqatqangit, or Inuit traditional knowledge -- although the two terms are not always considered completely synonymous. The idea of IQ can be considered a relatively recent way of

thinking about Inuit traditional knowledge⁵. Bell explains Inuit Qaujimagatunangit as being, “the Inuit way of doing things, and includes the past, present and future knowledge of Inuit society”(in Tester and Irniq, 2008, p.3), a description which fits how traditional Inuit knowledge is generally conceived of today. Two elements of this understanding are important, the emphasis on process (“doing”), and a way of thinking about time that is indicated in the synthesis of past, present and future. IQ is not just a product or body of knowledge, but a way or process. In being “traditional”, it is not fixed, or only relevant to bygone days. Similarly to the idea of IK in general, IQ is not easily defined, nor should it be. Tester and Irniq (2008, p.49) suggest the term “*avaluqanngittuq* ‘that which has no circle or border around it’” as descriptive of the way IQ is all encompassing or “seamless”, and argue that it is dangerous to construe the meaning of IQ narrowly. Jaypetee Arnakak (2000) links understanding of IQ to relationality when he states “individual, family and society are linked by the kinship structure”, the knowledge that is required to maintain good relationships within a family also informs all other relationships. The navigation of this contrast and interaction between Inuit and Qallunaat systems of knowledge, underwritten by the colonial agendas, can be seen reflected in the knowledge produced by Qallunaat about Inuit art, artists, and aesthetics. As the act of research is inseparable from the researcher, Western ways of thinking about people, material objects, and meaning have largely directed the discourse on Inuit art in the south. The following looks at this Western discourse on Inuit art. The history of Inuit art is also discussed further in Chapter Two, localizing and contextualizing art making within Panniqtuumiut experiences.

Qallunaat Knowledge of Inuit Art

⁵ Tied closely with the political developments surrounding the formation of Nunavut.

Qallunaat study of Inuit art has its roots in the works of anthropologists Franz Boas, Diamond Jenness, and Knud Rasmussen⁶. Non-western art, or “the art of primitive peoples” was at the time the intellectual domain of anthropology, and a precedent was set for interdisciplinary approaches for study of Inuit art (Lalonde, 2002). The academic discourse on Inuit art sits at an intersection between art history and anthropology, both disciplines with tarnished records of representation and engagement with Indigenous peoples. Where anthropologists located the study of Inuit aesthetic forms within a cultural, ethnographic interpretation, art historians worked to legitimize Inuit art as Fine Art (Lalonde, 2000; Bagg, 2006). Inuit art has historically been considered and treated in a different way than “southern art”.

Although Inuit art has been appropriated and promoted by Euro-Canadians as a quintessentially Canadian art form at home and abroad, it is still considered exotic and foreign by many, if not most, collectors, commercial galleries, public institutions and curators. Curators see their role as not only presenting beautiful and interesting art objects but also allowing viewers to understand another culture through these works of art. (Hessel, 1991, p.12, quoted in Lalonde, 2002, p. 201)

Qallunaat interest in Inuit sculpture grew rapidly in the 1950s with its introduction to the southern markets, and writing about ‘Eskimo art’ at this time tended towards romanticism, and placed the objects within the category of a traditional, “primitive art”. The literature was largely promotional, and often funded by the government (Lalonde, p.195). Later, scholars such as Charles Martijn, Nelson Graburn, and George Swinton corrected this, acknowledging the historical development of Inuit art and highlighting aspects like acculturation (Martijn, 1964; Graburn, 1976, 1987, 2004, 2005[etc.]; Swinton,1977,1994 [etc.]). Inuit artists have had different experiences than many other

⁶ Both Boas (1964 [fieldwork conducted 1883-4]) and Jenness (1922) collected and published drawings made by Inuit.

Indigenous artists in Canada due to the support and promotion initiated by the government in the 1950s. At the same time, Inuit artists have been consistently placed at the margins, having specialized galleries and spaces within cultural institutions. In the past, art that was considered “un-Eskimo” was discouraged by the Southern buying power in marketing the art (Gustavison, 1994; Mitchell, 1996). The activities of the Canadian Eskimo Art Council, a Qallunaat run regulatory organization acted as gatekeepers to the southern market for almost 30 years (see Gustavison, 1994). Only recently has scholarship on Inuit art begun to really critically address the ongoing colonial context of art making and connected it to broader Indigenous struggles for decolonization.

How Qallunaat knowledge about Inuit art is produced

There are volumes of Qallunaat writing on Inuit art (see R. Crandall & S. Crandall, 2001). Between the 1950s-1970s, writing about Inuit art aimed to move thinking away from “cultural production” – and consequently out of the sphere of anthropology. The 1970s-80s brought a heightened interest that put more focus on individual artists and artworks as personal expression – serving to validate Inuit producers as *Artists*. In the late 70s a new practice emerged. Art historians began doing fieldwork in northern communities, an indication of the recognition of the impact of culture and environment that was emerging in the social sciences and humanities. This signified a move to considering the role of culture, engaging with anthropological theory and practice. Interviews with artists became increasingly important. By the 1980s Inuit artists’ perspectives were used in exhibition panels and art history texts to add descriptive and anecdotal elements. The 1990s saw attempts at representing “the “Inuit” point of view” (Bagg, 2006, p.184; Lalonde, 2002, pp. 195-7).

Of the recent trend to include Inuit perspectives in scholarship on art, Bagg states that “For the most part, the approach has been championed as an effective strategy: Inuit

are given a voice and with it, the power to influence how Inuit art is received” (2002, p.184). How “effective” the efforts at representing and making room for Inuit voices is questionable. Inuit voices tend to be seen as a device for providing information to non-Inuit about Inuit culture and society. Just as McGregor (2004) argues that Western academics view IK as just another reference or source, the way Inuit voices have been incorporated into writing about Inuit art demonstrates a similarly narrow perspective. Artists’ voices are used primarily to provide ethnographic information. The ways in which art history has approached Inuit knowledge is indicative of a Western way of thinking about non-Western art forms. This has resulted in a repetitive dance around issues of appropriation and authenticity⁷. States Lalonde, “The dilemma for art historians and curators of Inuit art is that many people see a contradiction between the lifestyle represented in the art form and the contemporary reality of the artist”(2002, p. 197). Non-western art is conceptually categorized as “traditional” and “other”, yet Inuit artists are undeniably a part of the contemporary globalized world.

Inuit artists have made critical statements reflecting on their involvement and voice in Western scholarly events, including the following statement regarding a conference at the McMichael gallery (Kleinburg, Ontario) in the early 1990s:

I enjoyed being there, but the problem was we sat there like pieces of art on display. The non-Inuit at the conference spoke as much as they pleased about their own lives and how they lived like Inuit. But they never gave us a chance to speak or asked us questions about our work. The white people dominated as usual. They think they are the experts and know everything about Inuit. This goes on all the time. I myself felt that the white people should be asking us Inuit what we think

⁷Christine Lalonde noted during session of conference in 2002 that the issues debated at the 1982 *Conference for curators and specialists who work with Inuit art* are still being debated, and also, that these issues have really not been communicated to the public – it’s an internal discourse (in Blodgett, 2002)

[...] We're just like part of the show pieces; they treat us like carvings. The white people never seem to be interested in talking with us. [...] We Inuit have to speak our minds and not allow ourselves to be patronized any more" (Iyola Kingwatsiak, in Goo-Doyle 1992, p.29)

Michael Massie was the only Inuit participant in the panel held on Inuit art at the 2000 conference "On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery". He is quoted in the publication that followed, making note that the audience for the panel was "95 percent" non-Aboriginal, and among the Aboriginal members of the audience, there were no Inuit. Massie states,

[I]t's kind of hard to really sit down and say we are going to start doing things: let's start changing aboriginal art, let's start changing the way things are going to be. But how can you do that when you don't have the input from the actual aboriginal artists and people who do the work? (Massie in Blodgett, 2002, p.209)

Further, he stated that Inuit have asked him why people who talk about Inuit art down south don't come up North to talk about it. For Massie, this is the only way non-Inuit people can begin to understand Inuit and Inuit art. After attending several symposiums and conferences on Inuit art over the last few years, it is evident that significant efforts are being made to meaningfully include Inuit artists as speakers and recognize them as thinkers. In my view, steps are being made in the right direction, the motives are appropriate. For example, the 2011 Inuit Modern Symposium at the Art Gallery of Ontario put priority on Inuit perspectives, with talks intending to reflect on the statement: "It is not who we are, but where we come from and where we are going". But the reality is that overall Qallunaat voices continue to dominate the discussions, having the weight of academic authority. The saying holds true, old habits are hard to break.

In an interview between Janet Catherine Berlo and Norman Vorano, they discuss the issues of consulting with artists and community, and the practice of doing fieldwork

in communities. Berlo mentions Nelson Graburn's criticism of her own research, for working strictly from museum collections, and Vorano responds, saying,

But an underlying issue here is of voice, isn't it? Who is invested with the cultural authority to speak for/about whom? Less directly, Graburn's criticism points to a sometimes uneasy proximity between anthropologists and art historians. The former, in my view, tend to reduce the task of reading images to the simple process of asking a privileged community insider, or to a compiling of the sum total of community viewpoints. As Fred Myers pointed out (1994:11), for many anthropologists art criticism is thought to be external to the object and is unable to grasp the "real" intentions of the producer's work. On the other side of the spectrum, art historians are known to use artworks as a springboard for their own subjective ruminations. (Vorano in Berlo, 2006, p.25)

The changes in Inuit art scholarship echo a similar emphasis on reflexivity and consideration of context that emerged in Western thought. Collaboration with artists is seen as a way to move away from the curator-as-expert model. This was the goal in the 1994 exhibition *Inuit Women Artists*. Marion Jackson explains,

Museums have a long history of interpreting aboriginal art from the "objective" perspective of trained museum professionals and presenting it from a clearly defined curatorial perspective ... An alternative model is emerging which acknowledges that understanding is enriched by an awareness of the values and intentions of the artists. In this model, the curator (whether from within the culture or without) attempts not so much to impose a curatorial viewpoint as to facilitate communication between the artists and audience and to acknowledge the complexity of human experience in the works of art. (Jackson, 1994, p.38)

The goals of the so called “new art history” are lofty. This thesis argues that engaging with Inuit voices is to engage with Inuit knowledges, and that this needs to be understood beyond the limiting concepts of “art” or “culture”.

Recent moves in the representation of Inuit art in the institutional setting emphasize collaboration with Inuit artists and communities (Mitchell, 2006). Judy Hall has stated that the real issue lies in discovering/recognizing how the Inuit themselves want to be represented (in Mitchell, 2006, p.14). I would suggest that it is about making room for self-representation. Often, the impracticalities of truly intensive collaboration are still being used as an excuse to merely represent what the Qallunaat curators see as important. Mitchell discusses the exhibition Northern Rock as an instance of including Inuit perspective, as it focuses on practical knowledge of stone. Perhaps in content and structure, the exhibition more closely approximates an appreciation of Inuit knowledge. I question how the inclusion of quotes from interviews with artists without having Inuit contributing to the actual curatorial process is any different from what has come before⁸.

In many ways this thesis goes beyond a simple consideration of the concept of ‘voice’ as representation, for voicing is also an action or process. Are Inuit voices

⁸ Examples from Exhibition Catalogues of Inclusion of Inuit voice:
Pudlo: Thirty Years of Drawing, 1990, First solo exhibition of an Inuit artist at the National Gallery of Canada. Based on interviews with artist (1978, 1979, and 1989). Bagg argues the overall effect of this catalogues is that “the artist’s cultural experience is subordinate to, or in service of the art historian’s analysis”. This catalogue is set apart from previous publications due to “the degree to which the artists voice is privileged [and] also the art historical “worth” that the authors assign to the artists cultural experience” (p.186)
Qamanittuaq –Where the River Widens – Drawings by Baker Lake Artists (1995) MacDonald Stewart Art Centre -- How interview material is used - “While most of the captions in Qamanittuaq include interview material, in virtually all cases this material is included within, or framed by, statements made by the art historian that highlight cultural factors imbued in or “signified” by the works” (1991) Bagg argues that the “cultural reading of the artworks originated with the art historian” ... the art historian is attempting to “ “ write” culture” (p.191-2)
Between Two Worlds: Sculpture By David Reuben Piqtoukun , “the catalogue was designed by an art historian but the primary text was written by an Inuk about Inuit culture” – Bagg asks if this can be considered anthropology (p.193)

speaking in a way that can be heard? And is the audience ready to really listen? This thesis takes as its starting place that Inuit art is about Inuit knowledge, and examines what consequences placing Inuit knowledge foremost has for producing meaning around Inuit art. This could be described as reading works of Inuit art as a kind of literacy, or writing, but this is not a particularly sufficient illustration of the meanings objects hold, or how these meanings vary between cultures, and how they are located in culture – the interpretation or translation of these meanings.

James Clifford's description of Tlingit elders brought into a museum to examine certain artifacts emphasises that the meanings around the objects, the knowledge both recalled and produced, in the forms of stories and songs, took precedence over the material objects themselves (in Cruickshank, 1995). The kind of knowledge could be classified as "Indigenous Knowledge", having the characteristics outlined above. Meaning is further complicated when objects are designated by Western society as "Fine Art", a particular category of objects that carries certain preconditions of worth, rarity, and social value. In terms of 'meaning over object' for Inuit artists, it should be noted that for many Inuit artists, the material aspects of art objects, the stones, techniques, and tools, take equal place to meaning. While this particular thesis focuses on knowledge and meaning, the artists I spoke with during the course of this project made many comments about a broad range of concerns that had to do with the objects themselves. The discussion of availability and affordability of materials, challenges and skills related to the process of making an object consists of another key area of discussion for which there is not enough room here. Peter Kulchyski (2005) has poetically described how an amauti can be a kind of writing, that an amauti can be read (by people in the know) to lay out relationships of the wearer. The later chapters will explore the substance and significance of meanings that have been or could be read from objects of Inuit art.

PART II: Methods and Methodology

A key element of this project is to look critically at knowledge about Inuit art. In my approach to conducting this research, I needed to engage critically with the ways research has been and continues to be conducted on Inuit art. My methodology is located in a decolonizing framework that emphasizes an understanding of historical relationships established through colonization, and works to creatively challenge and resist their continuing impact. Simply, my methodology is founded in an ethical demand to make Inuit voices heard (Kulchyski, 2000; see also Moosa-Mitha; 2005; L. Smith, 1999; Absolon & Willet, 2005).

We can look at our academic writing as being all about managing voices, or curating conversation(s). It is especially important within the context of this project and my position as a Qallunaat researcher for me to be conscious of my role, how I engage in the research process. Of course, strict rules in academia around plagiarism make even the most unruly undergrad aware that one must clearly identify one's sources, or the voices that are informing your work. Citing your sources is not the same as thoroughly thinking through how the voices are being represented, your relationship to those voices, and most poignantly, how your own voice is embedded.

The historical representation of Indigenous peoples is one of the reasons voice(s), location, and positionality are so important in the broader context of academic work related to Indigenous peoples and Indigeneity. For Indigenous peoples around the globe, the slightest mention of the activity of "research" is often unpalatable (L. Smith, 1999; S. Wilson, 2008). In light of this history, it was important to approach this study of Inuit art from another viewpoint, one that is located in the ethical imperatives embraced by the discipline of Native Studies. As stated by Peter Kulchyski Native Studies as a discipline is "structured around an ethical approach and an ethical call, the call of Aboriginal peoples to justice, the call to name forms of oppression" (2000, quoted in Eigenbrod & Hulan, 2008, p.9). An important aspect of this research is that it is consciously situated in

a research methodology that aims to be decolonizing. My methodology is informed by various principles put forth by Indigenous scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and Waziyawatin Andrea Wilson (2005), as well as non-Indigenous contributions to analysis of colonial discourses and decolonization.

Absolon and Willet discuss the significance of the concept of location for researchers working in Indigenous contexts. They state that, “Identifying, at the outset, the location from which the voice of the researcher emanates is an Aboriginal way of ensuring those who study, write, and participate in knowledge creation are accountable for their own positionality” (2005, p.97). Said considers positionality with his methodological device of “strategic location”. For Said, it is important to be aware of a writer’s ‘location’ in relation to the subject about which they are writing. The author’s location determines how they speak about a subject - how their representation takes form (Said, 1994, pp.20-1). Location means, from the perspective of Indigenous scholar Cam Willet, that “When we locate, we are saying “This is just my view.” [...] who I am mitigates what I say” (Absolon & Willet, 2005, p.105). It means that one is not speaking for everyone, they are just speaking from themselves, and their experience – it is clear who and what is and is not being represented. The idea that one can only speak for what they know, and have experienced, is also a statement about truth. In this understanding of truth, there are no objective truths, but multiple truths. Eigenbrod’s (1995, pp.90-1) discussion of orality and literacy looks at how within oral cultures, “truth, accuracy of the spoken words is guaranteed by the personal experience of the speaker” – what is known as true is derived from what has been experienced, a generally accepted principle in Indigenous knowledge traditions. Inuit traditions of knowledge production reflect this precept (Kublu, Laugrand & Oosten, 1999). One can only speak for what they know, what they remember, what they have experienced.

Scholars have unequivocally stated that there is no such thing as objective and neutral research or researchers. Absolon and Willet argue that research purporting to be objective and neutral is both Eurocentric and unethical (2005, p.107; see also Smith, 1999). This criticism of “objectivity” is a response to the experiences of Indigenous peoples with Eurocentric research (Absolon & Willet, pp.106, 108-9).

Location is about responsibility, and accountability – its importance and purpose lies with its ethical base (Absolon and Willet, 2005, p.106). Positionality proposes that knowledge is not universal, is culturally produced, and is subjective (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p.66). As Blaut states, “Scholarly beliefs are embedded in culture and are shaped by culture”, and consequently, should not be assumed to be wholly objective in nature (1993, p.10). For LaRocque (2010), the concepts of voice and positionality are methodologically important because of this “contrapuntal” position to the Western scientific ideals of objectivity and impartiality. LaRocque argues that the acknowledgement of the subjectivity of individual researchers and the employment of this subjectivity through use of voice directly challenges the Western bias towards the principles of ‘objective’ research (2010, p.31).

In considering Indigenous knowledge, the objective/subjective distinction loses relevance when resolved with the acknowledgment that Indigenous knowledge is *relational* in character. As epistemology and ontology, relationality speaks to understanding reality as a process consisting of countless sets of relationships. Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) is clear in stating that relationality is a critical characteristic of Indigenous existence. These are the real relationships formed between people sharing knowledge and telling stories to each other, but they are also more than just interpersonal relationships.

Identity for Indigenous peoples is grounded in their relationship with the land, with their ancestors who have returned to the land and with future generations

who will come into being on the land. Rather than viewing relationships ourselves as being *in* relationship with other people or things, we *are* the relationships that we hold and are part of. (S. Wilson, 2008, p.80)

Shawn Wilson considers the creation of relationships through words, in his specific case through his writing a book about Indigenous research paradigms. The style in which Wilson wrote his book *Research is Ceremony*, partly conversational and sometimes directed to his family, was intended to, “instill an oral tradition into this written text” (2008, p.127). Wilson observes:

The relationship we form is an elemental component of an oral tradition and is generally missing from the written text. Words themselves [...] have the power to heal or to harm. They can transfer information and enlighten others, but they can also be used as tools of social control and disempowerment. “ (Wilson, 2008, p.126)

From the fundamental place of relationships derives what Shawn Wilson calls relational accountability, which he outlines as meaning “that the methodology needs to be based in community (be relational) and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity, and responsibility (be accountable as it is put into action)” (2008, p.99). Accountability is integrated into relationships. Within Indigenous knowledge production (including oral tradition, storytelling), there are responsibilities in receiving, holding, and sharing information. In receiving information, one enters into a relationship and takes on a responsibility (Wilson, 2008, p.126).

Representation can be understood as both “a political concept and [...] a form of voice and expression” (Smith, 1999, p.150). Voice is a mode of (re)presentation, and is multifarious. Emma LaRocque defines the concept of voice as “a recognition of the relationship between power and knowledge, which then reveals positionality” (2010, p.29). We can complicate the notion of voice further if we see individuals as having not

just one voice, but several. Scholars like Emma LaRocque, Rae Bridgman, and Shawn Wilson, to mention only a few, have discussed and attempted to address voice in their writing. In *When the Other is Me*, LaRocque (2010) speaks frankly about her experiences in academia in her positionality as Metis. In “Engendering the mask: Three voices”, Bridgman (1995) references her voices as an academic and as an artist, and identifies a third voice which is represented by images accompanying the text. Shawn Wilson (2008) uses the narrative method of alternating between more typical academic writing and a more personal, grounded writing in the form of letters to his three sons in his book *Research is Ceremony*.

As a Qallunaat scholar cognisant of the many issues surrounding research and Indigenous peoples, it is vital that I respect principles of relationality to my best ability and understanding. Shawn Wilson proposes an Indigenous research paradigm that is drawn from Canadian and Australian contexts, meant to be inclusive and broadly applicable:

- “1. The shared aspect of an Indigenous ontology and epistemology is relationality (relationships do not merely shape reality, they *are* reality). The shared aspect of an Indigenous axiology and methodology is accountability to relationship.
2. The shared aspects of relationality and relational accountability can be put into practice through choice of research topic, methods of data collection, form of analysis and presentation of information.” (Wilson, 2008, p.7)

Incorporating these ideas into the ways I conducted myself and the research had implications for how the project developed. I had visited the community of Pangnirtung in summer, 2010, in conjunction with the month-long land based program run by the University of Manitoba. Through that experience, I established friendships and initiated what I hope to be a lifelong relationship with the community. These relationships proved helpful as contacts when I returned to the community to conduct my research. To base

this project in the voices of Inuit artists, I knew it was critical to spend more time in the North and engage with artists directly. That Pangnirtung is diverse and vibrant in terms of art production made it a clear choice. Additionally my familiarity with the community and relationships I had established made it a practical choice.

This thesis grew out of interviews with sixteen artists and community members in Pangnirtung, as well as two qallunaat employees of the Uqqurmiut centre. When setting out to do the ‘fieldwork’ portion of the research, a goal was to involve Inuit artists in setting the trajectory of the research. While I had prepared a list of potential areas to discuss with people, I did not have a set list of questions. It was important to me that the final thesis represented faithfully the views of Inuit artists, and would serve to benefit the community. I was interested broadly in hearing what artists had to say about ideas of voice and the place art making has within Inuit culture. I began every interview by explaining my aims thoroughly, and inviting input and reactions on the direction the project should take and the kinds of questions that are important to be asking. I asked questions along the lines of, “what kind of questions should be asked about Inuit art? What do you think are the most important things about art making for Inuit?” This strategy did not at the time seem to be very effective – the questions seemed confusing. One person responded, “It’s your project”. In the interviews, many topics were covered – personal and community history, practical issues for artists, availability of materials, marketing and distribution, colonialism. Following my return to Winnipeg, as I went over the interviews, one overriding theme stood out - the relationship between Inuit art and Inuit stories or knowledge. Respecting the decision to limit the discussion in the thesis to art making and cultural resilience was my way of both deeply listening to what the people shared with me in the interviews, and connecting that knowledge to understandings of cultural resilience, process that strengthens and heals Inuit communities. This focus also follows the thinking of Inuk scholar Heather Igloliorte (2009, 2010a, 2010b).

