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Abstract

This descriptive case study explores Inuit visions for schooling in a remote community in the Qikiqtani (formerly Baffin) Region of Nunavut. I use information from interviews, casual conversations, observations, and a review of the literature on minority and cross-cultural education to describe what participants want, to discuss obstacles to student learning, and to suggest ways to improve schooling in Nunavut. The study, conducted in a critical frame foregrounding issues of power, was meant to be useful in considering change. Data came primarily from semi-structured interviews with 74 Inuit adults, and were contextualized by two years of teaching grade 7 in this community in the late 1990s, five short visits since, master's research in five communities in the Kivalliq Region of Nunavut, four months of fieldwork in 2006, and two brief trips to return preliminary findings to the community.

Findings from this study echo descriptions of what Inuit participants want from schooling found in the *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq* consultations (Aylward, 2004) and the Nunavut Education Act consultations (Nunavut Department of Education, 2006). Participants supported schooling and wanted an increase in Inuit knowledge and skills taught in (and outside) of the schools. They wanted an increase in, or strengthening of, Inuktitut in the schools, the meaningful inclusion of elders in schools, and higher academic standards. These wishes were consistent for women and men, younger and older participants, the wage-employed and those without wage employment, highschool graduates and those without formal schooling, and for participants who take part in 'traditional' activities like hunting, sewing and carving, as well as for those who do not.

Participants described a number of obstacles to student achievement, and no one theory can explain the failings of Nunavut schools. Many concerns identified in the literature on schools that underserve Aboriginal and minority students are discussed. These include culturally incongruent pedagogy, a weak connection between school and work, prejudice from non-Inuit, and disempowering relations between the school system and the community. Eurocentric thinking in the schools, the school system, and in Canada continues to block the creation of schools that work for Inuit.

The Government of Canada must provide funding to facilitate the transformation of

schooling in Nunavut to a system based in Inuit culture. The Nunavut Department of Education must work with Inuit educators to implement the changes called for in the *Bilingual Education Strategy*. As long as non-Inuit educators are needed in Nunavut, District Education Authorities should prioritize the hiring of people who are willing to examine their own Eurocentrism. In calling for schools where Inuit language and culture are taken seriously, people in Tuktulik reassert that despite massive pressure for assimilation, assimilation is not inevitable. It is time for EuroCanadians to understand this message.

Non-Technical Summary

Inuit visions for schooling in one Nunavut community

Background

Inuit taught their children successfully for thousands of years before Qallunaat built schools about 50 years ago in the eastern Arctic. The schools used a Qallunaat way of teaching and taught subjects from southern provinces. Teachers were Qallunaat and teaching was in English.

Slowly, some things changed. Inuit teachers were hired and Inuktitut was used in the primary grades. The Baffin Divisional Board of Education was created, District Education Authorities were strengthened, and *Inuuqatigiit: The curriculum from the Inuit perspective*, was completed. In 1999, the Government of Nunavut said that schools would be improved and would run on Inuit ways and values. Many people were concerned that Nunavut schools hurt Inuit culture and did not prepare students to get jobs or to go to university.

In 2003 the Department of Education did a study (*Sivuniksamut Illiniarniq*) to find out what Nunavummiut wanted from schooling and in 2006 held meetings for the new Nunavut Education Act. They found that Nunavummiut want more Inuit culture in the schools, more Inuit language and stronger English, and higher academic standards. The current study looked closely at what Inuit want schools to be like in the future. This should help policymakers, administrators, and teachers. The study was also done to learn what things make it hard for students to learn.

Methods

The study was done from January to May, 2006. I interviewed 74 adult Inuit from 18 years old to over 80 years old about schooling. I also had many conversations with Inuit and Qallunaat and took part in different activities in the community and in the schools.

Findings Part 1 This part describes the main things people would like from schools in the future.

More Inuit culture. *“Igloo building; that I don’t want to get lost.... And making clothing, in my Inuktitut way, and language. That’s the part I don’t want them to lose.”* (Elder)

Almost all of the people I interviewed said they would like more Inuit culture in the schools. Some said there should be more Inuit skills taught to keep ties with the past. Some said Inuit ways should be learned because students are Inuit, because it would help students learn better, or because Inuit skills, like survival skills, are still needed today. Many people were worried about Inuit culture being lost.

People named many cultural skills that should be a part of school like hunting, carving, building a qammutik, making an ulu, and surviving on the land. Many said that there used to be more cultural skills taught in the schools. Some people also mentioned other Inuit ways that should be part of the schools – things like sharing, supporting each other, and being friendly.

The Government of Nunavut wants schooling to be based in Inuit culture, but right now students in this community have little exposure to Inuit ways or skills in the highschool and the skills are not required in order to graduate. I recommend that schools be properly funded and that they be required to provide a variety of Inuit skills, taught by Inuit in Inuit ways, as chosen by the community. This would be a small step towards honouring Inuit culture.

More and stronger Inuktitut (and English). *“My children’s Inuktitut is more English than anything else. They may be speaking in Inuktitut, but they’re putting their words together in Qallunaatitut.”* (Woman in her 50s)

Most of the people I interviewed wanted more Inuktitut taught in schools or said Inuktitut is very important. Some people said that English is also very important. People were happy that children are learning strong Inuktitut in the daycare and early grades, but some said that after the early grades students forget their Inuktitut. Many said that more Inuktitut should be taught in schools because they do not want the language to be lost. Some connected language loss to a loss of identity. Some said that young people often leave out words and endings. This makes it hard for youth and elders to understand each other.

Several people said that learning Inuktitut is important for learning English. Many people said English is also important and asked that English be taught earlier. The Nunavut Department of Education's *Bilingual Education Strategy* says that Inuktitut should be used as a language of instruction right up to grade 12, and that English instruction should start earlier.

