Ikayuqatigiinuk

Working together for a common goal

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Part One

"When people show you who they are, believe them."

--Maya Angelou

Prologue

I always thought I had a good grasp of what it meant to be a Canadian. The truth is, I was only thinking about Canada in terms of what lies below the 60th parallel. It is significant when we consider that one-fifth of our country falls within the boundaries of a new territory about which most of us know very little. We talk of Canadian pride and of knowing who we are, but most of us only know part of the story. To be perfectly frank, I never gave the Arctic much consideration when I thought of Canada. For my own growth as a person and as a teacher, I have had to expand my horizons. I have had to broaden my perspective.

Since the Government of Nunavut was formed in 1999 (and well before then) the preservation of the Inuit culture of Northern Canada was a priority. It is a determination of the Nunavut Government to make every effort to help the Inuit people keep their language and their culture. As Fiona O'Donoghue[1] (1998) explains, the emergence of "Nunavut signifies the end of colonial rule in a land which belongs to Inuit" (p.2). This change from Northwest Territories to Nunavut "is one of such complexity and depth that the residents of Nunavut are only beginning to grasp some of the possibilities and dangers for the future" (p.2).

The new territory has brought about many changes for the Inuit, not the least of which is how education is delivered and received. It is the belief of the Department of Education in Nunavut that students take ownership of language and culture, by knowing who they are, where they come from, and where they belong in today's society (*Inuqatigiit Curriculum* 1989). As with my own negotiation of meaning, all of us need to have a sense of pride in who we are and what we are doing.

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[1]Fiona O'Donoghue is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Edcation at the University of Prince Edward Island. She worked extensively throughout the north in various capacities and wrote her doctoral dissertation on the topic of teacher professional development in Nunavut. She continues to conduct research in the area of cross-cultural education.

But there are many problems to overcome. One of the fundamental problems I see is that in order for the students of Nunavut to understand where they come from they need to interact in various situations with older and more experienced people from their own culture. Ideally, they need to have Inuit teachers. In Auluq where I taught, a Hamlet of 1500 people, out of 15 teachers for 253 students from grades 6 to 12 there was 1 Inuit teacher. The Nunavut government keeps saying that there are going to be more, that there are more Inuit teachers in training, and while there are quite a few at the elementary level, their numbers are not evident yet at the intermediate and secondary levels.

My purpose here is to seek the answer to the question: What do I, a Qallunaaq[2] teacher, have to offer Inuit youth? While I believe I have much to offer from my own experiences and learning, what are Inuit students really learning from me, or from other Qallunaaq teachers?

I remember clearly my first week in Auluq. I remember stepping off the plane with my two daughters, Elizabeth, aged 15 and Margaret, aged 12, and thinking right away how beautiful the mountains were and how warm it was on that August day. My daughters and I could not believe all the modern amenities that were available. There was a taxi service, a fast food outlet, and a department store. The school was more modern than many I had seen in the south. The building was large and bright and the classrooms were stocked with every conceivable resource any teacher might require.

The staff at the schools in Auluq were given a week to work in the school before the students started for the year. This time was an opportunity for us to get our classrooms ready and to get to know each other a little before the year began. We were all in our classrooms working away when my first real cross-cultural experience happened.

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[2]Ka-loo-naa is a term the Inuit use to describe white people. I was told by an elder in the community that literally translated the term means fat belly and bushy eyebrows, however, the Inuit do not use the term in any derogatory sense.

I heard teachers running down the hall yelling, "Go down to the fiord, there's a beluga whale close to shore." I was thrilled. I had only seen one of these magnificent animals at Sea World in a glass cage and was very excited to have this opportunity to see one in the wild. I immediately called my daughters and told them to meet me down by the water before I ran to catch up to the other teachers. To my utter horror, the first glimpse I got by the time I reached the end of the corridor and out the door were my two daughters running toward a huge gathering crowd out of which I could hear loud popping sounds. I could see the water splashing with every pop and realized with a start that this beluga whale was being hunted. I ran faster to catch up to the girls.

Everyone was there, construction workers, power company workers, the post mistress, parks people, teachers, nurses, mothers, fathers, kids, police officers and three Inuit men holding guns. The popping continued until a flurry of Inuktitut words flew through the crowd, back and forth. Boats were surrounding the whale and suddenly, out of the crowd on shore, a man brought up to his shoulder a long, pointed harpoon. Slowly and carefully he took aim while the boats maneuvered the whale closer to where the man waited. And then it happened. The harpoon shot from the man's body and the water began to turn red. Great cheers came roaring from the throng and my youngest daughter buried her head into my coat.

I remembered everything people had told me about living in the north. I smiled and nodded at the smiling, nodding faces looking back at me. I watched with my frozen smile as they hoisted the ten-foot, one-year-old male beluga whale onto shore. And we stood frozen as the crowd suddenly lowered their heads and grew silent.

I lowered my head and beckoned to my daughters to do the same. I kept my sight on a movement I detected coming through the crowd. A middle-aged Inuit man made his way to where the whale had been lowered onto the rocks. He raised his hands and began to speak. At once I knew he was praying. The girls and I remained silent but added our "Amens" after the rest.

We looked up to see three men straddling the whale holding huge knives. They dug in and skillfully carved the animal into pieces for all to have. Everyone there (including non-Inuit and Inuit alike) got a piece and most ate right where they stood. People were helping each other get their share of this bounty and I didn't have the heart to refuse the smiling-faced man handing me a rectangle of blubber and maqtaak[3] for the girls and I. While most of the people ate the whale right where they stood, we took our piece back to the school and one of the Inuit staff members showed us how to eat it.

This was definitely our first cross-cultural experience. In our southern way of thinking we saw the beluga whale as a zoo animal in the wild never thinking for a minute that any harm would come to it. But instead, we were faced with a food source, "a gift from God" as the people there were calling it, why else would it have swam so close to shore? This animal represented to the people that day their very survival. How naive we were when I think back; and what a rude awakening we got that day.

Many things have changed since then. That day on the shore reminded us that we were in the north, in a land so harsh that those living in its midst must band together in order to survive...a land surprisingly full of warmth traced in the twinkling smiles of its people...a land full of mystery and imagination, color and harmony, perspective and dimensions not seen by most people in the world. Our journey in this land had begun.

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3 muk-tuk: the skin and first layer of tissue of beluga and narwhals

Chapter One

Overview and Methodology

By way of introduction I will explain the title I have chosen for my thesis. Ee-kay-ook-at-ee-gee-nik is a concept the Inuit practice similar to a group of people working together for a common goal. It is a concept that includes the idea of organizing groups to learn how to improve situations or to solve problems rather than individuals working in isolation or at odds with each other. It coincides with my idea of what it is to be Inuit. It incorporates the values and beliefs of the Inuit culture and it speaks to the fact that Inuktitut is not just a language but a way of being.

This thesis represents a critical narrative, an autobiographical reflection on my teaching in the north. I chose critical narrative because I wanted to present my story, but within a framework that touches upon academia. Bruner (1996) speaks of the importance of using narrative to talk about one's culture and how that relates to one's education. As he explains,

> Education... cannot be reduced to mere information processing, sorting knowledge into categories. Its objective is to help learners construct meanings, not simply to manage information. Meaning making requires an understanding of the ways of one's culture--whether the subject in question is social studies, literature, or science (p. 27).

So, it is important that my narrative be an integral part of the research. During my research it was important that I always kept in mind my culture and values and what I was bringing to the negotiating of this new culture. It was also important that I understood my power and privilege and that I was not Inuk and was never going to fully understand what it meant to be part of the Inuit race.

This thesis is based on a phenomenological approach within the qualitative paradigm. By using critical narrative within the phenomenological framework I was able to critique my own work more stringently. As Van Manen (1992, p. 76) explains:

> Phenomenological sources allow us to see our limits and to transcend the limits of our interpretive sensibilities... a phenomenological study of a topic or our interest may suggest different ways of looking at a phenomenon or reveal dimensions of meaning which we had hitherto not considered.

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) have argued that "one's own narrative can be constructed, reconstructed, recovered and reconstructed again so that the author can extract meaning from it at many levels and in many ways" (p. 24). I looked at the whole experience as a teacher in the north through various lenses: culture, gender, race, ethnicity, and class. I used a journal of my experiences, a collection of letters from me, along with interviews I have carried out with elders and youth from the community. I also used journal writing carried out by my two daughters. This thesis is the result of my own interpretation and critical examination of our lived experiences during the year spanning August 2000 to July 2001.

The qualitative paradigm has been very important and helpful to my research and writing. Borg (1993, p. 194) explains that

> The purpose of qualitative research is to develop an understanding of individuals and events in their natural state, taking into account the relevant context.... Many qualitative researchers try to understand the phenomenological reality of particular individuals or groups and the cultural settings within which they function.

It is quite often thought essential that a qualitative researcher in a cross-cultural research situation be immersed enough into the culture to have a full understanding of the relevant context. By immersing myself into the community (attending community events, talking to elders, coaching sports and helping with various activities) I feel I have placed myself in a better position to make informed comments and decisions about my thesis work.

My research questions are as follows:

1. What do I, a Qallunaaq teacher, have to offer Inuit youth and how will that offering be delivered and accepted?
2. How do I judge the success of my experience?
3. To what degree have our (my daughter's and my own) attitudes and values changed from our experience--in other words, how have we negotiated meaning in our northern community?

The literature review was extensive but not exhaustive. Two very important works are Fiona O'Donoghue's dissertation surrounding educators' professional development in Nunavut and Joanne Tompkin's book *Teaching in a Cold and Windy Place* about being a principal in northern schools. As well, I have drawn extensively from Hugh Brody and Jean Briggs, both of whom immersed themselves as anthropologists within Inuit communities in northern Canada for several years.

I have also brought into my narrative excerpts from *Inuqatigiit* (1996), the curriculum document that is the basis for curriculum development in Nunavut. This document "focuses on the enhancement and enrichment of the language and culture of Inuit students" (p. 3). Arlene Stairs (1995) has completed extensive work in the area of Native Education and her article, "Learning and Teaching in Native Education" is drawn upon to highlight some of the differences between southern and Inuit educational philosophies. Jim Cummins (1996) has written extensively on second language acquisition. I have looked at his work regarding education empowering people in diverse societies. I have also taken information from Stephen May (1994) who has completed many studies on multicultural education and racism.

David Corson (1998) was studied regarding his discussion about the use of texts for culturally diverse teaching. And along those lines, I looked at the work of Ladson-Billings (1994) who believes that "culturally relevant teaching is not a series of steps that

teachers can follow or a recipe for being effective with students.... Teachers...will bring their own perspectives...because of their own pedagogical situations and contexts" (p. 26). Her words resonate through some of this narrative and are a very definite underpinning of my educational philosophy. It is so important for teachers to understand the context of where they are teaching and Ladson-Billings (1994) touches upon this issue extensively.

In Kawagely's (1995) work, *A Yupiaq Worldview: A Pathway to Ecology and Spirit,* I agree with his idea regarding teachers: "Teachers must be willing to learn at least the rudiments of the Native language and culture in order to do an effective job of teaching" (p. 113). In terms of working toward culturally responsive schools, I looked at the document entitled: *Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools.* This booklet of cultural standards is to be used as a "way for schools and communities to examine the extent to which they are attending to the educational and cultural well being of the students in their care" (p. 2).

In completing research prior to my moving to Auluq to teach, I learned that it is very important to smile and to exhibit a huge amount of warmth in any kind of teaching situation. In conducting research for this thesis I came across Kleinfeld (1972) who studied effective teaching of aboriginal children. She concluded that it is important to exhibit warmth "communicated nonverbally through facial expression, body distance, and touch" (p. 1). She also stated that it is important for teachers to keep a high level of "active demandingness in the classroom-- demandingness expressed, however, as an aspect of the teacher's personal concern for the student, rather than as concern for subject matter" (p. 1). These two ideas are paramount in terms of southern teachers moving to the north to teach.

In terms of completing this thesis I have considered the issue of trustworthiness and have decided that by using three different means of data collection the trustworthiness aspect is enhanced. By using my own journal writing, my daughters'

journal writing and letter writing I believe I have provided different perspectives. These various data sources support the analysis and interpretation. By comparing my daughters' journal entries to my own I was able to examine the differences, which then helped me understand the phenomena I was studying.

As a qualitative researcher, I analyzed my data inductively. As Bogden and Biklen (1992) explain, data analysis is like "constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts... the process of data analysis is like a funnel: things are open at the beginning (or top) and more directed and specific at the bottom" (p. 32). As this research emerged, the place where we fit into this picture became quite clear. I worked to delineate any biases or assumptions as I went along.

It is important that the information is as generalizable as possible. I believe that since I am actually using three different means of data collection the trustworthiness aspect will be enhanced. By using journal writing, letters and interviews I hope that I have achieved different perspectives. My daughters have kept fairly in-depth journals and their findings from their negotiation of this cross-cultural experience are included in chapter five. The Research Ethics Board of the University of Prince Edward Island authorized their input.

This critical narrative is written from the perspective of a non-Inuit person living and working in an Inuit community. One limitation in researching one's own lived experience, as Denzin and Lincoln (1994) explain, is that all research is interpretive, is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. However, the critical narration of this strongly autobiographical work allows for my findings to be stringently critiqued by myself. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) agree that many researchers now accept that they are not disinterested but are deeply invested in their studies, personally and profoundly. The researcher's personality and very character is central to the results of the research.

In the process of this research I had to consider several issues in order to uphold the canons of quality research expected by the University of Prince Edward Island. I had to make sure the methods I chose would be consistent with who I am as a researcher. I also had to consider the involvement of my daughters. I realized, after talking to each of them individually, that they both looked at this opportunity as a catharsis in a way. They did not have a readily available outlet for their discoveries. They had their friends, of course, but this project allowed them an outlet to discuss their feelings as openly and honestly as possible. They looked forward to that opportunity. Since both have kept a journal since they began to write, the journal aspect was appropriate. They have expressed to me that they liked the fact that some of their journal writing was more focused.

This thesis is divided into three sections. The first section (including this chapter) offers an introduction to both the work and the place. A picture of the Inuit culture is presented to provide the foundation upon which this narrative is based. In chapter two, an interview with an elder Inuit couple is presented to provide some insight into the way it used to be in the north. The second section presents some of the conflicts involved in living and working in an Inuit community now. And the third section offers a perspective, a way to pull it all together, as well as some thoughts about the findings.

Chapter Two

Solomonie and Rosie Akpalialuk

The Inuit culture has been romanticized, studied and, to some degree, scrutinized over the past several decades. People from all over the world and from all professions and backgrounds come to the North, visit, see a small capsuled portion of life and then go back home to talk, write, and theorize about what they have seen. I wanted to present my perspective as a new teacher, on life in the large expanse that is the northern region of Canada, as well as my interpretation of the people themselves.

In March 2001, the schools in Nunavut shut down for a week so the teachers could update and improve themselves through professional development. This practice has been going on for a few years now and it is part of an initiative called *Pauqatigiit*, which resulted from a survey of teachers (Nunavut Board of Education, 1995). I have taught in the south and found this practice of teachers taking a full week for professional development a unique and exciting experience. Not only did the Government of Nunavut provide this week to the teachers, we also received $750.00 each to spend on whatever we needed to accomplish our goals during the week.

My week, during the 2000 - 2001 school year, was dedicated to furthering my studies about Inuit and the impact of white teachers on Inuit youth. I hired one of the students from grade 12, Daniel Anmarliq, to act as an interpreter for the week and set out to interview an Inuit couple who were elders in the community. Rosie and Solomonie Akpalialuk were willing to take part in my quest for knowledge about all that is Inuit. We spent approximately four hours a day for three days talking together. Daniel and I spent a considerably longer period of time transcribing the taped interview and pulling the information together into a workable format. I am dedicating this chapter to that interview. The contents—the information so graciously provided by the

Akpalialuks—is priceless, to me, in terms of what it illuminates about the Inuit people generally, and the way white people have impacted the Inuit in Nunavut specifically.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Akpalialuks and to Daniel for their openness and honesty and for their patience during that week. The Akpalialuks were so very willing to share their stories with me even when to do so caused them obvious pain. I will never forget that week for the rest of my life. I can only express my memories of that week by saying that I did not just develop professionally because of meeting and getting to know the Akpalialuks, but personally as well. Together, Daniel, the Akpalialuks and I shared something that is difficult to put into words. We shared a catharsis in a way, both for me as a white person learning about some of the atrocities visited upon these people by my ancestors, and they as Inuit people learning some of the reasons why I (as well as many others) are so ashamed of those atrocities. It was also a catharsis in that we all learned a great deal about each other. This knowledge is important from their as well as my own perspective. Here is their story.

Solomonie and Rosie Akpalialuk live in Auluq, Nunavut. They didn't always live there though. Most of their lives they lived "out on the land" in outpost camps, living and working in *qammaqs*[4]. Here they raised their six children and survived in one of the harshest environments in the world.

Hunting

Solomonie was very anxious to get the interview going. He wanted us to know about his hunting. He began right away telling us about how much he enjoyed hunting birds. "My best thing to do when I was young was catching birds. Bird hunting was what started my hunting. I used a slingshot and rocks and a putuuqtajagait[5]."

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[4]Ku-muks seal skin tents with wooden floors

[5]Po-took-ta-ga-gate a device made from a piece of leather fashioned to the end of some sort of string or leather line attached to a loop that you swing around and the rock shoots from its end. (sling shot)

Solomonie was very proud of the stories he told. He was especially excited about his polar bear hunting stories. He told us one in particular in which he killed the bear without using a gun.