In addition to first seeking approval from the Hamlet Council prior to my arrival, when I arrived in Pangnirtung, I endeavoured to get as much informal feedback about the project idea as possible. I talked about it with everyone I met. I introduced myself, explained who I was, why I was in Pangnirtung, and what I was hoping to accomplish. There was general support of the ideas behind the project: that it's important that Inuit voices are heard, and that it should be Inuit perspectives on Inuit art that define knowledge about Inuit art. There was some confusion over whether or not I was a teacher and “where” I was doing the project – being independent from a local institution might be less typical.

These are, what you have are interesting, like we can talk about it. Inuit way. We never have that but hopefully people get a chance to learn hearing this stuff here. (Jolly Atagoyuk, 2011)

In the first few days after I arrived, I stopped by the Angmarlik and Uqqurmiut⁹, introducing myself and seeing what kind of interest there was in the project. I also stopped in at the Hamlet Council to let them know I had arrived, see what support they may be able to provide, and see if they could help me find someone to help me with interpretatin. Due to some recent unfortunate events in the community, things were pretty busy there, and I ended up striking out on my own. My first step was to find people to interview. I tried various routes, beginning with contacts established during my previous visit. I also had compiled a list of artists from the literature, and I asked everyone I encountered whether they still lived in Pangnirtung and if they knew where I could find them. Upon confirming that an individual resided in Pangnirtung, I tried to get in touch with them by calling or visiting and inviting their participation in the project. For the most part this was the most effective in terms of meeting people. In the first week I was

⁹ The Angmarlik Center houses the library, the museum, elder's room, and visitors' centre. The Uqqurmiut Centre for arts and crafts houses the print studio, tapestry studio, and a small commercial store selling art and crafts.

there I also went on the local radio station and made an announcement about the project and invited anyone interested to get in touch with me. I also put up posters in most public buildings (in English and Inuktitut) with a brief description of the project and how to get in touch with me if someone wanted to be involved.

I conducted a total of eighteen semi-formal interviews including two non-Inuit staff at the arts centre, as well as spending countless hours at people's homes, and at the few public places in Pangnirtung. Of the Inuit I spoke with, six are female and ten are male, their ages ranging from mid-twenties to mid-eighties. The interviews were semi-structured, and all were recorded with a digital voice recorder, and later transcribed. I offered everyone an audio copy of their interview, which I burned onto a cd and delivered shortly after the completion of the interview, and approximately half of those interviewed took me up on the offer.

Interviews with unilingual elders and anyone else more comfortable speaking in Inuktitut were conducted with the help of interpreters. Finding an interpreter was a challenge. The first two people who agreed to help both backed out, and by this time I was about a third of the way through my time there. Due to difficulties finding someone with enough availability, I ended up working with three different interpreters, Henry Mike, Bill Kilabuk and Martha Pitsiulak.

The interviews were mostly conducted in people's homes, sitting at kitchen tables. The style of the interviews varied whether it was just myself, or if one of the interpreters was involved. When I was interviewing people, I found that the format people seemed to be most comfortable with bordered on semi-structured. I was expected to ask lots of questions. People were comfortable with the audio recording when I explained that it was to ensure their ideas and voices could be accurately included in the final project.

At the beginning, I spent some time at the Uqurmiut centre, mostly just sitting and watching, helping out one afternoon with a small task. The management was not happy with my extended presence there, and asked me to leave after a short period of this. I respected this request by restricting visiting the Uqurmiut centre to coffee breaks, or very short drop in visits. For this reason, the project is not closely aligned or concerned with current activities of the centre.

I went around visiting old and new friends almost every day -- I drank a lot of coffee and tea and ate much too much *palauga* (bannock). I spent a lovely afternoon watching movies with Annie Pitsiulak featuring her husband Lypa and family on the land and at the outpost camp. Some of my most frequent visits were to see Evie Anilniliak and renowned artist Elisapee Ishulutaq, elders and lifelong friends who live only doors apart. Both only speak Inuktitut, which meant that sometimes we would just sit together and try to communicate the best we could. Evie instructed me on filleting and frying arctic char, and much laughter was involved in my mangled *iqaluk* (fish). She also taught me how to say some phrases in Inuktitut, *pulaaqtunga Eviekunuk sivaujami tamualunga* (very roughly, 'I went to visit Evie and I was also eating a cookie') When visiting Elisapee, I would sit on the floor drawing while she worked on a puzzle, chatting with her and her family. One day we worked on a drawing together, which I treasure. I really enjoyed spending that time with both of them and they both taught me a lot.

Over the course of my stay, I also engaged in other activities around the community. Ooleepika at the Angmarlik centre was always ready with a laugh and a beaming smile. I spent time in the elders' room at the Angmarlik centre while people played games and talked. I went out on a long day of berry picking somewhere down the fiord with family of the elders whose house I was staying at, dining on fresh seal meat while looking out onto the magnificent landscape. I attended events happening in the community, including one particularly interesting evening of a feast and movie screening

at the Hamlet building with the makers of *Qimmit: A Clash of Two Truths*. There was a visiting Qallunaat printmaker from Vancouver holding a workshop at the Uqqurmiut Centre, and I spoke with him a little and dropped in for short visits during the workshop. I also talked informally with Madeleine Qumuartuq, community economic development officer and Ron Mongeau, Senior Administrative Officer at the Hamlet Council about the current concerns of artists in the community.

I organized a thank you get together at the hamlet building shortly before I left, baking muffins and cookies, serving tea and coffee, and delicious palauga made for the event by Annie Pitsiulak. I spoke a little bit about what I had been doing, and thanked the community and invited questions. This was an attempt to keep the lines of communication open, express my deep gratitude to the community at large for welcoming me, and to return a little bit of the knowledge people had shared with me.

In writing this thesis, I attempt to make it clear when I am speaking, and when Inuit are speaking. Clearly distinguishing and highlighting Inuit voices through textual devices included bolding text of quotes from Panniqtuumiut and setting all quotes from Inuit formatted as blocks to clearly separate my interpretation. This serves to both give Inuit voices prominence. By avoiding paraphrasing and using actual quotes from Inuit extensively, including interviews I conducted as well as sourced from the literature, was again a method that allowing for a degree of Inuit self-representation. I also provide as much as context as I can to the source of the quotes so that what the Inuit authors intentions were are clear.

The application of voice and positionality will differ necessarily in every instance in which they are engaged, which reflects the diverse ways that identity is constructed, presented, and represented. This is part of the reason that, as concepts, voice and positionality serve as an important theoretical base for conducting research in a contrapuntal fashion – recognizing that knowledge(s) is/are not objective, that it is

informed by culture, that it is produced in a systematic way and is infected with power (see Blaut, 1993; LaRocque, 2010; Said, 1997; Smith, 1999). There are multiple points of departure and equally as many destinations, and if you will, round trips. The activity of research is never far from the researcher. The recognition of this and of its consequences for the products of research is integral to a research methodology that is oriented towards decolonization.

This chapter considered the theoretical and methodological framework of the project, and described how these factors influenced its development and progress. Concepts of voice, positionality and representation are interwoven throughout this work. The following chapter discusses the colonial setting of art making in the north, contextualized within the local history of Pangnirtung. Through an emphasis on local knowledge and experience, this approach to looking at history takes into account the characteristics of Inuit knowledge discussed above.

CHAPTER II

Colonialism and Art making in Pangnirtung

Artists are active across all of the northern regions of Canada, from Nunatsiavut to the Inuvialuit Settlement Regions. The following discussion focuses primarily on the Cumberland Sound region of Baffin Island, Nunavut, interlacing the general histories of Inuit art and Northern colonialism with the local history of art making in Pangnirtung. When repositioning the discussion of Inuit art to emphasize Inuit perspectives, it is important to look closely at local histories, the history Inuit themselves perceive. The history of contemporary Inuit art making tends to be presented as if it is a unified history. When presented this way, local histories in the Arctic are lost within the generalized narrative. Through a consideration of how the history of art making in Pangnirtung diverges from the standard history we can begin to understand the history of Pangnirtung from an Inuit perspective. This chapter demonstrates the complexity of this community's engagement with art making starting with the arrival of Qallunaat to their land. The degree of community action and agency in relation to art making in Pangnirtung has shifted over time, reaching a peak with the founding of the Uqurmiut Inuit Artists Association in the late 1980s. Art making is also the location of outside intervention and encounter. The history of art making in Pangnirtung and outlying areas, from the time of the whalers to the present day, is deeply connected to the enduring colonialism, developing resistance, and ongoing resilience in the North.

Colonial Encounters: When the Qallunaat arrived

Before the arrival of Qallunaat, four groups of people were living on the Cumberland peninsula, or Saumia: the Talirpingmiut, Kinguamiut, Kingnaimiut, and Saumingmiut, who were called Uqurmiut, or 'people of the lee side', by other Inuit. The Uqurmiut began to experience sustained contact with Qallunaat in the 1850s (M.

Stevenson, 1997, p.31, 52). Prior to the 1850s, Inuit in the area had infrequent contact with British whalers active in the Arctic. In the 20 years following, there was increased interaction with whalers, who came to rely on Inuit for successful harvests. By the 1870s, the productivity of whaling had decreased due to overharvesting, and the industry collapsed in the first decade of the 20th century (Eber, 1989). Inuit in the Cumberland Sound area were making carvings and drawings for trade long before they moved to the settlement of Pangnirtung due to this interaction with whalers and traders.

The period between the late 1700s and 1948 is defined by anthropologists and art historians as the “Historic Period” of Inuit art. Explorers, traders, missionaries, whalers and other Qallunaat who were coming into the North wanted souvenirs (Martijn, 1964, p.558). The demand was great, and Inuit began carving ivory and bone objects specifically for trade, of hunting and camp scenes, animals, model *qajaq* and snow houses, and some of the new objects Europeans brought with them – rifles, tools, boats, musical instruments like accordions and fiddles, intricate carved tusks (‘scrimshaw’), cribbage boards and ashtrays. The purpose and look of Inuit carving changed – traditionally Inuit carvings were small and very portable. Still small in size, carvings were now designed to stand alone, with figures sometimes attached to a base. In style, the carvings became more “realistic” and detailed, reflecting the European preference for naturalism (Hessel, 1998, p.21, 26).

In 1921, in an effort to establish dominance in the fur trade, the Hudson's Bay Company established a trading post at the location that would become the community of Pangnirtung. Soon after, the Canadian government established an RCMP detachment at Pangnirtung. Shelagh Grant reveals how establishing a policing presence in the North was a significant part of the government’s assertion of Arctic sovereignty (Grant, 2002, p.95). The RCMP served as the only tangible presence of the federal government in the North for many years. Grant (2002, p.187) notes that the original justification for the

RCMP post at Pangnirtung was to investigate a spate of violent incidents in the region. Marc Stevenson (1997) states that another key function of the detachment in Pangnirtung was to deter Inuit dependence by discouraging Inuit from settling at the post. David Damas explains that the government and traders favoured a 'policy of dispersal' rather than a 'policy of settlement' in regards to Inuit, and desired Inuit to be living on the land in traditional camps instead of grouping around trading posts (2002, p.27; see also M. Stevenson, 1997, p.101). Damas links the attachment to a policy of dispersal to the pervasive preservationist philosophy which from attitudes of "benevolence" in a surface manner but was informed equally by economic reasoning and pragmatism. Traders supported the policy because it complemented the trapping industry (Damas, 2002, p.32, 190). Up to 1982, sealing provided a way for people to be economically and socially independent from the government. The 1960s was a decade of change, as government priorities were shifting from encouraging life on the land to promoting relocation to settlements (M. Stevenson, 1997, p.103). Damas argues that centralization of settlement in the Eastern Arctic was not necessarily a result of a systematic change in government policy, but an unintentional result of the development of welfare state policies (2002, p.191).

Over the winter of 1961-2 there was a severe outbreak of distemper among the dogs in the region, resulting in the evacuation of most of the people living in outlying camps to Pangnirtung in the spring of that year. Many people returned to their camps by the end of the year and the dog population boomed to numbers greater than before the outbreak by 1965. Some also stayed in the settlement. In the few years following, the people who returned to camps were soon migrating back to the settlement (Damas, 2002, p.142-145; M. Stevenson, 1997, p.102-103; Tester, 2010, p. 36-9). Many Panniqtuumiut find this period difficult to talk about.

In conjunction with rising conflicts between Inuit and Qallunaat over the presence of dogs in the settlements, the introduction of the snow machine in 1964 had a significant impact in replacing sled dogs. This change had fundamental repercussions, and for Frank Tester (2010), the loss of sled dogs is a central element in the colonial history of the North. The mechanization of the hunt effectively shifted the nature of hunting practice to one that relied on money. The adoption of the snow machine deeply affected the relationship Inuit held to the land and the production and reproduction of traditional knowledge.

As Pelto (1973) argues, the snowmobile delocalises production, tying Inuit to social and cultural forces, as well as circumstances beyond their control.

Subsequently, the price of snowmobile parts and fuel, unlike dog-teams and the resources necessary to operate them, comes to play a role in the economic, social, and cultural logic of hunting. Cash is needed more than ever in order to hunt.

Cash can be found by increased participation in Qallunaat institutions, whose logic and relations challenge those of reciprocity within Inuit hunting culture.

(Tester, 2010, p.141)

This shift to a cash capital system of the hunt, combined with increased availability of government services at Pangnirtung and the fading policy of dispersal resulted in many people migrating to live in Pangnirtung in the late 1960s (M. Stevenson, 1997, p.103-4).

The transition to a cash-oriented subsistence economy also has particular relevance for Inuit art making. The commodification of the hunt and simultaneous growth of the carving industry have an important relationship. For many Inuit artists, their art practice is of primary importance for the cash it supplies for the ever-increasing expenses tied to subsistence harvesting activities. Store bought food is very expensive in the North, and many Inuit rely on country food as their “primary source of income”, with social assistance providing a measure of much needed cash support, but not enough for living

on often, the most significant source of cash is the art industry. Cash is needed to purchase supplies for hunting, and carving provides for some Inuit their only means to earn cash (see Quigley & McBride, 1987).

Bill Ritchie and Chris Trott have commented about the continued relationship between art making and subsistence hunting. Speaking at the Inuit Studies Conference in Washington D.C. (2012), Ritchie commented on contemporary Inuit artist Tim Pitsiulak, saying “Tim is a classic Inuit artist. His lifestyle informs his art, his art finances his lifestyle”. Trott (1982) comments on this when Trott's description of an elder carver from Arctic Bay, “who always referred to his carvings as *gasitarrutiksak* (material for obtaining gas) or by whatever skidoo part or tool he currently needed” (1982, p.343).

This speaks to the relationship between art making and hunting. While the two activities are different, they interact in a very strong way. When I asked Pangnirtung carver Pauloosie Nauyuk about the economic importance of art making, he responded¹⁰,

Yes. Yes. From now he's been carving, when he's carving he sold them, and this year and last year he even bought two Honda's, from the carvings
(Pauloosie Naujuk, 2011).

Some of the most renowned hunters in the north are also renowned artists, and anecdotally it is said that many would choose to identify as a hunter first, and an ‘artist’ second. When Pauloosie or the carver from Arctic Bay make reference to what they bought with the proceeds from their art making practice, they emphasize that commercial goods like snow machines and gas are essential to being able to hunt.

Inuit Art History and Art making in Pangnirtung

Literature addressing art and the history of art making in Pangnirtung is sparse, existing as paragraphs here and there in “coffee table” books describing regional style, a

¹⁰ This quote (and the others like it in this thesis) are presented in the third person as this was how the interpreter present during the interview translated the statement from Inuktitut.

few articles primarily concerned with publicizing exhibitions for the tapestry studio or for particular artists, and finally as exhibition catalogues. A piece that seems to depart from this pattern is a short essay based on an interview with Lypa (Lipa) Pitsiulak in the Baffin Island exhibition catalogue (Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1983) called “My Ideas Come from Up in the Air”. Translated from a tape recording in Inuktitut by Lypa, it contains his thoughts about art making, what inspired his drawings, and reflections on his life.

Another work that stands out as an especially informative and well-presented source is *Nuvisavik: The Place Where We Weave* (Von Finckenstein, 2002). As with all literature on Inuit art, what has been written about Pangnirtung is aimed at a Southern audience. Well-known artist Elisapee Ishulutaq is interviewed in Dorothy Eber’s ‘Talking with the Artists’ (1993). A notable Panniqtuumiut is July Papatsie, who co-curated the exhibit, *Transitions: Contemporary Canadian Indian and Inuit Art* (1997) with Barry Ace. He is an artist, has worked as a Northern cultural resource officer at the Inuit Art Information Centre (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada), and has been published in *Inuit Art Quarterly*.

The writing of the general history of Inuit art heavily emphasizes early developments in Nunavik and later in Cape Dorset. Drawing from popularly available accounts, one might conclude that art making in other settlements and regions was insignificant or evolved in a similar fashion. A second consideration of the way Inuit art history has been written is that the 'periodization', as defined by Qallunaat scholars doesn't aptly reflect the diverse experiences of Inuit art makers. Martijn's (1964) influential historical examination of carving production in the north was written to dispel the misinformed depictions of contemporary Inuit art carving. This work is of undeniable importance. Yet there is more to the story (or more stories). While the “contemporary period” can be defined by increased government interest, it does not necessarily reflect the way Inuit were affected – and in Pangnirtung, it can be argued that the intensification

of carving activity only began in the late 1960s, with the move to the settlement. In the following sections, the community history of art making in Pangnirtung will be explored, and in particular, the continuity of carving practice from an Inuit perspective will be discussed.

Art Making Before the Settlement

The enduring engagement with Qallunaat shows that carving and drawing for both trade and sale was well established, if not institutionalized to the point of industry, prior to the government stepping in in the early fifties. Little information is available on the carvings and drawings made prior to 1948, with only a few articles and exhibitions dedicated to the subject (see Martijn, 1964; Blodgett, 1988; Lister, 2002, 2004). Most of the information available concerns carving, but it is known that drawings and maps were also produced on the request of Qallunaat. Both Franz Boas (1964 [1888]) and Diamond Jenness (1922) collected and published drawings made by Inuit. Drawings were also made by Inuit for influential missionary Edmund Peck, which are included in the publication of his journals from 1894-1905 when he was living on Uumanarjuaq (Blacklead Island) in Cumberland Sound (Laugrand, 2002; see also Oosten, Trudel, Laugrand & Kublu, 2000). It is very likely that these drawings, or others like them, would have been made by people living in the Cumberland Sound area. In the Pangnirtung interviews, Elisapee Ishulutaq mentioned that her father used to make drawings for trade,

First time she ever saw someone drawing was her father. She must have learned from him. Southerners would ask him do some drawings or some art of the lifestyle up here.

They would trade for the rations, like tea, tobacco and like Pilot biscuits and whatnot. There was no money exchanged with the art. (Elisapee Ishulutaq, 2011)

Her father [Pauloosie Qappik] used to carve, long time ago, and he used to carve beluga [bones]. belugas, and whale [bones] ...the father used to carve a beluga, they have to use berries ...paint. painting...sometimes she can do it like the father, she thinks she can do that. (Anna Akulukjuk, 2011)

Photographer Peter Pitseolak¹¹ has spoken about watercolours and drawings he produced for Lord Tweedsmuir (John Buchnan) in 1939-40.

When I was a boy the Company used to buy carvings from ivory - not stone. At that time there weren't many people who carved. The manager chose three men to do carving: my brother Petalosis, Issacie, an old man now living in Frobisher - he was a very good carver - and Kenojuak, the grandfather of Kenojuak the print-maker here in Cape Dorset. Those three men. I did a carving for the man once myself but it wasn't very good! It was a white whale but it had a scratch.

Today I prefer the carvings as my eyes are not good but I did my first drawings in 1939 for Johanassie Buchan in a scrapbook he gave me when he was at the Bay. They were of hunting and people and animals. When I finished one, I turned the page. I did them with pencil first and then I filled in with a brush. I got the paints from Johanassie Buchan. He was a good man for paying. (Pitseolak & Eber, 1993, pp.145-47)

Pauloosie also recalled making carvings before moving to the settlement.

[...]long time ago there was no rock, only ivory, and he used to make [carvings], and when he finished them he used to sell them to RCMP or doctors. (Pauloosie Nauyuk, 2011)

One of these doctors might have been Dr. Jon A. Bildfell, who travelled to Pangnirtung in the 1930s, returning as a resident physician in Pangnirtung for a few years in the 1940s,

¹¹ In addition to being the first Indigenous documentary photographer in the Arctic, Peter Pitseolak was a respected leader, hunter, historian, and artist from a camp near Kinngait (Cape Dorset).

and an avid collector of ivory carvings (see Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), 2004). In a 1933-4 journal entry Bildfell remembers a carver named Appa,

This was the passing of the Genius of Pang [Appa] The man who was famous for originality in carving. Many of his designs have not been solved to this day and probably will never be. I am fortunate to have some of them. We all have some. He turned them out as fast as a highly specialized factory. Trees, ducks, aeroplanes, games, and riddles. I will never forget Appa arriving usually at a late hour [after he] patiently canvassed the whole village, at my igloo, and while I would be reading something of interest, he would arrive.... He seldom came alone. Often he would bring some other youngster with him... and try newer methods of salesmanship... He would hand the article--skins, tobacco pouch, mitts, meat, ivory, anything he apparently put his hand on--over to these kids. (Bildfell quoted in Lister, 2002, para.17)

For a period of time Pangnirtung was home to the only hospital in the region. St. Luke's Hospital and Industrial Home was founded in 1930 by the Anglican Church (Billson, 2007, p.106). Trott notes that the while it was operated by the church, funding for operation was supplied by Northern Affairs (2004, p.118). The Industrial Home was situated on the top floor of the hospital, and “elderly or disabled Inuit were brought by ship from all over the Qikiqtani Region to be housed there” (Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC), para.14). Hospital programs received some funding from the government. The residents of the St. Luke's Industrial Home were encouraged to produce carvings and other handicrafts (Goetz, 1993, p.358; Hessel, 1998, p.94).

Reverend Arthur Turner¹² was the Anglican missionary stationed in Pangnirtung over twenty-five years starting from 1928. In a letter Turner describes starting a carving class in the winter of 1942-3,

[...] began a men's carving class in winter but did not get many articles finished and stopped in summer because of lack of ivory - a blind man in the district has attended and learned to make ivory rings - has only been blind for 5 years and has a large family but for the past year has received no government relief.