I recommend that the federal government provide funding, as Thomas Berger called for in his report *The Nunavut Project*, to improve schooling in Nunavut. The *Bilingual Education Strategy* needs to be followed and Inuktitut needs to be strengthened in schools. In Greenland, students study most subjects in Greenlandic. Students in Nunavut deserve a strong school system that supports Inuit languages. They also need a strong program of English as a second language, with proper funding.

More elders. *“There’s no better way to say it than to hope for it. I hope some day that there will be more elders in the school.”* (Woman in her 40s)

Almost everybody said or agreed that there should be more involvement of elders in the schools. Many suggested that there should be elders in the schools to support the teaching of Inuktitut because elders know the language better than anyone. Many people also said elders know the land and should be hired to teach Inuit cultural skills. It was suggested that if elders were teaching real things the students would also be learning real Inuktitut. Some said that having more elders in the schools would help students learn. They remembered being excited when an elder came to class when they were in school.

I recommend that the Department of Education make funding available to hire elders. Elders should be present in schools throughout the year. They should be an important part of bringing Inuit skills, ways and values into schools, in taking students onto the land, and in strengthening Inuktitut.

Academic excellence. *“I always feel that our kids are being cheated out of that system. ‘Cause they can’t compete when they go to college or university down south.”* (Elder)

Twenty-three people said that the schools should have higher academic standards, and some said that expectations were lower now than before. People said that the standard of education should be equal to the rest of Canada. One person noted that in Greenland students are going to school and becoming engineers. Several recent graduates said that schoolwork should be harder to make things more interesting.

I recommend that funding be provided to offer an “academic” stream in all Nunavut highschools. To prepare for future studies students must be challenged and supported. Teachers must have high expectations of all students.

Findings 2 This section looks at obstacles to learning and school success.

Community support for schools and students. Researchers think that for students to do well at school, parents must support the school and students. I found much support from the people I spoke to. Everyone said that schooling is important and parents said children must graduate. Some said that the schools keep getting better. To increase this support further, I recommend considering the following:

- 1) Changing the schools as described in the first section. If people see that Inuit culture is valued, that Inuktitut is strong, that elders are involved, and that expectations are high, their support will increase.
- 2) Many people described very bad school experiences including abuse and angry teachers. As parents now, they may need extra encouragement when invited to the schools and asked to take part in their children’s schooling.
- 3) People described a favourite teacher as one who cared. Signs of caring from teachers may lead to increased support from parents.
- 4) There were concerns about suspensions, bullying, and that the schools are not strict enough. Reviewing the discipline policy with community input, communicating it to the community, and working together to be consistent, may solve problems and increase community support.
- 5) Some people would like more communication between the schools and the community. One person said that it is not easy to hear that her child is late, but *“those are the things you want to hear too, because you want to fix it.”* Increasing parent and community support for the schools may result in

students learning more.

School/home fit. Researchers believe when students must do things differently in school than in their homes, it can make it more difficult to learn. The best example from this study was in the way people learn. When I asked people how they learned to hunt, sew, or carve, they said by watching and by trying it themselves. One elder said: *“By looking. We weren’t taught. We watched our fathers. When we went out with them we watched our relatives. How they did things. They didn’t try to say to us this is how anything.... Things like building an igloo I learned how to do it by watching.”*

Many Inuit learn things best in the ways Inuit have learned successfully for thousands of years. Some said it was hard learning only from reading or from doing worksheets in school. They thought children should be active whenever possible. Several people suggested that students should learn about jobs through work experience.

I recommend training for Qallunaat teachers to help them understand the ways many Inuit learn best. This would help them teach better, and help them teach students to learn in other ways. Working toward schools that fit the students should increase student comfort and learning.

Colonialism in the past and present. When schooling began in the eastern Arctic it was colonial – the ways and values of schooling came from somewhere else – and Qallunaat in the Arctic had power to make many decisions that affected Inuit. Many things have changed, but the schools remain very ‘southern’ and many decisions are still made by Qallunaat.

I heard that some Qallunaat get angry very easily, and I saw this myself. I heard Qallunaat say prejudicial things about Inuit, make generalizations, and say things that did not value Inuit language and culture. I think many Qallunaat expect that Inuit will one day live and work like Qallunaat. If children feel that Inuit culture is not valued, their self-esteem may suffer. It may affect their motivation to do well in a school system that was designed by Qallunaat and still has many Qallunaat teachers. Research suggests that children who have a strong sense of their own culture do best in school. Children need positive messages about their culture from everyone.

I recommend hiring people who respect and value Inuit culture.

Reported obstacles to learning. In the interviews people described things that made it hard for students to learn and do well in school. Some are connected to past and continuing colonialism in Nunavut. Addressing them may help students learn.

Many people said that drugs or alcohol caused them to stop school. Many said that drug use makes it hard for some students because they lose interest in school or because parents use drugs and then cannot support their children. Several people also said that gambling is a problem. One person pointed out that there is not enough support available for people who want to stop addictions.

Several people described how violence affects children, who sometimes come to school angry. They cannot learn well and they disrupt others. One person again pointed out that there are not many ways to get help for people struggling with violence.

I recommend more funding for programs, to be designed locally, that would help people break addictions and celebrate their strengths and culture. I recommend that teachers learn how to meet the needs of students who are affected by these obstacles. Students need teachers who connect with them and help them feel safe and valued.

The connection between school and work. Some researchers think that for students to try hard in school they need to believe that it will help them get a job. Most people said that it is not easy to find a job in the community, but that graduating helps.