> I was around 15 when I killed my first polar bear. Yes, at times, polar bears came up pretty close to us. Closer than you are to me [he indicated with his hands that it would have been less than five feet.] I killed the bear by hitting it with the qamotik[6]. My dogs were real fighters as if they knew the polar bears were their enemies. I knew the polar bear wouldn't come at me because the dogs were fighting it. I used to have dogs that were real fighters. I had two main fighters that would go after the polar bears. These two dogs killed the polar bear just by biting it.

Solomonie told us another story of when he was a young boy and he would want to go hunting with his father.

> When I was little I went with my father because I was the oldest of the boys. In the summer when I was sleeping and when he would leave without me I would go by myself and try to follow him. And I would come back after going only a short distance because there was no chance that I would catch up to him.

Solomonie explained that hunters coming back with great catches were most often celebrated whenever possible. They would be welcomed back by all and the people would have a feast. "We'd have seal meat, caribou meat and baby seal." He explained that hunting for baby seal provided some of the best memories he had of spending time with his father.

> Back then there were more seals than now. My father would break the thin ice over where a mother seal would have a nest and I would be called by my father to grab the baby seal...I would hook it. He would tie it up and put it back into the water to use it as jigging bait to catch the mother.

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[6]ka-mo-tik a rectangularly shaped sled made out of wood pulled by a team of dogs--or by a snow machine today. These sleds are anywhere from five to ten feet long and are about three to four feet wide.

The food was often eaten raw, however some of the time; the meat was boiled as well. The women would use a qulliq[7] for cooking and for heating the qammaq. They would use fluffy white plant material from the Arctic Cotton plant as wick. Rosie told us that whale fat made a better fire than seal fat, but it was not so easy to get at times. The people would also use these lamps for lighting inside the qammaq. Some Inuit people still live in qammaqs out at their outpost camps, but they use oil-fired heaters and stoves and many other modern conveniences. The qammaq itself is now made of canvas and not seal skins.

Seals

Sealskins had many purposes (and still do) for the Inuit. Solomonie explained that they were used for more things than he could remember. "They were used for qammaqs, for pants, lots of purposes. We would use them for tents and for insulation." The women spent many hours scraping the fat from sealskins. They would use a tool called an ulu[8] and would scrape the unwanted material off the sealskin to tan the skin and the fur. The finished product is similar to soft leather. Rosie explained what she remembered. "[The women] would always have to scrape the seal skins... it would be the only way to make the tents and the qammaqs. The seal skin that has the fur part on it is removed and what is left is stretched and sewn together with other skins to make the qammaqs."

Rosie spent much of her time working with sealskin as she grew up and into her adulthood.

> I did lots with that. Even when I was 30 I was making kammiks[9] with absolutely no problems. I spent much of my time working with sealskin to make it soft. If we played with it all day then at the end of the day it

[7]koo-lik a seal lamp fashioned out of various materials from skin, bone, soap stone, or metal and fired by oil made from whale or seal fat.
[8]oo-loo a half-moon shaped knife with a metal neck above the blade attached to a wooden handle
[9]ka-miks seal skin boots

would be soft. I would have been very young when I started to spend my days doing that, maybe 12 years old.

Women Alone

The women spent much of their time alone either working or looking after their children. In fact, many of the women had babies alone while their husbands were out on the land. Rosie told us a story of when she had her first child. "I gave birth alone even though there was one other person at the camp. Solomonie was on his way to Frobisher Bay (now Iqaluit) so I had the baby alone. I screamed but nobody heard my screaming so I just did it all myself."

Rosie told us that she gave birth six times in a qammaq, six times and thought nothing of it. She said that most often the women were up the next day working because there was no other choice. When asked about the fear of women sometimes bleeding uncontrollably after deliveries she explained that it did happen sometimes but the women would usually get better on their own. "Gradually, they would just be left to get better on their own."

Health Centers

If the women did not get better on their own, prior to 1958, there was really nothing anyone could do. The Inuit people had many homemade remedies that worked quite well, but if these failed, or if surgery was needed there was nowhere to take the person in need. From approximately 1958 on, injured and very sick people living in the Arctic would be taken to one of the Health Centers set up throughout the territory. Solomonie and Rosie concurred that people did not get sick very often back then. Rosie explained what they meant: "We never got sick back then with the food we were eating. Once in a while we might get a cold, but it wouldn't last that long. Every time a ship would come in we might get a small cold but that was all. Nowadays, with all the planes coming and going, we often get colds."

When Solomonie and Rosie were young, a doctor and four nurses worked at the Health Center in Auluq. The Health Center served a great many outpost camps, because Auluq was the central settlement for the Eastern Baffin region. These health care workers were [and are] almost always Qallunaaq people who would commit to staying for a certain period of time at these centers usually no longer than a year.

Qallunaaq People

There were other Qallunaaq people beginning to appear in the North more frequently beginning in the latter part of the 1950's and on into the 1960's. Ministers, priests, government officials, RCMP officers, teachers, and others were sent to perform specific various tasks. The priests and ministers would often bring presents at Christmas time to the people living in outpost camps and they were the ones who introduced the concept of Christmas and many of the toys were things Inuit children had never seen before. Solomonie told us about that time:

> Christmas was a really happy time. We'd give each other presents, mostly things that were around or that we made. The Inuit priest, Tulugaqjuaq[10], would give us the presents that would be sent to him. So, I wouldn't be able to wait for Christmas. We knew when he was coming close to where we were and all the children would gather and be very excited. He gave me a toy car once and I had never seen a car before. I didn't know what it was and used to push it on the snow upside down on its roof. That was my happiest time.

Rosie told us about her memories of the Inuit priest bringing her presents. "The present I got from the priest was my favorite present also. It was a doll.... It was made out of hard material, plastic I think; I can't remember if it had any hair."

[10]Too-loo-gak-joo-ak

Christianity

The priests and ministers also brought southern religion to the North. There was a large move to bring Christianity above the 60th parallel throughout the middle of the 20th century. Many Anglican and Catholic religious leaders came to the North to spread the Word of God. They had Bibles translated into Inuktitut and they went from community to community trying to convert the people. Some of the practices that these religious leaders from the South tried to teach the Inuit people did not go over well. One of the practices not readily acceptable by the people, according to Solomonie, was the rule forbidding hunting on Sunday. He explained that sometimes people needed to hunt on Sunday because they were hungry. He explained some of what he remembered from that time.

> Back then they tried getting us to believe in God. In certain campsites the people were told that those living at other campsites already started to believe, so they should soon start to believe. Most of the people didn't want to believe in anything different. The priest was telling the ones who didn't want to believe how hard it was going to be if they didn't start to believe. The priest tried telling them God's Words because they weren't accepting God as the Supreme Being. I think the priest was the first Qallunaaq to come here to the Inuit.

Once the Inuit people accepted the philosophy of Christianity, small churches were built in the larger settlements such as Auluq. In the summer when the people would travel to the settlements to get supplies, they would go to church. Solomonie remembered when he went to church as a child.

> The priest would make us read. We'd read in a group and then he would explain it to us. He was just like an Inuk[11] (Tulugaqjuaq). His grave is

[11] In-ook singular form of Inuit,meaning person. Solomonie is referring to the man they called Tulugaqjuaq. He was a white man but learned the language and the culture so well that he was accepted as an Inuit person. He is buried in Pangnirtung.

here in town. He spoke just like the Inuit and he knew Qallunaaqtitut[12] too. He knew a lot. He told us stories that there will be houses across the Fiord someday. He would make us kids read from the Bible during youth service in the summer when we were in town in that church. So that he wouldn't make me read I would try to sit way down so that he wouldn't see me and make me read. But he would always see me anyway and make me read.

There are no houses across the Fiord yet, but there are many people moving to Auluq lately because of the decentralization of the Nunavut Government departments. There are houses across the river now and many more houses are being planned in the community.

Time and Dates

Before the Qallunaaq people came with all their modern conveniences, Inuit people used many different devices for the various things they needed. They fashioned a kind of sundial to tell the time, for instance. Rosie remembered what they used to do. "We would make a sundial when the sun was up so we would know what time it was. When the sun was straight up it was lunchtime. We knew to come in from whatever we were doing and get food."

Solomonie told us his memories of such a device. "When I was a kid, I remember my mother's grandmother putting a piece of wood outside and when the sun crossed the piece of wood it would mean that it was lunchtime."

The Inuit people also kept track of dates, before they were introduced to the kind of calendars we use today. They used to use the calendar that is in the Bible. Rosie explained what she meant. "You know how we have calendars today, they weren't like that. We only followed the calendar in the Bible. We knew when special days were like Christmas and Easter."

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[12]kul-oo-nak-ti-toot literally translated means all that relates to Qalunaaq (white), but actually it is the term used to describe speaking English.

Rosie and Solomonie's families would follow the main holidays in the Bible, making a correspondence between the holiday and the time of year. Rosie told us that their parents taught them to read and write using syllabics[13]. They would also learn about numbers along with all the other traditional things they were taught. They played many games.

Games

Solomonie told us about some of the games they used to play.

> We played baseball, went sliding using sealskins and little qammutiks. We played Qitinnuaq[14] and we'd play Iluvigaujaq[15]. And one of the really fun games was Amarujjaq[16]. We'd play it at night. All the kids get into a line standing arm to arm. They would have to run to a mark some distance away. The last person to reach the mark became the 'Wolf.' And the wolf would have to go around licking the others on the shoulder (like tag). Once you were licked on the shoulder you would fall down and be out of the game, temporarily. Alaqattaq[17] was the most fun to play. I would have something under my parka and I would throw a rock out far and the first person to retrieve the rock would get the prize under my parka.

Another game the children would play involved them singing a song. It sounded like a variation of hide-and-seek. Rosie remembered playing it as a child. "We would start singing a song and everyone would be in a circle or a group, then, when the song ended, everyone would go out and start looking for a specific object that would be a prize."

Music and Stories

Music was and continues to be a very important part of Inuit culture. The Scottish whalers who traveled to the Arctic, were known by their bushy eyebrows and

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[13]Si-la-biks The written symbols used to express the words and phrases of Inuktitut. There are 60 characters in the Inuktitut alphabet if you count the finals that are the small symbols used above the regular symbols to add emphasis on a certain syllable.

[14]Ki-teen-noo-ak a traditional Inuit game.

[15]Il-oo-ve-gow-yak a traditional Inuit game.

[16]A-ma-goo-yak a traditional Inuit game explained above.

[17]A-la-kat-tak a tradional Inuit game explained above.

bulging bellies. And by many accounts, that is the very basis of the term Qallunaaq which has been explained to me by elders in the community, "bushy eyebrows and fat belly." These Qallunaaq whalers introduced music to the Inuit. The Scottish whalers introduced the accordion, a very popular instrument in the North. And they introduced Scottish Square Dancing, which the Inuit call Inuktitut Dancing. The people often danced in their qammaqs at night. Rosie shares her memories about dancing. "We'd dance inside the qammaq with very little light but the qulliq would keep on almost going out because of the movement."

The Inuit would have lots of fun in the evenings together as a family. Rosie and Solomonie smiled as they remembered the stories told to them by their parents. Rosie fondly remembered her mother telling her stories. "I was pretty scared when they told the scary stories. It was when my mother told the scary stories. After the stories I wouldn't want to leave the qammaq, I was too scared."

Night and Sky

The nights were filled with laughter, fun, cold and dark. But there were beautiful starry skies and, of course, the Northern Lights, Aurora Borealis. Solomonie smiled as he remembered those nights. He told us that they used to use the stars to foretell the weather.

> The tail of a shooting star was referred to as its excrement. If a shooting star comes straight down, then the weather is going to calm down. That is all I know about the stars. If the Northern Lights went in the direction from North to South then we would expect wind from that direction. If the Northern Lights are right above you then the wind will stop coming from the South but the weather will not be very good. If the Northern Lights are really moving around then it means it's going to be windy. If we whistle, the Northern Lights will come closer and they seem to get quite close sometimes. Some people are very scared if you whistle at the Northern Lights[18].

[18]Northern Lights The Inuit have a myth passed down from their forefathers that if you whistle at the Northern Lights they will swoop down and take your head off. Actually, I have whistled at the Northern Lights and they looked like they moved around faster?

Tragedy on the Ice

Not all of Solomonie and Rosie's memories are happy ones. They have had their share of tragedies during their lives. The most significant tragedy for both of them was the loss of two of their children. Rosie simply said: "I had six children but two of them drowned. I had six children but two of them drowned."

Solomonie shared his memories about that situation and the one involving the loss of three of his siblings.

> Since our two sons drowned, I have changed especially mentally. Yes, losing a child was hard, your body gets weak, and you're not all there after you lose a child, especially losing a family member, because they didn't die of an illness. It wouldn't have been so bad if they had died of an illness but they died of drowning and it was sudden.
>
> I've lost three brothers and sisters, three of them through the water. Two of them died when I was right there. It was when a bunch of us were in the water. There were eight of us and my two little brothers went under the ice. It was the two kids that fell into the water first; Jusua Akulukyuk and my other little brother were the first two people who fell into the water. Those two kids, they would run and have jumping competitions. But then they'd jump too far and fall into the water. We would try to save them but we would also fall into the water. When we fell in the water we would have to save ourselves so we couldn't save the other two.
>
> It was broken ice and they got to a part where it was too thin so that when we were trying to save them we fell in also. One of the kids, Jusua, got out of the water, the other one, my little brother who was the same age as Jusua, was named Jonah, he got out too, but my other two little brothers drowned. All this happened when they were playing together. When they were playing together they would run and have a jumping contest; this was while we were all walking somewhere but they got ahead of us and that's how they fell. We tried saving them but we'd also fall into the water. My brother who lives in Iqaluit, after I got out of the water myself, I saved him using rope and pulling him out, and now he's living in Iqaluit.

Nature and Airplanes

On their journeys, walking through the mountains and across the tundra, the Inuit encountered all sorts of wildlife and experiences with Nature. One of these encounters was with bees. Rosie and Solomonie had very different memories about the phenomenon of bees. Rosie explained that she could just hold them in her hands and they would not sting her, while Solomonie called them devils. Solomonie told the story of his first encounter with an airplane and how he thought it was a huge bee.

> When we were gone fishing when the tide was down and I was down there checking the net for fish, I heard a bee. But there was no bee around. When I looked up there was this plane. I ran as fast as I could to the qammaq. Everyone laughed, but we were scared. We knew of planes, we just had never seen one that close overhead before.

Rosie had a similar experience when she first encountered an airplane: "It was in town here when the first plane came in when I was a kid. We ran up the cliff when we first heard the plane because we were all scared. We didn't know what it was."

In time, Rosie and Solomonie would have more experience with planes than they initially anticipated. One of their daughters was born with a seizure ailment and needed constant medical attention. The authorities in Auluq decided that she could not get the proper care there so they sent her south, to Montreal. She was adopted by a couple there. Her new adoptive parents were quite open to Rosie and Solomonie visiting their little girl.

> We flew to Montreal to go see our daughter. It's too hot there. The people who were looking after her, she's adopted, came to pick us up from the airport. She's weak, but she can still walk. Both her adoptive parents are dead now. My first time there I was afraid. I thought we were going to crash or something. Our daughter cannot speak Inuktitut, No. She can only say Anana[19] and Atata[20]. She lives with us now; she is 33.

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[19]A-na-na mother

[20]A-ta-ta father

Radios and other Modern Conveniences

Solomonie and Rosie were not only the first among their peers to travel so far away; they were also the first people in their area to own a radio.

> Before, we were the only ones with a radio. I bought a radio when nobody else had one. When we were at camp at night, people would be coming to our house just to listen to the radio. We heard about things. But we don't hear about things from Akukittu[21] anymore. Back then, people from Akukittu would come and visit. The radio transmissions were in Inuktitut, but in their dialect not in ours. That was around 1964.

It was around that time that the postal service began in the North according to Solomonie: "There was a postal service, not the same as this one, but there was one down there (he pointed to the outpost camp where they used to live). They brought the mail to the people. They brought letters to the people."

According to Rosie and Solomonie, television was introduced to the North at about the same time as they had the radio, in the early 1960's. The telephone did not come into their lives until a few years later. Before they had a telephone they used a radiophone if they needed to contact someone. Solomonie explained that the Qallunaaq people brought these radiophones with them when they were carrying out their exploration. Solomonie told us what it was like in terms of communication prior to the telephone and other modern conveniences.

> Before the radiophones were here, the only way to communicate with other communities was through the postal service, when the people came in through dog sleds. Sometimes through the mail we would get things like tea, tobacco, sugar and palaugaq (bannok)[22].

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[21] A-koo-kit-too the community from which the broadcasts were made

[22] ba-nuk a biscuit-like bread that the Inuit either bake or fry made out of flour, water, baking powder and fat.

Solomonie explained that there was electricity when they were moved into town.

> There was electricity when we moved to Auluq. The reason why I moved here was because of our daughter. Because the doctors told us that she couldn't stay there (in the outpost camps) anymore, that she had to move down south. That is why we are living here now. If not for that we would probably still be out there. The big thing that changed when we moved into the Hamlet was we didn't have to do as much work. We didn't have to bother with the qulliq and we had electricity. It's not cold in the nights like with the qulliq back then.

Igloos and Working Together

Some of Solomonie's nights were spent in an igloovigaq[23]. Inuit people never lived in igloovigaq for any length of time as many people might think. Solomonie told us what they were used for:

> We stayed in igloovigaq when we went hunting over night. But, today we use tents. Before, we used nothing but igloovingaqs when we went hunting overnight, but that is the only time we would use them.

Solomonie was very adamant that we understand how much the people worked together to help one another; he explained that it was the Inuit way.