Rev. Turner's wife Jean indicates that the carving class was referred to as the "M.A.", probably an acronym for 'men's auxiliary', to correspond with the Women's Auxiliary, and that they meet every Monday evening. In a letter dated, April 3, 1943, Jean Turner went on to comment that,

Life here goes on much as usual, school every night, except Monday, on Monday's we now have a men's ivory class, they are making things to sell in aid of the mission, there are about 17 of them and it's a terrible noise I can tell you when they are all sawing filing or chiselling ivory its sets my teeth on edge, but they enjoy it as much as the women do their sewing class on Fridays.¹³

At the time, the only Inuit allowed to stay at the post were working for one of the Qallunaat institutions (RCMP, church, HBC, hospital, doctor). The participants in the class likely included both residents of the post and patients at the hospital. It is unclear who might have been teaching the class, and this particular endeavour was short lived, as Rev. Turner notes above. Significantly, the carvings were for sale, although it is unclear whether the carvers themselves would have received any monetary benefit from the carvings as Jean Turner notes they were being sold to support the mission.

¹² Letter H. A. Turner to Bartlett, September 20, 1943. Bible Churchman's Missionary Society Records, University of Birmingham Archives, MS 47, Box 1, File 3.

¹³ Jean Turner to her mother, April 1943. Suffolk Record Office, Turner Family Files.

In 1943 Major McKeand declared that “The few Eskimo carvers of Baffin Island are getting fabulous prices for worked walrus tusks, from the United States Armed Forces”, a principle base being located at what is now Iqaluit (in Graburn, 2004, p.144). Graburn states that the artists producing these works would have been from nearby areas, including Cumberland Sound. Much travel back and forth between the mission at Pangnirtung, and the bases at Frobisher Bay and Davis Straight at Cape Dyer was occurring at this time (C. Trott, personal communication). Goetz notes that this market was “temporary and inflated” due to United States military being stationed on Baffin Island in the 1940s (1993, p.359). Goetz also points out that in Lake Harbour, the demand was so great that the HBC became involved, ordering in ivory for carving production, and marketing carvings to the Iqaluit base.

Lister discusses an exchange between Bildfell and Etuangat (Ittuangat) in Pangnirtung regarding commissioning some carving work,

When Bildfell commissioned sculptures, his style of bargaining did not always work to his favour, as an exchange with his hired man, Etuangat, noted in his journal in the early '40s, reveals. I wished him to do some carving for me, states Bildfell, who wanted to commission a plaque. Etuangat then asked about kinouja, which means dollars. But Bildfell dismissed the subject. Upon further enquiry the next day, Etuangat stated that he would get more if he was paid a set price for each carving completed. Bildfell notes: I wished him to carve without any set price since he was my hired man and... should gamble on what I gave him. In Bildfell's view, by trusting him to pay what he thought the item was worth when it was completed, Etuangat would get more than if he was dealt with on a Hudson's Bay Company basis. In the end, it appears that the carving was not completed. (Lister, 2002, para. 20)

Carving long predated the onset of Qallunaat artist John Houston's influence on the development of an Inuit art industry and subsequent government involvement in the 1950s (discussed below). Qallunaat were buying and commissioning carvings and the artistic value and quality seems to have been recognized by people like Bildfell. Art historians have emphasised a break in the periodization occurring with Houston's involvement. Inuit would not necessarily see this kind of break. The 'historic period' of Inuit art making is said to end with the federal government's increased involvement in the North, and the following increasingly intense period of change.

Art Making in the time of Settlements and Commercialization

James Houston was the catalyst in the "handicrafts experiment" – the beginning of what is referred to as the contemporary period of Inuit art. In 1948 James Houston travelled to Inukjuak (Port Harrison) while on a sketching trip, and brought back some small carvings. He showed the carving to the Canadian Handicrafts Guild in Montreal, who had been dabbling in marketing 'Indian' and Inuit arts and crafts since 1910 (Goetz, 1993, p.360; see also Graburn, 2004; Butler & Wight, 1991). The next year the first exhibition of Inuit art with was held by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild with great success, featuring carvings from Povungnituk and Inukjuak. The Department of Resources and Development sponsored Houston to further travel to other communities, including Pangnirtung, to investigate the possibility of instituting an economic development project centered on arts and crafts production. The federal government was at first interested in the economic opportunity presented by handicrafts as an alternative to the establishment of a welfare state resulting from the collapse of the fur trade. As Dorothy Eber has noted, these arts and crafts projects "were essentially 'make-work' programmes, designed to give displaced people something to do and a way to earn income at the moment when, as Inuit sometimes say, 'We began to live with money'"

(Eber, 1998, p. 54). Elisapee Ishulutaq talked about how it was to transition to a money-based system:

She became an adult before she knew about money. And no one had an idea of having money, and when they traded they would be given credits, instead of actual money. They would have these little tokens, different shapes for different amount of credit they can have.

She grew up without having money, well she grew up without having the idea of money. And she didn't see money until she was an adult.

It was confusing for her.

Even if the money was there they didn't really have an interest in owning it.

It wasn't much of a big deal back then. (Elisapee Ishulutaq, 2011)

The Canadian Handicrafts Guild, the government and the HBC collaboratively developed a system for collecting, distributing and marketing Inuit arts (see Martijn, 1964; Goetz, 1993; Butler & Wight, 1991). The Guild's interest in Inuit art was essentially ideological, in contrast to the commercial motives of the HBC, fitting their mandate to promote values of "uniquely Canadian, authentic, handmade and nostalgically pre-modern" (Graburn, 2004, p.153). Graburn argues that the Canadian government, as a colonial power, held an interest in Inuit art that was politically motivated and that they "tried in many ways to use the Inuit and their arts as their agency, as extensions of their will on the world" (2004, p.155). Graburn also suggests that by providing the funds for James Houston's buying expeditions of 1949-50, the government was attempting achieve some direction over Houston's activities and to regain their footing in the Inuit arts/handicrafts area which had been somewhat usurped by the Guild.

Wight describes Houston's report of his first trip to Pangnirtung in 1951 while on a multi-stop trip across Baffin Island to assess the 'handicrafts potential' of the region. It is noted that, "Pangnirtung was then known for its sewn skin items, but no soapstone was

available for carving. A monetary incentive of \$500 was left with the Hudson's Bay Company Manager in the hopes that stone might be found" (quoted in Butler & Wight, 1991, p. 68-9). Houston evaluated the state of handicrafts production at Pangnirtung in a 1953 report stating,

Splendid at skin sewing. Do some ivory work but no stone available. Would like to see stone imported from Lake Harbour because of large population and obvious ability at carving. H.B.C. and Anglican mission purchase all skin work (quoted in Butler & Wight, 1991, p.77).

While not discussed at length in this thesis, skin work , such as sewing clothing and footwear, is properly categorized as 'art work' as this reflects an Inuit viewpoint.

The Canadian government and the carving as economic development initiative did not officially come to Pangnirtung until the relocations of the 1960s. Etuangat (Ittuangat) and July Papatsie have commented on that time,

In the year 1962, during the time of the dog distemper, which resulted in the death of most of the dogs, everybody living in the camps was brought into Panniqtuuq [sic]. The people no longer had the means of transportation for themselves. At the time I became an instructor in carving. I was ordered by the government to teach all the Inuit men how to carve, because the government regarded it as the only means of economic development in the community. Soapstone and other items were brought into the community, and everybody got into carving. (Etuangat [Ittuangat Aksaarjuk], in Knotsch, 2002, p.34)

Keith Crowe had started a carving project in which the Inuit made a lot of carvings of soapstone, bone and ivory. And the co-op followed afterwards, buying and selling carvings, and running the first black and white movies. (Papatsie, 2002, p.20)

The beginning of the government carving program in Pangnirtung was directly influenced by the devastating effects of the dog distemper outbreak. Harold Zuckerman, the area administrator based in Frobisher Bay, states that the decision was made to implement “a crafts programme as part of the economy of the Pangnirtung people” because of the crisis caused by the loss of dogs in the area. In the memorandum, Zukerman acknowledged the general importance of income derived from crafts production and hunting, trapping for Inuit and gives the opinion that after equilibrium returned to the lives of Inuit in Cumberland Sound, crafts production would continue to play a key economic role (in Knotsch, 2002, p.35). Elisapee Ishulutaq reminisced about her first experience carving,

The first time she ever carved was a bone. When she carved, she tried carving out a human. And further, she even got it to her liking, the bone was finished.

The next time she did a carving, it turned out very well.

Ever since then she did carvings, in the 1970s. And when she was living in Iqaluit with her husband she also did carvings there. (Elisapee Ishulutaq, 2011)

Co-operative Movement in the North

As the federal government stepped up its involvement in the North in the 1950s, bureaucrats reasoned for the need for a diversified economy to avoid Inuit dependence on the State (Duffy, 1988; Mitchell, 1996). Development of a handicrafts industry was seen as the only viable course from the government’s perspective (Mitchell, 1996, p.149). The co-operative form presented a way that the government thought they could create an independent, self-sufficient economy for Inuit (Duffy, 1988, p.169). The plan was that Inuit would be in control of the co-ops. By in control, Mitchell argues, the message that was underlying it was that Inuit "should substantially increase their exploitation of

renewable resources in order to generate a profit that would eliminate the need for state assistance" (Mitchell, 1996, p.164). The co-ops were funded entirely by the federal government (Duffy, 1988, p.170). Because the idea, management and funding for the development of co-ops were provided by government, the Arctic co-op movement diverged from the existing co-operative movements, co-ops traditionally emerging out of community-based initiatives (Mitchell, 1996, p.156, 160).

The first northern co-operative was established in the community of Kangiqsualujjuaq (George River) in 1959, and the movement quickly spread across northern Quebec and the Northwest Territories – by 1963 there were fifty-two co-ops in existence (M'Closkey, 2006, p.15). Co-ops were established in almost every Arctic community, with Northern Affairs officers assisting in the setup of mainly fishing, sealing, and handicrafts projects. Most initiatives were new, such as commercial fishing, except for a few areas such as handicraft production which were taken over from the Quebec Handicrafts Guild, missions and HBC (Mitchell, 1996, p.165-6). HBC agents supported early development of co-ops, which weren't seen as competitors because the co-operatives were originally "producer-oriented" with the main focus on arts producers. As Duffy states, "To encourage the establishment and expansion of co-operatives and thereby increase the spending power of Inuit was to the HBC's advantage" (1988, p.171). Over time, many co-ops shifted to being increasingly "consumer-oriented", which resulted in those co-ops coming into direct competition with the HBC. By 1980s co-ops employed the highest number of indigenous people in the North with exception of the government (Mitchell, 1996, p.167).

Art making provided the economic foundation for Arctic co-ops (Duffy, 1988, p.169). There is no doubt that the most successful project operated through the co-op system was the production and marketing of soapstone (steatite) carvings, and the industry supported northern co-ops for a long time (Mitchell, 1996, p.166). At the time of

the formation of the co-ops the carving industry was already bringing in a quarter of a million dollars in revenue, which provided a strong economic foundation for the co-ops. Now arts production in the north is a multimillion dollar industry, with a strong international market (Mitchell, 1996, p.168).

State interest in Inuit art coincided with the developing Canadian identity as well as issues of Arctic sovereignty. A specific example of the complicated role the government played in the industry is contained within the roots of the co-op movement. When printmaking began in Kingnait (Cape Dorset) in the late 50s, the government's interest in the prints created conflict with the HBC. The government thought it was important that they were in control of this, rather than the HBC, because of the predicted symbolic and economic significance. However, it was seen as a conflict of interest for the government to market products of its own project (Mitchell, 1996, p.174-7). Mitchell argues that the incorporation of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative was "clearly a move to legitimate government involvement and to retain state control over the prints". The "hidden agenda" of the government was to control Inuit arts production, without appearing to control it (Mitchell, 1996, p.177). The government of the Northwest Territories formed Canadian Arctic Producers (CAP) in 1965 to take care of the marketing and distribution of arts products from the Northwest Territories. This move marked a split between NWT and Quebec, CAP operating with non-Inuit management, and Quebec marketing Inuit art through La Fédération des Co-opératives du Nouveau Québec (FCNQ), run by Inuit managers (M'Closkey, 2006, p.15).

There is a suggestion that culture and money are two separate activities, highlighting the place of capitalism firmly in *qallunatitut*, non-Inuit ways, where arguably, the culture is money. In general, getting money is associated with non-traditional activities (see Quigley & McBride, 1987), and as Taparjadjuk stated, "We're all aware that the co-op is the best vehicle for joining the two activities of culture and

money” (in Mitchell, 1996, p.155). Mitchell states that carving, and the subsequent co-operative movement, were encouraged as a means of connecting Inuit to a “money economy” in a way that was perceived as “enabling them [Inuit] to preserve past practices” (1996, p.173).

For Mitchell, the co-op concept was distorted when executed in the Arctic and she argues that the implementation of co-operatives in the Arctic was an overt expression of the longstanding trend of Qallunaat promoting economic activity and structures that manage to support ‘traditional’ practices while simultaneously subverting them (1996, p.160, 154). In this way, Mitchell sees Arctic co-ops as conflicted organizations, because “[the co-op] was the vehicle by which the state exported capitalism to the unit, it is pointless to examine the Inuit co-op as an alternate economic form (which always contains an element of protest)” (1996, p.160). Mitchell argues that while the co-operative system is based on a concept of egalitarianism, in a capitalist society the reality is that the Arctic co-op is capitalist. The co-op system fundamentally altered Northern economies by providing opportunity for wage employment.

For Mitchell, the rise of carving for cash at the same time as the fall of trapping was just “a happy coincidence”, but she also notes that carving wouldn’t have taken off as it did if trapping had continued to be an option (1996, p.272). The decline of the fur trade was more due to competition, rather than conditions in the north; it stopped being a profitable venture in the north for investors (Mitchell, 1996, p.273). However, carving has an attraction that trapping never did – it’s possible to be both a carver and a hunter. Hunting and trapping often conflicted, whereas carving and hunting are complementary.

The Pangnirtung Eskimo Co-operative was established in 1968, and the summer of that year Gary Magee was sent by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to collaborate with the Co-op to put in place an arts and crafts program

(Goetz, 1977, p.238; Hickman, 2003, p.42). In 1969 both the Print Shop and Weave Shop (now the Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio) were established.

Tapestry Weaving

In keeping with the trend begun with carving and handicrafts production, the tapestry studio was an economic development project started by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. The weaving firm Karen Bulow Ltd. was hired by the federal government to introduce the program in Pangnirtung. Donald Stuart, brought on by Karen Bulow Ltd. to be the manager of the tapestry studio, arrived early in 1970. Stuart soon reported back that the young women from the community were quickly mastering the techniques (Hickman, 2003, p. 42-3). As Hickman describes, “the weaving practices and techniques brought to the Arctic in the early 1970s and established at the Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio were those of the organized European workshop. From the fifth century on, tapestry in Europe was created primarily in workshops known as “ateliers” under the patronage of church and court” (Hickman, 2003, p.43). Hickman argues that the “Pangnirtung tapestry weaving is a hybrid,” drawing upon both Inuit traditions –story telling –and European traditions – weaving being an ancient form. In the early years, Donald Stuart sought out drawings from Malaya Akulukjuk and Elisapee Ishulutaq (reportedly it was their first time drawing), and the first exhibition of Pangnirtung tapestries was held in 1972 (Hickman, 2003, p.45).

Printmaking

Printmaking in Pangnirtung began later than other print making projects in northern Canada, more than twenty years after the first prints were produced in Cape Dorset. The Pangnirtung print shop project was funded by the Government of the Northwest Territories, with supervisor Gary Magee, and the first collection was released in 1973 (Goetz, 1977, p.238). Issues within the local co-op and supply shortages prohibited a release in 1974, and following collections were released from 1975-1980 and

1983-88 under the co-op (Uqqurmiut). John Houston, the son of James Houston, was hired by the Co-operative to be an advisor to the print shop in 1975 and worked in Pangnirtung for the next five years (Goetz, 1977, p.238). Renowned graphic artist and printmaker Lypa Pitsiulak is credited with leading the print shop in the early years (Uqqurmiut). In the 70s, the printmakers were generally young, in their thirties, while most of the graphic artists were elders.

There is in this community an intense interest in the history of its people, and an effort is being made to record and preserve the stories and experiences of the elders. As prints are seen as valuable means to that end, the old people are urged to supply drawings that can be translated into prints by the young. The entire activity is regarded as a collaborative one, with the printmakers treating the drawings as a valuable resource. (Goetz, 1977, p. 240)

Elisapee Ishulutaq discussed drawing in the early days of the settlement,

The first time she ever did drawings, she learnt from, before the print shop, well before the print shop burned down, and she had some interest in doing some drawings, and she did a bunch of them. And when she brought the drawings to the print shop she got five dollars out of all the prints.

Ever since she did some drawings she's been continuing them until today.

And even with her husband in Iqaluit she did her drawings, and when he had to be in a community where there's a doctor, she did drawings.

Tommy [a Qallunaak] from Iqaluit, she did drawings for him too. It might be from co-operative, he might be the manager over at the Arctic, that gallery across the airport in Iqaluit.

Ever since she did her first drawings, she's been drawing. (Elisapee Ishulutaq, 2011)

The Uqqurmiut Inuit Artists Association

In the 1980s, print shops across the Arctic were struggling in both economically and aesthetically. The art market was slow, and the market for prints was becoming more selective and trickier to navigate. The operating costs of print shops in the Arctic had inflated, and in economic development terms they had become more of a burden than a boon (Gustavison, 1994, p.70). From the perspective of the Canadian Eskimo Arts Council a perceived lack of visual ('artistic') and material quality was also a contributing factor – the work being produced by the print shops across the Arctic was not reaching the bar set by the Council (Gustavison, 1994, pp.70-1). In May of 1988, the Baker Lake Sanavik Co-op was forced to close their print shop, and it was in this atmosphere that the Uqurmiut Inuit Artists Association (UIAA) was formed. As Gustavison describes,

The market for Inuit graphic art had proved weaker in 1988 than in the previous years [...] Both Baker Lake and Pangnirtung had some success in the sale of their collections but for both it was insufficient to offset operating and production costs. Consequently, printmaking remained suspended in both communities until proposed financial assistance from the territorial government was in place.

(Gustavison, 1994, p.86).

Due to financial issues within the Pangnirtung Eskimo Co-operative, in 1988 the Co-op withdrew their support of the print shop, including its physical home (Hickman, 1993, p.15).

Rose (Rosie) Okpik, chairperson of the UIAA board from 1987 until her passing in 1997, was an indispensable advocate for art makers in Pangnirtung (Billson & Mancini, 2007, p.247). Rosie describes the founding of the UIAA,

Five years ago we were told that the Print Shop had to close. It could no longer be supported by the Co-op, nor by the Government. Many of us were determined that the print shop would not be closed, or at least that it would not be a permanent situation. This is why we formed the Uqurmiut Inuit

Artists Association. We needed an organization that the Inuit of Pangnirtung would own and control, that would provide support for artists like the print makers, because outside support had failed them. (Okpik, quoted in Hickman, 1993, p.15)

The Uqqurmiut Inuit Artists Association mission statement is:

To serve Pangnirtung artists and the community of Pangnirtung, to keep all of their arts and culture alive, and to ensure their full participation and control by creating employment and training opportunities for artists, providing a central place for the creation and marketing of art, contributing to local tourism, and providing an art archive to preserve the art for future generations.” (Uqqurmiut, n.d., para. 2)

The Uqqurmiut Inuit Artists Association acquired the Weave Shop from the Government of the Northwest Territories in 1989 (Hickman, 1992, p.48), and Print Shop was transferred from the Pangnirtung Eskimo Co-operative two years later. “Geetee Maniapik, assistant manager [of the weave shop] since 1980, became the manager of the renamed Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio. General Manager Ed McKenna was hired to manage the entire operation, which consisted of printmaking, weaving, and home –craft programs as well as marketing” (Hickman, 1993, p.48). New facilities were needed, and the Uqqurmiut Inuit Artists Association collaborated with architect Keith Irving in the design of the new Uqqurmiut Arts and Crafts Centre. The buildings’ design reflects the summer tent. Originally there were five “tents” planned, but due to funding availability the final construction included two “tents”, the weave shop and the main gallery/administration area, with the print shop in a separate building directly next to it (Keith Irving, in Enright 1992,p p.91-92). The weavers moved into the new Uqqurmiut Centre for Arts and Crafts in April 1991, and the printmakers operated out of the old “weave shop” after the new tapestry studio was built (Hickman, 1993, p.48). In an

interview discussing the building of the Uqqurmiut Centre, Rosie speaks at length about how people were feeling about the arts and their community,

We were full of dreams of it. We could see that building right there, even before he [Keith Irving, architect] finished the drawings. We were so happy talking about that building. We were only planning to get a print shop. We didn't realize we were going to get something that big. It came out of our culture and we were so happy that finally we were going to show meaning to the people in the community. I'd been reading in newspapers and magazines that the Inuit can't even make their own boots anymore. And I said, I wonder whose fault is that? Do you blame mothers or do you blame the government? Who do you blame? I recognized we had gone too far without realizing ourselves, we were losing our culture and language every minute, every day. We should take at least one step back to adopt this culture we've been losing without realizing. When we had the official opening, the old lady lit a soapstone lamp with seal oil. That means, 'light up the building.' That's one of our symbols, it represents the sun.

[...] We played bingo and we held a bake sale, an auction, a radio open line show, raffle tickets, talent show, you name it, We did anything you could think of to make money [...] we raised a little over \$15,000. (Okpik in Enright, 1993,pp.91-2)

The hey-day of the community controlled arts and crafts centre was short lived. Deborah Hickman (2011) described how in 1993, the Government of the Northwest Territories expressed the desire to take control of the Uqqurmiut Centre for Arts and Crafts, through the Northwest Territories Development Corporation taking ownership of 51% of the shares. In return, the territorial government promised ten years of funding. Both Rosie Okpik and Ed McKenna were opposed to this proposal, as everyone involved

understood that giving the government majority shares would take away the community control the UIAA had fought for. In the end, the fear of losing operating funding won over and Uqqurmiut Arts and Crafts (1993) Ltd. (UAC) was formed.

The UAC is owned jointly by the Nunavut Development Corporation (NDC)¹⁴ and the UIAA, and the Uqqurmiut Centre for Arts and Crafts (UCAC) is operated through the UAC. There are two advisory boards directing operations of the Uqqurmiut Centre, the UIAA board and the UAC board, as well as being influenced by the directives of the Department of Economic Development and Transportation who oversee the NDC. Annual funding for operations is provided annually by the NDC. The development corporation holds majority interest and oversees the financial and business affairs, as well as providing other organizational support (Hickman, 2003; Fisher, 2011; Forest Ethics, n.d.). The UIAA owns the buildings, and they lease the buildings to UCAC for a very minimal amount (possibly a dollar a year, as Hickman recalled the original agreement). The UIAA's other source of funding is the rent from the manager's house, which they also own.