While it would be easy for a university graduate to get a job, it is not easy for a student to think about going to university. Few people have been south to school and many said that it would be hard to leave the community and Nunavut. More exchange trips and a bigger Nunavut Youth Abroad program might help people see the possibility of studying outside the community. I also recommend that the Department of Education deliver more post-secondary programs locally.

Graduating increases the chance of getting a job, but is no guarantee. Using apprenticeships and creating more possibilities for further study might help. Making some jobs

more flexible might also increase students' desire to finish school and apply.

All of these obstacles to student learning have ties to colonialism in the past or in the present.

Conclusion

Government policy calls for more Inuit culture and language in Nunavut schools. This includes the proposed Inuit Language Protection Act and the proposed Nunavut Education Act.

Unfortunately, in the eastern Arctic many good ideas and policies have been slowed or stopped by Eurocentrism, the Qallunaat belief that Qallunaat ways of doing things are best. Qallunaat teachers, administrators, and bureaucrats, while often well-meaning, may not be able to imagine other ways of doing things.

I believe that Eurocentrism is the reason why schools in Nunavut have not changed to be like Inuit want them. Eurocentrism is also responsible for many of the problems facing Inuit students. Eurocentrism needs to be acknowledged and overcome in order to change schooling in Nunavut from a 'Qallunaat' place where few Inuit students succeed, to an 'Inuit' place serving the hopes of Inuit parents, students, and communities.

The Government of Canada must support Inuit wishes for schooling. It must provide funding to help change the schools to schools that Inuit want, away from the schools' colonial past.

Much work is needed to make Nunavut schools places where Inuit culture, language, and elders are central, and places where most students succeed. This work has begun and must continue.

The government schools were basically “outpost” versions of southern schools. Their programs had nothing to do with our language, culture, or the adaptive challenges faced by our people.... Rather than making us stronger, they tended to undermine our confidence and identity.

(Sheila Watt-Cloutier, 2000, p. 115)

In the formal education system our parents had absolutely no influence or input, and our unique identity as Inuit was of no consequence inside the schoolroom. The legacy of this imposition crossed over to the problems of lost identity and dismantled self-esteem, which still plague the latest generations of Inuit students in education systems across the Arctic.

(Zebedee Nungak, 2004, p. 14)

We in the south do not know what is best for others – we are enmeshed, quite properly, in deep uncertainties about what is best for ourselves. Rather than export our disorders and diseases, we must look to the Inuit in the hope that, despite all the historical pressures to the contrary, they have retained a lifeline to their own heritage.

(Hugh Brody, 1991, p. 14)

0. Introduction

I am not neutral or free from bias – researchers never are (Agar, 1996, p. 92). I start by introducing myself to give you insight into who I am, where my biases lie and my motivations for undertaking this research. In Chapter One I chronicle the development of schooling in what is now Nunavut¹. This is woven together with an overview of theories that attempt to explain how Eurocentric schools have failed to adequately educate students who have been ‘marginalized’ and ‘normalized’ (Osbourne, 1996). Perhaps unconventionally, I treat historical and theoretical considerations concurrently since their parallel development is interesting, and this treatment will avoid duplication of other recent works about schooling in Nunavut (e.g., Aylward, 2006; Douglas, 1998; Pulpan, 2006; Tompkins, 2006). In Chapter Two I describe the research tradition,

¹ Nunavut, Canada’s newest territory, was created in 1999 from the eastern part of the Northwest Territories as part of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.

methodology, and methods used in the study, with a particular focus on how I tried to conduct the research respectfully, and where I believe I fell short. Chapters Three and Four present findings coupled with discussion. Chapter Three details what Inuit participants said they want from the schools in Tuktulik²: that is, more Inuit culture; more Inuktitut; more elders; and higher academic standards. Chapter Four explores factors influencing the academic success of Inuit students, organized around themes that appear in the literature, including: parental and community support for schools and students; (in)congruence between home and school; prejudice, colonialism and disempowerment; dysfunctional corollaries of colonialism; and the connection between school and work. In Chapter Five I discuss how Eurocentrism works to block the changes called for by Inuit, and in Chapter Six I suggest some avenues for pursuing this change.

0.1 Personal introduction

My values have inevitably influenced this work. Making my position explicit is necessary (Schram, 2003, p. 35); knowing something about my worldview may help you to ‘read’ this research.

I am a forty-two year old White EuroCanadian who grew up near a major urban centre (Toronto). As a PhD student and now tenure-track faculty member at a western academy I have much privilege to be heard and substantial economic freedom (Shahjahan, 2005). This is in sharp contrast to many participants in the research. I was raised in a family where issues of social justice, feminism, and oppression were discussed, sometimes hotly. As a child and youth I critically observed teachers’ roles and uses of power and during a Bachelor of Engineering degree (1984-1988), I became disillusioned with higher education.

Before returning to school, I worked independently on construction and renovation projects and travelled. In 1994, I married Helle Møller, a Dane, who is now a PhD student and anthropologist working on matters relating to health and colonization in Nunavut (Møller, 2005) and Greenland. We lived in Demark for two years, where I learned Danish and was struck by the

² Tuktulik is a pseudonym for the community. It means ‘place with caribou.’

socialist ethos (now somewhat in retreat) that included an acceptance of high taxes, the absence of slums, and the existence of comprehensive social programs.