> In the winter, in Ummanaqjuaq[24], where the ice constantly broke up a lot, while we were out on the boat, while we were boating, and we came back, the line attached to the boat, we would just throw that onto the land with everyone still on the boat. And the people on the land would pull the boat and the people in it up onto the land. They didn't have to get out of the boat because everyone on land would help one another in situations like that. There were different sizes of boats; long ones were for the bowhead whale hunts. The men would get together in their different boats and work to herd the whales to a certain spot to hunt them. But they used any kind of boats to go around on. Every time the wind came we'd go using the tikirautaq[25]. The boats flooded back then, but we had pumps that we

[23]ig-loo-vi-gaq the term the Inuit use for igloo or snow house

[24]Oom-man-ak-ju-ak one of the outpost camps

[25]Ti-ki-rau-tak a piece of skin or material that they would fashion into a sail

made ourselves. The pumps would pump all the water from the back of the boat and it would pour out really well.

Changes

Many significant changes took place in the lives of Inuit people during the 1950's and 1960's, but one of the most meaningful changes occurred circa 1962. Solomonie called this occurrence Qimminarniq[26]. The R.C.M.P. was sent to the area now known as Auluq and requested that the dog owners living in the outpost camps in the area bring their dogs to the settlement. Most of the dogs were killed. In the early 1960's the Canadian Government sent officials to try to get the Inuit people to move into settlements. Many people believe that the killing of hundred's of sled dogs during that time was a deliberate ploy to keep the people from going back to the outpost camps. There was also talk, however, of a huge outbreak of rabies during that period. This was a devastating time for the Inuit. As Richard Harrington (1981, p. 106) explains:

> Nothing symbolized more the perfect harmony and adaptability of the traditional Inuit way of life than the relationship with their dogs. The hunters and the dogs were completely dependent on each other. Originally from Siberia, the husky dogs were enormously tough and powerful, accustomed to surviving long periods of hunger and the worst Arctic weather.

During this period, officials from the Canadian Government came to the North and assigned each person with a number. Solomonie explained what he remembered about that time.

> Back then, we didn't have last names—we had numbers. For example, I was 378. But we don't use them anymore; we started to have last names. Long ago, I remember that we only had the one name. Our last names come from our father's name. The name you got was it; no one had nicknames.

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[26]Kim-me-yuln-nik the killing of many dogs

Prior to the influx of Qallunaaq and Christian religious philosophy, the people living in the North did not get married like many of us living in the south. The couples were very committed to each other and usually stayed together for life, but they did not get legally married. Solomonie explained how it used to be.

> Before they never got married. Like my grandmother never got married to my grandfather. They never got married because there weren't any priests around. The only way we got married when the priests did come was only if both parents agreed with the girl or guy you wanted. I just told my parents that I wanted a wife and they found Rosie. Both sets of parents agreed and so we were married. We have been married since 1964.

Solomonie and Rosie remembered their families. Rosie remembered her grandfather's name: Tunga[27]. Solomonie remembered that one of his grandmother's names was Shikuliak[28]. He said that his other grandmother's name was Qauniq[29]. Their grandparents would not have had last names.

Rosie told us she was born in 1927. She explained that Solomonie was approximately 73 years of age, but she wasn't sure of his exact date of birth. Solomonie is the second oldest of nine siblings and Rosie is one of six. All of Rosie's siblings have passed away. Because of the changes brought about by the influx of Qallunaaq people over most of their lives, I wondered how they felt about Qallunaaq teachers teaching their children. Solomonie explained how he felt:

> I like Qallunaaq teachers teaching my children because now they can speak both languages. I like it also because that's the only way they're going to have jobs in the future. Before, how we were educated was how to hunt, but nowadays they don't educate them that way anymore. But I like it. If my children had the opportunity to get more education down south like after high school, I would want that. I want the kids to know Inuit traditional ways; I want them (the Qallunaaq teachers) to notice

[27]Toon-ga a name in Inukitut that means ghost
[28]She-koo-lee-ak
[29]kow-neek

> because the kids today are not taking the language and the traditions seriously. I want people to know the truth about what it is to be Inuit.

In my opinion, Solomonie is absolutely correct about the youth losing some of their knowledge about the language and about Inuit traditional ways. I was amazed with how often the students I taught had to consult each other to figure out the correct translation of the Inuktitut word I had inquired about. Many of the youth struggled with writing syllabics and, many admitted to me when I asked them that they had stopped thinking in Inuktitut.

There is a movement in Nunavut to try to aid the Inuit people in retaining their culture. One idea put forth by the Department of Education is that every year, teachers and students take a few weeks and live out on the land. This opportunity is wonderful as it allows the students to teach the teachers. All the food is hunted and the students work with elders in many traditional ways. I experienced this exciting time during the last few months of my first year in Auluq. We traveled to Avataaqtu[30] and I thoroughly enjoyed myself. It was one of the toughest experiences I have ever lived through but one I will not soon forget.

This interview changed my life. I was forced to change my perspective about things that I had heard about from childhood. I heard about "Eskimo" peoples from Northern Canada, and really thought I had a bit of an understanding about Inuit culture and hunter-gatherer societies. However, as I spoke to Rosie and Solomonie, and listened to their stories, I developed a new understanding about the history of the Inuit in the Baffin region. I asked Solomonie what he wanted me to say to the people who might read this interview and he simply replied "the truth."

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[30]Av-i-tuk-too a beautiful frozen lake out on the land nestled by snow-covered mountains all around. Caribou dot landscape and polar bear tracks are always close by.

Chapter Three

A Glimpse Into Inuit Culture

In order to put my experiences while living in Auluq into some kind of context, I think it is important to discuss the Inuit culture and way of life as it is in present day. This chapter provides a very brief glimpse into the Inuit culture, as I have interpreted it through reading and talking to people in the community, and explains a bit about three vital aspects: the Inuktitut language, parenting, and time.

The Inuit of Northern Canada present for many people the quintessential example of culture as adaptive response. The Arctic presents for its inhabitants an environment in which very few careless actions can be afforded. Cold temperatures, polar bears, raging blizzards, physical accidents, mechanical failures, and wrong turns on the trail can turn a seemingly natural occurrence like hunting into a fatal tragedy. We have romanticized the connection the Inuit have with nature, but really, when you are amidst that nature, you need your wits about you at all times. You need to know how to survive.

The Inuit have evolved into a people who reap what they need, do what they need to do and go where they need to go in order to further their race. In my experience, there is very little pretense in Inuit culture. While teasing occurs quite often, there is not much bantering. People generally say what they mean and then move on.

Language

Initially, there were not even words for "hello," "good-bye," "thank you," and "you're welcome" in Inuktitut. "In the course of colonial changes to the North, however, the Inuit adopted or created [such] words" (Brody 2000, p. 46). There is very little small talk. People usually get to the point and only speak if they have something

worthwhile to say. Silence is not the enemy here. In fact, silence is a very important part of communication. I learned this aspect of the culture the hard way trying to fill in the empty spaces in the conversation. I soon tired of this practice and just let the silence be. When the students came to visit they most often just sat and looked around. I used to try to start conversations with small talk but to no avail. The students simply answered with a "yes" or "no" (usually using facial expressions) and then didn't add anything to further the conversation. I would get a headache trying to come up with things to talk about. Then I just stopped and let the silence be. It was a wonderful awakening for me. I learned that silence is really not something to be afraid of. And I learned that people communicate in so many more ways than by using their voices. Even the way the Inuit express "yes" and "no" is silent. For "yes" they raise their eyebrows and for "no" they scrunch their noses. After a few months I noticed that my daughters and I were doing the same thing. It is so much more convenient not to have to verbally communicate constantly. At first, though, it was hard to get used to.

I remember my first week or two teaching. I was asking questions hoping to get to know my students a bit better. I was warned prior to moving North about the facial expressions for "yes" and "no," but I had no idea how subtly the people could form these expressions. None of the students seemed to be answering any of my questions. This particular class was 24 grade 11 students. Finally, I asked them if there was something wrong. I asked if they were purposely not answering me. One of the guys spoke up and said "we are answering you, but you weren't listening." I responded by saying that I couldn't hear them. He finally explained the eyebrow and nose movements. I got several demonstrations and there was much laughter as I demonstrated my skill at the art. After thinking about the whole process, I concluded that it was a really good practice because the person with whom you are carrying on a conversation must really focus on your face, to read what you are communicating.

The Inuit language, Inuktitut, is very complex. As Brody (2000)

explains,

> The words of the Inuit create the world as well as describe it. A person can explain how a word is used and what it refers to, but the word's meaning depends on knowing a web of contexts and concealed related meanings. ...Therefore, it is held the language of the Inuit cannot be translated into the language of the Qallunaaq (p. 49).

There is no word in Inuktitut for animal. There are only words for specific kinds of animals. This I share with you to explain that Inuktitut speaking people do not usually waste much time in speech. Instead of starting with generalities and then moving to specifics, as most southerners are used to, Inuktitut speaking people start right off with the specifics. There does not seem to be very much sarcasm in the Inuktitut language. There is a little sarcasm involving the normal competition between young people, but, for the most part, there is not the level of sarcasm that we, in the south, would be involved in. I spent some of my time in my English classes teaching the students how to be sarcastic. They were exposed to a certain level of sarcasm in the novels, poems, etc. they were studying and I felt that it was important to teach them about how and why some people use sarcasm. They thought it was quite amusing. I was really amazed with how quickly the students picked up on the subtleties of sarcasm.

Inuktitut is a unique language in many regards. One of the most interesting aspects for me is that the language of the elders and the language of the youth are two, sometimes completely different, languages. In some instances, the elders cannot communicate with the youth. It is quite sad. I did not understand the situation at first, but I grew to understand its significance as I learned more about the culture. I remember attending a talk about igloo building. I was sitting beside a student from grade 11 who seemed very focused on the talk. I asked her what was being said and

she paused for a moment or so and then turned to me and said: "he is using old words, and I don't understand them all."

Basically, because of so much southern influence, the youth are losing their language. They watch English television and have English teachers and so much of their day is spent speaking and listening to English. I asked my students if they thought in English or Inuktitut and they told me that for the most part they thought in English. They explained that the only time they thought in Inuktitut is when they were carrying out traditional kinds of activities out on the land. But as Cummins (1996) states, bilingual children, in acquiring their second language are "developing what has been termed an additive form of bilingualism; in other words, they [are] adding a second language to their repertory of skills..." (p. 105). However, many of the teachers who come from the south find it difficult to understand the challenges involved for the students in moving constantly from Inuktitut to English.

The term "Inuk-ti-tut" literally translated means "in the manner of an Inuk." To learn the language of the Inuit is not just to learn how to verbally express yourself, it means to learn about "a way of being" (Brody 2000, p. 64). It is sad that the youth are gradually losing this unique "way of being."

Quite often when students visited me in my living room, they would tell me stories. Sometimes, though, one of them would break into Inuktitut and only intersperse a bit of English here and there. I would hear a long string of Inuktitut words and then suddenly "and then my grandfather killed it" followed by another string of Inuktitut words ended by "my grandfather almost died." They would all laugh and comment. I would ask for a translation. They would all look at each other and pass words back and forth and then apologize because the "feeling" of the story could not be transmitted to me, I would have to understand the language. I didn't really understand what they meant until I read Brody and learned that Inuktitut is not

just a language but a way of transmitting life. It is closely tied to the sustenance activities.

Parenting and Children

Parenting and the way the Inuit interact with and treat their children is quite different, in some ways, from the way it is in the south.

> The Inuit way is without authoritarianism; parents are inclined to trust children to know what they need. Individuals have to be left to make decisions for themselves; and children are individuals just as adults are, since they carry the names, for which we may say souls of their late and much admired relative (Brody, 2000, p. 31).

I remember a discussion I had one day with some of my students about names. We were talking about middle names. They asked me what my other names were and then I asked them about theirs. To my surprise, almost all of them (and there were seven of them with me at the time) had the name Alookie as a middle name. I asked them if it was a popular name at the time and they laughed. They said they were named Alookie because she was an elder who died around the time they were born. There were three males and four females with whom I was carrying on this conversation and so gender obviously was not a concern at the time of their naming. The students explained that whenever a baby is born, the custom is to use the name of the person who most recently died in the community. Inuit people believe that the person who has recently passed away will live on in the baby who carried his or her name. Accordingly, the child will be afforded the respect and honor that the person would have received prior to his or her death. He or she *actually* is that person to some people.

At times, the person carrying the name of one who had recently passed away would get called the nicknames of that person. If an elder male lost his wife and her name was given to a child, he would often call the child "wife." So, the way that child is treated is not the same as the way children are treated in the south. Not once did I

witness an adult exhibiting any anger towards a child. The odd time I would see a glance or an expression passing between adult and child, but never harsh words or yelling. As Briggs (1970) explains, "Emotional control is highly valued among [Inuit]; indeed, the maintenance of equanimity under trying circumstances is the essential sign of maturity, of adulthood" (p. 4). I witnessed many interactions between children and adults but when a child was acting in a way that wasn't socially acceptable at the time, the adult would most often simply go to the child and remove him or her from that particular situation. That kind of discipline only happened very infrequently. For the most part, children were left to do what they wanted and the consequences of their actions ruled how they behaved. If that meant injury or getting hurt mentally, so be it. The adults I witnessed did not interfere in the normal day-to-day lives of their children. At times the adults would tease the children as a form of mild discipline, but for the most part the adults just let the children be. That is not to say that respect and politeness are not an important part of the culture, quite the contrary.

> Children were told to be obedient to their parents so they would live a long life. If a child misbehaved or was not obedient to the mother or father, other members of the family took over the correcting of the action. ...Inuit believe that when a child does something wrong, one should correct the action, rather than the behaviour or personality of the child. (*Inuqatigiit Curriculum*, p. 3)

This is not the way it is in the south. Most southern families I know work on a preventative system. They try to remove dangers from any area where their child will be spending time. I was not used to the way the Inuit interact with their children. I must say, though, I had fewer discipline problems in my high school classrooms than I did in any teaching situation I experienced in the south. The students were usually attentive, and respectful of me for the most part. There was a general sense of lethargy at times; and there did not seem to be the enthusiastic feeling I used to get when introducing certain topics in school in the south. I had to get used to what was exciting

to the group of people sitting in front of me everyday and get rid of the idea that what I thought was exciting and "fun" to learn might not be what this group of students wanted or thought was fun. It didn't take me very long to figure that out. Once I did, I found that the seemingly lethargic way of being was the result of the students not completely understanding where I was coming from. The material was not related to what they already understood or knew to be true. So, I spent a great deal of time molding the curriculum (derived from Alberta and based quite a bit on American culture) to the schemas of the youth before me everyday. This proved to be a daunting task but one I felt was vital to the success of the students. The curriculum was written after certain assumptions were made. For instance, the short stories in one of the anthologies we were supposed to use were full of references to things normally associated with an agricultural society. There didn't seem to be many references to hunter-gatherer societies and if there were, the societies mentioned were in far away places like Africa or Australia. Some of the stories, in fact, could be considered racist in nature.

David Corson (1998) in his book *Changing Education for Diversity* quotes Stones (1983) regarding this issue: "There is good evidence that ...non-racist children's books can have a positive influence on achievement, and also reduce harmful stereotypes" (p. 98). As Corson continues, "this is the easiest area of reform for schools to deal with, because it is the most tangible" (p. 98). I think it is very important to give careful attention to the selection of texts when teaching any students, but to present books and materials totally irrelevant to the people sitting before you as the text they will be working with for the rest of the year is not positive for anyone.

Time

One of the things my daughters and I noticed almost immediately upon our arrival in Auluq was the lack of stress we were used to experiencing in our home province. No one seemed to be hurrying anywhere. There was no one running and no

one seemed very upset about anything. I rather enjoyed this approach to life. What many people conclude based on watching the Inuit, for instance, is that they don't care if they are late for an appointment or late for school. Southern people often conclude that Inuit people are being rude when they are late. This I don't think is true. I believe that to conclude that Inuit people don't care about being on time is to deny them their way of life and to push on them a way of life that is not their own. Over the last several years, many scholars have studied hunter-gatherer societies from a number of different perspectives. These scholars have come up with some startling revelations. Brody (2000) states that scholars such as Woodburn, Lee, and Sahlins[31] have shown that "the routines of the hunter-gatherer way of life allowed more leisure time than those of agricultural systems and secured a good supply of highly nutritious food for most people most of the time" (p. 123). I think that because we are so impacted by an industrial and agriculturally oriented society we think any other way of life has to be wrong.

I somehow expected to be carrying out some kind of time travel when I took my daughters and ventured to the Arctic. But, the truth is, Inuit people have been evolving along with the rest of the world. Brody (2000, p. 125) explains this concept as he describes one of the people he met on his journey to Pond Inlet.

> When I first got to know Anaviapuk in Pond Inlet, he did not present himself as a human being from some other, more remote time. He gave no indication, and made no claim, of belonging to a different era. He had lived much of his life as a hunter and trapper, making use of snow houses and sod huts, the illuviga and qarmak of "traditional" life, and traveling by dog team and in open boats. His language, Inuktitut, was rich with grammatical sophistication. His family relied on caribou skins for winter clothes, and on sealskins for spring and summer boots. A great deal of Inuktitut material and intellectual culture played its part in his everyday life. But Anaviapik was as modern as anyone. He was a contemporary of mine, not an ancestor. Every part of his life had been changing... for as

[31] James Woodburn at the London School of Economics, Richard Lee at the University of Toronto and Marshall Sahlins at the University of Chicago.

> long as anyone else's. Some of these changes were intrinsic to the Inuktitut system and Inuit lands; many others were to do with historical and colonial processes that originated in Europe. The uses of metal, gunpowder, manufactured clothes, rifles, petroleum--all the things that are the story of European materiel history--were important to his life....