So, from then on it [Uqqurmiut Centre for Arts and Crafts] continued to be run in very much the same way until, well, Ed left. Ed was here for seven years. And Rose passed away. And she passed away I think, I'm not sure if she passed away before he left or not, but he left in '96 or 7 and Geoff Ryan took over, and he I think worked a little bit more with the development corporation, but at the same time he understood the problem and didn't like it. But what happened was, once they had that extra share, they wanted to call the shots. So that took away community control. And I won't go into the details of the shots they called, but just the fact that the control of the business and its direction and everything --

¹⁴ With the formation of Nunavut the activities of the Northwest Territories Development Corporation were transferred to the government of Nunavut from the NWT government, and the Nunavut Development Corporation was formed.

basically the general manager works for the NDC [Nunavut Development Corporation], not for the people of Pangnirtung. So that's a big difference. Ed worked for the people of Pangnirtung. And he was the only manager who did (Deborah Hickman, 2011).

Hickman sees the 1993 ownership transfer as extremely significant, as it signaled the end of true community control. There's an interesting definition of community at play here -- whereas we could look at the Nunavut Government as representing Inuit as a 'nation', they are still "government" -- and thus seen negatively.

It is hard to put into words the importance of the formation of the UIAA. The UIAA said, "You are shutting us down? Well we don't accept that. And here's what we are going to do about it." There was a strong sense of community control. No longer was the marketing agency going to determine the future of art making in Pangnirtung, it was the artists themselves who were going to determine their own future. And they did, until the government again took over. The fact that they did is not insignificant. Autonomy in direction was achieved, if only for a brief period. And it is not completely lost. While the powerful sense of ownership that was achieved has faded, the possibility remains.

Today, art making continues to be an essential aspect of community life, and expression. Most days, the tapestry studio is lively with activity, hushed conversations over the noise of the looms. The print shop in contrast is often quiet, sounds from the radio or graphic artist Andrew Qappik's iPad barely audible, the thump thump of long-time printmaker Josea Maniapik's brush against paper. Take a walk around the community and you will hear the whining buzz of power tools on stone. Investigate further and you might find a carver outside working on a large carving. Large panoramic photographic prints by David Kilabuk grace the walls of a number of houses. Beautiful, well-made cloth amauti and parkas are worn everywhere you go, and less frequently sighted kamiik (probably because of the time of year) are equally beautiful and well

made. A friend of mine showed me some caribou skin snow pants she made for her son, and a number of young women I met were ecstatic to be learning how to make kamiik and clothing.

The picture painted above glosses over many underlying issues in community around arts production. From the perspective of the management of the Uqqurmiut centre, young people lack interest in taking up art making, particularly around the graphic arts -- a problem for the long term sustainability of the art centre. The manager criticized perceived issues of quality in the works coming into the centre, the lack of availability of new drawings to make prints from, and continuous funding problems. The print shop has seen a drop in involvement in recent years, having only three people regularly working in the space at the time of this study. Carvers in Pangnirtung expressed concern over the quality, availability and price of stone. Norman Komoartuk commented on issues around stone, and the sources currently available to the community.

...what he wants to note is there is not many resources here to purchase materials for carving. [...]

Before, they used to get it [stone] outside Iqaluit, between Iqaluit and Cape Dorset, and today they get it from out the sound [near Opingivik outpost camp], it's not close, it's still pretty far, and takes a lot of gas to bring back. [...]

A lot of people go out, get the stone themselves. He [Norman] never went and he can't go today because he has health problems. So, definitely help a lot of people in this town if there's new resources to get stone from.

There is some stone the hamlet sells, and it's pretty expensive, well it can get pretty expensive for newcomer carvers, even finishing, the stone can be gone before the carving is finished.

It's like 3 dollars a pound, that's not very much stone. (Norman Komoartuk, 2011)

Textile workers are confronted with the high price of yardage and other materials at the Northern and Co-op stores. The cost of wool, thread, fabric, and needles are much higher in the north than in the south, and the selection is much reduced. Carvers and crafters alike encounter difficulty in selling their work to local distributors, and commissions are appreciated. While these challenges are not discussed in depth in this thesis, every conversation I had made evident that they take precedence in Inuit discussions about art making. There is recognition on the local, territorial and national levels of these issues, and different initiatives are making attempts for resolution¹⁵.

Pangnirtung has a rich and distinct local history, and the development of the contemporary Inuit art industry in the region has been influenced by various factors specific to the region around the settlement. This chapter looked at how colonial activities and art making co-existed and interacted from the arrival of qallunaat to the North. Inuit artists and art are embedded in these processes of colonialism, and the underlying resistance to and cultural continuity through colonialism. The last two chapters of this thesis move to a consideration of how Inuit knowledge is embodied or materialized through art making, and the relationship between this process and that of cultural resilience.

¹⁵ One example is *Ukkusiksaqtarvik: The Place Where We Find Stone: Carvingstone Supply Action Plan* (2007) from the Nunavut Department of Economic Development and Transportation— finding new sources of stone is a top priority.

CHAPTER III

“Story is the key”: Narrative and Memory in Inuit Art

Inuit involvement and control over the economic aspects of the art industry, is linked to the manifestation of Inuit autonomy and voices. The formation of the Uqqurmiut Inuit Artists Association in Pangnirtung is one example of this intersection (discussed in Chapter II). A direct response to lack of support and community direction, the UIAA represents a key moment when Panniqtuumiut exercised agency over their lives and livelihoods. Similarly, art making presents another arena where Inuit self-representation and voices operate through knowledge production. Works of Inuit art play a role in knowledge production and in communicating Inuit knowledge through storytelling.

The previous chapter argued for the importance of a localized approach to the history of Inuit art making, recognizing that Inuit value particular knowledge over generalization. This chapter looks at the place stories have in Inuit lives. Through a survey of the kinds of stories that are told, the diverse aspects of Inuit knowledge represented in works of Inuit art are explored, and specific examples of work from Pangnirtung artists are considered. Embedded in this discussion are ideas of history and memory and how understandings differ between Inuit and western traditions. That Inuit art objects are directed to a Qallunaat audience also has consequences for the potential for Inuit art to contribute to knowledge production. An examination of practices of collection and exhibition provides a space to contemplate different ways of understanding the relationships and value of stories and objects.

For Inuit to do art they usually carve and produce art, and stories from what they heard from Elders. (Henry Mike, 2011)

[Carving] does bring out the culture a lot, and it does show a lot of the different cultures about ours. With carvings he makes he likes to use all the

experiences he went through, like trying to harpoon a seal, drum dancing, dog-sledding, the old lifestyle.(Norman Komoartuk, 2011)

[W]hen Inuit art is being displayed or exhibited it highlights the traditional way of life. (Jaco Ishulutaq, 2011)

The tapestries are part of Inuit culture, part of our lives, and it is important that they are seen by people in other cultures and by our own younger generations. They reinforce our culture. (Rhoda Veevee, quoted in Von Finckenstein, 2002, p.195)

White people tell stories in books, I tell them by my drawings. (Helen Kalvak quoted in Eber, 1993, p.430)

The relationship described between Inuit art making and Inuit knowledge is threefold. The first aspect of the relationship is the production of Inuit knowledge, the subject matter and narrative content of works of Inuit art. This chapter will consider a few different kinds of narratives, and provide a brief discussion about issues around making art and around who decides which stories are told. A second aspect, emphasized by Jaco Ishulutaq, is that of art as objects, the process of displaying or exhibiting works of Inuit art, and how the stories are told about the objects. Often, the stories that get told involve an examination of Inuit life before settlements, a trend which is seeing shifts in recent years. The third aspect, as indicated by Rhoda Veevee, is the transmission of Inuit knowledge, a role which places art making and exhibiting art in a position to promote cultural resilience. This final aspect is examined in the following chapter.

Story is the key. It's very important to Inuit art. (Henry Mike, 2011)

Inuit have a rich oral tradition. *Unikkaat*, stories, are educational, serving to pass knowledge on, as well as entertaining. *Unikkaat* refers to stories in general – an *unikkaa* could be a story about any everyday event happening at any time, such as an account of a hunting trip taking place a few months earlier, or a funny thing someone did the other

day. *Unikkaaquat*¹⁶ are older stories, long stories, or ‘traditional stories’, about physical and spiritual worlds. As Seidleman and Turner eloquently state,

The stories represent the cultural memory and imaginative history of the community. They encode the values considered important for survival. Both the commonplace and the important events are understood in relation to these stories and the beliefs they express. (Seidleman and Turner, 2001, p.14)

There are many kinds of stories, including *inuusirminitait*, or life stories, also expressed as *inuusirminik unikkaaq* (Martin, 2009, p.93; Nungak, 2008 p.19). As pointed out in the exhibition *Holman: 40 Years of Graphic Art*,

The visual aspect of storytelling is almost as important as the story. String games were used to illustrate stories, making familiar figures of humans and animals to reinforce certain themes and images in the story. The body language of the storyteller, including gesturing and facial expression, was also vital to the story. Storytellers would even change the intonation of their voices to portray different characters. (Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG), 2002)

Building upon Henry Mike’s statement that “story is the key”, one can argue that this is holds true both as an entry into an Inuit perspective on Inuit art making, and to an appreciation and understanding of Inuit oral traditions and knowledge more generally.

When Inuit began to create carvings for trade to Qallunaat, their lives were reflected in the work that was made. At this time, people were very much still living on the land, although shifts post-contact with Qallunaat were slowly occurring, mostly around whaling. Qallunaat academic and popular interest in the exotic other, and the ‘cabinets of curiosity’ waiting to be filled with objects from around the globe certainly influenced this – the carvings depicted what would become known as the ‘traditional’ way of life. At the time James Houston visited Nunavik in 1948, the carvings he saw had

¹⁶ Often people call these legends or myths.

emerged from this established trade. At the time, the still strong fascination with the “other” and popularity of “primitive” art made the entry of carvings by Inuit into the Southern marketplace a relatively smooth transition. Inuit carvers making these works were still living in camps, and they were encouraged by Southern agents to depict their ways of life (see Wight, 2006). As Abraham Aparkak Anghik Reuben, remarked in a recent talk this “first generation” of contemporary Inuit artists made art about their lived experiences, and this art is considered the ‘benchmark’ against which all contemporary Inuit art is assessed in the marketplace, as well as by art historians (18th Inuit Studies Conference, Washington D.C., 2012).

Both Rhoda and Jaco call attention to the idea of Inuit art as art about Inuit lives and Inuit knowledge. Carvings, prints, drawings, sewing and crafts, all have the capacity to tell stories about the lived experiences of Inuit. As noted above, what is often told is the story about life before colonialism and the Qallunaat incursion in the North – life in camps and out on the land. This also holds true for carvings and drawings made in the early times of contact. Detailed models of Inuit technology as well as European technology, of camp and hunting scenes, maps, and illustrations of elements of *unikkaaqtuaq*, such as the images drawn for Knud Rasmussen and Peck of *tuurngait*¹⁷, (sing. *tuurngaq*) are usually described as the helping spirits of the *angakkuut*. All of these subjects speak about experiences. It is important to recognize carvings from this time as being narrative. In cases like the *tuurngait* drawings, the people who drew them likely understood that these Qallunaat were interested in learning what they knew about these beings. Illustrated tusks tell hunting stories and illustrate ways of making a living. Camp scene models demonstrate the specialized knowledge and technologies required for living

¹⁷ Oosten and Trudel (2002) discuss research Reverend Edmund James Peck on the *tuurngait* of South Baffin Island, as well as drawing on Boas’ *Central Eskimo*. They cite similar studies by Knud Rasmussen, Merkur, and Nelson Graburn.

well on the land. Ash trays and match holders, exhibit this quality as well, in addition to their functionality, demonstrating moments of innovation and adaptation.

Inuit stories are embedded in a palimpsest, a complex network of relationships, and take place within the social landscape transposed onto on the physical land (see Nuttall, 1992). There are stories about everyday things. Elements of traditional knowledge are represented, of *sila*, of the land, navigation, and animals (cf. Driscoll-Engelstad, 2005, p. 40). July Papatsie describes the drawing and resulting tapestry *Woman and Child in Tent House* (1979) by Elisapee Ishulutaq,

Elisapee shows the classical layout of any traditional Inuit dwelling, be it an igloo, a winter tent, or a summer tent. There is a square floor in the centre with two sections alongside where you have the cooking utensils and two seal-oil lamps. In the back is the elevated sleeping platform, covered by caribou skins. The woman in the middle is in the process of removing the blubber from the sealskin, a long and arduous task, requiring much patience. [...] The drawing shows the details more clearly. The woman uses a slanted wooden board which helps her to remove the blubber. On her right side is a stone pot with two stone handles, for cooking meat, and on the left side we see a stone pot with string handles, which was used to melt snow and to brew tea. (July Papatsie, in Von Finkenstein, 2002, p. 109)

The original image is drawn from Elisapee's individual and specialized knowledge of the subject. July's interpretation draws from his knowledge of this area, and is concerned with 'ethnographic' information than with social relationships. Together, Elisapee's drawing and July's interpretation work in the production and transmission of Inuit knowledge.

In addition to knowledge of travelling, hunting and home life, there are also stories that tell about the composition of the cosmos and unusual beings and spirits that

inhabit it, including *inuait*, *ijirait*, *nunamiutait*, and *tuurngait* (see Bennett & Rowley, 2004; Oosten, Trudel, Laugrand & Kublu, 2000; Seidelman & Turner, 2001). The work of Pangnirtung graphic artist Malaya Akulujuk, a pivotal figure in the weave shop, involves many considerations of the spirit world, including *angakkuit* and *tuurngait*. Von Finkenstein relates that Malaya may have had particular knowledge of this realm, “Although not openly acknowledged, she was reputed to be a shaman, a factor that helps to explain her access to the spirit world, so vividly portrayed in her drawings” (2002, p.52). The subject of *angakkuit* was forbidden among most Inuit in the Eastern Arctic after the arrival of missionaries, although the practices did not disappear entirely. Many Elders are uncomfortable talking about the subject, although recently uneasiness around the subject seems to be relaxing

Included in the publication *Nuvisavik* are a number of tapestries based on drawings by Malaya depicting various beings. Aisa Papatsie, an Elder from Pangnirtung, reflected on the tapestry *Oolapalik* (Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio #25),

I think Oolapalik was the name given to a helping spirit. It may have been Malaya's own or the name was passed on to her. Judging by the wings and big eyes, this helping spirit was a bird which acted as the shaman's eyes. It could fly over distances and report back what it had seen. (Papatsie in Von Finkenstein, 2002, p. 54)

Another tapestry, *Pointing Goose*, is described by July Papatsie, of Pangnirtung. Papatsie reads the drawing and sees more than a goose wearing a man’s coat. He brings the *unnikkaqtuat* indicated by the tapestry into relevance for today.

A male goose, wearing a man's parka, is pointing with his wing. He belongs to the Nirliit Inuit, the geese people, who live in another dimension outside of our physical reality. Even today we have spiritual places where torngait (spirit people) live. If they like your spirit, they might invite you into their

dimension. Is he pointing because he is showing the way? (July Papatsie, in Von Finkenstein, 2002, p. 62)

Papatsie's engagement with the tapestry evidences traditional knowledge and ties the knowledge to the present (The geese people could reference Kiviuiq?). He also links the knowledge to experience – the world is infused with different kinds of spirits, who one could encounter at any time. He locates it in time – this is important to know because it has relevance for the present. *Unikkaaqtuat* are significant in providing meaning and solutions for *unikkaa* happening now.

Minnie Aodla Freeman links the skill of artists in art making to their experiences of life on the land, traditional culture.

It is because these artists have seen and felt and lived these experiences that they are so good at their art (Freeman, 1994, p.17).

As expressions of experience, they are also expressions of Inuit knowledge. Importantly, as Jaco points out, a great deal of the knowledge informing art made by Inuit is knowledge about the 'traditional' way of life¹⁸, sometimes referred to as Inuit ways, the ways of the *Inummariit*, or "real Inuit". There is a very strong protocol around Inuit traditions of knowledge production, or the oral tradition, that one speaks only from personal experience¹⁹.

"You don't just do drawings...you express yourself. It is also a way of life, a part of life. Life is sometimes heavy. You have to be able to express yourself. Some of it comes out through art...I am just doing what I know how to do best. (Pitaloosie Saila in Leroux, Jackson, & Freeman, 1994, p.27)

¹⁸Note: the term "traditional" is fraught with implications of a past that is no longer present, and the use and understandings of the term often fail to encompass ideas of resilience and continuity of traditions. I use the term with caution.

¹⁹ There is an exception when it comes to unikkaatuaq (Martin, 2009, p.194)

My grandmother's ability to make things is always coming back to me... I have been thinking about her a lot more in the 1990s ...I made my artwork to show what I have done before in my life. (Oopik Pitsiulak in Leroux, Jackson,& Freeman, 1994, p.27)

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and Art Making

Jaco, Henry, and Norman emphasize that narratives involving the old ways – traditional knowledge or *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ) – have a strong presence in carvings, drawings and prints. Beyond representing knowledge, art works also serve to communicate knowledge. Referring to the process of knowledge production, Henry indicates that this is one of the ways younger generations of Inuit continue to learn from their Elders. This discussion can be linked to what Cree scholar Neal McLeod refers to as narrative memory. McLeod uses the concept narrative to describe the way that Cree culture is “open-ended and multilayered”, not a static set of traits but constantly changing and growing (2007, pp.95-6). *Mamâhtâwisiwin*, “tapping into the Great Mystery” or Cree narrative imagination is a way of thinking and being that is informed through Cree narrative memory -- oral history and traditional knowledge the mapping of relationships over time and space. Neal McLeod describes *mamâhtâwisiwin* as “essentially an Indigenous conception and practice of theory” (2007, p.94). Key to an understanding of narrative memory is its dynamic and innovative nature. *Mamâhtâwisiwin* is the process that contributes to and cultivates narrative memory while integrating new experiences, of which an essential part is described as “a visionary process of imagining another state of affairs [...] a different way in which people might live together”(McLeod, 2007, p.98)²⁰. As Inuit art making engages with narrative memory it takes on this kind of active process

²⁰ A good example of the ways various indigenous artists are engaging with these ideas is found the exhibition *Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years* (multiple venues, Winnipeg, 2011)

of narrative imagination. Works of Inuit art engage with Inuit epistemology and ontology. Thus, we can consider Inuit art making *as* knowledge production.

Zebedee Nungak outlines four areas of knowing that were and continue to be drawn on by Inuit art makers:

A lot of artistic work was also a direct representation of real, everyday Inuit life [...] Inuit artists tapped into what they were most knowledgeable about: their *unikkaaqtuat* (legends), their *unikkaat* (historical accounts), their *inuusirminitait* (life experiences), and their *isumaminitait* (inspired imaginations)” (Nungak 2008, p.19; see also Spalding & Kusugak, 1998; Martin, 2009).

In Pangnirtung, many artists I met or know of make art that represents Inuit ways and ‘traditional’ life. Most of the imagery is of life before settlements, including narratives of the time of whalers, hunting, and camp life. Jaco Ishulutaq and Manasie Maniapik, two of the most renowned carvers of the community, draw greatly on *unikkaaqtuat* for imagery and themes in addition to knowledge they have gained from a lifetime of hunting and being out on the land. Common subjects for both artists include images of *angakkuq*, scenes of transformations, and carvings of human/animal beings or spirits such as *qalupaliit* (*sing. qalupalik/qalupaliq*)²¹. Elders from South Baffin, Naqi Ekho and Uqsuralik Ottokie discuss some aspects of *qalupaliit* and recount experiences they have heard about (in Briggs, 2000, pp.14-16). *Qalupaliit* (S. Baffin) or *qallupilluit* (*sing. qallupilluk*) (N. Baffin, Keewatin) live in the sea by the tide line. Under the sea ice, they make a sound Uqsuralik describes as *qatimaajuk*. Some of the *qalupaliit* wear an *amautiq*, which they use to take children. *Qalupaliq* (Sea Monster, 2001) is a carving by

²¹ Examples include the carving *Qalupalik* (*Sea Monster*), 2001, Jaco Ishulutaq, and an animated short by Ame Papatsie, also of Pangnirtung, which tells the story of young Angutii, who is abducted by Qalupalik, a half-human, half-creature from the sea who takes children who don’t listen to their Elders (NFB). Also, drawings by Annie Kilabuk, QALUPALIK (1999) tapestry #449, and QALUPALIK (Stencil print, 1997). And LIPA PITSIULAK (1943-2010) (Printmaker: Solomon Karpik, Qalupaliq, 1979 Stonecut)

Jaco Ishulutaq that depicts a creature with a human-like body, with a very large amautiq pouch, and what seem to be feathers and some hair. Naqi recounted that *qalupaliit* are known to have feathers similar to a duck. It is good to note that stories about strange creatures or unusual happenings are not always in the category of *unikkaaqtuat*, they can also be just regular *unikkaat* if they happened not long ago. Naqi recounted an experience her husband had with a *qalupalik*.

My husband had a close-up view of a *qalupalik*. If you suspected it was a *qalupalik* you were supposed to say the name of an animal before you aimed at the thing. When you were ready, you said “*ugjuk*,” bearded seal, and it would become an *ugjuk*. [...]

There was a part of the story I didn’t finish. If a man was suspicious that it was not an animal, just before he shot it he shouted that he wanted it to be a bearded seal or a ring seal. He would shout the name of an animal just before he shot it. The animal my husband and his companions shot sank, so they used a three-pronged hook called a *kivijurniuti* to drag it up. It was very heavy. Wherever they hooked it, the skin would just tear because it was very soft. They towed it back onto the land and cut it up after they beached it. It had a round head. It wasn’t like anything they had seen before. The head was almost perfectly round. They started opening it up and inspecting and investigating it. The insides were those of a seal, but it had a whole duck in its stomach. They were amazed about that. They never took the meat. They kept the skin to keep as evidence. They were not very far from our camp. Laipa [Lypa] Pitsiulak, who lives in an outpost camp, was the one who caught the *qalupalik*. They used the skin that they took off as evidence to show other people. It had a perfectly round head, unlike that of any animal. This is not an old story, it’s quite new. (Naqi Ekho in Briggs, 2000, p.116)

Naqi concludes the story by clearly stating that this is a *unikkaat*, and happened in the more recent past. Both *unikkaat* and *unikkaaqtuat* are elements of IQ, of Inuit ‘traditional’ knowledge, producing and reproducing information about Inuit culture, society, values, and the land and environment. Storytelling is part of the process that has sustained Inuit traditional knowledge over thousands of years, and which reinforces and develops IQ today.