We moved to Canada where I studied teaching and then taught grade 7 from 1997-1999 in Tuktulik, an isolated community in the eastern Arctic. I arrived in the Arctic eager to learn about Inuit culture and hoping to be able to engage students and help them learn. From the beginning, I had vague misgivings about my role as a EuroCanadian teacher of Inuit students, teaching within a EuroCanadian institution. I tried to adapt content and methods to meet the needs I perceived students to have. I ‘learned’ about Inuit culture largely from my mostly White colleagues, from observing my students, and from a limited amount of reading undertaken within a busy schedule of planning and teaching. I was frustrated by the lack of formal discussion about the role of EuroCanadian-based schools in Inuit communities, and the lack of a viable mechanism for sharing ideas and resources that seemed to work with Inuit students.

After 2 years we moved south so that Helle could pursue further studies; I began master’s work. My thinking about Inuit education was that enormous potential for improving schooling in Nunavut was being lost because of the difficulty educators had in sharing successes, isolated as they were by great distances. The Internet was still an unreliable tool in the north at the time. For my master’s research I studied adaptations that had been made, or that educators thought should be made, to better “fit” the schools to their Inuit students to increase student achievement and well-being (Berger, 2001). The work was done in 9 schools in 5 communities in the Kivalliq Region of Nunavut. Due to the design of the study, most of the participants were Qallunaat³ (non-Inuit) (see Berger, Epp & Moeller, 2006).

I became convinced that a more important issue than “fit” – cultural compatibility – is the issue of power and control of education (and other institutions which affect the lives of Inuit). Although some of the adaptations documented in the master’s research did move the schools toward Inuit culture, only a few instances were noted where the community was involved in the

³ “Qallunaat” is a word used by Inuit to denote non-Inuit: “anyone who comes to the north from the south” (Brody, 2000, p. 319). The singular is “Qallunaaq.” I use the word as synonymous with “non-Inuit.”

changes. In those instances, community agency was reported as an important factor in their success.

I came to believe that the underachievement of Nunavut schools would not be changed simply by a mechanism to easily share best practices. Colonialism, poor pedagogy, and culture clash made underachievement predictable (Berger, Epp & Møller, 2006). Asking Inuit about obstacles to student learning and exploring underachievement in one community seemed a natural fit in a study exploring Inuit thoughts on schooling and Inuit visions for schooling in the future.

If Inuit controlled schooling in Nunavut, what kind of schools would they choose for their children? Some Qallunaat educators in the master's research suggested that Inuit themselves were struggling with identity issues and were not clear about what they wanted from the schools. One said: "communities aren't really sure what they stand for.... I don't know if all people in our community want our schools to be that much different than schools elsewhere in the world" (cited in Berger, 2001, p. 91). With little written in the academic literature about Inuit wishes for schooling, it seemed that an exploration would be valuable for informing teachers, principals, elected Inuit policymakers at the local level, the largely non-Inuit educational bureaucracy, and Inuit policymakers in the Government of Nunavut.

I began this study with the following assumption about schooling in Nunavut:

For schooling to support Inuit culture, the superimposed EuroCanadian system will likely need major adaptations or a complete re-invention, by Inuit. As long as the fundamental values undergirding the school system are EuroCanadian and not Inuit values, it is unlikely that the schools will stop assimilating Inuit to EuroCanadian norms and values. My orientation here was critical (Kincheloe, 2004), focussed on power imbalance. Starting this study I also believed that some Inuit might not want to change the EuroCanadian system in fundamental ways. There are a variety of reasons why this might be the case; for example, in Australia, Harris (1990) noted that with true indigenous control a two-way schooling model might be adopted, maintaining a western domain controlled by Aboriginal community members. Similarly, Crago (1992) reported that in Nunavik (northern Quebec) Inuit leaders wanted older students to learn through Qallunaat discourse patterns to prepare students for post-secondary education. Hegemony, or domination

through ideology rather than physical force (Tosi, 1988), might also have resulted in some Inuit believing that Qallunaat ways are inevitable or best. Whatever the chosen form for schooling, I was (and remain) convinced that Inuit control of Inuit education is needed for schools to be effective and to support cultural vitality. Fairness also demands that indigenous groups should have control over their own education. This was my position as I began the research, and remains my belief as I finish this writing.

1. Review of the Literature & the Context of Schooling in Nunavut

My understandings of theories and concepts in the area of Inuit education are synthesized here with literature associated with intercultural⁴, cross-cultural, minority, and First Nations and indigenous education. I position the present study in historical, theoretical, and methodological contexts. Literature informing this work is eclectic and comes from a variety of research traditions. Work on schooling Inuit students is supplemented by concepts from related areas of study relevant to the Inuit educational context. Other work in the circumpolar north is often relevant due to similar histories of contact and colonization, and certain similarities across cultures (Darnell & Hoem, 1996). I also draw on work with other indigenous groups and colonization, and some work with minority groups in mainstream American school settings that share common themes, especially those related to power.

Problems in education are often “messy” (Boote & Beile, 2005, p. 3) and the underachievement of Nunavut schools is no exception. The development of academic thought about Inuit schooling has occurred rapidly and has been impacted by many related fields. Although there are trends that can be traced in the development of thought concerning the failure of schools to educate indigenous and minority students, they are often vague and overlapping, without clear transitions or unanimous approval by the academic community. I weave these into the historical narrative that describes important events in the last 55 years of schooling in the eastern Arctic. The divisions in this presentation help with organization, but are often artificial.

1.1 Failing schools and assimilation: A brief history/present

Formal schooling in the Canadian eastern Arctic is less than 100 years old, with scattered missionary schools the first to appear (Van Meenen, 1994). Qallunaat schools⁵ were built a half-century ago across the eastern Arctic and were used by the Canadian Government to move Inuit

4 Appel (1988) wrote that ‘intercultural’ education refers to schooling aimed at promoting a positive self-concept for minority students and appreciation across difference.