What I learned about the Inuit way of dealing with time is that they mostly deal with the present. Everything is based on what is needed for survival and priorities are set depending on what is needed at any given time. These priorities, I learned, were not the same as the priorities my daughters and I brought with us. We had to change the way we thought about things. My teaching changed rapidly when I moved north. My idea of what was important at the time and the ideas of my students were often two totally different things at first. It took me a few months to figure out that going to university was not as important to most of my students as it was for me. In some instances, families would not even hear of it. So, I had to rethink my strategy, my reasons for teaching. The experience caused me to go back to the beginning, to why I became a teacher in the first place. I love working with youth. I love the potential and the hope that they represent. In the south, that hope is often translated into the students going off to post-secondary institutions to further their education and to live up to their potential. In the north, for my students, that hope is often translated into figuring out a way to continue their culture. To some, that means going south to university or college, getting an education and coming back to the north to work. To others, it is learning the traditional ways of their culture and perfecting these to the best of their abilities. Neither way is better or worse than the other, they are just two different perspectives. I learned to be patient with both ways of thinking and I am using the two ways as a dichotomy with the assumption that there are many things between the two if they were placed on a spectrum. It is important to point out that because of this dichotomy and all that which lies along this spectrum there is much

frustration for the students, teachers and families. (see further reference to this dichotomy on page 87 of this text). I learned that just because I am a southerner doesn't mean I know the best way to live. Brody (2000) explains that

> all human groups incline to the view that they lead the best possible way of life. From this follows a more or less casual assumption that those pursuing any other way of life would, if they could, change from their inferior to our superior society, religion, morality, economy and forms of knowledge. (pp. 156-157)

Fiona O'Donogue (1998) points out that

> Schools in Nunavut include individuals from all across Canada and world. Increasing numbers of Inuit educators, whose [backgrounds] may differ in significant ways from that of the Qallunaat, now work in the system. However, while educators from both groups express an urgent need to maintain Inuit culture, tradition and language, they may not fully realize that the school and their own behaviours, support a western, eurocentric background which powerfully undermines their articulated dreams and desire to work together to achieve those dreams. (pp. 178-179)

My experience has taught me to quash any feelings of ethnocentrism I had, and open my mind to the possibility of difference. Brody's idea is true. We all think that what we do and how we do it are the "only" ways. What I have learned, and so have my daughters, is that there are many other ways. I am grateful that during my experiences in the Arctic I was afforded the privilege of learning that lesson.

Part Two

'I can imagine a world of harmony,' she says.
'I believe there is a place where I can grow wings
And fly from the top of a waterfall.
I believe there is a place where the world is colorful,
Shimmering with indigo light.
(O'Donoghue & McAuley, quoted in O'Donoghue (1998) p. 345)

Chapter Four

Spirituality

Spirituality is something we think of from time-to-time but not something we usually come right out and ask each other about, especially in certain circumstances. But, sometimes you can't help that it comes right out of the blue and infiltrates your life whether you are ready or not for the experience. There are many who confuse the terms *religion* and *spirituality*. For me, the terms are two completely different things although they do intermix and are hard to discern at times. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (1974) the term *religion* means "belief in or worship of God or gods" (p. 951). According to the same dictionary, the word *spirituality* means "a devotion to spiritual things or things of or having to do with the spirit as distinct from the body or material things" (p.1083). In every sense of the word, to me, the Inuit represent the whole essence of spirituality. As Hugh Brody (2000) explains, "Hunter-gatherer knowledge is dependent on the most intimate possible connection with the world and with the creatures that live in it" (p. 254). Most of the Inuit people I have met are very much interested in things that are not really material in nature but are more nature related. Even the students I taught, the sixteen-year olds, were very excited to walk out into the tundra and just sit and listen, waiting for caribou or seals.

I have been involved in several situations I would consider spiritual experiences while living in Auluq. Most of these have occurred during my time outside the school while visiting or spending time with my students. One time in particular was during my first week in the community. The day started with my youngest daughter and I standing outside the front of our house, looking at the mountain across the street. We were deciding whether or not we would make an attempt to climb it. It is called Mount Auluq and we were told that it would take us three and one half-hours to climb, by the

various people we asked from the community. We decided to give it a try. We packed a few sandwiches and a thermos of tea and off we went.

Before long we heard something behind us. We stopped to see what it was and were surprised by the quiet presence of three little girls smiling as they climbed up over the rocks. They had an agility we did not possess. We greeted our companions and watched as they spoke to each other trying to find the words to greet us back. They just smiled. The oldest of the three, a girl around ten years old, could say a few words in English but not many. She went on ahead of us and beckoned for us to follow her. We did. Immediately we were on an easier trail. She and the others would bend down periodically and pick a piece of the low-lying vegetation we were climbing over. They would chew and swallow whatever it was they were picking. The older girl noticed our inquisitive looks and said "Banana Plant, you try, it good for you." So, seeing that nothing was happening to them after eating the plant, we each picked one of the ones that the girls were pointing to and put it in our mouths. It tasted almost exactly like a banana. It was delicious. The older girl smiled when she saw our expressions. "You like"? She asked. We nodded our approval and we all walked on.

It took us a long time to reach the summit of this small mountain and we were extremely tired. When we came up over the last large rock we were overwhelmed with what we saw. There standing before us was a huge, larger-than-life inuksuk[32]. These structures are human-shaped statues made from piling rocks on top of one another in certain positions. The legend of these rock figures is that the Inuit erect them "so they'll know we were here." They are a surprising comfort out in the middle of nowhere when you come upon one. It is like you are not alone. The term *inuksuk* actually means figure of a person (Inuk meaning person). They are supposed to bring you luck on your journey. The legend is also that when you climb to the top of Mount Auluq you must erect your own inuksuk and scratch your initials into the huge cross standing there.

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[32]i-nook-shook

The girls began to scratch their initials immediately. The older girl told me that this was the younger girls' first time.

Margaret asked if she could scratch her initials into the cross and stood beside the girls as they were doing the same. The older girl and I were standing by watching the ritual. She suddenly began to look around. "We must make our own inuksuk, I get rocks." I looked for rocks as well and the two of us gathered most of the rocks we needed for the project. Soon the others joined us, and the four of us lugged and pushed until we erected a three-foot high inuksuk. Margaret was thrilled. She was really sad that we didn't have our camera with us. I assured her we would climb the mountain again and take a picture of our accomplishment.

The five of us were hungry and thirsty and sat together with our feet over the side of the rounded hill that formed the top of the mountain. We just sat for a moment surveying the community and the breathtaking view of the mountains and fiord cutting in and out of one another. The air was crisp and there were bits of mist floating up here and there from brownish green pillars of rock. I took it in. I don't think I have ever felt more spiritual than at that moment. Here we were sharing food, nature and the building of an inuksuk with newfound friends in a new community literally at the top of the world. How could we be any closer to "God"?

We sat and communicated the best we could, sharing laughter and warmth and before long we began our descent down the mountain. We stopped at certain spots that we hadn't noticed on our way up, waterfalls springing out of huge rocks and beautiful little Arctic flowers blooming everywhere. We found thousands of blueberries and were distracted by the picking of these succulent juicy morsels. We didn't realize that seven hours had gone by before we reached our front door again. I asked the older girl if the three of them would like to come in for a little while. She conferred with the others and then smiled her consent. They came in and looked around.

They seemed to move gingerly through our house, not at all as confidently as they had maneuvered on the side of the mountain. They seemed shy inside. I told them to have a seat and relax and told Margaret to get out some games and toys to share with them. They stayed for several more hours playing with Margaret and laughing. It amazed me that they were all getting along so well even though Margaret could not really speak to them to any degree. The eldest of the three became one of Margaret's friends in Auluq. She spent many hours in our home and many more hours talking to Margaret on the phone. She taught us plenty about Inuit culture and sought to learn much about us. The experience we shared on Mount Auluq that day has somehow created a bond between Margaret and her friend that is still strong and unforgettable.

Another very spiritual experience I had was hunting with Solomonie Akpalialuk. It was during Spring Camp. Spring Camp is a week in April during which the entire school lives out on the land in tents, eating only what is killed when there. It is a time during which the students teach the teachers. The Inuit culture was all around; I felt part of it, enveloped by it. Some of the teachers were working on their campsites while I was trying to set up mine. Of course, with permafrost, there are no tent pegs; you must use rocks and tie lines from the tent to the rocks. This is a difficult task as the rocks are frozen into the ground and the ropes are stiff and difficult to tie. I watched as one group of students after another were getting their tents up and operational. I was still struggling with mine. Then one group of teachers got their tent up, then another, and still I was struggling with mine.

Finally, seven hours had passed since we had set out from the school to the campsite and I was getting really cold and frustrated. I was sitting on top of the snow trying to figure out what to do next when a student, Thomas, came over toward me. He looked into my face and asked me if I was all right. I said "No." I told him I was actually hoping that a polar bear would come down out of the mountain and eat me

because I had had enough. He laughed, a wonderful, full-bodied laugh and said "Don't wish that, it might come true." He asked me if I needed his help. I assured him that I certainly did. He stayed right there with me until the tent was up, the stoves were lit and I was warm. He donated his mattress to me as he said he didn't like to use it anyway. I knew he was fibbing though. I knew he was just being very kind.

He was absolutely right about something. I wouldn't have survived without him. He was very patient and kind to me right when I needed it. That seems to be the way in the North, just when you think you can't make it through a situation, someone comes along and makes it all right. It is the northern way. I finally got things organized to the point where I could get in my tent and go to sleep. I was just dozing off when I heard something rustling outside my tent. All of a sudden, the tent ties were being fiddled with and three rosy-cheeked smiling faces were staring down at me. "Can we come in"? I nodded my approval and they piled in through the tiny opening. "We thought we would come and visit you," they echoed. "We thought we would teach you throat singing."

For the next two hours, a group of six teenagers (both males and females) ended up in my tent. We read poetry, had throat-singing lessons and laughed, a lot. I thoroughly enjoyed myself, more than I imagined I would. I was warm and cozy and experiencing first-hand a group of teenagers showing me how to have fun at Spring Camp. The Northern Lights were playing behind us and the moon was shining across the Fiord. It was a night I will never forget.

The second day started with me waking up to ice shards floating around my tent. There were literally tiny slivers of ice crystals all through the air above me. It was spectacular to look at but they hurt when they bounced off my face and hands. I had to get out of there and get myself to the heat I knew was in the mess tent. I think I made record speed. When I arrived there I was greeted with the welcoming heat of the gas heaters. The heaters had been on for several hours by the time I rushed through the

door (approximately 8 a.m.). Heat, and the smell of fresh bannok and tea greeted me. That was our usual breakfast while at camp and I grew very fond of the ritual every morning.

As I was eating, one of the elder ladies came over to me and told me that my boots would not be adequate for the day's journey. She said that she would trade with me because she was not going with us on our journey that day; she was staying back to watch the campsite. I never asked anyone why someone had to stay back at camp to watch because I knew it was the ever-present fear of Nanook-the polar bear. No one verbalized his or her fear of this great beast because according to Inuit myth, to do so would be to bring on an attack; but we all knew why someone had to keep watch. So, I traded with her. Her boots were much warmer than mine, and I was grateful that she made the offer. We were heading out to Lake Avataktu for a bit of ice fishing and then into the mountains a bit further, to go caribou hunting. I was absolutely intrigued by the adventure but a little apprehensive about what I might encounter on our way.

We were to meet by the end of the tents toward the mountains at 9:00 a.m. The students and teachers with snow machines and kamotiks were taking all those who didn't have any form of transportation. I went with Pauloosie, a grade 12 student, Rod, a grade 10 student and Christina, a grade 11 student. Pauloosie was driving the snow machine and Rod and Christina were in the kamotik. I was standing by the end of the tents when they came up beside me and beckoned for me to hop in. I followed their orders.

Riding in a kamotik is not like any other drive I have ever taken. It is made entirely of wood and is pulled by two pieces of metal attaching it to the back of a snow machine. There are no shocks and the snow being scooped behind the snow machine gets funneled right into where you are sitting. It is cold and bumpy. It is also very noisy and you cannot hear each other unless you yell. All of this coupled with the language barrier causing us all to try to reach for words between English and Inuktitut made the

trip very tiring. But the scenery was absolutely breathtaking. On our right most of the time were mountains with all sorts of tracks clearly visible. Rod and Christina were yelling to each other in Inuktitut pointing at the various pieces of evidence of the animals that had been there very recently. To our right was the outer reaches of Auluq Fiord partly covered by ice and partly open. The open water was as smooth as glass. Every once in a while a seal would surface, look at us, and then dive out of sight. Huge tall pillars of greenish white glaciers pierced through the top of the water reaching far into the sky. They were magnificent. I don't know why, but I was reminded of a Disney ride, *Space Mountain,* although this wasn't Space Mountain it was Arctic terrain, and not even Disney could mimic such breathtaking scenery.

We reached our first destination, a frozen lake. I have never understood how Inuit travelers know where to go because everything looks the same. I asked but most just smiled and said, "we just know." Yet here we were at the frozen lake. In the distance we could hear the sound of a machine. I asked what it was and Rod told me it was a circle machine to make a hole in the ice. It was a huge auger and a few male elders were holding it making holes every several feet. I was equipped with a fishing line attached to a 12-inch piece of wood. At the end of the line was a large shiny lure fashioned with a hook. I was told which hole I should use for fishing and off I went. At the hole there was a piece of plywood leaning on the small bank of snow down toward the hole. I looked around and noticed that others were sitting or lying on their pieces of wood. They were busy jigging their lines up and down and some of the group had begun to land some fish, Arctic Char.

I sat on the piece of wood in front of me and dropped my long line into the freezing water. I could see the bluish-gray line drop down and down and noticed that ice crystals were forming across the top of the augured opening. I began to jig while moving my line around to keep the ice from forming. Around me I heard cheers from people here and there as some more of our group landed fish. In front of me lay the

Arctic: vast, white, mysterious and breathtakingly beautiful. I felt totally relaxed and totally at peace. In between the excited sounds of teachers, students and elders catching fish was total silence. There was the odd sound from under us as the ice shifted slightly in its way, but mostly there was silence.

I finally broke my silence when I felt a heavy tug at the end of my line. I jerked the line immediately and felt that the weight was still there. I held fast to the fishing mechanism in my hand and slowly stood up. Hand over hand I began to pull up the line from the crystal-cold water. Finally, the fish emerged. Not as large as I thought, but a keeper. I cheered and those at holes close to me yelled over their approval of my catch both in English and in Inuktitut. I was thrilled. What a great feeling it was to be contributing to our collective meal. The food we caught was put together and cooked as one for all to share. I caught three fish that afternoon, all of which were added to the pile. I was really enjoying myself.

After fishing and downing a quick snack of bannok and hot tea, we headed off into the mountains for caribou hunting. I must admit I was quite nervous as we began this next leg of our adventure. It was one thing to be sharing a serene activity like fishing with teenagers, students of all ages, moms, dads, elders and other teachers, but it was quite another issue when I thought about the .303 rifles being added to the mix. But what I learned on that day was that while some of the students struggle, somewhat, in the classroom, almost all of the students excel in this vast outdoor classroom. They showed me how expert they were at a combination of crack shooting, surviving the cold, agility while running up and down steep embankments and creativity in maneuvering their snow machines. These teenagers were really skilled at a great many things and I was very impressed.

We traveled from the frozen lake to the mountain edge in kamotiks pulled by numerous snow machines. I hopped into Solomonie Akpalialuk's kamotik. He looked at me as I was standing in the crowd getting ready to go and nodded for me to get into

his. We arrived about third in line and we piled out to get organized for the hunt. I really wanted to go on with the men to the actual hunting grounds. I was trying to figure out how I could arrange such a rare outing.

Solomonie was making ready his machine. He was topping off the gas and making sure he had his knife and the amount of ammunition he felt appropriate. He very swiftly slung his rifle over his shoulder and, in a wink, beckoned for me to climb on the back of his machine. We waited in line until the rest were ready. His granddaughter, a grade 11 student of mine, came over to me while we were in line ready to go and told me that she could not remember her grandfather ever taking a female hunting, not her and not her mother. I felt really overwhelmed. I asked her to thank her grandfather for me and after she spoke to him in Inuktitut, he took off his rifle and handed it to me to hold during our trip. I was really nervous.

A group of three snow machines began the journey up the side of the mountain; our machine was second in line. We putted along at a steady but slow pace for about fifteen minutes. The scenery was absolutely breathtaking. I couldn't believe where I was and what I was doing at that moment. What an opportunity! I watched Solomonie carefully. He seemed to be looking from side to side. So I decided to do the same. He slowed the machine down from time to time and pointed with his hand. He was speaking in Inuktitut to me pointing at hundreds of animal tracks up and down the slopes. The tracks mostly looked like rabbit tracks to me, but some were bigger. I could not believe how peaceful it was, white as far as the eye could see. Again, I was amazed at how Solomonie seemed to know exactly where he and the others were going. On the other two machines were two sets of students. Both groups were boys from my grade 11 class. They wove in and out in front and behind us and smiled brightly when they caught my eye as they passed.

Suddenly, Solomonie reached behind him, grabbed the rifle from my hands and jumped off the machine while it was still in motion, all in one smooth movement. I

could not believe what was happening. I just held onto the machine for dear life as it coasted over the snow until it stopped. Solomonie ran up the side of a hill jutting out of the side of the mountain. He dropped to the ground on his belly, slowed his breathing down and slowly squeezed the trigger of his rifle. Shots pierced the still Arctic air. I shuddered for a moment and then stared squinting trying to see what Solomonie was shooting at. He ran over toward me, grabbed the rope off the back of the machine and raced up the hill again on foot. I watched him until he ran out of sight, over the embankment. The other two groups followed him on their machines. I sat and waited. I never felt so alone in my whole life. I couldn't hear a thing. I looked around and before me lay the Arctic, not a footprint in sight, not a sound, not a human. Behind me lay the Arctic carved and chopped with snowmobile tracks and the tracks of animals I have yet to identify. And right there was just me. Alone.