A carving by Manasie Maniapik that I came across on the website of the Webster Gallery (Calgary) is entitled *Stories of the Inuit*²². It is a large whalebone carving, with at least four figures represented. Most prominent is an Inuk man holding what looks like a piece of paper and a writing utensil, and he is flanked by a woman and two mermaids, possibly referencing the Sedna/Nuliajuk/Taleelayu or relationships between people, and environment. The reference to the written works is telling—as a statement of the realities of Inuit knowledge production after colonization. This could also be seen as a statement about the relationship between Inuit art making and the telling of *unikkaaqtuat*. Another possible reading is the relationship between the written word and oral tradition.

Cruikshank has discussed the ways the relationship between words (oral traditions) and things (material culture) have been understood differently by anthropologists and Indigenous peoples. Anthropologists have in the past dealt with the two separately, as belonging to different ethnographic realms of folklore studies and museum studies – although she acknowledges that as two kinds of “data” used by anthropologists, they have been treated and analyzed similarly over time (Cruikshank, 1994, pp. 25-7). Comparing the way the field of museum studies constructs the relationship between words and things, to that of Dene (Athapaskan) Elders, Cruikshank states,

²² URL: http://www.webstergalleries.com/title.php?page=1&data=search_array&ititlenum=9485

If museum discourse emphasizes the importance of using words to describe, interpret and give meaning to the physical *objects of collection*, indigenous discourse, at least in this instance from the Subarctic, suggests that it is spoken *words* which are primary, and that material objects essentially provide illustrations for particularly meaningful stories. (Cruikshank, 1995, p.28)

This somewhat subtle distinction describes how the meaning indicated by an art object can be more important than the object itself. Works of Inuit art that illustrate scenes from *unikkaaqtuat* or contain other elements of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit serve to support and reinforce Inuit knowledge. Art objects materialize knowledge, making the words concrete. Embodying knowledge, Inuit art making engages in knowledge production, passing on traditional knowledge and oral history. Thus “story” is key.

In Fienup-Riordan’s visual repatriation work, the emphasis of Yup’ik Elders has been “not to reclaim museum objects but to re-own the knowledge and experiences that the objects embodied” (1998, p.56). Anthropology is typically about producing information for a non-indigenous readership. This collaborative work flips anthropological fieldwork conventions, with Elders using ethnographic collections as tools for forwarding Yup’ik knowledge promoting cultural continuity²³. Examining the objects brought out stories about personal experiences, as well as stories about strange creatures, songs, and traditional knowledge. Fienup-Riordan describes Elder Annie Blue recounting a story after looking at a carving. Through the telling of the story, there is a message that through hearing traditional stories and oral history, young people will be better equipped for the future (1998, pp.53-5). Paul John, one Elders involved in the exploration of the Berlin collection, states; “My hope is that our work will bring our people closer to their own culture”. Paul suggests that through seeing images of the

²³ Another project was undertaken by Bernadette Driscoll-Englestadt that promoted traditional techniques to be revived (Fienup Riordan, p 56; see Driscoll-Englestadt 2005 p. 41-4; also Issenman 1985, 1990, 1991).

objects held in the museum collection, the Yup'ik culture can be strengthened for the future. Knowledge emerged from examining the objects in that particular museum collection, and this knowledge holds power. It is important that this knowledge is shared, so that this power can provide a source of strength for Yup'ik (Paul John in Fienup Riordan, 1998, pp.55-6).

Inuusirminitait

Inuusirminitait, life stories, figure largely as content in works of Inuit art. These narratives both in oral history and in visual expression provide versions of Inuit history specific to communities and families, and individuals. This includes stories from people with all kinds of experiences, from life in camps before settlement, to contemporary experiences. As already discussed, Inuit knowledge derives from, is validated and applies to personal experience. *Inuusirminitait* are essential for the production of Inuit knowledge.

An example of *inuusirminitait* in art work from Pangnirtung is the very large scale drawing (9.3 meters by 1.3 meters) made by Elisapee Ishulutaq that has recently gained attention due to its inclusion in the Canadian Biennale 2012 at the National Gallery of Canada. The drawing made in 2009 is entitled *Nunagah* ("My Home Place") or 'my land'.

I drew this [*Nunagah*] so when I pass away people will remember me by my stories. (National Gallery of Canada, 2013)

She did this work because this is how Inuit used to live back then. She wants them to see this after she passes away. It's very important for her to tell people how Inuit lived was very different from today. (Andrew Ishulutaq interpreting for Elisapee Ishulutaq, in Gregoire, 2012, n.p.).

The drawing passes on information about traditional life and Inuit history, by showing a part of her life story. The life stories contained within the drawing are very specific, with

particular places, times, and people. A small snapshot of the people and activities that made up Elisapee's youth, when unpacked contains numerous additional narratives of family and community contained within it and referenced by it.

An article published in *Inuit Art Quarterly* contains Kyra Vladykov Fisher's description of what Elisapee drew (2010, p.20). The description is rich with biographical detail, although somewhat sparse on narrative. Two important places in Elisapee's youth are shown in the drawing, which is divided into three frames. As described by Fisher, the place in the first two frames is Iqalulik²⁴, the winter camp where she lived (with her *anaana*, Avunirq and *ataata*, Arnaquq (Angnaqok), and her sister and adopted brother, (Malaya and Silassie Arnaquq). The left side of the drawing has an illustration of both Elisapee and Kanayuk, whom she would later marry²⁵. The centre frame of the drawing shows an eight-year-old Elisapee in front of the *qammaq* of her *anaana* and *ataata*, watching Kanajuk who is holding the lead rope of a whaleboat, which was named *Ujjugayu*, and is identified as belonging to Noah Maniapik, the husband of her father's *najak*, Qaqatunaq (Fisher, 2010). One story contained in this drawing has to do with this boat. Stevenson makes a small reference to this particular boat, stating that two whaleboat owners lived at Iqalulik, but because there weren't enough people to crew two, they would usually only use one at a time. Maniapik was often the captain of the whaling crew, and "was generally regarded to be the *angajuqqaq* of the camp", a highly respected and influential leader (Stevenson, pp.197-8). The boat opens a channel to many different memories, about whaling, about relationships between camp residents and others nearby, about relationships between Inuit and Qallunaat. The last frame of the drawing shows summer fishing at Nattilik Lake, located in the interior of Baffin Island. Inuit travelled there to hunt caribou in the late summer and early fall. On the left are Qaqatunaq's

²⁴ Cf. M. Stevenson, 1997; also mentioned briefly in Von Finckenstein, 2002, pp.26, 31.

²⁵ Fisher notes that after marrying Kanajuk, Elisapee moved to Usualuk (=Ussualung), Kanayuk's parents' camp.

children, Qappik, Towkie and Noah running after a pet *pitsiulaaq*. In the distant background, Maniapik watches Arnaquq *kakivak* fishing. Also in the picture is Kanajuk, hunting, and Lasaloosie, Elisapee's *irniq*, outside another *qammaq* (Fisher, 2010).²⁶ Observe the breadth and depth of social relations located on the land that are shown in the work.

Several other drawings made by Elisapee at the same time also tell stories of what life was like before moving into the settlement of Pangnirtung. One example is *Igluvigaq* (*Snow House*) which tells a story about how Kanayuq, Lasaloosie and Elisapee would travel to the post at Pangnirtung around Christmas time to meet and give gifts to people from surrounding camps travelling there for Christmas services. The drawing shows the detailed interior of the *igluvigaq*, with tools and other objects. Elisapee is looking after the *qulliq*, and Lasaloosie is asleep next to her. It looks like Kanayuk is about to go hunting. There are *pirraak*, *qamutiik* runners on the ground outside, Lasaloosie's temporarily abandoned project (Fisher, 2010).

These stories are not always immediately apparent from the images themselves – the specific people shown in the pictures, their relationships to each other, and to the specific place on the land, what they are doing and why all require explanation. Without the background information, to the uninformed observer, the images could be of any Inuit family, anywhere on the land. Instead, they refer to specifics of Elisapee's life experiences and family history, the relationships that her family has with other families, and their relationship to particular places on the land. But for a story to be told there needs to be a storyteller – or someone who knows what to read. And to tell the right stories, the right storyteller is needed (cf. Qitsualik, 2000). In a published excerpt from

²⁶ *Ataata*, father. *Anaana*, mother. *Uik*, husband. *Najak*, sister of a male. *Pitsiulaaq* or *pittiulaaq*, a bird, black guillemot. *Qammaq*, sod house. *Igluvigaq*, snow house. *Qamutiik*, sled, *pirraak*, *qamutiik* runners. (South Qikiqtaaluk dialect)

an interview with Dave Depper (Ottawa, February 1995) artist and leader Mattiusi Iyaituk stated,

“We don’t have a written history of our culture. Some people are starting [...] but in the beginning, when we started carving, it was to record the history of the people.” (Gruben, W., Inukpuk, C., Iyaituk, M., Kogvik, C., Suqsluk, J., Terriak, J. et al., 1996, p.4)

Mattiusi acknowledges here the connection between history, memory and art making explicitly. *Inuusirminitait* serve to bring Inuit perspective and experiences to the history of the North. Together they form a body of knowledge about history that can stand alongside the ‘official’ versions of history supported by settler colonialism.

History and memory

Reclaiming knowledge and history has a poignant resonance and particular project in the context of colonialism. This discussion requires a consideration of how knowledge traditions diverge.

Positivist Western traditions of knowledge revolve around notions of truth and objectivity, while Inuit traditions of knowledge have been described as placing less value on objectified knowledge, with Inuit knowledges and ways of knowing coming from a frame of reference that is inherently social. For the positivist epistemology that grounded Western thought in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, truth is based, “on its relation to reality. If the form of the statement and reality itself correspond to each other, the statement is true.” (Kublu, Laugrand & Oosten, 1999, p.6) Being schooled in this tradition, Western scholars historically constructed an objective version of Inuit knowledge.

Inuit traditional knowledge is always related to the present, and the context in which it is produced. State Kublu, Laugrand and Oosten, “Knowledge is produced in relation to practice [...] a balance of experience and innovation is central to the

production and transmission of knowledge” (1999, p.6). The authority of the speaker is the verification of the truth of a statement. Knowledge is carried by individuals, and people can only speak with authority from personal experience. For Elders, objectivity and generalization are not highly valued. Elders’ histories are instead very individual. As there are different traditions of knowledge, there are different ways of understanding of history and time. Inuit memory values different principles and legitimacy than western histories (Laugrand, 2002).

For Inuit, historical knowledge, and conserving and remembering traditions, only makes sense in accordance with requirements of the present. Knowledge passed down over time makes survival in the North possible. The practices of naming that are found across circumpolar Inuit are one of the ways the past is enacted into the present. Naming practices create connections across generations through the recreation of social relationships (Anawak, 1989; see also Alia, 2007; Nuttall, 1992). The namesake relationship maintains a link with the past, along with a responsibility to it. There is immense strength, respect and closeness in the relationships established by naming. Through naming, individuals are related to past holders of the name. Jack Anawak also links the namesake relation to the need to maintain an oral history. Anawak explains that,

Thus, we as Inuit are taught that all things stem from and continue to be tied to the past, and that it must continue to be respected and preserved [...]

Children quickly come to understand in my culture that time-honoured skills and attitudes can never be relegated solely to the past; that they ensure a way of life and survival in the present and for the future. (Anawak, 1989, p.46)

In Elders’ oral history accounts and storytelling, there is found often an indifference towards the order of events, and dates are regularly approximated. Cruickshank locates this as being due to the narratives prioritizing the element of social relations over chronology. Oral history or life history as a genre privileges Elders’ knowledge, and

follows along with the goal of preserving the diversity of experiences and not reducing them. This contrasts with Western history – which tries to organize things under a linear, ‘normative system’.

The past -even the remote past- enters the present, becomes part of it in stories, in myths [...] when the Inuit of today tell their stories, talk about the past and about the first occupants of the Arctic, they are also talking about themselves. (Brody, 1976, p. 186)

In light of the above discussion, Manasie’s carving, *Stories of the Inuit*, can be interpreted as speaking to the force of Inuit storytelling. As stated by Brody(1976) and Kublu, et al.(1999), Inuit traditional knowledge is always brought into the present, and there, builds towards the future. The carving can be seen as both offering stories, but it emphasizes the recording of stories. Manasie recognizes the importance of Inuit Qaujumajatuqangit, and express concern over how effectively the knowledge is being passed on.

Several well-known artists have commented about issues relating to how little knowledge younger people have which ties to the overarching concern that young people are not exposed to enough of their cultural knowledge.

Another problem [...] is that the younger generation no longer knows how we Inuit used to live. Again, I say that telling them about or writing stories of our past will help [...] I think they should be educated by us – in writing, prints and drawings.[...] I feel very strongly that we Inuit should be given more opportunity to teach printmaking and carving because it is we who know about our past and present traditions and values. (Kanangniak Pootoogook, in Mitchell & Goo-Doyle, 1992, p.31)

Kananginak notes that like written works, prints and drawings have a potential knowledge transmission. He makes a strong connection between teaching the skills of carving and printmaking and teaching “past and present traditions and values”. In the

next chapter, I will examine this interaction more closely. Zebedee Nungak observes that there are differences between the ‘knowledge-base’ of different generations of artists that gets reflected in art work. “The younger generation [not the first generation of carvers] still knew their subject matter, but omitted details, such as the name of the character, which the older generation made a point of specifically including” (Nungak, 2006, p.20). It seems like Nungak is saying that the quality of the knowledge being passed on was being lessened as the artists lives are further removed from that of their Elders. Twenty years ago, Jimmy Manning made the following comment regarding the changing look of Inuit art, “One reason is because they don’t know the legends and the stories of what happened in their parents’ days and they are trying to do things they don’t know about” (Jimmy Manning in Mitchell & Goo-Doyle 1992, p.34). However, the flipside of this situation is that younger artists are now contributing their own life experiences to the narrative.

‘Non-traditional’ or ‘post-contemporary’ Narratives

All stories are elements of collective narrative memory, but there exists a difference between stories about the past (tradition) and stories about today (colonialism, change). With the with rapid encroachment of ‘modernization’, ‘progress’ and the South, lived experiences quickly shifted from camp life to settlement life, residential schools, interactions with government and RCMP.

It didn’t make sense to me to carve scenes of traditional life because I was not there so I began to carve from my own experiences – both happy and sad ...because I am a woman who has always worked with stone, I did this sculpture of the woman carrying stone on her back. It’s really more about working with stone in general than specifically about quarrying. (Oviloo Tunnillie in Gustavison, 1999)

My brother was really into carving, Jimmy. And he was doing stuff that other people weren't really doing. Like he was doing hockey players. And yet his work was very detailed. But people adapt, like, the younger carvers I think they should try things like that, hockey players and stuff. (David Kilabuk, 2011)

Younger generations of Inuit artists sometimes depart from what some see as the conventions of Inuit art making. They are still seen as something of a minority in the Inuit art world, and are quite celebrated by current Qallunaat art appreciators, gallery owners and curators alike. For a long time, the market was not 'ready' for Inuit artists who carved "non-traditional" subject matter and life experiences²⁷. Jimmy discussed how he approaches these subjects in his work,

A good example for me, I was born when there was no TV, you had to find the radio station, if you could find it, you were lucky. That's how we used to hear about the hockey news, and Canada team, radio, a lot of static. I was 10 years old when we finally had CBC, we finally had a television set when I was 10 years old. So I've gone from no TV to iPods. So I've seen a lot of change, and I've seen the community grow from just downtown to the whole uptown and across the river. I've seen a bit of change and I can hopefully interpret that through my carvings or drawings, and try to compare what I grew up with and today, and the past. I try to mix it in. (Jimmy Kilabuk, 2011)

Increasingly Inuit artists depict contemporary life and subject matter in their work, often providing critiques of social issues including colonialism, and incorporating non-traditional materials.

Ian Mauro describes a piece Jaco was carving and their discussion about it:

²⁷ Inuit have been producing "outside the box" work for a long time. There are stories of carvings destroyed, or reserved from sale (Mitchell, 1996; Graburn, 2004)

While in Pang, we sat down with Jaco to discuss climate change, specifically focusing on a carving that he made called "global warming". The carving was mind blowing. A huge rock tablet with three hands carved into it as the base, with a massive carved walrus skull sitting on top, and various other carvings attached to the skull.

The carving represented Jaco's worldview on how global warming was going to adversely affect certain parts of the Arctic ecosystem and how people from all nations must work together to combat this problem. His rich and nuanced understanding of ecology was represented in how he carved the stone and bone. (2009, n.p.)

The kind of political critique discussed by Mauro is becoming more overt in works of Inuit art. In the earlier years of contemporary Inuit art making, works of Inuit art that reached the south were rarely understood by Qallunaat as statements about social issues. A few artists working recently are using words to underline these statements. Incised on one face of a sculpture by David Ruben is the statement:

“Bewildered”

Like many young Eskimos who went to residential schools ... this Inuk has his language, his ability to hunt caribou, seals, bears, and trapping techniques bewildered.

Confused, he ponders life lost and betrayal!

(*Bewildered*, 2008, as seen in MIA Gallery, Toronto)

Another chilling example is a tombstone shaped carving by Jutai Toonoo, on which he inscribed the phrase “here lies the Inuit way of life” followed by syllabic writing and the words “Cape Dorset” (*Letter on Stone*, 2008, as seen at Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto). An earlier (circa 1973) example of using inscription similarly is a carving by Mariano

Aupilarjuk, who inscribed in Inuktitut the phrase, “Grasp tight the old ways”. Jean Blodgett describes this as an unusual expression of social commentary, that makes “an urgent plea for the preservation of Inuit cultural heritage” (1983, pp.228-9).

The above demonstrates the diversity of contemporary themes represented in works of Inuit art. That these works are often politicized is linked to the increasing political mobilization of Inuit since the 1970s. Artists whose subjects are contemporary also emphasize the continued strength of Inuit culture and perspective through the experiences of colonialism.

Issues: Author and Authority

In a discussion with Henry Mike, he commented extensively on the importance of narrative to Inuit art making, and Inuit control over that narrative.

Story is the key. It's very important to Inuit art. And there's southerners that try to dictate what kind of Inuit art should be made. And that really takes away the story.

I think a lot of artists would have more freedom in what they're creating, in what they're carving, producing, like for prints and painting and art in general. Because there's a lot of southerners, or people who would criticize another person's art and in general I don't think that makes it very Inuit art.

For Inuit to do art they usually carve and produce art, and stories from what they heard from Elders. And southerners are coming up here, they don't know much about the culture, they don't even speak our language, and they have no idea, the lifestyles that we live up here – can have a say in what to be made. And can have a say in what are popular down south. So really, what does that, what position would you put that -- that's the question you would ask, when you talk to art collectors down south.

I was speaking earlier about artists creating carvings or sketching what they're gonna produce... I came across some people who would change another person's art ...people from the south, art dealers... they would ask people to sketch what they're gonna make, so they would have like fifty, sixty pages of sketches done, and they'll look through the artwork and just be like, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no. You should change this into that, you should change that into this." So generally it's not Inuit art if the art dealer is changing the art, or any management is changing the art. So I think it would be very beneficial for the artists to be able to produce their own idea of art.

(Henry Mike 2011, emphasis added)

The question of Qallunaat influence on the 'look' and subject of Inuit art, specifically carvings and prints, is a complicated one. For over 200 years, the way that carvings were made by Inuit has been influenced by one of the reasons they were made – for trade and for sale (see Wight, 1997; Igloliorte, 2006). The market influences the product. Qallunaat explorers, traders and missionaries, and a miscellany of other individuals who travelled to or had interest in the North wanted particular kinds of objects. The marketing of the “Other” is one element informing earlier buyers-which still has some hold. Qallunaat have certain images in their minds of what an “Eskimo” is, and want to purchase art that reinforces this idea. The Qallunaat arts advisor has been an essential figure in the development of contemporary Inuit art, and arguably many artists would not have achieved the level of success and profile in the art market without the assistance and advice of arts advisors. Even so, it is not always an easy or completely beneficial relationship.

For many Inuit artists, the reality of the geographic and cultural distance from the market has made the role of the Qallunaat intermediary quite important. Historically it was seen necessary for Qallunaat to assist Inuit in the process of marketing the art – at

least once Qallunaat had decided that they wanted to create the market for the art. The issue here is that this process took most of the decision making power away from Inuit artists.

In the 1950s when the government began to actively support art-making in the North as a measure to promote economic development, the skew of power was evident. One example of how this power relationship played out is through the existence of the Canadian Eskimo Arts Council (originally the Canadian Eskimo Art Committee), which was a group of Qallunaat art experts whose role was to advise co-ops and communities about printmaking. As noted by Virginia Watt (1993), when the first committee was organized, it was met with some indignation from other white people who saw this as interfering too much with the integrity of the art. Susan Gustavison has discussed the role that the CEAC played in defining for the market what exactly the “Eskimo” or Inuit aesthetic was. Gustavison’s description is hardly favourable, arguing that “Never before, or since, has the art production of a people been treated as an entity that could be scrutinized, directed, protected and promoted like the art of the Inuit”(1994, p.11). Due to an attitude that resisted inclusion of Inuit in the decision making process on the assumption that they wouldn't have sufficient capability or objectivity, the CEAC took complete authority over determining the quality of prints, and wouldn't allow their release if they felt the works fell short on quality or what they imagined was “a true expression of the Eskimo people” (minutes from CEAC meeting, in Gustavison, 1994, p. 15). Andrew Qappik related an experience he had when he started out, illustrating this attitude.

“First I had to submit my work to Canadian Arctic Producers, which was CAP, back then, I think they are still, not sure.

They said my work was too, style, not Inuit? Not Eskimo, not, not that style.

So they didn't approve my work. [...]

It offended me, like I'm not, I'm an Eskimo, I think. Born in outpost camp, not in a hospital, midwifery, and ... non-Inuit style, they don't want to see. So I kept going after my style. They approved it. When they approved it, they tried selling it – it was sold out in less than a month!” (Andrew Qappik, 2011)

It is not altogether clear, but I suspect that the CEAC or its legacy may have had something to do with Andrew's early experience with Canadian Arctic Producers.

Anthropologist Nelson Graburn mentions a drawing by Kavavaow Mannomee (Qavavauk Manumi) made in 1986 in commemoration of the deaths of the astronauts on the Space Shuttle Challenger, which was deemed to be “not Inuit enough” for being made into a print at the time (2005, p.60). This judgement is, from the way Graburn presents the incident, not a reflection of the artistic quality or value of the piece, but a reflection of the marketability of the subject matter. Perhaps as a reflection of (further) changing times, this particular drawing or one related in subject (different dates given suggest that they are two different drawings), entitled *NASA Graveyard* (c.1989?) was discussed in the pamphlet accompanying a recent (2008) exhibition of Kavavaow Mannomee work at Feheley Fine Arts, as what Nancy Campbell calls “first truly contemporary Inuit work” she had encountered.