5 I use the term “Qallunaat schools” to highlight the fact that although some of Nunavut’s schools are staffed almost wholly by Inuit teachers, and although over 90% of students are Inuit, the schools are largely structured like schools in southern Canada, and based on EuroCanadian values (Berger, 2001).

from the land into settlements, part of a plan to increase Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic (Prattis & Chartrand, 1990; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Schools were built in the new settlements; Inuit were told that attendance was mandatory and that family allowance payments would be withheld from parents who did not send their children to school (Dorais, 2001; Tester & Kulchyski; Watt-Cloutier, 2000). Early schools were thus used as instruments of colonial policy.

These schools superimposed Qallunaat educational traditions on the previously existing Inuit way of educating (Douglas, 1994), a way that was holistic and embedded in the context of daily living (Nungak, 2004). As with most of the colonial policies pursued in Arctic North America, schooling was aimed at the assimilation of northern indigenous peoples into the mainstream (Brody, 1991; Chisholm, 1994; Lipka, Mohatt & the Ciulistet Group, 1998; Lipka & Stairs, 1994). Even when it is not the explicit intent, pressure towards assimilation is often the result of transplanting schools from the dominant-culture to indigenous settings (Henze & Vanett, 1993). As LaFrance (1994), a First Nations woman, wrote: “it is extremely difficult to be educated in a western way and, culturally, remain who we are” (p. 20). In Nunavut, this may be particularly the case because “formal education is not only alien to Inuit culture but, as initially transposed from the south, is in direct conflict with indigenous modes of transmitting knowledge across generations” (Stairs, 1988, p. 315).

Over the last decades awareness has been growing about the potential damage to students’ self-esteem and school performance when the school does not reflect and value their native culture (Bennett, 1999). Wright, Taylor and Ruggiero (1996) noted that Canada’s Inuit “experience persistent, disproportionate academic failure” (p. 734), and Binda (1999) wrote that “the high dropout and failure rates and negative impacts of schooling testify to the dysfunctional effects of a EuroCanadian education system of service delivery for Aboriginal and Inuit people” (p. 87). Some of the common difficulties indigenous students have in dominant-culture classrooms include, “a reluctance to perform in front of peers and to compete with them, avoidance of communication with teachers, non-comprehension of decontextualized verbal instruction, and general withdrawal from and even resistance to classroom life and routines” (Stairs, 1994a, p. 68).

Historically, the education imposed on Inuit did not reflect or value Inuit culture. Efforts to change this have resulted in the development of some curriculum specifically related to Inuit culture (Aylward, 2006; Northwest Territories Education Culture and Employment [NWT ECE], 1996); some control being transferred to locally elected District Education Authorities; investigations into what truly 'Inuit' school leadership might look like (Tompkins, 2006), cultural inclusion programs being implemented in some schools; and educators employing a variety of strategies to try and make learning relevant for Inuit students (Berger, 2001). While this work has laid important groundwork for school transformation, these initiatives have not yet fundamentally changed the colonial terms upon which formal schooling in Nunavut began; schooling in Nunavut remains "essentially a foreign institution...delivering a foreign curriculum...in a foreign language" (McAuley, 1991, p. 45).

The damage done by the presence of powerful EuroCanadian institutions in Inuit communities is considerable. The consequences of contact and the EuroCanadian colonization of the Inuit have been dire (Prattis & Chartrand, 1990). The Nunavut Social Development Council [NSDC] (2000) described some of these consequences as "social havoc" (p. 71), "intense change" (p. 73), and "abysmal levels of education," a "national disgrace...a scandal that Canada hardly acknowledges" (p. 74). The social problems in Nunavut are so serious that "if they were replicated elsewhere in Canada, there would be a public outcry of national proportions, serious enough to topple a government" (NSDC, p. 83). Problems include high unemployment and a low median income, high addiction and suicide rates, overcrowded housing, and lower health status than any other province or territory (Chisholm, 1994; NSDC; Prattis & Chartrand, Statistics Canada, 2004). The highschool graduation rate is 25%, compared to the Canadian average of 75% (Hicks, 2005). Nungak (2004) called contact and colonization the "Great Cultural Earthquake" (p. 14) behind Inuit communities' social problems, which are in part a result of alien schooling (Brody, 1991; Crago, 1992). In recent years the Inuit language has largely disappeared in the western Arctic and Labrador (Stairs, 1988), parent/child language patterns in northern Quebec have changed as Inuit mothers adopt questioning techniques that mimic Qallunaat school practices (Crago, 1992; Crago, Annahatak & Ningiuruvik, 1993), youth have become alienated

from elders (Minor, 1992; NSCD), students have lost self-esteem and committed suicide (Chisholm), and Inuit cultural vitality is under pressure (Bunz, 1979; Kawagely, 1995; Lipka, 1989; Simon, 1996; Stairs, 1988), all attributable in part to Qallunaat schooling.

Qallunaat schooling historically created a “pressure for assimilation” on Inuit students and communities (Crago & Eriks-Brophy, 1994, p. 44); it continues to do so today (Berger, 2005). As Corson (1992a) cautioned:

Education provides a field in which the language rights and cultural values of children can be trampled on by the routine exercise of legitimate power. This especially applies to children of indigenous minority cultures that survive precariously alongside invasion European cultures, such as... Inuit... [who] often express world views and values that do not always accord with the norms that the school legitimates. (p. 198)

In their structure, aims, and functioning, Nunavut schools remain largely Qallunaat institutions, and are one instrument in what Kulchyski (2005) termed the completion of the conquest of the Americas, a process that continues to this day.