Suddenly I heard the sounds of the other machines starting up and then I saw Solomonie. He was walking down the side of the hill dragging a rather large caribou behind him. He pulled it right up along side our machine and beckoned for me to get off the machine and stand beside him. I obeyed and waited for what would happen next.

Before I had time to think, Solomonie grabbed his huge knife from its sheath on the machine and began to hack off the legs of the still warm animal at my feet. I was dumbstruck and speechless. He hoisted the first leg he cut off and thrust it into my chest. I had no choice but to raise my arms so it would not drop to the dotted red snow beneath. I just stood there holding one then two, three, four, full, warm, furry caribou legs. I didn't know what else to do. Finally, the cutting was over. I just remember looking down at the head of the once agile beast and seeing its huge brown eyes staring up at me. Steam was coming from the gouged flesh.

As quickly as Solomonie had jumped off the snow machine he was back on it, waving for me to get on behind him. This time he slung his rifle over his back and

turned around to help me get my balance right while holding the four, heavy legs. The teenagers on the other machines drove up along side and smiled at me. "Nice caribou hey!" I nodded my approval and just kept holding onto the legs. By this time, blood was dripping onto my parka and down the front of my snow pants. I just kept holding on.

With the caribou body held fast to the machine with the expert tying of Solomonie, we were off. We seemed to be moving a lot slower than when we came out and by this time I was beginning to get a bit cold. We finally got back to where we began our hunting expedition and the legs were taken from my hold. The crowd gathered around and Solomonie began to clean and gut the animal. People began to eat the meat.

I will never forget my hunting trip with Solomonie that day. His granddaughter told me that he wanted me to go with him because I had asked him questions about hunting during our interview. He said he wanted me to know the truth about hunting. Now I do.

These experiences I shared with my students out in their world really taught me many lessons. First, my classroom was not their Mecca, it was mine and I had no right to expect that Inuit youth would fully understand where I was coming from. Second, just because some of my students did not immediately pick up the juxtapositions and the verisimilitudes in literature did not mean that they were less than extremely intelligent. That word, *intelligence,* is such a vast one, and I pledged to myself from my spiritual experiences in the North that I would not simply measure intelligence one way. It is these "extra curricular" experiences that I have shared with my students, these spiritual experiences that I will bring with me wherever my teaching takes me, into the classrooms of my future. I will carry these experiences and the memories of these students so I'll always remember that there are different intelligences in each of us marked by all that which is not material, but rather *spiritual* in nature.

Chapter Five

Auluq from Elizabeth and Margaret's Perspective

In this chapter we hear from my daughters, Elizabeth and Margaret. Both have been keeping a journal since they began to write and wanted to contribute to what I was doing with my thesis. This is their own account of how they negotiated meaning in our Arctic community. I have gone over their notes to correct grammar and spelling, but the core of what they wrote over our year remains intact. Here are their stories.

Elizabeth's Notes

Adventure is simply a nine-letter word to most people-- a television control teleporting a person to distant places is sometimes as far as many people get. Other people might dream of blizzards and Arctic storms while gazing into a miniature glass dome filled with snow. True adventures are rarely experienced and when they are taken on they can sometimes become far from what was expected. A person's life, outlook and very being can be thrown into a whirlwind of confusion as new challenges unfold. While others sat on their couches, I was in the distant places and while others watched through a glass dome, I was in the middle of that blizzard.

To those who lived in Auluq for their entire lives, adventure is the last word they would use to describe their community. A small town of less than 1500 people and a high school of less than two hundred students wouldn't appear to most people to hold much for the average teenager. But there were lots of adventures and lots of challenges for me to get through.

The teenagers in Auluq are raised, for the most part, with strong cultural influences and, for the most part, I was seen as an outsider. I was the minority; in fact, I was the only Qallunaaq teenager in the community. I really stuck out. I was a visible minority for the first time in my life and was faced with conflicts few teenagers in some

parts of Canada even know exist. I certainly didn't know that these kinds of conflicts existed before I lived in Auluq.

As I stepped off the plane on that August day, I was totally overwhelmed. I was literally on top of the world. The mountains soared skyward, still capped with snow. I did not realize then just how much snow I would be seeing. Still, even as I was surrounded by breathtaking beauty, I was already beginning to feel isolated and very, very white.

The people seemed really friendly. As I walked around the community I discovered a new form of communication--SMILES. I was very relieved to find out that the simplest gesture of smiling could breech the ever-prevalent language barrier. The language spoken by the people in the community was foreign and unusual to my southern ears. It amazed me. It was different than any language I had ever heard. Throaty strings of syllables whirling around my head conveying messages clearly to those with ears that understood it. I felt rather isolated when I was in the midst of a group of my classmates all speaking a language I didn't understand. It was a really strange feeling. I was already feeling somewhat isolated and then when my friends spoke to each other while I was there, in Inuktitut, I felt somewhat left out. After some time, living, working and going to school in the community, I became quite accustomed to the sound of the language; I even began to understand it somewhat.

In school, the language used is English. I found it so strange to be in the middle of class with the teacher teaching and suddenly the other students would speak in Inuktitut to one another. Coming from an environment where you would not interrupt the teacher, I was very uncomfortable at first. I soon realized that the students were translating for one another. I became filled with admiration and understanding for my classmates. I was in the French Immersion program for most of my schooling prior to moving to the Arctic so I could empathize with the students who didn't understand everything the teacher was saying. I was thinking that if I could have asked a fellow

student to translate for me when I began the Immersion program down South, I would have asked.

But, even though English was spoken in the school, I did not blend in anymore there than outside. The language barrier was still there. Many of my classmates down south would act out in class and in school for attention, in Auluq, all I had to do was walk down the hall and I got a lot of attention. I learned far more than the curriculum dictated. One of the most important lessons I learned was that simple gestures are a very important form of communication when language is a barrier, and can be drawn upon in tight situations.

The first day of school was one of the most nerve-wracking experiences I have ever had. Although the day was short, it was very stressful. I got through the day by smiling and nodding a lot. I was stared at, poked, laughed at, pushed, and ignored all in one morning. For the most part, many of the students were friendly enough, but they all stared. They were nice enough, but they pointed. I was the only white teenager some of the students had ever seen other than on television so far in their lives.

I did make really good friends, eventually. It took about four months, but I finally started to feel accepted. Yet, although we could laugh together and joke around, I still felt different. I felt this difference exaggerated by those times when my friends came over to visit and they spoke to each other only in Inuktitut. I felt all alone sitting in my own living room. It was those times that I felt very isolated and the closest to my family.

The scenery changed quickly during the first couple of months in Auluq. The rugged brown terrain was quickly replaced with a smooth sheet of white, as winter moved in. The winter I endured in Auluq was nothing like the winters I experienced or even imagined before. The anxiety of being unbearably cold was rivaled only by the perpetual darkness. It is ironic that white stretched out as far as the eye could see, and yet the darkness was sometimes quite overwhelming.

The friends I made were mostly guys. I found this very frustrating during my time in Auluq. I tried everything to involve myself with the girls in my class and in the high school, but nothing I did seemed to get them to like me. In retrospect, I think the girls thought I was a threat to them in some way. I think that I was a novelty, in a way, to the guys and so the girls would fight to get the attention back of the few eligible bachelors in the community. I found that the girls would not talk to me at any length. They would keep their distance and if I spoke to them they would just nod and get away from me as soon as they could. It seemed as though many of them spent a considerable amount of time pointing out my faults to me if they did, in fact, speak to me at all. Now that I look back on those first few months, I wish I had worked a bit harder at trying to get the girls to understand where I was coming from. I was scared. I really believed that nothing I did would make any difference to them at all. They didn't even try to get to know me and they were judging my every move. I had never felt racism before I moved to Auluq, but I felt as though I was a victim of it then.

The prejudice was not confined to the minds of the teenagers with whom I went to school. I felt it from some of the people in the community as well. Upon our arrival, I decided that I would try to get a job as soon as possible. I went to the Convenience Store, the Northern Store and the Co-op Grocery Store and applied for a job. All three organizations got back to me. I decided to take the job at the Convenience Store because it was located closer to my house and the hours they were offering were better for my school schedule. It wasn't as easy as I thought it would be, however. The Manager of the store assumed that I knew how to work the machinery and knew the operation of the store because I had worked down south before. He didn't take any time to go over things, he just told me to figure it out on my own. I felt isolated again. I did figure it out, but I think it would have been easier if he had spent a few minutes showing me. He was also white and on several occasions made really quite negative

remarks about some of the other workers. All of the others were Inuit. His comments made me feel really uncomfortable.

By about the end of February I was becoming somewhat bitter, lonely and depressed. I was getting really tired of the unending darkness and I was getting really tired of the sneers and negative comments. I was tired of snow and snow covered mountains and I really wanted to see a tree. Suddenly, as if my prayers were being answered, everything changed. The sun came out and it shone directly down on me. My spirits were lifted immediately, my thoughts of sadness and bitterness all but disappeared and I felt like a new person. I was no longer in the dark. My perspective seemed to change that day, standing outside my house with my head tilted up and the rays of sunlight touching my skin.

After that day, things began to seem different somehow. I was looking at things from a different point of view and because of that, I think, others started to change their point of view. I had hope overshadowing my bitterness and because of that hope I was no longer looking at the negative side of everything. I suddenly realized that I was living an experience of a lifetime. I realized that most of the people in the world never experience such a wonderful life-altering adventure and that I should be grateful for having the chance of being in Auluq, in the Canadian Arctic. I would never forget that day, that moment when I came to the realization that everything was not so bad. Spring was on its way and with it came new hope and new friends.

At the end of February, my mom started a girl's basketball team. I love to play basketball so I was eager to be part of the team if I made it. We started to have three practices a week and then we narrowed down the number of players on the team to eight. I made the team as the starting center. I am taller than most of the girls in the community so the position suited me. During the course of our practices, the girls on the team and I were beginning to get a bit closer. They would talk to me in the dressing room and on the floor of the gym and even sit with me in some of our classes. At times

they would still show some signs of teasing or being cruel, but for the most part, things got very much better. At the beginning of June, my mom organized a tournament with the only other organized high school girl's team in Nunavut, Iqaluit. They came to Auluq and spent the weekend with us. We played a total of five games and had lots of fun.

The community came out to watch and we all learned quite a bit about playing competitively. I learned quite a bit too, about the girls on my team and their feelings toward me. They were scared, for the most part, to get close to me. They had met a lot of white people in their lives so far; most of whom would come in and out, never staying for too long. They assumed, and rightly so, that I would be just like the others. I would come to Auluq with my mom while she taught in the school, go home in the summers and only stay one, maybe two years like all the other teachers had. They didn't want to get attached to me and they resented the fact that I was on some great adventure in their community going to their school. I could really understand how they felt. I couldn't tell them that we were going to stay forever in Auluq, but I could try to see things from their point of view. I really worked at understanding their feelings. Before long I noticed that some of the girls were starting to call me on the phone and come over to the house to visit. I really enjoyed their company.

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One of the most notable experiences I had while in Auluq was during Spring Camp. Every April for the past ten years the students in the school spend a few weeks out on the land teaching the teachers about their culture. During Spring Camp last year we only ate the food we caught or shot and we slept in tents when it was minus 27 most of the time. It was lots of fun but really scary at the same time. I was freezing cold, but got to know the students a lot more seeing them out on the land where many of them were the most comfortable. I was really happy to be invited on the back of some of their snowmobiles and they took me on great rides through the breathtakingly beautiful

mountains. I went ice fishing and caribou hunting and was so shocked to see how great my friends were at doing these things. They were expert shots and really could ride their snowmobiles better than any of my friends back home could drive cars. I was really impressed.

We had lots of fun. At night we would all pile in one tent and sing songs and tell stories. Some of the girls tried to teach me throat singing and I nearly choked trying. Throat singing is when two people (mostly females) stand facing each other holding each other's arms, and while staring at each other's faces, constrict their vocal cords. By doing that along with different patterns of breathing, they produce very unique sounds. Throat singing is an ancient art and one that is practiced quite a lot in Auluq. It is really difficult to do. Also, they taught me many Inuit games. We heard some wonderfully warm stories. I felt welcomed and accepted there. It was really interesting to watch these young guys travel into the middle of mountains and to see snow for as far as the eye could see. I was amazed that they knew their way around. They just laughed at me when I told them I was scared because I thought we were going to get lost. They said that they didn't get lost. For the most part, that was true. Here I was on a real survival test out in the middle of the Arctic living off the land when all around me was a frozen ice menagerie. I'll never forget Spring Camp.

Another experience I will never forget was the New Year's Eve celebration out on the frozen Fiord. Every person in the entire community got into kamotiks, or on the backs of snowmobiles and paraded around town. They waved at the few people left in their homes and sang and yelled as they went. All of the people in the parade met out on the Fiord where we had a big bonfire. We all stood around in a circle and felt the heat from the burning wood. The building supply store donated the scraps of lumber for the fire and the few of us who had real trees shipped in for our Christmas tree, brought those down to add to the heap. We had hot chocolate and sang songs. Then all

of the snowmobiles got into a huge long line and faced the community. All the lights from the snowmobiles lit up the whole town. It was a spectacle I will never forget.

As the days were getting longer and my time was getting shorter before we were going home for the summer, a really sad thing happened. My best friend's grandmother died. I had spent a lot of time with this wonderful lady and she was always kind to me during my time with her. She had lung cancer and died quite quickly. She wanted so badly to die out in the outpost camp that she and her husband lived in but it was not to be. The nurses at the Health Center felt it would be better for her to die in the hospital in Iqaluit. They thought she would be more comfortable there. I felt really badly for her.

After her death, my friend called to ask me to join him and a few of his relatives out at the end of the Fiord for tea. He explained that the Island where we would be going was one of his grandmother's favorite places and they were going to celebrate her life. I was honored that he included me, so I went along. I was a bit surprised to see over 30 snow machines heading out in a long line toward the Island. I was on the back of my friend's machine and it took us about a half-hour to get to our destination. When we got there we were greeted by the smell of Coleman Stoves cooking seal meat and tea. I was the youngest there and the only white person. I felt a bit uncomfortable, but everyone was really friendly. There was not just the seal meat cooking, there was also caribou stew and bannok. The elders who were cooking the food offered me a piece of seal meat when it was done. I really tried to avoid their offering but couldn't. I learned during my time in Auluq that it was just easier to take the food that was offered and smile than to refuse. I put the piece in my mouth and was really not enjoying the flavour, but just smiled and swallowed. I did refuse the second piece and they laughed.

I took the tea that was offered and just sat on the back of my friend's snowmobile watching all the people mingling with each other and smiling. They all really seemed happy. This was a celebration. Finally, I noticed that the stoves were being put away

and people were starting up their machines. I was getting a bit cold and so was happy that the evening was coming to an end. I was overwhelmed that this group of people wanted to have tea out in the middle of the Fiord at 12:30 am. Of course with there being almost 24 hour sunlight by now, time was not as much an issue.

As the time went by in Auluq, I was happy to see that the racial issues became fewer. I was getting used to the idea of being the only white teenager in the community and my friends were getting used to me. I learned many lessons during my time in the North. One of the biggest lessons I learned was never to take anything for granted because you don't know that you need something until it is gone. I think that a lot of people take things for granted, me included, and I am glad that I had the opportunity to see things differently. I love being able to appreciate the simple things in life. It might seem really cliché, but material possessions don't mean as much to me anymore. I just have a different perspective about a lot of things. There is more to being happy than the superficial satisfaction of material possessions. I've learned to live each day to the fullest and to never give up on myself. As long as I hold onto who I am and as long as I believe in myself, then I can do anything.

Thinking back I would have to say that I really enjoyed living in Auluq, for the most part. There were times when I thought I would leave in a second, but then I would see something like the sun shining on the mountains and I would forget about the bad times. Auluq, with all its diversity, beauty and strength, was definitely an excursion I will never forget. It is a beautiful place to visit, but it is a hard place to fit into if you are the only white teenager in the community.

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Margaret's Notes

In August of 2000 my mother took my sister and I and we moved to Auluq, Nunavut. People always say life is full of choices, but no one ever mentions fear. I was so scared to move to the North and to go to a different school. When we flew into the

town, I was surrounded by beauty. The mountains were breathtaking, I couldn't believe where I was. I thought it was a dream. I felt strange in my new surroundings. Our new house was large and empty like a hollow box. We arrived but our furniture didn't. The air or sea are the only ways for things to be shipped to and from the community, so you can't depend on things being there right when you want them. A lot of the time it is too windy for the planes to get in. We didn't have anything to sleep on that first night. I also couldn't sleep that first night because of the children outside my window yelling and playing. It seemed strange to me that kids were outside in the middle of the night, but I had never seen night that was sunny before either.

I couldn't believe that I was actually in the Arctic. I spent a lot of time during that first week staring out the window at all hours of the day and night. About the second night, a child looked back up at me as I was staring out my window and asked if I could go out and play. I told her that I couldn't go out because I was so tired. I eventually got used to the days running into nights without any difference in light until about the middle of September when it started to get dark at night.

School started the last day of August. The first day of school was very short. I didn't think I could get through it with all the new people. They kept staring at me as if I was some kind of strange animal. They kept laughing at me and I just wanted to run somewhere and hide. My teacher was very nice. She helped me get through the day. She was the only Inuk teacher who had a homeroom to look after in the school. She spoke English but carried on most of the classes in Inuktitut. It reminded me of being in French Immersion all over again.