Works of Inuit art are narrative. As Henry stated, “Story is the key. It's very important to Inuit art.” It's important that the story keeps its integrity, and that the artist is free to tell the story how they want to. Sometimes southerners involved in the Inuit art world, while well intentioned, have different ideas about how art should be made and what stories should be told. This often has to do with marketing. Further, many Southerners simply do not know the stories.

“I think they stereotyped it. Way too much, way too much. Because there are some artist that do different mediums, different art, and like a lot of them are stereotyped into shamanism, inuksuk's, drum dancing and animals in

general. But what they don't get into is the real stories, traditional stories that Inuit culture has. There's so many that could be done. And I think it's been stereotyped way too much, a little too much. Again, that would dictate what kind of art should be made, by southerners.” (Henry Mike, 2011)

This certainly is represented in the organization of The Northwest Company's Inuit art warehouse in Toronto. It is organized primarily by subject, with shelves of inuksuit, 'dancing' polar bears, birds, seals flank the showroom. In contrast, the Canadian Arctic Producers warehouses are organized primarily by community. Henry makes a valuable point – there is an extremely rich, and voluminous body of Inuit *unikaaqtuaq*, representations of which may not be reaching the market place – there is so much that can be drawn on, but due to market demands, some art makers become limited in what they represent due to what is able to be sold.

How can we reconcile this issue that Inuit interest in the stories and Qallunaat interest in the objects won't always match up? These are two different ways of interacting with the objects. While it is inarguable that Inuit should be able to freely express themselves, the market will not be compelled to follow. Inuit art does not need to mean the same things for Inuit and Qallunaat, but the qallunaat approach takes precedence in having an inordinate distribution of power.

Several people I spoke with expressed concern over the strength of outside influences. Some felt that if their work did not look a certain way, or was about a certain subject matter, their work would not be bought by local buyers. They felt they were being pressured to make work that did not personally represent them, that was inauthentic because it had not originated with them, and they did not connect to the idea.

The Inuit art world is seeing a shift, and “modern” or political imagery is much more marketable than it was before -- so much so that there is now some pressure to conform to this “new” qallunaat view of the “Eskimo.” Elisapee talked about how a

Qallunaat person of authority wanted her to draw images that fit into this area, for example the recent print that was made based on her drawing of tall buildings in Vancouver. I got the impression that this was not something she, herself, thought of drawing, or necessarily was interested in drawing, but that it had been suggested to her by this person and she felt rather obligated to draw it²⁸. She seemed unhappy about being pressured into a style that doesn't necessarily reflect her experience. When southerners interfere in this way, the voice of the artist is muted or silenced.

She said it [Uqqurmiut] should be run freely and without any outside influence. [...] it would make a huge difference if an Inuk was running the Uqqurmiut, it would be a much better place because that would give them the freedom to draw whatever. (Elisapee Ishulutaq, 2011)

Issues: Inuit Discourse on Inuit Art

It is not unheard of for Qallunaat researchers or Inuit art specialists to be quick to dismiss or get frustrated with what appears to be a lack of interest on the part of Inuit artists to engage in art criticism, or to even speak about their art work at all. Terry Ryan²⁹ has made some intriguing comments about artists not wanting to talk about their work, asserting that the artists do not have much to say because there is not much to say. He reports that artists sometimes feel like they should say something about their art because people ask them about it – Bagg paraphrases Ryan's view "Artists wonder 'what do they want to hear' and laugh about it later because they made something up", with Ryan stating that there exists "the pressure to come up with explanations for things" (Bagg, 2006, p.77). While this may sometimes apply, I take issue with Ryan's statements that

²⁸ Cf. discussion of Ilirasuktuq in Brody 1976; see also Kuptana, R., 1993; Tester and Irniq, 2008, pp. 52-3

²⁹ Started as arts advisor at Cape Dorset in 1960, and has worked there since.

suggest there isn't anything for Inuit to say about the contemporary work being done, that "...more often than not there isn't a lot of content involved in contemporary work..." and that "...in many cases, there really is nothing to comment on and if you ask the artist, they'll shrug their shoulders..." (Bagg, 2006, p.77). Ryan's view as represented in Bagg could be seen as being quite dismissive of Inuit voices. But it could be that he actually means Inuit art-makers aren't interested in speaking in "artspeak" to the Southern art world. Ryan's comments perhaps point to the need and the reality of reconfiguring or reclaiming the idea of the artist in the North.

Inuit have not talked much about their critical processes, nor is there any reason for them to do so, except insofar as they are drawn into our discourse. (Mitchell, 1997b, p.5)

Up to and upon my arrival to Pangnirtung, there were numerous reactions to my proposed project by knowledgeable Qallunaat to the effect of a sarcastically intonated 'good luck', and implications that I am wasting my time, because 'Inuit artists have little to say about their art work in general, and even less to say on critical matters', essentially paraphrasing the quote below from Mitchell, which is already dated by almost 15 years. This attitude only serves to silence Inuit artists, removing the chance to speak before it is even presented.

[...] the Inuit message is rarely heeded. How many times have I heard Inuit artists dismissed as having nothing of interest to say because "all they want to talk about is their tools and materials." Inuit artists focus on *artmaking*, the process, not the theory or the object. *We are* getting commentary from them, but it is being expressed in their categories of thought, not ours (Mitchell, 1997b, p.6).

The position that process takes priority over product reflects Ginsberg's articulation of evaluation of art making within the context of Australian Indigenous media. Ginsberg argues that Australian Indigenous media artists conceptualize the value of creative work

through“ the activities of [...] production and circulation”, the social processes involved in the making and dissemination of their works (p.369). As already demonstrated in this thesis, Inuit artists have plenty to say regarding their work both about the process of art making but also about the meaning of the product. Treating story as a departure point for a discussion of Inuit art seems to encompass at least one facet of Inuit approaches to art making.

For me, the story or idea behind my sculpture is more important than the technique. That’s what I want people to see when they look at my work. The story is more serious to me than actually making the piece.” (Oviloo Tunnillie, in Gustavison, 1999)

If story is the key, where does an interpretation grounded in story begin?

The problem with the way in which traditional stories have been recorded in print [by academics, Qallunaat] stems from the fact that cultural specifics have not been provided. The telling is often too basic, as though the story were nothing more than a series of events [...].

Yet a story lacking cultural references neither entertains, nor serves as a basis for accurate study. It is the lack of explanation regarding the way in which Inuit think — and therefore live now or in the past — that can destroy a story, and with it the cultural treasures it carries and conceals. (Qitsualik, 2000, n.p.)

Elders have expressed concern with their ability to tell *unikkaaqtuat* well, or in the right way. States Martin, “*Unikkaaqtuat*, then, seem to be stories in which the way something is told is almost as important as what is told” (2009, p.195). The emphasis on the way of telling is reminiscent of the emphasis on form and process that carvers speak about (cf. Graburn, 1987, p.61) Given this distinction, how does this apply to how one speaks about works of art in terms of Inuit knowledge? For Martin, the different forms of stories contained within oral histories provide significant critical context within the field

of Inuit literary studies, making important statements about form and content (cf. Kublu, Laugrand & Oosten, 1999, p. 5).

An emphasis on truth or truth-telling is one way Inuit think about art making. In the 1970s, anthropologist Nelson Graburn was one of the first academics to argue for the importance of the *sulijuk* concept in the way Inuit approach and evaluate art (1976, p.52; cf. Trott, 1982). Graburn defines *sulijuk* simply as meaning “it is real or true”. To confuse the matter, *sulijuk* has also been defined as “an Inuit concept for reality beyond what can be seen” (Thompson & Ratzlaff, 2005, p.14). The root, *suli-* means “to speak truthfully; to tell the truth”— and *-juq* indicates to “one who/something that does the action”. The term seems to have become generally accepted without critique as an appropriate term to talk about “realism” in Inuit art. Chris Trott’s explanation of the term *sulitsiartuq* seems to have more value – the idea that the carving has a truth (*suli-*) value, or, effectively tells the truth, (“-tsiaq” to do something well, in a good manner)(1982, p.347).

...when you grew up in Inuktitut it's very hard to think in Qallunaat. If I'm talking to you and I barely spoke English, we wouldn't understand each other the way we should. It's like, facial expressions, southern and northern, are different. (Jimmy Kilabuk, 2011)

Jimmy's statement refers to the fact that southerners interested in Inuit art come from different epistemological and ontological spaces, differences which can lead to misunderstandings. The concept of *sulijuk* can be treated as a mini case-study exploring issues around translation, interpretation and communication. Even when employing an Inuit perspective, the message can quickly be framed from a Western viewpoint. This is seen in Hessel’s statement, “Nelson Graburn chose the Inuktitut term *sulijuk* (“it is true or real”) for identifying realism as the overriding aesthetic approach among Inuit artists”, a demonstration of how swiftly the presentation of an Inuit concept can turn into an

appropriation of that concept (1998, p.77). In the Western art academy “realism” fits into a historical trajectory of Western art-making, and is assigned a particular value. As is well established, language and culture are linked; it may be a mistake to equate the Inuktitut concept of *sulijuk* to the Southern concept of “realism”.

There are different ways of looking at "realism". Inuit understanding of the composition of the universe and beings who inhabit it that do not necessarily match up with Qallunaat visions of what exists in the world, and how we should approach understanding it. Inuit and Qallunaat traditions of knowledge are entirely unique from each other. Inuit perspectives on what constitutes reality and how it is thought about – what is real and true – have to be considered when examining Inuit art practice. Art that expresses Inuit realities which depart from Southern conceptions of what is or can be “real” can also become an instance of Inuit resistance to western notions of "realism" and "reality" (cf. McLeod, 2007; Trott, 1982).

What does it mean for something to be real or true, if it does not necessarily correspond with Southern ideas of realism as showing something that is real, and what Qallunaat call it when real things are represented? For Inuit, depictions of things that would probably be called surrealism, “mythological” or “fantastic” beings can be as real as polar bears and harpoons – some people have even encountered them in life. (cf. Bennett & Rowley, 2004, pp.150-159). Swinton (1977, p.23), writing about such carvings from Povungnituk, stated that these carvings, whether deriving from *unikkaqtuaq* or *isumaminitait*, are *sulijuk* – “accurate representations of dreams, fears, and well-known spirit configurations”. Swinton and Trott also have both linked the concept of *sulijuk* in art making strongly with communication. Swinton states firmly, “art as reality, art as truth, and art as effective communication” (1977, p.8). It’s important to remember the character of Inuit the Inuit knowledge tradition. Truth follows from

authority of Elders, not whether a statement conforms to a supposed uniform “reality”.
(Laugrand, 2002, p.109)

Trott links a broader Inuit approach to engagement with economy (that may seem ‘irrational’ to Qallunaat), arguing that representing Inuit history and knowledge is a specific resistance to Southern totalization,

The Inuit seek to use the hegemonic capitalist economic relations to sustain activities bear little relation to the motivating forces in capitalism. This ideology and rationality are presented in the carvings. The ‘realism’ of the Arctic Bay carvers is not realism at all, but the expression of a particular ideological structure of relations. This contains a dual ideology of a past and present and what these should look like, with the Inuit engaged in a hunting way of life. It is a refusal to accept incorporation into mainstream capitalism without first maintaining their own integrity (Trott, 1982, p.356).

As a vehicle for Inuit voices, Inuit art expresses Inuit truths, and sulijuk become a strong voicing of Inuit experience within the colonial context. This action belongs to narrative memory. Neal McLeod argues that “Storytelling is a subversive act that causes people to question the society around them. Storytellers hold the core of a counter memory, and offer another political possibility” (2007, p.97). Both McLeod and Trott insist on the power of narrative imagination to shore up indigenous individuals and communities to engage with colonialism on their own terms, with solid foundations.

Sulitsiartuq has been highlighted as a serious consideration for Inuit artists. In a conversation with Marybelle Mitchell and Peter Murdoch, in Puvirnituq in 1985, Tamusi Tulugak, then general manager of Puvirnituq co-op, mentioned three words used to describe a good carving: *inismatsiatuk*, ‘everything in its perfect place’; *takuminuktut*, ‘that which wants to be looked at’; and *suligasuatuk*, ‘striving for truth’ (Mitchell, 1997b, pp.7-8). Again, the notion of truth-telling emerges as a key feature in Inuit art that is well

made. The term *uqattiartuq* has the dual meaning of “he speaks well, correctly, fluently” as well as “he speaks truthfully (does not lie or equivocate)” (Spalding, 1996). Truth is linked to the way something is done as well as its content.

The way truth-telling is understood when applied to *unikkaaqtuat* and to carving parallels the way or craft art making (cf. Auger, 2005, p.108). In an essay included in the catalogue for Winnipeg Art Gallery exhibition Port Harrison/Inoucdjiouac, Paulosie Kasudluak states:

It is not only to make money that we carve. Nor do we carve make-believe things. What we show in our carvings is the life we have lived in the past right up to today. We show the truth. We carve the animals because they are important to us as food. We carve Inuit figures because in that way we can show ourselves to the world as we were in the past and as we now are. That is why we carve men hunting and building igloos and women making something that they will use, maybe kamiks or clothing or using an ulu. No matter what activity the carved figure is engaged in, something about it will be true. That is because we carve to show what we have done as people. There is nothing marvellous about it. It is there for everyone to see. It is just the truth. It is the same with the work which the women do with their hands. We do not reveal ourselves only in stone. The work of the women shows the type of clothing which we as people had. That, too, contributes to the truth. (Kasudluak, 1977, p.21)

In this statement, Paulosie Kasudluak explicitly breaks down the relationship between truth and carving. At the centre of this relationship is showing. In making carvings which involve showing *unikkaat* and *inuusirminitait*, stories, and life experiences perspectives on history, the truth is also shown. Thus, truth-telling, *suligasuatuk* is a key element in Inuit art making. What is being shown, *unikkaat*, *unikkaatuaq*, *inuusirminitait*, and *isumaminitait*, are expressions of Inuit voices, and contribute to cultural resilience and

decolonization by this showing. Alfred Gell's theory of art, discussed by Graburn within the context of Inuit art, argues that art objects do something: they have agency. Gell argues that the way art objects work is that the maker of the object has a variety of intentions that are extended and acted upon through the object, and indirectly cause the intentions to be perceived by the audience (Graburn, 2005, p. 48). Within this framework, narrative could be considered an important aspect of the art work as agent, in addition to the intention that the object be bought, and that it is aesthetically appreciated by one's peers.

'Story is the key' – all kinds of *unikkaat* are represented in Inuit art, from stories relating to Inuit Qaujimaqatugangit and oral history, to considerations of the impact of colonialism, to dreams and the spirit world, imagined worlds and beyond. These diverse narratives are expressions of experiences and communicate different areas of Inuit knowledge. It is important that Inuit perspectives on art making, as well as the narratives represented in art are respected. Placing story at the centre of a discussion of Inuit art making leads to a consideration of what these stories accomplish. In the following chapter, I argue that Inuit art making as knowledge production serves to support processes of cultural resilience in the North.

CHAPTER IV

Staying Power: Narrative Memory, Art Making and Resilience

The previous chapter explored the role and importance of *unikkaat*, *unikkaaqtuat* and Inuit knowledge more generally have within Inuit art making. The relationship between *unikkaat/unikkaaqtuat* and Inuit art was considered as being one of knowledge production and transmission. This chapter further develops these themes, looking more closely at what the significance of this relationship is. Through re-enactment of the past through art, through the embodiment or materialization of knowledge, Inuit cultural resilience is reinforced. The term cultural resilience can refer to the characteristic of communities that work towards the preservation and rehabilitation of cultural heritage. Alternatively, the term ‘cultural continuity’ has been used to refer to the same process (Lalonde, in Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). For the purpose of this thesis, cultural resilience refers to the continuity of Inuit culture through the challenges presented by colonialism.

Yeah, staying power [...]because I mean, when I first started seeing carvings I was thinking that it's only done for white people, I mean that's what I thought. But then when I saw some of the pictures of carvings done from, I don't know when it was, they found carvings from [...] before white man came up here. And I realized that it's part of our culture. (David Kilabuk, 2011)

David Kilabuk’s statement clearly states that the *practice* of carving is “part of our culture”, and has meaning within Inuit culture with significance outside of cultural commodification and the North-to-South market³⁰ (cf. Graburn, 2005, p.49). Making reference to carvings made by the ancestors of Inuit acknowledges the place carving has

³⁰ The influence of the market on Inuit art is a discussed and debated question , specific issues include authenticity, artistic value, art as commodity and commodification of culture (cf. Nelson Graburn, 2004, 2005; Shannon Bagg 1997a, 1997b, 2006; Mitchell)

had for Inuit over millennia. The continuity of this skill and its evolution in practice demonstrates one of the ways Inuit art making is involved with ‘staying power’, or cultural resilience³¹.

David Kilabuk notes that carving is a part of Inuit culture. In fact, carving has been considered to be *Inummaritut*³². The concepts of *Inummariit/ Inummaritut* are directly related to Inuit understandings of tradition, and the contemporary usage of these terms/concepts indicates the “strong consciousness of tradition” of Inuit (Brody, 1975, p.126). As noted in Chapter Two, carving and making other art objects started to have economic relevance for Inuit around the early 1800s (Brody, 1975, p.133). Regarding the soapstone sculpture industry, Brody comments,

That commercialization that got underway in the 1950s when soapstone...was urged on the Eskimos as a medium for artwork that might have great value in southern markets. Some of the motifs of these soapstone carvings are distinctly Eskimo but their size and many of their forms have been conditioned by the marketplace if not by the somewhat idiosyncratic artistic sensibilities of one or two of the scheme’s pioneers. Eskimo carving, as it is now internationally known, is a consequence of southern domination of Eskimo life. Nevertheless, it is, like fox trapping, held to be among the *Inummariit* traditional skills. The *Inummarik* is said to have carved soapstone and trapped, and to have done both for trade.”

(Brody, 1975, p.132)

³¹ “Cultural resilience” is generally used to talk about how communities or cultural systems act “as a resource for resilience in the individual”. The concept of resilience is commonly expressed as “the capacity to spring back from adversity and have a good life outcome despite emotional, mental or physical distress” (Stout and Kipling, p. iii–iv). Stout and Kipling note that from the 1970’s on there has been active interest in the subject. Research around the concept of resilience has its roots in the discipline of psychology and was originally applied on an individual level.

³² *Inummarik* means ‘a genuine Inuk’, ‘a real person’ (from Inuk and “marik”, 'real'); pl. *Inummariit* (“the real Inuit”); *Inummarittitut* means “in the manner of a real Inuk”. Brody stated that, “Some people are said to eat, work, talk, or even to walk *inummarittitut*” (1975, p.125)

Brody's apt observations of the way Inuit conceptualize tradition and characteristics of being *Inummarit* or "a real Inuk" demonstrate how contact and colonization has consistently been resisted or undermined through Inuit resilience and adaptation. The economy of camp life from the 1920's onward consisted of a mixture of subsistence and trade, and Brody states that Inuit in the 1970s "**regard[ed] that blend as the essence of *Inummarik* life** and it is a combination of activities that many people in the settlements still pursue" (1975, pp.131-2, emphasis added). Fox trapping and soapstone carving, practices not undertaken until the arrival of Qallunaat, are seen as an element of living on the land, the 'true' Inuit way. This understanding raises the issues of cultural fluidity, continuity and resistance to colonialism, and creates an opening for a consideration of decolonization and what this means for Inuit.

The concept of cultural resilience concerns the dynamic, adapting character of culture, and reflects a position asserted in Indigenous oral traditions. Southern perceptions of Indigenous cultures have typically been limited to a stereotyped, archaic image defined by misapprehensions of traditional cultures as past, old, and static (Francis, 1992; Fienup-Riordan, 1990). As outlined in the previous chapter, Indigenous traditional knowledge is not set, or static, but is rooted in practice and always connected to the present (Laugrand, 1999, p.7; McLeod, 2007, pp.95-6). There is a strong link with the past, but at the same time, cultures are always adapting. Acknowledgment of processes of cultural continuity or resilience accepts this fluid aspect of traditional knowledge and culture.

The discussion of Inuit art making, resilience and decolonization has recently gained some attention. Nunatsiavumiutaq scholar Heather Igloliorte wrote an essay for the exhibition catalogue *Inuit Modern* discussing the idea of cultural resilience, decolonization and Inuit art making, drawing from Madeleine Dion Stout and Gregory Kipling's (2003) discussion of the concept of resilience in relation to residential school

experiences (2010, see also Igloliorte, 2009; Badger, 2012). For Igloliorte, the concept of resilience is “in line with the Inuit worldview as communal and based on the well-being of the collective” (2010, p.45). In McLeod’s discussion of narrative memory and mamâhtâwisiwin, he argues that Indigenous oral traditions have an important place in resisting the totalizing force of Southern thinking (McLeod, 2007, p.97). In this way, Indigenous knowledge in collective memory plays a part in the dynamic process of cultural resilience. As Laugrand states, Inuit elders consistently emphasize the importance of maintaining and passing on traditions for the wellbeing of future generations (Laugrand, 1999, p.6; see also Stevenson, 2006). Jaypetee Arnakak explains how Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is not exclusively ‘traditional’ knowledge – it is a “living technology”:

To many people, the "traditional knowledge" aspect of IQ is often the only side that is seen, but that describes only one half of it. IQ, (as we envisioned it at DSD [Department of Sustainable Development]) is really about "healthy, sustainable communities" regaining their rights to a say in the governance of their lives using principles and values they regard as integral to who and what they are.[...]

IQ is a living technology. It is a means of rationalizing thought and action, a means of organizing tasks and resources, a means of organizing family and society into coherent wholes. (Arnakak, 2000, n.p.).

The concept of IQ is a good example of how Inuit are both participating in modern politics (the state game) as well as cultural resilience (see Laugrand, 2002, p.111).

Engaging with Inuit knowledge, with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, is political. Linda Tuhiwai Smith has argued that, “Coming to know the past has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization. To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges” (Smith, 1999, p.36). Presenting history and Indigenous knowledge through art can be considered a political act, which can work toward decolonization through the

incorporation of oral traditions and life histories. Parallel to art objects, Zacharias Kunuk and Isuma Productions tie Inuit filmmaking to storytelling and resilience. Kunuk (2010) sees filmmaking as being the key vehicle for traditional knowledge production and strengthening Inuit communities and culture. Keavy Martin similarly positions Inuit literature in this role.