Qallunaat schools in mainstream Canadian settings embody the pursuit of various aims of education. In one view, Qallunaat schools have historically tried to socialize students to the norms and values of Qallunaat society, build students’ ability to pursue truth and perceive reality, and help fulfil the individual potential of all students (Egan, 1998). These particular school goals present some serious problems when transplanted to Inuit communities in Nunavut.

As an instrument of socialization, schools where over 90% of the students are Inuit might be expected to socialize students into Inuit culture, but this is not what happens. Since the ideological underpinnings of schools created by Qallunaat and structured on southern norms are EuroCanadian, the cultural traditions in the classroom are likely to be Qallunaat, not Inuit. The norms and values of Inuit culture often conflict fervently with those of EuroCanadian culture⁶

⁶ It should be noted that not all members of a cultural group hold the same beliefs or share the same values (Lipka, 1989). Thus, speaking of “Inuit culture,” “western culture,” or “Qallunaat school culture” are generalizations that may not adequately describe individuals’ experiences. As a construct, culture is useful for speaking about significant differences between groups, but carries the danger of masking diversity within groups.

(Chisholm, 1994; Henze & Vanett, 1993; Stairs, 1991), such that Qallunaat schooling may mean being assimilated to possessive western individualism instead of socialized for group cohesiveness (Brody, 2000; Stairs, 1994b; Rasmussen, 2002), learning western egocentricity instead of Inuit ecocentricity (Stairs, 1992), and coming to value hierarchy instead of equality (Ryan, 1992).

As an institution meant to help students pursue “truth,” problems also arise because the epistemology and ontology of Inuit may differ radically from the scientific worldview held by many Qallunaat (Kawagely, 1995; Roepstorff, 2003). Most Inuit trust their own experience to provide knowledge and truth (Angmarlik, 1999; Møller, 2005; Oosten & Laugrand, 2002), whereas Qallunaat schools rely heavily on abstract verbal mediation for learning (Stairs, 1994a). This fundamental difference works to pull Inuit students from their culture, as does the Qallunaat school commitment to fulfilling individual potential when it is uncritically located in a culture historically based on collective identity (Rasmussen, 2002; Stairs, 1992). The very conception of what it means to be ‘smart’ is not the same in Qallunaat and Inuit culture (Briggs, 1998; Stern, 1999).

In these circumstances increasing the effectiveness of schools and student achievement within them might mean even faster assimilation to Qallunaat culture, with concomitant loss of Inuit culture (Crago & Eriks-Brophy, 1994; Darder, 1991; Darnell & Hoem, 1996; Doige, 1999; Ogbu, 1992; Young & McDermott, 1988). From a theoretical standpoint, fundamental school change may be needed to address student underachievement and the threat to Inuit culture that Qallunaat schools in Nunavut represent. School “improvement” may not be enough.

1.2 The historical roots of schooling in Nunavut and models of minority school failure

In the early 20th century when schooling had only been introduced sporadically in the Canadian Arctic, largely by missionaries, little was written about the schooling of Inuit outside of government documents. Van Meenen (1994), who conducted historical research on schooling in Arctic Canada and Russia, reported that the Government of Canada initially did not want to assimilate the Inuit due to the projected expense of providing services for them, including public

schooling (p. 149). She reported that the Depression and the advent of World War II “contributed to the government’s ambivalence toward native people in general and the Inuit in particular” (p. 160). At that time, missionaries were Christianizing Inuit, in part through teaching the syllabic system of reading and writing so that Inuit could read the Bible (Brody, 1991, p. 157). Early mission schooling was deeply assimilative (Tompkins, 2006).

Despite this early government indifference, early residential schools in the western Arctic caused major disruption to Inuit culture, one of the stated goals of schooling according to some school officials (Brant & Hobart, 1970). In the eastern Arctic there were residential schools in Churchill and Chesterfield Inlet, with nothing ‘Inuit’ about the ‘education’ offered there (Tompkins, 2004). In the early 1970s a residential school operated in Iqaluit, against the wishes of many Inuit, who were often relieved when their children left school to come back to the communities (Brody). Brody reported on the disruption that residential schooling caused to Inuit family life, and Manning (1976), an Inuk⁷, wrote that children returned and “didn’t seem to like their parents any longer” (p. 34). Although not all children were taken to residential schools, disastrous reverberations from this upheaval are still felt in Inuit communities today, with the traumatic effects only recently understood (Tompkins, 2006).

World War II brought much attention to the Arctic and this had a major impact on policy (Brody, 1991). At mid-century public schooling was in its infancy in the north with only 25% of Inuit children “exposed” to any school at all (Jenness, 1964), but sovereignty considerations rapidly increased government interest in providing services to Inuit. Civil servants served as teachers and created their own curriculum in the areas of arithmetic, hygiene, games, conservation, and handicrafts (Van Meenen, 1994). All instruction was in English, in part because the teachers spoke English, and in spite of the high proportion of Inuit already literate in Inuktitut⁸ (Van Meenen).

7 ‘Inuk’ is the singular of ‘Inuit.’

8 Many dialects of Inuktitut are spoken in Nunavut. In the western part of Nunavut the dialect is called Innuinaqtun. From western Alaska to Greenland the Inuit languages spoken are closely related.

In the early 1950s education moved from a religious to a secular orientation and curriculum from the adjoining southern provinces began to be adopted (Van Meenen, 1994). In 1952 it was decided that some Inuit should be trained to be teachers and it was deemed allowable to instruct certain courses in Inuktitut (Van Meenen). Despite these small concessions to Inuit culture, from early in the history of formal education in the eastern Arctic there have been cautionary notes from Qallunaat who lived there and involved themselves with education. Hinds (1958), who taught in the north for many years, thought highly of her Inuit students and their ability to learn quickly but was concerned about the possibility of loss of culture. She was especially concerned that pupils who excelled in school would need to leave their communities for higher education in the south (p. 108).