While most of the children accepted me quite quickly, there was one child who was not so nice to me. I kept wondering if she was trying to get my attention or what her problem was and I could never figure it out. She picked on me for most of the year. I never knew what to do about it to try to stop her teasing. She was really mean sometimes and hurt me physically on a few occasions. The teachers and principal even

tried to help; eventually my mother had to involve the police because she and her mother were calling our house at all hours threatening us. Apparently, her mother had been married to a Qallunaaq man who had caused her trouble. She was very scared of Qallunaaq people because of her bad experience. We just happened on the scene at the wrong time.

During the first week we were in Auluq, I was playing on the playground and I met my best friend ever, Aimo. She and I spent every waking moment together whenever we could. She was in a grade above me and I looked up to her to help out when I was afraid at school or when I didn't know what to do. She turned out to be an excellent friend. She was very loyal and very kind. We are still friends.

Some of my favorite memories include things that Aimo and I did together. One of the adventures we went on was walking up to the top of Mount Auluq to carve our initials into the cross at the top. She spent considerable time teaching me things like what to eat and what not to eat on our way up. Qungulik (Koo-gu-lik) is a small green plant that is quite sour. Aimo had great fun watching my face as I tried not to change my expression while I chewed on this plant. It was really hard to keep a straight face; it was one of the sourest tastes I have ever had in my mouth.

One of the times we climbed Mount Auluq we built an Inuksuk. These cairns are made of rock and are shaped roughly like a human. The legend is that you are supposed to build one each time you climb the mountain. The Inuit use them for direction and also so that others who come after will know you were there.

Another thing Aimo and I did together was school dances. I really enjoyed going to the high school dances. Aimo and I would get dressed in really cool clothes and go to the high school on Friday nights to dance to the music. I skipped a grade when we moved to Auluq; I went from grade four to grade six. If you are in grade six in Auluq you are allowed to go to the dances. I was thrilled. I thought I would have to wait years before I had the opportunity to go to a dance.

A high school student played the music on a loud music system. There were black lights and lights that moved around and bounced off the walls. There was also a canteen. Most of the teachers, including my mom, attended the dances and most of the time they danced with us (my mom included). It was really fun. My best dance ever was when John, my sister's friend and the president of the student council, danced with me. All the other kids were a bit envious. I loved it.

Another favorite thing for me in Auluq was riding on snowmobiles. I just loved it when some of Elizabeth's friends came over to visit and took me for a ride on their snowmobiles. Frank was the best; he had one of the most powerful machines in town and loved to show off with it. He took me a few times and we went really fast up and down the mountain. I'll never forget how it felt to be flying up toward the stars over a snow-covered mountain in the Arctic.

One of the good things about living across the road from a mountain was the fact that we had the best toboggan hill in the world right on our doorstep. It was great. Whenever the temperature was not below about -40 I would grab my crazy carpet and go across the street. It was really hard climbing to the top of the hill but once I got up there, I just knew that speeding down was going to be the best. It always was. I would spend hours going up and down feeling as free as a bird.

The cold never seemed to bother me in Auluq. I heard the adults talking about it being a dry cold but I think it was because there was so much to do outside. In the South, there never seemed to be as much to do for some reason, but in Auluq, we would be busy every day, even in the dark time. Someone would always be calling inviting us to a potluck supper, or we would go cross-country skiing or sliding. We went ice fishing a few times and just walked through the mountains on several occasions.

On quite a few evenings, some of Elizabeth's friends would bring over a movie and we would gather in our living room to watch it. We had lots of fun and treats. My mom would make a pizza and we would all have pop and watch one or two movies. I

would usually fall asleep and somehow in the morning I would wake up in my own bed. I really used to look forward to those nights.

Going to school in Auluq was really different. I wasn't too afraid of the fact that my teacher spoke mostly Inuktitut in class because I was in French Immersion for my first four years of school; so going to school and not being able to understand very much was not really new to me. And just like in French Immersion, before long, I was able to understand a little of what was being said.

My teacher was one of the best teachers I ever had. She was really nice and she always tried to make sure I understood what was going on. We did some different things in class. We made a lot of Inuit-type crafts like beaded bags, seal skin mittens, embroidered wall hangings and kammiks (seal skin boots). I felt really good after making my very own pair of mitts. I even sewed fox fur around the cuffs. They are really warm.

We had spelling tests and learned about fractions and division in math. My teacher asked me to do a few presentations in front of the class about Prince Edward Island. I really enjoyed doing the talks, even though some of the other students teased me for doing them. I think most of my classmates were really interested in hearing about my home province and about *Anne of Green Gables.* My mom brought the movie with us and some of my friends came over to our house to watch it.

One day my teacher came into class and told us that she was going to take three of us at a time with her in her kamotik (a large wooden sled connected to her snowmobile) to the Arctic Circle for a picnic. The Arctic Circle is only 15 kilometers away from Auluq and so it is only an hour by snowmobile. I was thrilled because I really wanted to go there. I was also thrilled because when she called out the groups, I was in a group with my closest friends in the class and I was in the first group going. I could hardly wait until the next Saturday which was when our trip would be taking place.

My teacher gave me a list of things I would need to take with me for my mom to help me with and told me she would be by the house at 12:00 noon. I was ready and waiting when she came. I was wearing my homemade Inuit parka, snow pants, my self-made mittens, a specially made woolen hat, fleece shirt and pants, long underwear, double socks, and really warm boots. The temperature was minus 20 when we left for our journey and I was determined not to get cold.

I was cuddled in the back of the kamotik with my two friends, covered in a caribou skin flying over the tundra and frozen Fiord toward the National Park and the Arctic Circle. My teacher was on the snowmobile bundled in her Inuit parka and snow pants, and she had a rifle slung across her back. I was kind of scared of the gun, but she told us she had to bring it in case we ran into a polar bear. I was so much more scared of the polar bear than of the gun. I was glad she brought it along.

We passed lots of mountains and snow hills. We saw caribou tracks and lots of ravens as we went. We were flying along on top of the snow and my friends and I were singing as loudly as we could. It hurt a little when we went over a rock or a bump. The ride was very cold and bumpy, but fun.

In about one and one half-hour we could see a big brown sign up ahead. We were all trying to squint our shaded eyes to see what was written on it, but we couldn't until we got a bit closer. Finally, the words came into sight. The message was written in both Inuktitut and English. It read: YOU HAVE REACHED THE ARCTIC CIRCLE. There was also numbers like on a map on it and then it read: CONGRATULATIONS. I thought it was a really neat sign.

My teacher pulled up right beside the sign and stopped her machine. We piled out of the kamotik and stretched our cramped bodies for a minute. Before long our teacher had the oil stove heated and we were drinking hot chocolate and eating bannok. It was really good. She brought her camera with her and she took lots of pictures of us.

She always had her rifle handy and she kept looking around all the time. I felt safe with her.

It seemed as though we were always having adventures in Auluq. Just going for a walk in the wind was an adventure sometimes. I remember one windstorm I almost blew away. One of the things I noticed right away as we started to explore Auluq for the first time was that many of the houses had big steel wires right over the top, connected to the ground on either side. I couldn't think of why the wires were there so I asked my teacher when I went to school. She said they were there so the houses wouldn't blow away. I couldn't believe it. I thought she was teasing me. But sure enough, I experienced the wind myself before long. I was at my friend's house and my mom called to tell me that I should get home as soon as I could because a storm was coming. I got my things on and started for home right away. The wind was the strongest I ever felt. It blew me off the road into a ditch on my knees. I could hardly stand up with it blowing against me. By the time I got home, I had two skinned knees and a bleeding nose. I couldn't believe how hard it was just to get to my house.

Our school was closed down for only two and one half storm days during the year. The reason we closed was that the wind was too strong for walking. On the day that the school was closed for a half a day, our whole class walked home together like a big chain of people. We went from house to house in a long line letting people go when we got to their door. It was really fun but a bit scary too. When I got home, I noticed that the water in the toilet bowl was moving and I could feel the house shake and could hear the windows rattle. It was very scary after awhile. I thought the school would be shut down a lot because of snow, but the principal never shut the school down just for snow, I guess because we mostly all walked or took a snowmobile from place to place. There is one snowplow, but it didn't do the streets very much. The people want snow on the streets so they can use their snowmobiles on them.

I think I learned a lot in Auluq. I was really nervous to go there at first, but when we got there I kind of liked it. I really liked the mountains and doing things outside and even when it was dark it was fun. I loved going sliding in the dark and I loved watching the Northern Lights while standing on our front door step. I didn't know that that part of Canada was really there. I didn't think any people were different from me in Canada, but because of our trips to the North I know there are many different groups of people in Canada. I'll always remember my time in Auluq and the friends I made there. My dream is to become a veterinarian someday and go back to the Arctic to help take care of the animals. I think that even though it was hard sometimes, with not everyone accepting me all the time, it would be wonderful to live in the Arctic for a long period of time doing worthwhile work.

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My daughters grew from their experiences in the Arctic. Not all of them were positive, but I was really proud of the way each was able to find a way to get through the negative times. I was often asked by other white people living in Auluq why I brought my daughters with me. I think it is obvious from their writing how important it was for them to have lived in Auluq and for them to have lived through the experiences we had there. I am not sorry at all for introducing them to the Arctic.

One of the things my daughters and I discussed from time to time was the great privilege and power we were perceived as having by some of the people living in Auluq. We didn't realize that we might be perceived that way before we moved to Auluq. We discussed the fact that we would probably be perceived as wealthy to most people in the world and we talked about being part of the dominant race in Canada. That power and privilege comes with tremendous responsibility. One of the main aspects of that responsibility is acknowledging to ourselves that we are privileged and to take humbling experiences as such.

My father always told me that knowledge is power. We have all heard that before. But with that knowledge, my father would remind me, comes tremendous responsibility. He told me that all learning and exploring create openings. It is totally up to those doing the learning and exploring whether they choose to go through those openings and use the learning that comes from the exploring.

Chapter Six

Cultures Collide

Racism is a word with many connotations, none of which are positive. In the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (1974, p. 926) we find the following definition: (1) Prejudice or discrimination against a person or group because of a difference of race. (2) Prejudice or discrimination against a person or group because of a difference of cultural or ethnic background. (3) Belief in the superiority of a particular race, based on the theory that human abilities, character, etc. are determined by race. No matter where I was, or what I was doing, I always fought against any kind of racism in whatever way I could. But it was easier when I wasn't faced with it in my everyday life. In the past, the racism I fought against was never directed toward my girls or myself. Before moving to Auluq, the racism I fought against never directly affected me. I was really sheltered from the whole meaning of racism in any context.

In the North, there are really two forms of racism acting simultaneously. There is the racism that the Inuit have struggled through for many years resulting in some rather horrific stories and scars; and there is the racism that Qallunaaq people experience when they are in the North delivered by some of the people who live there. It really comes down to power. O'Donoghue (1998) points out that

> collaborative relations of power are based on the belief that power is available to be used positively and ethically in our daily interactions in order to promote practices of freedom, while coercive relations of power are present within institutional structures which tend to promote control and governance through rules, policies, procedures, and rituals. (p. 265)

There are many positive situations involving many different people working together but there are also some very negative, very racist situations that occur. I have witnessed both of these, the latter in rather surprising ways. Of course, it was my naïveté that

clouded my vision about the fact that we might experience racist attitudes towards us. My vision was also clouded regarding the possibility that some of the people with whom I worked exhibited racist behaviour toward others. In this chapter I will review our first-hand experience with racism and then I will talk about some of the factors that might contribute to the fact that racism occurs as it does in the North.

As soon as my daughters and I stepped off the plane we could see immediately that we were a visible minority. It was a rather strange feeling and one I never imagined before. We are very fair (both our skin and our hair) and so our difference in appearance was rather striking compared to the dark-haired, olive-complexioned people we were suddenly living amidst. The difference was so striking that our first trip to the Northern Store involved a male elder touching my youngest daughter's hair. He made gestures to show the difference in color between his hair color and our own and then he repeated the word "*Qallunaaq* " several times. My daughter was a bit nervous but not afraid as it was quite obvious the man meant us no harm.

The next time we went to the Northern Store he was there again and he came close to us. My daughter moved in behind me in hopes of avoiding the inevitable head rub, but to no avail. He reached out and made the same gestures indicating the difference between his hair color and hers. He then slipped his hand into the pocket of my parka. I was a bit startled but I tried not to flinch. When he withdrew his hand, I reached in to see what his motive was and found a beautifully carved goose made out of soapstone. I just held it and smiled. When I looked up he was gone. I showed the carving to my daughter. She proudly displays it in her room. The man did not touch

our hair anymore after that day but he always smiled at us when he saw us and gestured to indicate the difference between his coloring and our own.

Hair and skin coloring are not, of course, the only differences we noticed in our new community. I remember the second night we were in Auluq. It was about ten o'clock and we heard some noise in the front porch. I listened and heard scuffing and someone shutting the outside door. I became a bit afraid for a moment until I heard the inside door open and saw a little girl smiling up at me. "Can your 'panik' (daughter) come with me up the mountain?" she asked. I told her that I didn't think so because it was too late. She said "For what?" I told her that Margaret was not intending to go anywhere, it was simply too late in the evening for her to go out. The little girl, Oolee, just smiled and stared up at me. "Can I come in and play?" she asked. I told her that she could and called Margaret down to meet her.

They had seen each other at the store and around the community a few times but they were not formerly introduced. They spoke briefly to each other in the living room and then Margaret took Oolee up to her bedroom to see her stuff. They played together for an hour or so and then I told Oolee that it was time for her to go home. She asked me why it was time and I told her that Margaret had to go to bed. She turned to Margaret and said, "Do you need to sleep now?" Margaret replied that she didn't think she did but that she better anyway. Oolee just shrugged, got her things on and left.

I learned during my time in Auluq that children playing together at all hours of the day and night is not in the least bit strange. Inuit people, because of being used to a hunter-gatherer way of life, usually have different perspectives about the concept of time. There are some families who insist that their children are in bed early, but there are families who eat when they are hungry and sleep when they are tired. Some of the people are not governed, like I was, by a mechanism like a clock. As Briggs (1970) points out, "[The Inuit] cherish independence of thought and action as a natural

prerogative, [so] people tend to look askance at anyone [or anything] who seems to aspire to tell them what to do" (p. 42). Because of the long periods of dark and light, the sun or the lack thereof does not govern them. When Oolee came to visit I was expecting her to exhibit the same manners I was used to. I was really wondering why her parents would allow her to be out so late at such a young age and I was expecting her to understand why Margaret had to go to bed at 11:00 p.m. She just didn't. She was not brought up in any way the same as I was (or as Margaret was) and she did not understand where I was coming from. She just went along with it because she had become accustomed to Qallunaaq people and their "strange ways."

Our ways were not her ways and her ways were not our ways. It was that simple. Neither was right nor wrong, it was just the way it was. If people only accepted each other as they are, even within the same society and the same race then life, naturally, would be so much simpler. But that is not the case. What I experienced first hand from certain Inuit and Qallunaaq people was the premise that "their" way *is* the best and only way. In terms of the Inuit people, in many cases they are right. They have been surviving for thousands of years in one of the harshest environments in the world, so their way in the north, for many reasons, is probably the best and only way. But there are preferences even among the Inuit in the same community. Some families preferred to be more traditional than other families.

Of course, the converse is true. It is quite amusing to witness some Qallunaaq people getting off the airplane coming for a vacation to the Arctic. At times some of the people think they can walk into the tundra carrying only a knapsack and a camera and they will be fine. They often come with the idea that the animals they might see (even the polar bears) won't hurt them. When people come to the North unprepared it is quite often the Inuit people who have to risk their lives to go into the tundra to save them. So, while many Qallunaaq people assume they are superior in many ways to Inuit people, when it comes to surviving in this harsh environment, the opposite is most often the

case. It comes down to one's perspective. Brody (2000) explains that even though many didn't realize it, when the first explorers came to the Arctic they:

> Arrived in the lands of societies that were at least equal to their own. Hunter-gatherers did not display abundant material goods or the technology of warfare, and they did not have the knowledge of mathematics, astronomy, engineering and textiles that was to be found in some indigenous societies of South America. But the Europeans who came ashore from those ships of exploration—dirty, malnourished and ill clad—encountered hunters and gatherers who showed all the signs of being well fed and healthy. The societies of these people were more stable and more secure than those of the explorers; they were also societies in which private and public well-being intertwined to ensure much fairer distribution of resources and greater social justice than the newcomers had ever experienced. (pp. 280 - 281)

My daughters experienced racism much worse than I did. What we witnessed was that the females in the community were far less welcoming than the males. I am not sure why this was, but especially in my oldest daughter's case, it was quite evident. On Elizabeth's first day of school it was clear that the youth of the community were not used to a white teenager in their midst. Some of them went as far as to say as much. Elizabeth was spit on, pushed, punched, knocked down, attacked, chased and yelled at on far too many occasions during our first six months in Auluq. On one occasion we had to involve the police, as there was a threat that the people might try to harm her again. I was very scared for her. She did not want to give up—so we just carried on; but we did so very carefully and cautiously.

The other teachers were helpful in looking out for Elizabeth. Very quickly Elizabeth decided that if she immersed herself deeper into the community things might become better for her. She applied for and landed a job at the local convenience store. Within 48 hours of our arrival she was right up there behind the counter dealing with people who mostly only spoke Inuktitut to her. She was doing fine. In school, she stuck

a bit close to me at times, and during some occasions, she would try to find ways to break the ice with the girls. It took quite a long time.