Beyond the creation of a collective memory, the act of remembering and of telling stories about the past might itself be thought of as a deeply political act [...] In this context, oral histories become acts of resistance, or of healing. [...] Furthermore, the implicit recognition of Elders as scholars of an intellectual tradition marks an important step in the dismantling of cultural hierarchies. (Martin, 2009, p.189)

Both Kunuk and Martin argue for film and literature, respectively, as modes of expression contributing to the process of cultural resilience and decolonization through knowledge production. Art, film and literature that engage with Inuit Qaujimaqatunqangit, oral tradition and histories work towards the ‘staying power’ of Inuit culture. Fleming and Ledogar (2008, p.7, 23) compiled an extensive list of “protective factors”, resources available to an individual that support the process of resilience, with three levels, individual, family and community/culture. At the community level, they outline cultural resources, all of which specifically relate to tradition: traditional activities, traditional languages, traditional spirituality and traditional healing. Although this chapter focuses on the way resilience and art making work in terms of cultural resources, the way art making works on the individual level was also addressed by art makers in Pangnirtung:

The artist – that person is free to carve what he feels, makes that person happy [...] One person can learn a lot about themselves when they carve freely. (Norman Komoartuk, 2011)

And you do a lot of soul-searching. You look for inspiration in all kinds of things. You start to see things people don't see. You start to see colours you never saw. You start to appreciate little plants out there, and look at them closer. You look at little birds and be amazed how a little egg in the north can fly all the way down south and keep doing that each year. And you start to respect the land a little more, because you are doing a lot of soul-searching I guess. And you learn a lot of, I don't know what the right word is, but you learn how to deal with things a lot more calmly, like emergencies or whatever. You're much more calm, you don't freak out when everybody else panics and stuff. I found that it has really helped me, stay calm, over the years, after losing parents and sisters and suicide, there's been like almost fifty suicides here now, and death is a part of life here, pass by the graveyard every day, constantly reminded. Our airstrip's in the middle. No privacy. Dust. And we put up with it. We don't say, stop the planes from coming, move the graveyard. We deal with it, we accept things. That's how Inuit are basically, they adapt a lot more easily for some reason, they adapt to change.

(Jimmy Kilabuk, 2011)

Jimmy talks about how art making has helped him work through difficult, adverse experiences, connecting art making with individual resilience, and Inuit cultural values. Norman made his comments above in response to a question about the idea of Inuit art showing contemporary life as well as the old ways, where he noted that “he’s comfortable with it”. The statement about the importance of the agency to carve freely links art-making with self-expression or community expression, and also speaks quite strongly to the Inuit idea of knowledge coming from practice and experience. In discussion with Pauloosie Nauyuk, he also spoke about how he is happier when he is carving, and that he always finds himself going back to carving. Jimmy and Pauloosie

both emphasize art making as beneficial to an individual as they move through life. Art making is something that causes a person to feel good, on an individual level. Self-esteem, or positive self-image, is a generally agreed upon resource or “protective factor” for resilience (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008, p.23).

Inuit take pride in their ability to both personally and collectively adapt to changing circumstances (cf. Freeman, 1994; Ace & Papatsie, 1997, p.4; Wenzel, 1999, p.114.). Features of resilience and tenacity are represented and respected in Inuit values, with individual and group success and survival tied to a person’s “capacity for self-reliance and their ability to meet life’s challenges with innovation, resourcefulness and perseverance” (Pauktuutit, 2006, p.32). One of the eight guiding principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit set out by the Government of Nunavut is *qanuqtuurniq*, translated as meaning “being innovative and resourceful in seeking solutions”³³. States Jaypetee Arnakak, “There is no single defining factor of being Inuit, but this comes close. Inuit culture is qanuqtuurniq” (2000, n.p.). These descriptions of Inuit values correspond closely to the idea of resilience on an individual and community and cultural level.

The works of art engage in cultural resilience through re-enactment, bringing the old ways and the new ways of life together as a continuance, thus enacting a staying power. Inuit art serves as an historical record - of people’s life histories, of important community events — art which has arisen from experience. That Inuit artistic expression tends to draw from “the old ways” for inspiration was confirmed in most of the conversations I had in Pangnirtung. There is a sense that through art making, through depicting scenes and imagery of the past, the knowledge of this lifestyle, of the *Inuit nunangat*, is being passed on both to younger generations of Inuit and also to the world in general. One can look at art making as an expression of voice in practice – through the

³³ Qanuqtuurniq also translated as “exploring or discussing ideas” (Simailak in Tester and Irniq 2008, p.50)

physical and intellectual acts of art making, Inuit culture is strengthened. McMaster and Martin write that, “The works of Nick Sikkuark and Lucy Tasseor attest to the cultural tenacity and celebration of life on the land for Inuit” (p. 20, 1992). Tenacity, staying power, resilience, all refer to this same process. Ironic in a sense, as the Canadian government pushed for carving as economic development in an age where the consensus was still that Indigenous cultures were slowly dying and assimilation, settlement and modernization were the only foreseeable future.

Art, History and Stories

It would make a lot more sense to show that kind of culture because the young generation would also learn from it. Feeding young brains through the art like that could encourage them to ask questions of the lifestyle they had, and of the culture. [...] It is important to draw cultural ways and lifestyles because it will give a similar knowledge as oral history. (Elisapee Ishulutaq, 2011)

Elisapee states that Inuit art has particular value for the production and transmission of Inuit knowledge. Inuit art can be a visual version of oral history. Works of Inuit art communicate knowledge about traditional values, and practices. For Elisapee, this element of Inuit art is very important. Inuit art that shows traditional culture, as opposed to modern culture, is very valuable. It is valuable because it can be a teaching tool to reach younger people who have not had the opportunity to gain knowledge from their elders. As Elisapee remarks, Inuit art making also has the potential to encourage a dialogue between youth and elders. Looking at works of Inuit art as a form of ‘visual’ oral history, places artists in the role of storyteller.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the great value placed on the past and its incorporation into the present in Inuit culture is something that children soon come to

recognize (Anawak, 1989). This incorporation is an essential process – and it is directly tied to the concept of cultural resilience. The presence of this value, along with established social and cultural systems such as naming promotes cultural continuity and enables individual survival.

Art historian Ingo Hessel considers the “role of visual artist as storyteller and keeper of history and beliefs” as something that is a part of Inuit culture now, one that can be considered alongside of things like the role of elders or gender divisions in society (Hessell, 2012, p.18). Heather Igloliorte has written forcefully about this role,

Our ancestors – shamans, hunters, storytellers – were the keepers of collective social memory; now our artists share that responsibility for preserving *Inuit Qaujimagajatuqangit* in their works, by asserting themselves as the true authorities on Inuit culture and confronting the legacies of colonial influence and the more recent mediation of Inuit identity by both the media and the art markets.

(Igloliorte, 2010, p.44)

An important characteristic of this role, as keepers of knowledge and storytellers, is that of *responsibility*. The Inuit artist has gained a responsibility, as Igloliorte notes, to maintain and pass on knowledge appropriately and respectfully. With art’s relationship to oral tradition, this role gains an added ethical dimension with the responsibility of telling a narrative and in the interpretation of that narrative.

Inuit filmmaking, such as work by Zacharias Kunuk and Isuma Productions, has been referred to as “an extension of oral tradition” (Mitchell, 2006, p.15). Zacharias Kunuk describes his work and the development of Isuma:

When I began to see myself as an aboriginal person and a filmmaker I learnt there are different ways to tell the same story. [...]

In the 1970's Igloolik voted twice against TV from the south since there was nothing in Inuktitut, nothing in it for us. But I noticed when my father and his

friends came back from hunting they would always sit down with tea and tell the story of their hunt. And I thought it would be great to film hunting trips so you wouldn't have to tell it, just show it. In 1981 I sold some carvings and bought a video camera. When I watched my videos I noticed kids gathered outside my window looking in to see the TV. That was how special it was at the beginning. [...]

Can Inuit bring storytelling into the new millennium? Can we listen to our elders before they all pass away? Can we save our youth from killing themselves at ten times the national rate? Can producing community TV in Igloolik make our community, region and country stronger? Is there room in Canadian filmmaking for our way of seeing ourselves?

To try to answer these questions we want to show how our ancestors survived by the strength of their community and their wits, and how new ways of storytelling today can help our community survive another thousand years.[...] Young and old work together to keep our ancestors' knowledge alive. (Kunuk, 2010, n.p.)

Kunuk's words are a very strong statement of the power of creative expression as supporting cultural resilience. Kunuk and Isuma Productions' work is involved in knowledge production and the endurance of Inuit narrative memory just as the work of many carvers, graphic artists, printmakers, seamstresses and craftspeople is also engaged in narrative endeavours.

As demonstrated in this thesis, Inuit artists express at different times that they hope their work engages in knowledge production and transmission, that people from outside their culture can learn from it, and that the young people can learn from it. The underlying statement is that the art says something about their culture, that it has the capacity to teach something, that it contains their particular knowledge. What significance does this have to an interpretive approach to Inuit art? An interpretation of

Inuit art that works towards cultural resilience respects Inuit traditions of knowledge production, establishes Inuit as authorities on their culture and themselves, and recognizes Inuit art as a form of knowledge and narrative.

Elisapee's discussion of works of Inuit art and artists as knowledge keepers and storytellers moves the discussion into a consideration of histories and the process of decolonization. There is not just one history, as argued by the Western system of knowledge upon which colonization depends, but many alternate ones. Indigenous words and things were seized by colonizers while they simultaneously attacked Indigenous ways of life on ideological and socio-economic fronts and defined a master historical narrative. Colonial discourses strove to both control and define Indigenous peoples as 'others' by the eradication and appropriation of Indigenous objects and their meanings (Phillips and Steiner, 1999; Racette, 2011). Due to this history, engaging in reclamation is a significant step toward decolonization. As Sherry Farrell Racette writes, "representing or recreating the lost or remembered object can be a powerful and evocative tool for a contemporary artist [...] storied objects can reclaim history". Remembering through art making, reincarnating and retelling stories and histories is in this way, part of the process of cultural resilience³⁴.

The idea that Inuit artists transmit cultural knowledge through their art is not a new theme in literature on Inuit art, nor is the relevance of traditional stories to contemporary life³⁵. Inuit artists are conscious of this process, and some have expressed a clear vision of how this is accomplished through art making. Simon Shaimaiyuk, from Pangnirtung, in speaking with July Papatsie, explains why he chose to inscribe on his drawings,

³⁵ Selesky (1996) observed that when considering myths and legends in Inuit art, Qallunaat critics tended to reduce the content to preserving a memory of a past that is gone, rather than focusing on continued importance.

I thought in my mind about the fact that Inuit refer to their seal hunting equipment as ammunition. They say *sakuka* [my ammunition] referring to the harpoon, harpoon head, harpoon line and sealskin float which are the source of survival to all Inuit. Just like a rifle today. But back then the harpoon was their primary hunting tool that they could only throw by hand to catch animals, for they did not have any rifles to hunt with. That is why I started writing inscriptions on my drawings, to show how we worked just to survive. All the way from childhood, one worked very hard with all of one's strength and endurance with a strong will to live a happy life. Just like the hunter has is *sakuk* to be more successful, I have my inscriptions so that people will understand what I witnessed of the good life that has passed. Most importantly, I want my drawings to be understood for their historical value (Shaimaiyuk in Papatsie, 1997, p.22).

Similarly, in the pamphlet accompanying a solo exhibition of work by Manasie Akpaliapik³⁶, Darlene Wight describes how Manasie expresses concern with addressing contemporary social problems through traditional stories. Wight states that for Manasie, there are “essential and enduring truths” in traditional Inuit songs and stories, and the artist’s role is to pass these on for the next generation (1990, n.p.).

Graburn (2005) recently made an argument that seems to both complement and contradict the role of narrative and intentions of the artist in regards to the content of art work. Graburn argues that Inuit artists have a dual intention in art making, the first has to do with local audiences, who will consider “physical strength, skill, and cleverness of the maker” in assessing a work of art. The second intention has to do with the external audience, the chosen content of an art work – traditional themes are “intended to seduce the white, the *qallunak* buyer” (Graburn, 2005, p.57). Graburn aligns *practice*, the

³⁶ Manasie Akpaliapik is from Arctic Bay, and moved down south in the 1980s to Montreal and later Toronto.

process and techniques associated with art making, as having importance for Inuit, while suggesting the content is not intended for Inuit but for Qallunaat³⁷. He is correct in highlighting practice as a fundamental part of Inuit thinking about art making. Where Graburn's argument differs from the one being made here is with his views on the subject content of art works. While it is true that artists have the market in mind when creating works, it can be argued that this concern does not eclipse the possibility of another role, namely, history and memory.

I try and make prints so that people will know about them, and so that the next generations – my grandchildren, my children, and people – would know of who I was and what I have gone through. Also, people will know my prints even when I have passed away. (Elisapee Ishulutaq in Inuit Art Foundation (IAF), 2009, n.p.)

As Elisapee Ishulutaq, Simon Shamaiyuk, Manasie Akpalialuk, Paulosie Kasudluak and others have described, the content of Inuit art works, *unikkaat*, *unikkaatuaq*, *inuusirminitait*, and *isumaminitait*, are not chosen only out of consideration of the market. There is a documentary element, and another intention – to communicate and show Inuit culture in its past and present shapes. The market may well be “seduced” by images of arctic life for reasons that have more to do with Western views of otherness and ideas of North but they are also audience to the narratives shared in the art works. Inuit themselves are also an important audience for Inuit art (while not traditionally influential in the buying market), and are an audience who will read the works in a different way, with different reference points. Inuit aesthetic evaluation of art hinges on particular values that may not always match the Western aesthetic approach (Graburn

³⁷ Mitchell (1997b) stresses that Inuit artists tend to place their attention on the practical aspects of artmaking, such as techniques and materials.

1976, 2005; Mitchell, 1997b). Inuit evaluation and engagement with narratives in art works will reflect this ontological and epistemological starting point.

Memory and Responsibility

There is a great deal of anxiety on the part of Inuit around the fragility of their culture, as Lisa Stevenson (2006) discusses in “The Ethical Injunction to Remember” (cf. Brody, 1975, p.126; Laugrand, 2002). She states that as Inuit began to collectively think about themselves as a people, nation-like, there was the almost simultaneous consolidation of thought towards the idea that as a people, they are threatened with disappearing. “Over and over again young Inuit are urged by their elders to remember their language, their values and their traditional ways of life. The alternative is unthinkable – they are threatened with their own disappearance, even extinction” (L. Stevenson, 2006, pp.168-9). Stevenson describes that the remembering involves both personal histories and memories and also to a less concrete form of the “spirit” or mythology of Inuit life, a kind of “cultural memory”. Outspoken artist and writer Alooook Ipellie offered his perspective on the responsibility to remember:

It is the descendants of the First Peoples of the Arctic who have the ultimate responsibility to dig through materials that have been recovered from their long-lost forebears' stories, legends and mythologies. This should happen thus, to ensure today's living generations are left with "reincarnated cultural treasures" that will serve to enlighten today's Inuit youth. A modern Inuit population without a connection to their past do not possess the stories and histories that make them the people they once were, especially in the face of rapid societal changes happening amidst them.

It is Inuit-owned-and-run publishing and film companies, such as Isuma Publishing and Igloolik Isuma, that have to take the Umimmaq by the horns and run with it. [...] It is through the dissemination of such works of art to retell what has gone before us that will help recover our Inuit cultural amnesia and effaced memory of our once-virgin past. We can then ask how did this all begin to happen, what were the root causes of the changes that took place among our people, and what has been the resulting "new face" we Inuit possess in modern times? (Ipellie in Robinson, 2008)

The anxiety about losing a collective and individual identity as Inuit is tangible. My informal interactions with youth in Pagnirtung showed a high level of conscious self-identification as Inuit. Many times over young people would express the feeling to me that they are most definitely Inuk. These statements were often made in discussions about the strange or funny things that Qallunaat do. Their identity as Inuk often centred on traditional activities, and is practice and land-based, but not exclusively. They are Inuk because they do Inuit things, have Inuit experiences, and speak Inuktitut, the definitions of which are ever-evolving. There are a number of inspiring independent youth-based initiatives which support this – including the joyful viral video “Feel the Inukness” by Becky Qilavvak, the often hilarious news meets sketch comedy videos of 280Productions and the 2007 rap song “Don't Call Me Eskimo” by Arctic Bay group Northerners With Attitude, to mention only a few³⁸. The ability of Inuit youth to appropriate current media trends and adapt them to tell their own stories is an example of engagement with the process of cultural resilience.

Janet Berlo argues that for Inuit, art works hold a relationship with the past by showing elements of Inuit culture. Berlo states, “To *draw* harpoons, kayaks, and Inuit

³⁸ “Feel the Inukness”, <http://youtu.be/iawDXQGQsr0> ; 280Productions <http://www.youtube.com/user/280Productions> Northerners With Attitude <http://youtu.be/tS8RZcKQwBA>

syllabics is to be Inuit, whereas the in the past to *use* these things provided a unique cultural identity” (1990, p. 137). Berlo makes a good point, although perhaps too reductive in dismissing the value of use and practice by suggesting that performing Inuit culture through practice is a thing of the “past” and that drawing images of the past is the only “present.” “*Use,*” as in performance, practicing, speaking and acting, retains an equal if not greater importance than showing, depicting knowledge and action in art work (cultural schools, hunting, sewing, eating, relating, speaking Inuktitut---cf. Kulchyski, 2005). In point, the act of art making itself could also be considered as such. If art is representing oral tradition, IQ, and this knowledge essentially is produced and promoted out of practice and experience, art making is strongly tied to active ‘cultural practice’.

Sometimes she teach sewing [...] some of the students who are younger generation, and are able to teach others and to show how it's done. And as you might have seen in the community that the younger people, females who may be wearing amautiks maybe they make themselves and are sharing to how to make clothing for themselves, and they are starting to wear them. [...] It's a very useful thing because it's a thing that can continue being used. And before they are taught, cause when they're going to school they're not taught how to sew, [...] traditional way of sewing, kamiks and whatnot, and now they're being taught, know how it is.” (Mary Battie, 2011)

The example given by Pangnirtung elder and expert seamstress Mary Battie describes one of the ways cultural resilience is enacted in Inuit communities like Pangnirtung. In the old days, sewing was an essential responsibility for women (Billson & Mancini, 2007, 35-37), and women spent much of their time sewing. Today, with the availability of store-bought clothing, sewing is not being taken up as in the past. Nancy Kisa, also from Pangnirtung, states in an essay on Inuit sewing based on interviews with elders:

Right now, our generation doesn't really know how to sew seal and caribou skin. There may be a minority who know how to sew, but there aren't that many who do. We are focusing more on education and working than on sewing. In those days, women sewed all day. I always wanted to learn how to sew seal or caribou skin, but I have been working or in school. I knew a little bit about sewing, but not about sewing seal or caribou skins. I used to enjoy sewing, but education and work are more important to me. Whenever I get a chance I would love to do more sewing. (Kisa in Billson & Mancini, 2007, p.144)

Kisa's evaluation matches the feelings of some of the young women I met while I was in Pangnirtung. A number of young women were actively seeking to learn skin sewing techniques from their elders or through programs at Arctic College. One friend proudly posted photographs of her *kamiit*-making progress on Facebook. There are also a visible number of women who continue to sew outer garments both Inuit and Qallunaat style, *japaq*, *qulittaujaq*, *amauti*³⁹.

Taking steps to gain experience in culture, through traditional activities is an element of what Lisa Stevenson calls 'ethical memory', which is more than exposing youth to elders' stories. Initiatives in this direction include the spring camp out on the land attended by all Pangnirtung school children from grades one to twelve, and the new Piquusilirivvik Inuit Cultural Learning Facility. An early planning document for Piquusilirivvik on goals and outline of programming emphasizes the need for a dynamic approach that integrates traditional knowledge into contemporary life (Department of Culture Language Elders and Youth(CLEY), 2008, pp.9-10). There is a relationship between skill building,

³⁹ *Japaq* / jaikak?- parka of European materials made in Inuit style (right dialect?) , *qulittaujaq* - white-man's parka, overcoat, or outer jacket; *amauti* (women's parka)

practical experience and traditional knowledge production. Practical skills associated with art making could be considered in a similar light.

...especially the high school students, young students[...]want to learn, pass on our printmaking[...] these kids, hopefully get a chance to understand what, I don't know. So we want to keep it that way I guess. (Jolly Atagoyuk, 2011)

Last year he taught students to carve, they enjoyed it [...] when he was growing up, not many people would be teaching carving. Today, it seems to be part of the culture now. Carving has always been within our culture too, and it must be that it makes us happy to share our vision with other cultures.

(Norman Komoartuk, 2011)

Both Norman and Jolly refer to the practice of carving and printmaking as something that is also a skill that can be passed on, as something that is part of Inuit culture. Simeeonie Pitsiulak discussed his interest in starting a program at his family's outpost camp, to teach hunting, camping and carving skills for people who do not get that opportunity growing up. Again, carving is considered alongside hunting and camping, as a kind of 'cultural' skill. Abraham Apakark Anghik Reuben has related the apprehension of the visual necessary for survival to that of carving. His father once told him that on the land, one needs to be conscious of everything around them, and have a three-hundred-and-sixty degree awareness. This awareness necessary for hunting matches the kind of awareness one needs to be good at carving. Conscious observation is essential to create great art.

While good observation is necessary for making art, art objects themselves demand observation. Whenever objects of Inuit art (or artifacts) are displayed, whether in an art museum or in an ethnological museum setting, a story is told about Inuit. What story is told depends on how the objects are contextualized. How these stories are told, and who is telling the story, is decisive in the way that the storytelling promotes or works

against Inuit cultural resilience. Truth-telling through art making engages in the process of decolonization, if the authority of Inuit voices are respected. Hence, I take issue with the following statement made by Darlene Wight, which was made referring specifically to solo exhibitions for individual artists. Wight states that, “Through their art, be it sculpture or graphic art, the artists’ voices are heard directly” (2004, p. 27). Artist’s voices are generally mediated, be it by translation, editing, or curatorial decisions. Elaine Heumann Gurian describes museum exhibitions as expressing “the producer’s [curator, institution] visions, biases and concerns”, and as such are ‘cultural artifacts’ in themselves (1991, p.178). At issue is the matter of who is deciding what form that context will take, and what story will be told.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Inuit art and culture is framed in particular ways through exhibitions in Qallunaat institutions. Typically ethnographic information is used to contextualize the works of art, and sometimes this Qallunaat generated narrative takes precedence over the works of art themselves. A reason for the way the narrative gets constructed this way is that mainstream museum exhibitions serve to tell stories about Inuit to a mainly non-Inuit audience.

Since the 90s, an emphasis on collaboration has brought Inuit artists into the process of producing exhibits. Inuit interpretation and knowledge is needed for the appreciation of the realities depicted in the art works. Trott (1982, p.351) discusses how, for example, carvings depicting scenes from *unikkaaqtuat* or involving signs or symbols with this kind of significance require an interrogation and understanding of the full *unikkaqtuaq* or corresponding cultural information to reveal their full meaning.