Jenness (1964), an anthropologist who worked for the Canadian Government and lived in the Arctic for extended periods, also expressed concern about the rapid changes brought about by contact with EuroCanadian society, and blamed this in part for the failure of the schools to retain Inuit students, most of whom stopped school before grade three. Jenness, however, seemed less certain about the justice and viability of protecting Inuit culture. He wrote that Inuit should receive a vocational education to prepare them to take part in resource development, and speculated about whether “we may justly use coercion over a short period to educate them and to integrate them into our society, because by so doing we shall save them from greater hardships in the future” (p. 130). Into and through the 1960s the schools continued to operate on “the premise that the transition of the Inuit from the traditional lifestyle was inevitable” (Van Meenen, p. 225), with vocational training prioritized “to provide the most efficient path into the wage economy” (Van Meenen, p. 227).

During the 1960s Qallunaat curriculum experts began to travel to the north and curriculum committees were set up in many communities, though without Inuit participants. By 1965 there were many curriculum documents that included northern themes, but “they still did not directly relate to Inuit culture” (Van Meenen, 1994, p. 235) and Van Meenen reported that in 1971 a federal study by the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Indian and Inuit Education, “found that children in northern schools could not relate to the existing teaching

materials” (p. 251). A survey by the NWT government then recommended goals for education including “[enabling] each individual to choose freely between different courses of action in a manner such that he [sic] can live a satisfying personal life” (cited in Van Meenen, p. 252), one of the first references to the idea of educating students for a traditional subsistence or a western urban lifestyle.

While formal schooling had only just begun in the eastern Arctic, it was clear in mainstream North American settings that schools were not meeting the academic needs of indigenous and minority students. Some researchers were looking inside classrooms to find out why this was the case.

1.3 The differential treatment model

In the 1950s Spindler and Spindler (2000) did pioneering work in the use of anthropological methods for studying questions of minority student achievement in mainstream American schools, visiting classrooms to observe and participate, interviewing teachers, and surveying students. Primarily ethnographic in nature, their studies suggested that underachievement might be related to differential treatment of minority students, “a product of the interaction between people, institutions, and cultural patterns” (p. 347). This treatment could be quite unconscious and could contradict the stated aims of the teacher, who might wish to be fair to all students but who might nevertheless give “highly selective positive interaction” to students most like him or herself (G. Spindler, 2000). The Spindlers recommended ‘cultural therapy’ to help teachers learn to treat students equitably, but the process was not easy to adopt as it required an anthropologist to work closely with a teacher who was, from the outset, open to learning about his or her own biases, and willing to change.

This explanation of school failure did not appear to gain great popularity at the time it was first proposed, but it does reappear convincingly somewhat later (e.g., Cazden, 1990; Cummins, 1986, 2000). At mid-century it was easier to believe that there was something about students who were not White that led many to do poorly in mainstream schools.

1.4 The genetic deficit model

The Spindler's (2000) work, which considered social class as well as ethnic background, did not resonate with some of the thinking in vogue in the 1950s and 1960s, that poor and minority students performed poorly due to a genetic deficit: "poor children of color or of minority cultural or language background have been seen as inherently inferior, intellectually and morally" (Erickson, 1993, p. 27).

Although this genetic deficit model has long been discredited (Jordan & Jacob, 1993), one quantitative study with Inuit children provided a compelling confirmation that Inuit children "are intellectually well-equipped for success" (Wright, Taylor & Ruggiero, 1996, p. 734). This longitudinal study in Nunavik (northern Quebec) supported the results of earlier studies in 1963 and 1976, reported by Van Meenen (1994, p. 266). Wright et al.'s study also concluded that the development of Inuit children's analytic intelligence is not slowed by interaction with the White-dominated school, although their school achievement may be low. Paulston (1980) pointed out that despite the fact that the genetic deficit model has been thoroughly discredited, many educators still believe it to be true.

1.5 The cultural deficit model

As the genetic deficit model lost favour, the cultural deficit (Jacob & Jordan, 1993a) or cultural deprivation (Agbo, 2002a) model of explaining minority student underachievement gained in popularity. It held that students from poor and minority backgrounds arrived at school unprepared for school success due to deficiencies in their home cultures, specifically with respect to language, psychological, and social development (Jacob & Jordan, p. 5). This explanation has been challenged as ethnocentric and lacking credibility. Jacob and Jordan report, for example, that studies in the late 1960s and early 1970s showed that different groups employ different dialects, not impoverished versions of standard English, and challenged the notion that children in low socioeconomic status homes are under-stimulated and untaught by parents. The model, however, has not been quick to disappear. Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzales (1992), reporting on their work in developing "ethnographically informed classroom practices" (p. 132), found that

households in Mexican working-class communities in Tucson, Arizona contained “ample cultural and cognitive resources” (p. 134), but noted that “this view of households... contrasts sharply with prevailing and accepted perceptions of working-class families as somehow disorganized socially and deficient intellectually; perceptions that are well accepted and rarely challenged in the field of education and elsewhere” (p. 134). In Aotearoa/New Zealand Bishop (2003) wrote that the tenacity of cultural deficit theories is still a major obstacle to addressing issues of inequality and disadvantage for Maori.