Some of the teachers, while not meaning to, made things worse for Elizabeth. At times in class, for instance, a teacher would be trying to explain something using a very southern context and most of the students would not comprehend the point. Often the teacher would turn to Elizabeth and say, "You know what I mean, you've been there before." And most of the other students would just give her a dirty look or sneer at her. She would be mortified. Finally, she spoke with the teachers who were the worse culprits and explained to them how those situations made her feel. Things gradually improved during class time. Outside of school Elizabeth had many male visitors. The boys in the high school were just mesmerized with her. They would come over and sit and stare at her. It was quite difficult to get used to. The young females in the high school were quite jealous of the attention she was receiving. They were afraid, we found out later, that Elizabeth was going to "steal" one of the eligible bachelors in town. All the attention from the boys was a bit exciting at first, but then it became somewhat disconcerting for Elizabeth.

Eventually, the novelty wore off and only three kept coming to visit. The three young boys actually stuck with Elizabeth as her friends until we left for the summer and still contacted her throughout the summer. The four of them seemed to get along as if they had known each other forever.

It wasn't really until February that Elizabeth was able to stop worrying about the girls attacking her outside the school. I started a basketball program and Elizabeth made the girl's basketball team. Fifteen of the girls from the high school met every day

after school for an hour to learn how to play basketball and then to learn plays and technique. Elizabeth is quite tall for her age and proved to be one of the top point getters on the team. But it wasn't until the team went through several meetings and sessions that they accepted Elizabeth as a member. They really gave her a hard time for quite a long period. Once they did accept her, they began to visit regularly and they all became quite close. It took a lot of courage on Elizabeth's part and at times she became quite bitter. It was hard for me, at times, to keep her spirits up. I felt like becoming very angry with the girls in question. But then I would try to put myself in their shoes and understand their perspective.

One thing I have learned over the years is that when people are behaving in racist ways they are usually full of fear about the unknown—usually the culture or race, in other words, the differences, of the people being treated in racist ways. In Nunavut there were many reasons including the fact that

> in the context of Nunavut, Inuit, though they are the majority, still do not hold the power in the society. The power structures, in government and private business, though they are changing, still reflect those of a colonial era. Most government bureaucracies and successful businesses are led by Qallunaat. Qallunaat are economically advantaged, holding most of the wealth in Nunavut communities.... [This economic disparity] is visibly evident within most communities, supported by obvious differences in the quality of homes, vehicles and other signs of the economic prosperity. (O'Donoghue, 1998, p. 186)

Elizabeth represented the unknown to the girls in the community. She was quite attractive and intelligent and was obviously taking some of the attention of the boys away from the girls. One might consider their behaviour petty or unimportant, but to them, having adequate numbers of eligible bachelors is imperative for the furtherance of their race. There were deeper issues of power and dominance operating in this

situation. Elizabeth was seen as being multi-privileged from a white, dominant society. She posed a threat to them. Once it was shown that she was not going to displace their equilibrium to any great degree, they backed off. But it took a lot before the struggle came to an end.

At the time of the problems Elizabeth was having I wanted to bundle her up in whatever was warm and cozy and sit with her at the airport waiting for the next available flight out. But in retrospect I am glad we all stuck it out. She learned a great deal from the experience, as did I, and we are each better off because we lived through it. From all the research I did before moving there, nothing prepared me, though, for the racist behaviour toward the girls that we faced. I just did not expect it.

Margaret, the ten-year old, had it really hard as well. She didn't have the intensity of the situation that Elizabeth faced, but she had bouts of truly racist behaviour exhibited toward her, and at times, she came home with the bruises to show for her experiences. Margaret was skipped from grade four to grade six when we moved to Auluq. She was young for her age already and to move her up with the twelve and thirteen-year olds was a really big jump for her. The jump itself caused the children and some of the parents in the community to question Margaret, her teacher and I regarding why she was skipped. I wonder, in retrospect, if keeping her in grade five, where she would have been had we stayed in the South, would have made things easier for her. When we first moved to the North, Margaret was still going to bed at 7:30 p.m. She was still playing with dolls and she still believed in Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny. She grew up quite quickly there.

Margaret was in a class with 22 other students, all of whom were Inuktitut speaking. Her teacher was the only Inuk teacher, teaching full time with a homeroom class in the high school. Margaret's experiences in the classroom were really quite positive but out in the hall and in transition, walking from one activity to another within the school, fights would break out. Most of the fighting surrounded the concept

that Margaret was Qallunaaq. The children used to tell me as much when I asked them why they punched or hit Margaret. They would be quite open about it. It wasn't until Margaret was befriended by a young girl in grade seven that things calmed down a bit.

Aimo was quite aware of her impact in becoming Margaret's friend. She would assure me that no harm would come to Margaret as long as she was around, and she was quite right. Margaret seemed to be without threat whenever she hung out with Aimo. It took some time for Aimo to get used to our ways. While Margaret no longer had to go to bed at 7:30 p.m., she was still not allowed to go for walks past 9:00 p.m. and I had to know where she was at all times. Aimo thought my parenting strategies were quite humorous at first. She used to ask me if I trusted Margaret and did I think Margaret was not smart. I spent much time trying to explain to her the way many people deal with their children down south. She didn't easily grasp the concept but she came to accept that I was not going to change totally. She became a regular fixture in our household and one we all enjoyed having around. She was a loyal and kind friend to Margaret.

In terms of myself, I did not have the same kinds of overt racism exhibited towards me on such a regular basis. There were times when the Inuit staff in the school would talk among themselves in Inuktitut and some of my students would relay to me later that what was being said was not at all flattering. I told the students that I would rather not know. I explained that quite often things carried from one context to another lose something in the translation so it wasn't fair, even though the students were trying to protect me.

Because Margaret was in an Inuktitut immersion situation in her classroom, she picked up the language quite quickly. She knew what was being said after about six months. If we were in a taxi, for instance, and the people sharing the taxi with us were speaking to each other in Inuktitut, she would ask later, when we got out, if I wanted her to repeat what was being said. She would usually end up telling me even if I didn't

want to know, and some of the comments were quite negative. But again, fear breeds contempt in many situations; and from what I have learned about some Qallunaaq teachers in the North, I don't blame the people for feeling fear. For me, it presented a challenge to prove that I was not one to fear. I hope I did prove that over the year.

Many of the people who move North expect to find people who really don't know what they are missing in life. They expect to find that the Inuit people are somehow poorer in many ways than those who live in the south. This misconception is usually very strong and in many cases the people believing this about the Inuit will not change their minds. As Brody (1991) explains, "white presence in the north falls into the category of colonialism, [a category which] regards the native as being without a society, savage, wild and heathen" (p. 96). It is almost as though the Inuit have to prove something to the Qallunaaq in order for the Qallunaaq to believe that the Inuit people are just fine and quite content the way that they are. The situation is somehow the reverse of what it should be. The same is true about land claims. The Inuit people, just like Aboriginal peoples in the South, have inhabited their land for thousands of years. Why, then, should they have to fight for the right to lay claim to that land now? It seems as though the reverse should be true. As Brody (2000) explains, "the term 'land claim' is itself an anomaly, implying that the onus should be on the original occupants to claim their homes, resources and territories from the colonists" (p. 283). As Brody (2000) continues:

> Aboriginal peoples, in seeking to claim land in Canada, must prove that:
> -They use and occupy a definite territory to the exclusion of all other peoples;
> -They have used and occupied the territory "since time immemorial";
> -They are "an organised society." (p. 284)

The Inuit did prove all these things and in April of 1999, the Inuit of Nunavut laid claim to their own territory. Nunavut is the third territory in Canada and the Inuit people of the Eastern Arctic are very proud of their struggle for freedom and their fight for

independence. They do not want anything to spoil what they have worked so hard to accomplish.

Of course, the Canadian Government did not walk away without benefit from the deal. As Dickason (1990) explains in her book entitled *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*:

> The case for the creation of Nunavut ("Our Land") received unexpected outside support in 1985 when the United States sent the *Polar Sea* through the Northwest Passage without permission from Canada. This was the second such infringement on the part of the Americans (the first was the voyage of the *Manhattan* in 1971), who want these waters to be declared international. Since the Inuit have been in the region for more than a thousand years and represent about 80 per cent of its present population, the creation of a self-governing province could be the best possible demonstration of effective occupation, thus enormously strengthening Canada's claim to Arctic sovereignty. (p. 415)

The Federal Government could lay to rest a few fears they had experienced over the years when the Nunavut Territory was finally proclaimed. The occupation of this vast part of Canada was no longer being threatened by the United States or the Soviet Union. Some of the fears exhibited by the Canadian Government over the occupation of the Arctic region caused some officials to make decisions that have resulted in lasting scars. The Inuit were pulled in the direction the Canadian government deemed fit at times over the past one hundred years and many of the people will never forget the pain and suffering that resulted.

In one of the moves made by the Canadian Government to occupy the North, many of the Inuit were moved from their homes in Northern Quebec and South Baffin, to such places as Grise Fiord. Moves of this magnitude are hard to fathom for people living in the South. In some accounts, the Canadian Government officials came into such communities as Auluq and chose certain people based on some unknown criteria to be placed on boats and to be moved far away from their families and their homes. At

times, the only way that these people survived was with the help of the R.C.M.P. and other Qallunaaq people who were inhabitants of the lands to which the people were sent. Often, the people were not sent with anything but the clothes on their backs.

There seem to have been harsh moves under harsh circumstances. When people have the idea that others are "savage" or "primitive" then the people so deemed are not seen as having feelings or intelligence of any kind. As Brody (2000) states, "[This idea] places millions of people at the lowest level of a human hierarchy" (184). He explains further that Colonial theorists and administrations have often insisted that savage societies are dangerous because they are wrong, lacking the necessary intellectual skills or moral principles, flouting the essential rules of civilised society, they could not be trusted. (p. 184)

I had the pleasure of working with a man who was approximately 65 years old. He was a self-proclaimed "Eskimo." He told us he liked to use that term because he was proud of being a "raw meat eater" but I think he "put on" a lot, just to make others laugh. I am absolutely sure that he was proud of eating raw meat; I just don't think he was happy about the connotation of being called an "Eskimo." He was the shop teacher at the high school and an expert at hunting and fishing. He worked for the R.C.M.P. for many years and was enjoying his retirement job. Whenever I had the opportunity I would sit and talk with him. He was a very interesting man. He told me many stories of his growing up and working with the R.C.M.P. and he told me stories of being sent to a residential school when he was young. I find it amazing that he went to an English school for any length of time, as he cannot read or write English. He is, however, quite proficient at reading and writing Inuktitut.

One of the topics that caused him great joy was whenever we talked about his son. His son was in some of my classes and was a very intelligent and funny young man. I would let his father know of his progress throughout the year and he came to expect that every two weeks or so I would give him an update. What I sensed from him

was that he was quite adamant about his son behaving well in school because he believed in good behaviour and did not want his son causing any trouble. He told me about going to the residential schools and being beaten by the white teacher for speaking Inuktitut. He was not proud about those times and did not like sharing those stories. He wanted his son to learn Qallunaaq ways and he wanted him to do whatever made him happy in life in terms of education.

He told me once of the time when the missionaries came to his outpost camp when he was a young man. He and his family lived in a remote camp and were very self-sufficient. As he explained,

> Suddenly this man came and we were no longer allowed to hunt on the day the stranger called 'Sunday.' I could never understand that. To this day I don't hunt on Sundays, but I could never understand that—when you are hungry and your children are hungry, it doesn't matter what day it is, your belly doesn't know that.

I am afraid that I don't understand it either; it seems rather paradoxical that the missionary people promoted keeping the Sabbath holy resulting in children going hungry. When he shared these stories, he never seemed bitter. I once asked him if he was angry about those times. He replied, "Inuit don't get angry, Inuit just go on." As Brody (2000) explains, "For Inuit, especially the elders..., displays of anger are deemed to be signs of mental illness in adults" (p. 250). I couldn't help wondering, however, if some of the people held their anger inside and if that was the reason for some of the addiction and social dysfunction problems in the community.

Others told me stories of some of the atrocities they experienced. One of my favorite students, Pauloosie, spoke once of a terrifying experience his father had. It was during Grade 11 English class. I was teaching essay writing by having all the students and myself write an essay together. We would brainstorm a topic, come up with a thesis statement, and then I asked them to dictate one sentence at a time while I wrote the

words on the board. Our topic, we finally decided, would be the evolution of schooling over the last 50 years in Northern Canada.

Many ideas came flooding in from the students. I set up a concept/idea web on the board and was busy writing one idea after another as students yelled them out. At times they would confer with each other in Inuktitut before yelling out their thought in English. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I saw Pauloosie stand up. Pauloosie was one of the quietest students I have ever taught. He very rarely called attention to himself and would behave quite shyly if I called attention to him. His standing surprised me. "Do you want to say something?" I asked. "Yes! I do." He took his time and then announced: "My father stood beside his friend when a Qallunaaq teacher killed his best friend." Were they in a residential school?" I asked after some time. "Yes, I think so, they were sent away." "Why was he killed? How?" I replied.

> He was hit with a stick for speaking his language in school. You know when you hit an animal in the right place and it dies? They hit my father's friend in the right place. My father was hit lots of times but not in the right places. Qallunaaq teachers don't hit us anymore.

I was rendered speechless. I just let the silence take over the conversation as it does so aptly in the North, and watched as Pauloosie felt his emotion for a moment. Then I said, "You are right. A Qallunaaq teacher, any teacher, no one, is allowed to hit you anymore—not anymore." I waited for a minute or so and then student after student began to share with me their stories. Some of their stories had been passed down from their parents and relatives while others were their own—fresh, like the emotions brought forth through their sharing. We spent the rest of the period like that, students sharing their horror stories with me about their schooling. I had no idea what horrible things had taken place in their lives. It really surprised me that they would act the least

bit civilly towards me, I'm not sure I would have been able to had I experienced similar atrocities.

Yet, the negative experiences have not completely ended. When I first received word that the position in Auluq was being offered to me, I received a letter from one of the high school teachers who was leaving. I was dismayed with what she wrote. Basically, she explained that I would lose a third of my students by the end of November. She said that I should not be discouraged with the total lack of enthusiasm I would be experiencing. She suggested that I use a comprehension package entitled SRA quite often and that I absolutely should not start with, or in fact attempt at all, a novel study. Her comments, while I appreciated the thought, were disregarded. I began in grades 10, 11 and 12 with a novel study and by January I was asking in jest in the staff room when the 30% were going to begin to drop out. I didn't lose anywhere close to 30%, actually none of us did. We might have lost 10% as a whole school—and that was still too many.

Doing a novel study was definitely not easy, but it was wonderful. It was so gratifying to see the glee on the students' faces when many of them announced that the book we just read together in class was the first book they ever read. One thing I practiced constantly in my teaching was looking at everything from the students' perspectives. Instead of jamming square pegs into round holes, I simply tried to shave the holes a bit so the square pegs would fit. I used portfolios for assessing most of the subjects I taught. These portfolios were collections of the students' work. They chose the pieces that they wanted me to mark and the collections would be carried out throughout the entire year. Portfolios would be usually marked out of 60%. I also used many small assignments worth 10% or less each. I didn't have any specific due dates for things other than the last day of regular classes and I allowed students to ask me any question any time—even during a departmental examination. I would not

necessarily tell them the answer, but I would try very hard to get them on the right path so that they could answer the question themselves.

I also had the students fill out an evaluation of my teaching methods and style. Many of the students found this process quite amusing but I received truly excellent and helpful comments and suggestions. They said that they had never been asked to tell a teacher what they thought of him or her. I learned, to my surprise, that the media unit I so thoughtfully prepared for them was not their favorite, that most of them liked the *Of Mice and Men* unit I presented. They also really enjoyed the essay writing unit and most of them felt they could write an essay and felt good about being able to do so. I was a bit surprised because I would have thought that they would have loved the media unit. They were asked to watch television and movies and had to answer questions and do some critiquing. I was really surprised about their feeling good about essay writing. I felt that we struggled through that unit. These evaluations taught me that I must never assume what my students think. I must always ask.

All in all our time in Auluq was good. We went through some growing pains and a few bruises trying to negotiate our meaning of the community and the culture but learned lessons we could not learn in any other place in the world. The one thing I find so enthralling about the Arctic is that it is part of Canada. So many of us hear of the Arctic and gloss over it thinking we know something about what the term entails. To be there in person, though, is the most important and exciting experience I have had in my life.

Part Three

"Everyone has the power for greatness, not for fame but greatness, because greatness is determined by service." Martin Luther King Jr.

Chapter Seven

> I had a dream that all the people of the world were together in one place. The place was cold. Everyone was shivering. I looked for a fire to warm myself. None was to be found. Then someone said that in the middle of the gathering of Indians, what was left of the fire had been found. It was a very, very small flame. All the Indians were alerted that the slightest rush of air or the smallest movement could put the fire out and the fire would be lost to humankind. All the Indians banded together to protect the flame. They were working to build the fragile feeble flame. They added minuscule shavings from toothpicks to feed it.
>
> Suddenly, throughout the other peoples, the whisper was heard. 'The Indians have a fire.' There was a crush of bodies stampeding to the place where the flame was held. I pushed to the edge of the Indian circle to stop those coming to the flame so that it would not be smothered. The other people became hostile saying they were cold too and it was our responsibility to share the flame with them. I replied, 'It is our responsibility to preserve the flame for humanity and at the moment it is too weak to be shared but if we all are still and respect the flame it will grow and thrive in the caring hands of those who hold it. In time we can all warm at the fire. But now we have to nurture the flame or we will all lose the gift.' (King, 1989)

I use this story as a metaphor to explain a little of what my thoughts are about being a southerner in the North. I am one of the people rushing the flame in this story, to warm myself and my family, not to do wrong, but in the interest of self-preservation. Sometimes I feel as though the education system in the North is like this metaphor as well. The Inuit are trying desperately to preserve the "flame" of their culture and "the other peoples" are rushing in to promote their own ways. Often we, who move north, even though we have the best intentions, almost extinguish the "flame" completely from communities, schools and the people themselves. We just don't understand what is important at times. As Battiste and Barman (1995, p.110) explain in *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds:*

> The 'fragmentary self-world view' that permeates the Western world is detrimental to Aboriginal epistemology. The Western education systems that our children are subjected to promote the dogma of fragmentation and indelibly harm the capacity for holism. The mind-set created by fragmentation impedes the progress towards inwardness that our ancestors undertook. (110).