Sometimes Inuit art is displayed with very little to no context. This happens more often in commercial art galleries, where the aim is commercial rather than educational. In ethnographic and art museums, labels and placards that provide more cultural or historical context are typically an important part of displays. These statements are often

too brief, too generalized, or contain too much conjecture to really provide audiences with sufficient or helpful context. One recent example from the massive Indigenous art exhibition in Winnipeg held in 2011 is the following caption for an image by Pudlo Pudlat, *In Celebration* (1979):

Considered the first Inuit modernist, Pudlo's prints can be understood as an aesthetic contemplation of the onset of modernity. Here a musk ox outfitted in ceremonial regalia appears to be considering the existence of an airplane.⁴⁰

The aim of this short contextualizing label is to position Pudlo's work in a greater international art historical discourse, as well as to address the subject of the print. Without getting into the dubious ascription of the term "ceremonial regalia" within an Inuit context, the text left myself as the viewer more confused than informed. What is the story? Who is this *ummimak*⁴¹? What is it thinking? Is it perhaps not an *ummimak* but an *angakkuq*? Perhaps Pudlo had no more in mind than to dress an *ummimak* in colourful attire. Of course, interpretation is necessarily variable.

An Inuit art piece, much like a written work, is subject to a variety of readings. Contrary to the notion that Inuit voices are heard directly through a work of art, as Wight (2004, p. 27) has suggested, I argue that these voices are always mediated by an interpretive process. As Fienup-Riordan (1999) has demonstrated in reference to museum exhibitions, different spaces (and institutional priorities) can change the story. As outlined earlier, there are certain ways Qallunaat curators and art historians have approached the interpretation of Inuit art and used Inuit voices to tell the stories in Inuit art. However, these voices are always mediated by both the curator and the institutions where exhibits are held. Norman Komoartuk sees a need for better communication between artists and

⁴⁰ "Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years". Various locations, Winnipeg, MB, January 22 to May 15, 2011.

⁴¹ Inuktitut (South Qikiqtaaluk dialect) for "musk ox".

the south, which would lead to greater opportunities and control over marketing ones work.

Having a collaboration would be better, he thinks. Because a lot of the galleries and museums are mostly southern people, and it would be good to have connections where exhibits could be held. (Norman Komoartuk, 2011)

As established, the narrative is what is important, and it follows that interpretation, the process of re/telling the stories, takes on an imperative role. Further, the interpreter has a responsibility to the greater Inuit community. As Mitchell, on David Piqtouqun's work and the need for explanations, said, "there is a passion and resentment in this work, but you would not know it unless you read the captions [...] the work *needs* the artist's commentary to be intelligible" (Mitchell, 1997b, p.7) Taking an interpretive and analytical approach to art made by Inuit that respects and upholds the intentions of the maker and the character of the narrative, Inuit values and oral tradition is imperative I argue that beyond the material fact of art works existing, it is the process of interpreting the art where cultural resilience is acted out. To reclaim representation and control over the production of knowledge, it is essential that Inuit voices take the lead in the interpretation of Inuit art, to the interpretive process.

What the first generation brought to art-making was their knowledge of their way of making a life. Art making might hold different meaning for this group of artists than for second, and third generation artists. The first generation of artists had different life experiences, and different art making experiences than the later generations⁴². This knowledge and experience were what was marketed and snapped up by buyers in an era where the "primitive" and "ethnic" was in high artistic fashion. These

⁴² Art historians typically identify three or four generations of Inuit artists. The first generation is the wave of "contemporary" post-1948 Inuit artists, who belong to the generation which experienced the move from camp life to settlements many of which are now passed.

generational distinctions were underlined recently by Gerald McMaster and Ingo Hessel, curators of the exhibition *Inuit Modern* (2010), with their decision to highlight this shifting self-perception/outside perception of Inuit artists 'We are Inuit/I am an Inuit Artist/I am an artist'. Each generation has something different to contribute to the discourse - they speak from different places of experience.

Recalling the past by means of artistic expression reaffirms ethnicity. It is taking an active stance in relation to one's own culture and in relation to the dominant culture. Inuit graphics that depict the old ways – scenes of igloo building, skin sewing, caribou hunting – have been criticized as nostalgic and artificial. But as for analogous processes in colonial literature, one writer suggests that “such remembrance does not encourage a passive yearning for reinstalling an uncoverable past, but is an intervention winning back a zone from colonialist` representation. (Berlo, 1990, p. 138, quoting Benita Parry)

It is this zone of winning back that Inuit art becomes a part of cultural resilience.

Labrador artist Gilbert Hay has talked about art making as winning back, identifying showing culture in art as a crucial method for 'holding on to' Inuit history and values,

Look at us today. For the last 150 or 200 years our culture has been sabotaged by you guys, your values. I'm wearing your clothing. Any culture tries to hold onto what it's losing. We were and still are trying to document our own history. Many times our works are about our legends and events such as mass starvations. The only way that we are able to hold onto many of our cultural values is by reducing art to forms related to and centred around that culture. [...] Right now, at the stage we're at, everybody is producing art. But we can only produce a certain type of art -- the so-called accepted art. It's the safest place to be. You don't often see Inuit venture to make art that's an expression of what's going on today because it's

dangerous – dangerous in the sense that abstract art can get carried away.

(Akpaliialuk et., 1990, p.11)

Hay's reference to "accepted art" refers to what the traditional market for Inuit art seeks, romanticized depictions of traditional culture. What the market wants has shifted lately. Works that address social issues have a 'post-contemporary' aesthetic are now being sought out by buyers (Gaitskell and Atkinson, 2012)

Several publications and events focusing on themes connected to this project emerged during its course. The Inuit Modern was organized around a consideration of the statement: "It is not who we are, but where we come from and where we are going." Inuit voices emerge as an overriding concern. A recent issue of FUSE Magazine (2012) explores art making in the North and Indigenous sovereignty -- part of a series looking at the way art and artists are participating in decolonization. The editorial states that the Inuit avant-garde works towards decolonization through confronting colonial history, "truth telling", and using art to "consolidate, celebrate and nourish Inuit knowledge as a crucial component of the wellbeing of Inuit populations and lands". The "Inuit avant-garde" (a movement identified by Heather Igloliorte) refers to art makers whose work explicitly examines social issues. Igloliorte argues that what these artists are doing in relation to colonialism should not be classified as acts of resistance, "reaction to opposition", but as acts of cultural resilience, 'fortification of culture from within' (2010a, p.45). This way of winning back is not as much a reaction as continued engagement. The second statement, that art "as a way to consolidate, celebrate and nourish Inuit knowledge is something that I would argue contemporary Inuit art has always been doing. Perhaps only now is that aspect of Inuit art making becoming more widely recognized and celebrated.

A philosophy of Inuit art that applies Inuit cultural and intellectual values in examining narratives seems to have something in common with work taking place in

Indigenous literature. Daniel Heath Justice works in the area of 'Indigenous literary nationalism' an approach that places Indigenous values at the center of analysis. In the introduction to his book *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History* (2006), Justice states, "Our literature is the textual testament to our endurance; just as our oral traditions reflect the living realities and concerns of those who share them, so too do our literary traditions". Similarly, Inuit art is a 'visual testament of endurance' and expression of Inuit staying power. As yet, it has been a somewhat latent exercise in cultural resilience, slowly building from the inside and 'fortifying' the foundations. The accumulation, over a number of decades, of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit and narrative memory in art representing knowledge, is something like an archive, although physically dispersed and largely removed from the North.

It is in the relationship between Inuit art and knowledge that Inuit art works towards resilience. In celebration and nourishment of Inuit culture, in storytelling and carrying knowledge forward, in its sheer physicality and practice, in voicing and truth telling, Inuit art making works towards resilience. Although the body of knowledge is fragmented by a multiplicity of variations and perspectives, that knowledge, together, is an element of the collective narrative memory of Inuit. Through the telling of stories, Inuit establish themselves as authorities on their experiences, embracing both diversity and collectivity. It's important that *unikkaat* and in particular *unikkaaqtuat* are told in the right way, and that the work of art is *suligasuatuk* or *sulitsiartuq*, expressing the truth well, endeavouring towards a truth. This is why interpretations of Inuit art that aim for cultural resilience must respect protocols of narrative memory, Inuit knowledge production, epistemology and ontology. Through art making, staying power is exercised as knowledge is voiced.

CONCLUSION

This project explores the nature of a discussion of art making from the perspective of Inuit, and provides a critical approach to the discourse on Inuit art. The importance of the inclusion of Inuit voices in the discourse cannot be understated, owing to the colonial context in which the contemporary Inuit art industry developed and continues to operate within. I approached the subject of art making from a localized focus, highlighting Panniqtuumiut perspectives in an effort to orient the way the study took shape in the direction of Inuit epistemology. The analysis is based around the thoughts Pangnirtung artists shared in interviews, examining the ways in which Inuit artists are involved in the production and transmission of Inuit knowledge, and how this activity contributes to the continuity or resilience of Inuit culture. This thesis explores how Inuit knowledge is materialized through art making, and looks at various aspects of the circulation and interpretation of this knowledge. In the following I summarize and integrate the discussions in the previous chapters, identify a few theoretical implications of the arguments presents, and propose several areas for future research.

Synthesis

I began with a survey of relevant areas of Indigenous, post-colonial and critical theory, focusing on the concepts of representation, voice and location/positionality. This was followed by a critical look at the existing body of literature on Inuit art, discussing how qallunaat knowledge of Inuit art and culture has historically taken form. The particular value of the inclusion of Inuit voices in research about Inuit art was identified, and I assessed how Inuit voices have been treated in the discourse to date.

The discussion shifted to look specifically at the history of art making in Pangnirtung and the impacts of colonialism on that community. The particular trajectory of artists' experiences in Pangnirtung is closely tied to colonial activity and also exhibits elements of agency, autonomy, and resilience particularly in the formation of the UIAA.

Finally, I examine the intersection of art making, Inuit knowledge, and resilience. Three factors were identified in the process from art object to cultural resilience. The first is that Inuit art represents or embodies knowledge or ideas. The second, objects of Inuit art circulate, are interpreted and transmit knowledge. Third, the transmission of knowledge through art contributes to Inuit cultural resilience.

Artists' knowledge is refigured as an art object is created, and then the object moves south and east and west, and sometimes back north. These objects get interpreted in various ways (not all of which have to do with Inuit knowledge). There is the potential for Inuit art to contribute to cultural resilience, if the objects are interpreted for the knowledge they embody. This requires that interpretation is made from an Inuit perspective.

Theoretical implications

Art making takes place within a complex web of social and economic relationships, complicated further by structural inequality and power imbalances. Arguing for an approach to the study of Inuit art from a perspective that emphasises Inuit knowledge and the role of art making in this respect has implications for curatorial practice and beyond. With story as the key, an ethical dimension is added – with knowledge comes accountability and responsibility. This thesis explored several potential implications which can be summarized as “story is the key”, voice(s), inclusion, and the artist's role.

“Story is the key”, refers to focusing the interpretation of works of Inuit art around knowledge, which also entails respect for the character and principles of Inuit knowledge. The importance of Inuit involvement and voices is emphasized throughout this work, acknowledging the way that colonial discourse silenced Indigenous voices, and the way that the value of Inuit perspective emerged in the study of Inuit art.

Involvement of Inuit experts, qualified in accordance with the appropriate principles (not necessarily Western criteria, such as academic qualifications), is another step that

seems to be required in reading of Inuit art towards cultural resilience. Objects rarely exhibit more than a piece of a story on the surface. It is the dynamic interaction between people and objects that brings out meaning, and the meaning which is accessed depends upon the experience and knowledge of the subject brings. The process of reading the objects reinforces staying power through the transmission of knowledge, the incorporation of the past into the present. As Elisapee Ishulutaq emphasized, this process is similar to the way oral tradition functions, and is one of the ways Inuit knowledge is now transferring through generations.

Emphasizing the oral history/traditional knowledge element of art works involves putting the artist in a key role as knowledge holder. It is unclear whether this is the case for all Inuit art makers, or requires a conscious decision. In this role, there would be responsibilities placed on the people who make art. On the other end, these same issues arise around those who receive the knowledge through art. Through ‘listening’ to the knowledge in the work of art, it would seem that the ‘readers’ also become involved in responsibilities associated with holding knowledge.

Placing artists and art objects as important promoters and supporters of cultural resilience, Inuit art contributes significantly to the wellbeing of Inuit communities and individuals. Inuit art is important for Northern communities in ways other than as an economic resource. Thus, continued support for art making in the North by the government and public worthwhile as it serves a variety of vital functions.

Future research

The next step in is to take this interpretation back North, and continue an engaged discussion with Inuit communities and museum/ art industry professionals. There is also implication of the benefit of looking at Inuit art making from an interdisciplinary perspective that centres on Indigenous and Inuit knowledge. This thesis introduced the argument that it is essential that the interpretation be based in Inuit traditions of

knowledge and from Inuit perspectives to be involved in cultural resilience. A closer look at the interpretation process is needed to more fully understand and clarify how this takes place in practice.

This thesis introduces several other areas that deserve further elucidation. The content and value of the knowledge should be further discussed with Inuit artists and communities. The role of art making in decolonization and cultural resilience, and the processes by which this functions is complex and varied, and calls for additional consideration. A potential project would be to examine a particular body of art work from the perspective proposed in this thesis perhaps with an exhibition as a final step.

There is much potential for Inuit art and artists to make change, and the opportunities of expression afforded by the arts in all forms are invaluable and limitless. Acting to support the continuity of Inuit culture, art works can be powerful statements of decolonization. Compounded with the essential role of the art industry in the northern economy, Inuit art making can be considered one of the most significant initiatives furthering the continued health and wellbeing of Inuit communities.

For Inuit to do art they usually carve and produce art, and stories from what they heard from Elders. (Henry Mike, 2011)

It is important to draw cultural ways and lifestyles because it will give a similar knowledge as oral history. (Elisapee Ishulutaq, 2011)

The tapestries are part of Inuit culture, part of our lives, and it is important that they are seen by people in other cultures and by our own younger generations. They reinforce our culture. (Rhoda Veevee, quoted in Von Finckenstein, 2002, p.195)

[Carving] does bring out the culture a lot, and it does show a lot of the different cultures about ours. With carvings he makes he likes to use all the experiences he went through, like trying to harpoon a seal, drum dancing, dog-sledding, the old lifestyle.(Norman Komoartuk, 2011)

Our history is about [...] dealing with change as well as the causes and consequences of change forced on us through colonialism [...] most of the research on our culture and history has been done by individuals who come from outside our culture. Since the information that these individuals collected was seldom made available to us, the image held by much of the outside world about who we are is usually someone else's creation, not ours. (Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, 2002, n.p. quoted in Laugrand, 2002, p.100)

Story is the key. It's very important to Inuit art. And there's Southerners that try to dictate what kind of Inuit art should be made. And that really takes away the story.” (Henry Mike, 2011)

APPENDIX I: Who's Who

Anna Akulujuk, in her mid-70s, is known for making mini-kamiks, sewing, and has also had drawings produced as prints.

Evie Anilniliak, in her late 80s, is not actively involved in art making. Evie has done a little bit of drawing, as well as being an experienced seamstress.

Jolly Atagoyuk, in his early 50s, is actively involved in drawing and printmaking. He has also done some printmaking instruction.

Mary Battye, in her early 80s, is respected across the region for her skill in skin and textile work. Mary's work is featured *Our Boots: An Inuit Women's Art* (Oakes, 1996).

David Kilabuk, in his early 50s, has become well known for his photographs of northern community life and lands. David also works for the local housing authority.

Jimmy Kilabuk, in his mid-40s, is David's brother, works in graphic art and carving. Jimmy was employed at the local garage at the time of this research.

Norman Komoartuk (Qumuartuq; Qumuaqtuq), in his mid-60s, is a well-known carver with many years' experience. He served as president of the Pangnirtung Co-op in 1990.

Elisapee Ishulutaq in her late 80s, is a respected artist who has carved in the past, and continues to be active in graphic art. Her late husband Kanayuk was also a carver.

Elisapee's work has been featured in many exhibitions.

Jaco Ishulutaq, in his early 60s, is Elisapee's son. Jaco is a master carver and hunter, and is very well known. He is currently serving on the Nunavut art and Crafts association board of directors.

Manasie Maniapik, in his mid-70s, is a master carver and skilled hunter. Highly respected, his work is represented in several key books on Inuit art.

Henry Mike, in his mid- twenties has worked in a variety of mediums, including graphic art, carving and metalwork. Currently, he does not consider himself a professional artist, and is now living and working in Iqaluit.

Pauloosie Nauyuq, in his mid- 80s, is an experienced carver, known for his antler snow-goggles.

Annie Pitsiulak, in her early 60s, was married to renowned artist Lypa Pitsiulak (who passed away in 2010). Annie has done some graphic art, and one of her images is featured as the logo for the weave shop. She is no longer actively involved in art making.

Simeonie Pitsiulak Simeonie is a carver in his mid-30s, and is Annie and Lypa's son. He was interviewed together with his partner Martha, who also assisted with interpretation in several other interviews.

Andrew Qappik (Karpik) is in his late 40s. He is a well-known and active graphic artist and printmaker, and recently has begun to do some carving . He assisted in designing the Nunavut flag, coat-of-arms, and official logo, and recently featured in his first solo exhibition at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, *Pangnirtung Memories* (Wight, 2010).

Norman Qupee , in his mid-40s, is a skilled carver who focuses on jewellery production. His fine work in in high demand.

APPENDIX II: Research License

APPENDIX III: Consent Forms

UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

204 Isbister Building

Winnipeg, Manitoba

Canada R3T 2N2

Telephone (204) 474-9266

Fax (204) 474-7657

Department of Native Studies**Form for Written Consent**

Project Title: **Inuit Art in Pangnirtung: Community Perspectives**

Principal Investigator: Alena Rosen

204 Isbister Building, University of Manitoba

Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2

Phone : (204) 898-4942

E-mail: alenaErosen@gmail.com

Research Supervisor: Dr. Chris Trott

227 St. John's College, University of Manitoba

Winnipeg, MB R3T 2M5

Phone: (204) 474-8101

E-mail: trottcg@cc.umanitoba.ca

Would you like an interpreter/translator to explain this form to you in Inuktitut? YES
 NO

Would you rather tell me you agree, instead of signing this form? YES
 NO

Do I have your permission to audio record these conversations? YES
 NO

I would like to share the things we talk about with other people. Would you allow me to use your name when I talk or write about this project? YES
 NO

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

This research project is being done as part of my Master's thesis for my university degree in Native Studies. The main goal of this research project is to create a space for an Inuit conversation about carving, drawing, printmaking, tapestry-weaving, or handicrafts.

This project is different from most research and writing about Inuit art because the purpose is to learn about and discuss Inuit perspectives on art and art-making, instead of discussing *Qallunaat* (non-Inuit) perspectives.

I will be conducting interviews and focus groups.

Your participation is voluntary, and you will not receive compensation for participating in this study.

You might benefit by sharing personal stories and memories with me. Ideas I share in the interviews and focus groups may be interesting to you.

There are no risks to you in participating in this project that you would not encounter in everyday life. At any time, you can choose to withdraw from the project.

You have the choice to identify yourself or remain anonymous. If you would like your identity to remain anonymous, you will be assigned a pseudonym and referred to by this in all written documents and presentations. You can also choose for this information to be confidential, which means only I will know that you are the person who told me this information.

Participants in focus groups will be reminded that anything that is said within the focus group is to be treated with confidentiality, but that confidentiality following focus groups cannot be guaranteed.

Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law.

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed after the interview/focus group. You will have the opportunity to review the conversation and make changes before I begin writing my report. Audio recordings can be reviewed within 72 hours of the interview. Written transcripts will be sent to you by mail or e-mail for review upon request. All changes/modifications must be made within a thirty day period upon receipt of the transcript.

Because this project emphasizes the communication of Inuit knowledge and perspectives, I would like to share what you say with as many people as possible. This information will be shared in the form of the written thesis, and in conference presentations and journal articles that discuss this project. I will also be giving a copy of the final report to the community.

At the end of the study you will receive a copy of a report summarizing the research. This will be mailed or emailed to you in the spring of 2012.

This research is funded through *Culture and Ecology in Cumberland Sound: Community Adaptations to Global Warming*, SSHRC Research Grants - Northern Communities: Towards Social and Economic Prosperity, Principle Investigator: Dr. Christopher Trott.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or

refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management / Assurance office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or Margaret (Maggie) Bowman, the Human Ethics Secretariat, Phone :(204) 474-7122 , E-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature : _____ Date: _____

_____ Date: _____

Script for Verbal Consent

Project Title: **Inuit Art in Pangnirtung: Community Perspectives**

Principal Investigator: Alena Rosen
204 Isbister Building, University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, MB
Telephone : (204) 898-4942
E-mail: alenaErosen@gmail.com

Research Supervisor: Dr.Chris Trott
227 St. John's College, University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2M5
Phone: (204) 474-8101
E-mail: trottcg@cc.umanitoba.ca

I am a student, and this research is part of my thesis project for my university degree.

You are being asked to take part in a research project. This form is asking you if you will talk with me, and let me share what you say with other people.

You have asked to give your consent to participate in this research project verbally. I will read you the written consent form, and explain what it is asking. I will record this conversation so that the University can check that we had this conversation. Only me and the University of Manitoba Ethics people (The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management / Assurance office)will be able to hear the recording.

[Read written consent form to participant]

This project is about sharing your ideas and memories about making carvings, prints, and tapestries or crafts. It is also about the stories things like carvings and prints can tell about Inuit. It is important that *Qallunaat* (non-Inuit) people know what Inuit have to say.

I will be talking to people alone and in groups. You are welcome to do either one or both. If it is okay, I would like to tape record these conversations. This is to help me remember what you said. You can ask not to be recorded.

Is it okay if I record the conversations? [] Yes [] No

This project is free, and you will not be paid to participate.

You will have the chance to share your stories and memories with me, and with your community. You should not experience any risks participating in this project. You can leave the project any time you want to.

You don't have to answer questions if you don't want to. You can ask me questions at any time.

What you say can be private or public, it is your choice. If you don't want your name to be used, we can choose a different name that is not your own. Please let me know if you want your information to be private. [] Public [] Private

I would like to use your real name when I write and talk about this project. Let me know if you do not want me to use your real name. Can I use your real name? [] Yes [..] No

If you say something in a group, it might not stay private.

If I find out a law was broken, I will need to tell the police.

If it is alright with you, I would like to share what you say with your community and people down South. Please let me know if you mind if anything you say is shared with the community, or in the thesis, conference presentations or journal articles I write about this project.

After we talk, you can listen to the recording and make changes if you want to. After I leave your community, I can mail or e-mail you a paper copy of what you said. You can still change anything you said for 30 days after you get the paper copy.

I will send you a report when I am done this project. I can mail it or email it to you. This will be sent next spring.

This is my phone number and email in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Alena Rosen

Phone : (204) 898-4942

E-mail: alenaErosen@gmail.com

This is the phone number and email of my teacher in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Chris Trott

Phone: (204) 474-8101

E-mail: trottcg@cc.umanitoba.ca

If you have any concerns or questions, you can call or e-mail me, Chris Trott, or Maggie Bowman (Human Ethics Secretariat), who works for the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board.

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You can keep a copy of this form and a written copy of what I just said.

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