Bringing my two daughters with me to the North really provided a different perspective from those teachers who came alone. I really think that my daughters and I were privileged in different ways. We were allowed "inside" to a greater extent than many of the teachers working at the school during our time there. For one thing, we had lots of teenagers in our home on a daily basis while living in Auluq. These youth provided a unique insight into the importance of preserving their culture. We frequently would be sitting in our own living room listening to the soothingly melodic sounds of the Inuktitut language as it flowed over and around us amidst the laughter and giggles of the group. And quite often a translation was not given and not really necessary. We could get the gist of what was being said just by watching the interactions.

We were introduced to Inuit games and sports and had exciting exhibitions of strength and endurance by these proud teens. We saw the glee in their faces as they explained to us a certain game or move. Some of our best times were spent with the youth on the sides of mountains as they took us for drives. My most memorable moment with a student was when one grade twelve boy took me for a ride on his skidoo up Mount Auluq. I hung on for dear life and prayed that we would make it. I felt surprisingly reassured that I would be fine after only a few hundred feet once I felt his sureness and skill in handling himself and his machine on the mountain. He told me to just enjoy the ride. I did and I will never forget it.

These situations were not experienced by the other teachers while I was there. They got rides up Mount Auluq but either by themselves on their own machines or

with other adults from the community or down south. I just think you gain a different perspective when you are with youth. There is freshness and a freedom of spirit that you don't experience as much when you are surrounded by adults. As Nieto (1996) explains:

> Relationships between students and teachers and how these can be either improved or damaged by their interactions is another important area of research. For example, students and teachers from the same background are often on the same wavelength simply because they have an insider's understanding of cultural meanings and therefore need not engage in the process of trying to figure out nonverbal and even verbal messages they may be sending one another. (p. 142)

It is really important, therefore, when teaching in another cultural situation, that we make the effort to close the gap caused by having a completely different background than most of our students.

While most teachers did go out and experience the culture and their surroundings, a few became and remained quite isolated. It was sad for me to see. I remember one teacher in particular who simply went to school and went home. She did not experience Spring Camp or any outing at all sponsored by the school or the community. She simply experienced school, the time involved in teaching and being in the classroom. I strongly believe that much of the learning in life takes place in the hallways and outside the learning institutions. The Arctic is not different in that regard. I have learned so much from watching students in my living room, from being flown up the mountain and down again on the backs of skidoos and by just walking around the community, just to see who is out and what people are doing.

It always strikes me as being such a pleasure to be walking around the community and notice that so many people make an effort to smile and to make eye contact. It is really quite unique from anywhere I have ever been before. As Elizabeth stated in her writing, smiling is like a language in and of itself. It is a simple gesture

that means so much. Sometimes I would stop as if to talk to a stranger because of such a warm smile they were giving to me. I would say hello or qanuippit (how are you?) and once their response of qanuinngi (I am fine) was given then we would not really be able to communicate much further verbally. But the smiles would continue and sometimes we would just stand there smiling at each other for a few minutes. I found those moments kind of strange at first, as if I had to fill the voids with something. But I came to know that they were not voids, they were what they were, a form of communicating still.

In Battiste and Barman (1995), Arlene Stairs, in her article "Learning and Teaching in Native Education," uses the term *Isumaqsayuq* to describe education in the north. As she explains, the term means:

> The way of passing on knowledge through the observation and imitation embedded in daily family and community activities, integration into the immediate shared social structure being the principal goal. The focus is on values and identity, developed through the learner's relationship to other persons and to the environment. (p. 140)

Personal excellence involves being socially adept in any situation. While social involvement and interaction has a very important place in southern schools and communities, personal excellence is paramount. In fact, personal excellence involves being socially adept in any situation. But looking at involvement and interaction in social situations in Auluq, what is acceptable and what is not acceptable is quite different from what I was used to from my experience. Personal excellence in our "southern" way of thinking is seen as secondary to being socially mature. As Stairs (1995) explains, "Awareness of interpersonal relationships and one's role in the social network is what constitutes maturity; this social competence has priority over individual excellence and productivity" (p. 143). So while there are those who

seemingly excel in certain areas, when you put all the strengths of all the people together, the whole is stronger than the individual.

In the way I was brought up and schooled, I was only able, for whatever reason, to acknowledge that I knew something once I was told by someone, a parent or a teacher, that I actually knew it. That is not the case in Inuit society. The children learn from older siblings things that are very necessary to the group. So children learn at a very early age that they can contribute something very important to their society. Children in traditional, non-native societies from southern Canada often learn skills that cannot be generalized to anything else or to any other context, but they learn to live with this reality. They learn because they have to, not because they need to. They learn because someone is telling them that they have to cover a certain amount and type of material within a certain amount of time. In what Stairs (1995) calls *Ilisayaq*, teaching (the type of teaching found in most schools in the south) "involves a high level of abstract verbal mediation in a setting removed from daily life, the skills of a future specialized occupation being the principal goal" (p. 140). In traditional Inuit society, the young learn out of necessity for survival. It becomes apparent relatively early if one is to be a hunter, a great story-teller, or whatever else one seems to be aspiring to, and the society works together so that all the pieces fit together to form a cohesive whole. If one of the pieces is missing or doesn't quite fit in, then there are problems for the survival of the whole. Prior to the 1960's, there were no social workers, police officers, or school officials to deal with these anomalies, so the group itself dealt with problems. There would be the elders and a great deal of pressure from the group for the person to conform. If he or she didn't, there would be very drastic measures taken. There simply was not much tolerance for delinquency. The very survival of the whole depended upon unity.

Today, the way Inuit society works in the midst of a great deal of Southern influence is quite different from how it worked traditionally. Because of so many

changes happening so quickly, many problems have emerged. In 2000, an initiative was undertaken to provide answers to the questions surrounding the problems facing Inuit people in today's society. A document was put together by the Nunavut Social Development Council entitled, *On Our Terms: The State of Inuit Culture and Society.* In this document there are very startling statistics and information about education in the Canadian Arctic; for instance, "Education in Nunavut is a serious problem. In 1999, only 83 students, or 1 per cent of the total school population, graduated from high school" (p. 81). There are many possible reasons for this low number of graduates. In my experience, I found that some of the reasons are not what many people might think.

During the time I was in Auluq, there were a possible 37 graduates and only 15 ended up graduating. This number, to me, is quite upsetting, but if you look at the overall statistics in Nunavut, the number of graduates in Auluq was quite a bit higher than in many other communities. What I noticed was there were different categories of possible graduates: students who, if they completed the subjects assigned to them for their grade 12 year, could graduate. Out of this group there were those students who just simply did not have the ability to complete what was required of them. Among these students there were those who had ESL issues, learning problems, or personal issues keeping them from attending school. I could get into a great amount of detail about each of these sub-categories, but I am just providing an idea here about what I noticed in my interactions with the students I taught. I would suggest that another category comprised students who actually were quite capable of graduating but really did not want to because there was nothing for them to do once they did graduate. I felt most sorry for this group of students. They were the ones who were undecided about what they wanted to do when they graduated and usually had financial issues about going to a post secondary institution to further their education. And finally, there were those students who were capable and determined to graduate no matter what they were going to do after graduation.

Out of this last group of students, there were a mixture of ability levels, English language proficiency and aspirations for the future. There were students who wanted to be hunters, nurses, lawyers, and mothers. There were males and females and there were students ranging from 17 to 22 years of age during the time I was involved with teaching grade 12 in Auluq. I worked with these students to fill out applications forms for colleges, universities and funding institutions. I worked with the other groups of students in grade 12 as well. The category of students who had the ability to graduate but, for different reasons, did not, were the ones I worked with the most. I noticed a trend within this group of students. I would say that out of the 37 possible graduates during the time I was in Auluq, this group comprised 9 students. There were 8 males and 1 female. This group seemed to have a rather defeatist attitude. They often would seemingly give up on tests and other assignments and, for the most part, decided quite early in the grade 12 year that they were not going to graduate.

I worked with these students in my home after school and spent a considerable amount of time giving them pep talks in school. Out of the nine students in this group, my extra pushing and motivation worked for only one. I say "worked" because one of these students did graduate and did go to college. He successfully completed his college program and is now working on getting into the R.C.M.P. But it was a constant struggle trying to convince this boy that he could, in fact, graduate and that there was life after high school. In his particular case I had lots of support from his parents. I think, in retrospect, his parents' interaction was the key factor in his success. In the eight other cases, the parents did not interact at all. I would call the parents to discuss the possibility of their child not graduating and I would be met with a "so what" kind of response. At first their responses really upset me, but then I came to understand that the most important thing in their lives was not the graduation of their son or daughter. There were many other important things and many other successes that they celebrated with their children; these were not necessarily things that I would consider successes

until I remembered where I was and which culture I was living amidst. Again, in spite of my understanding, two cultures were colliding. I had to constantly remind myself that my ways were not their ways and that I was the outsider, not the people with whom I was interacting.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, *Isumaqsayuq* is the term used by Stairs (1995) to describe the traditional method of educating the young in the Arctic. As she explains, *Isumaqsayuq* "validates knowledge on the basis of life experience and community consensus. This knowledge is conveyed holistically and thematically" (p. 144). Also, as mentioned previously, Stairs (1995) uses the term *Illisayuq* to describe the way the young are educated in southern schools and in northern schools most recently in Inuit history. As she explains,

> *Illisayuq validates* knowledge on the basis of objective proof and expert opinion. It conveys knowledge in abstract universal categories (for instance, insects, fish, mammals, or science, philosophy, art) rather than situational specifics, and it organizes these categories into hierarchies rather than treating each in its own right. (p. 145)

I believe that one way to be productive as a teacher in the north is to take both philosophies and marry them somewhat in one's approach to teaching. Putting these completely different philosophies together in any cohesive whole is really a difficult task. I found myself fighting my urge to control and to have students memorize facts *just because*. Instead, I used portfolios and provided marks for the completion of tasks not for the correctness of tasks. In other words, my teaching changed completely. Two philosophies came together. As O'Donoghue (1998) explains,

> It seems reasonable to suggest that teachers are, to some extent, influenced by cultural reproduction, and that changing deeply engrained patterns of behavior require teachers to critically examine their beliefs and their willingness to maintain and accept the status quo. This kind of critical reflection can shake educators to the core (p. 180).

This coming together of the two philosophies and my unwillingness to maintain and accept the status quo has not gone without much pain and strain along the way, both personally, in my own teaching and for the whole education system in the north. Hugh Brody (2000), in his book *The Other Side Of Eden,* has a strong opinion about the two cultures colliding over education. As he writes,

> The residential school was part of a process of ethnocide. The plan that shaped these schools, and the attitudes that informed their daily regimens, emerged from the agriculturalists' need to get rid of hunter-gatherers. These schools represent a dedicated and ruthless attempt to transform the personalities and circumstances of "native people" into... well, what? Farm workers and industrial labourers? Domestic servants and housewives? All of these, and yet the project is easier to understand as a negative rather than as a positive undertaking. The intention was to stop people being who they were- to ensure that they could no longer live and think and occupy the land as hunter-gatherers. The new and modern nation-states make no room for hunter-gatherers. (p. 189)

Even though Brody's words might sound rather harsh, the situation he illuminates still resonates in today's educational facilities in the north. In his experience, Brody explains that "In the history of the 'education' provided [to Arctic peoples], there is no acknowledgment that hunter-gatherers had a right to be on their lands, nor a jot of concern for their skills and knowledge" (p. 189). What Brody is saying is similar to what Stephen Harris (1990) talks about in his book, *Two Way Aboriginal Schooling: Education and Cultural Survival.* Harris believes that the cultural education of the people and the academic education brought forth by those from outside should be presented separately. He believes that each should be clearly placed in its own context. As Stephen May (1994) points out in his book, *Critical Multiculturalism: Rethinking Multicultural and Antiracist Education,* "Radical theorists have argued that there would appear to be an irreducible gap between the emancipatory conception of multicultural education as cultural pluralism, and the realities of school practices" (p. 40).

For those going into another culture to teach, there should be culturally based curriculum guides to follow. But, in spite of all the documents supporting a culture-based curriculum, the education system I worked within in Auluq still did not fully acknowledge the "right" of the Inuit people to be educated according to who they are. There were pockets of time when cultural activities were taking place, but these were outside the regular curriculum not a part of it. There were no marks given for these activities and there was no acknowledgment of these other than the verbal appreciation of the teachers involved. I must reiterate again, as I did in the chapter about Spring Camp, how much the students seemed different out on the land, involved in traditional activities. Those students who struggled the most in school were most often the ones who excelled out on the land, and they were so proud to "show off" their expertise. What was expected of many students in the classroom by most teachers was simply not in their schemas of understanding. That is not to say that they could not learn, they could and did so very well, given enough understanding and time, but they really shone out on the land doing and exhibiting a very high level of skill in carrying out many different tasks. It is sad to me that all the teachers interacting with these students don't get to see them in their element. As mentioned before, not all the teachers took part in the activities out on the land, so they missed these wonderful experiences.

It is important also to bring the administrators into this discussion. Often, we find in Nunavut a group of retired educators who have moved north to enhance their careers a bit more by spending on average five more years in the business. They are mostly of the old school and not as energetic as they once were. Don't misunderstand me, there are many administrators who are really dedicated and willing to go the extra for his or her school, but then there are those who are not as willing for whatever reason. While this problem is not unique to the north of Canada, it is really quite a problem when there is a lethargic Qallunaaq administrator running an Inuit school. One of the reasons for the quick turnover of teachers is due to the poor administration

in the schools and the less than enthusiastic people who occupy positions at the board level. It takes special people to fit into this very unique opportunity of working with the Inuit and when administrators spend all their time in their offices and fail to immerse themselves fully into what is going on, then there is conflict, disappointment, wasted energy and frustration. As we have discussed, in order for one to be successful in interacting with the students in aboriginal schools, one must exhibit a great deal of warmth. If one is an administrator in an aboriginal school, one must be a charismatic leader. It just will not work well if one does not exhibit leadership in a charismatic way. As May states, "For many [educators], education is simply a matter of survival; teaching children as best they can, and with what limited time and resources they have at their disposal" (p. 1). But it just can't be about surviving. Leaders must lead and in order to be successful in leading a school, it is imperative that the leader be visible.

Joanne Tompkins (1998) discusses the role of the principal in her book *Teaching in a Cold and Windy Place*. As she explains:

> When you ask a... principal to really care about the people [he or she] works with, you are asking a great deal. I don't think that you can talk about having patience and faith without ultimately caring about people. You have to care enough to have faith that people will succeed and patience enough to support them when they stumble or are unsure.... If ...principals, from their lofty positions, make decisions about how things should be without really knowing the people that these decisions affect, then they can make easy clean decisions. They don't really have to use judgment-- they can just apply abstract rules, and if people can't follow the rules, then the people must be in the wrong (p. 120).

Because of a number of administrators not making the effort to really get to know the people, many "easy clean decisions" are made. It is quite often the teachers who have to follow through with these decisions and it is always the students who have to suffer through them. When administrators stay in their offices most of the day, they cannot

learn to care about the people. The school becomes a place to go to work and earn a larger pension. No one really wins. It is these situations which cause the system to fail.

Much of what I have discussed here is about power. Before there were Qallunaaq people living and working in the north, the power was with the Inuit. Since the time of the whalers and on into the 1950's the power shifted. With Nunavut becoming a territory and being self-governed there seems to be a lessening of the total dominance over the Inuit. But Qallunaaq dominance is still a huge issue.

I mentioned in a previous chapter the story of the boy in grade 12 who flew me to the top of the mountain on the back of his skidoo. But I didn't tell the whole story. Before we took off, when we were sitting on his skidoo at the foot of the mountain with the Northern Lights playing overhead, he turned to me and said: "There are a bunch of Qallunaaq teachers stuck frozen out of the top of the mountain. I might end up taking you up there and adding you to the pile." He then smiled a beautiful full-mouthed smile and his eyes twinkled. He flipped down his visor and off we went. While we were on that mountain he had the power. His words were a challenge for me not to be frozen in his mind, and in the minds of all the students, as one of *those* Qallunaaq teachers. One of the ones who go north, do their thing and leave without having any idea of the wake they leave behind them.

I wanted to keep my eyes open the whole time and even now, after. Much of what I saw was absolutely awesome, but some was heart wrenching. It was often difficult to keep open to all that was happening. But I wouldn't have missed any of it for the world.

Through living as a teacher, a coach, a mother, a friend and a co-community member with the people in Auluq, I learned a whole lifetime of things. Though I still have a great deal to learn, my whole way of thinking changed. With any change there is resistance and some of the change I went through did not come easily. I learned that while I was no stranger to risk-taking before, taking risks in Auluq took on a whole new

meaning. In my constructing, reconstructing, recovering and reconstructing again my critical narrative, the way I teach and, in fact, the way I live will never be the same. My concept of who I was as a teacher and a person completely changed since living and working in Auluq. I have come to see things from a different perspective. My perspective changed right up until the last moment. Everyday I learned something new, something that changed the way I look at things. I will be forever thankful for the lessons I have learned, and for the people I will hold in my heart-- their twinkling smiles and warm welcome resonate within my daughters and I. I am so truly grateful for having had the experience of touching the lives of the youth of Auluq and for the youth of Auluq touching my life. Quanamiq!

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