1.6 Early Canadian studies critiquing inappropriate schooling

In the late 1960s and early 1970s scholarship on minority and First Nations schooling began to proliferate. Set in the historical context of increasing awareness of diversity and the rights of minorities, calls began for a transfer of control to indigenous peoples, such as the National Indian Brotherhood’s position paper, *Indian control of Indian education* (NIB, 1972). These demands followed evidence that schooling was not working for indigenous peoples, and was causing damage. The *Hawthorne Report* (Hawthorne, 1967) laid the blame for First Nations students’ school struggles and loss of self-esteem at the feet of the EuroCanadian school, which, it claimed, valued nothing from the native culture and operated in ways foreign to First Nations students. Also in 1967, the Canadian Teachers’ Federation sent a brief to the government of Canada claiming that curriculum for “Indian, Metis and Eskimo” should “include support for the valuable aspects of their own culture” (cited in Van Meenen, 1994, p. 235).

In 1970 the federal government transferred responsibility for education to the NWT Department of Education. In 1972 the Department released a report based on a 1970 survey of all NWT teachers, principals, supervisors and superintendents; it defined the role of education as follows:

To provide for all people the opportunity for maximum development of their aptitudes, skills, and competencies along with an understanding and appreciation of the sum total of human experience. Such development should enable each individual to choose freely between different courses of action in such a manner

that he [sic] can live a satisfying personal life. (cited in Van Meenen, pp. 251, 252)

Van Meenen called this statement “elegant but meaningless...in light of the status of the educational system” (p. 252). Though native language began to be used in the early grades and policy focussed on curricular change to reflect Inuit language and culture, the structure of the school remained unchanged, limiting implementation of the study’s recommendations (Van Meenen).

Also in the early 1970s, the Arctic Institute of North America [AINA] (1973), commissioned three studies of Arctic education that called the structure of the school system into question and blamed schools for loss of culture. These studies, *Community guided education*, *Native apprentice teachers*, and *Training southern teachers for the north*, followed the *Man [sic] in the north conference on community development* held in Inuvik in 1970, where delegates from communities in the Northwest Territories voiced concerns over schooling.

The three studies were conceived of and directed by a task force comprised of 12 members, 6 of whom were native northerners. In the general remarks preceding the first report on community control of traditional cultural education, the problems of assimilation and underachievement were clearly noted:

When the native child starts schooling at age six, he [sic] is in fact invited by the school system itself to reject the way of thinking, the way of behaving, and the general philosophy that his group has developed. The conflict that he has to live through within himself is a most serious one. He is asked to choose between his group and his parents’ views on one hand, and on the other hand, the views and motivations of the dominant society of Canada, represented by the teacher and indeed by the whole school system. In the process the native child unavoidably loses pride in his own people and in his own identity. The repercussions are not limited to the child; the parents and the whole community are also affected. The advantage of community-guided education is very obvious in such a situation. If young children newly introduced to the school system can see that representatives of their communities play a meaningful role within the school curriculum, they will surely feel more at ease and less disturbed. And if cultural elements which refer to their own northern human and biophysical environment are recognized as

an important part of their curriculum, this of course will mean to them that their national identity is something worthwhile. (AINA, 1973, pp. 7, 8)

The first study saw local committees struck in five communities to select community teachers and to determine a curriculum of traditional knowledge and skills to be taught over the course of several months. Although the authors wrote that the experiment had not lasted long enough to be conclusive, they were definitive in the claim that people wanted “their children initiated through the school program to their own way of life, their own history, and their native culture” (p. 7). There was, however, no unanimity on the point. In one of the sites concern had been raised in the community about the relevance of native language and culture in schools, whether culture ought not best be taught by parents, and whether academic subjects might suffer (p. 44). Unfortunately, little detail was given and the relative strength of these concerns is impossible to determine. The study was groundbreaking in examining the effects of programs controlled locally, and it provides early evidence of a diversity of opinion within communities about whether schools should include curriculum based on traditional practices.

Qallunaat teachers involved in the project expressed concern that the local committees did not “adequately represent the Eskimo part of the community” (AINA, 1973, p. 43), but the authors wrote that community members were “extremely pleased” at the participation of their members in the school:

It is probably not an exaggeration to say, when considering the reports received from the native people, that they saw the community teachers as their representatives, vis-a-vis the children, of their cultural identity – an identity that the school, like other structures conceived without their participation, has placed in a seriously threatened condition. (p. 48)

The second report focussed on the training of indigenous teachers through an alternative apprenticeship process. The rationale for training local people to teach, even in the absence of higher academic qualifications, was framed in terms of culture at the *Man in the north conference on community development* in 1970:

All the participants had stated that one of the most urgent needs in northern native education was for native teachers.... It would be preferable to have native people teaching in the first grades of the school, rather than white teachers who quite obviously have not the language nor the cultural background required to understand native children and be understood by them. (AINA, 1973, p. 54)

In response, in 1979 the Eastern Arctic Teacher Education Program was established in Iqaluit (then Frobisher Bay) to make teacher training more accessible to Inuit in the eastern Arctic (Van Meenen, 1994).

The third report focussed on the poor preparation of Qallunaat for teaching in the north. Proper preparation, it was thought, would help to avoid some of the most deleterious effects of culture clash and would increase teacher effectiveness. Data gathering included two surveys of Arctic teachers, a questionnaire to administrators in the Canadian Arctic, Alaska, northern Quebec, and Greenland, a survey of administrators and universities to explore teacher preparation practices, and meetings with indigenous parents and students. Criticism was levelled at the “short” 1 to 3 week orientation for new teachers hired from the south (p. 136). The study recommended a university course to orient prospective Qallunaat teachers to Arctic realities, a minimum 4 week intensive orientation period for teachers new to the north, and 5 months of continued intensive training while the northern teaching career began. It favoured the hiring of teachers with no more than 3 years experience – unless the experience involved other cultures or remote areas – in order to guard against rigidity.

The issue of culture clash had been moved to the centre in Arctic schooling, and, with these three studies, responsibility for academic underachievement and cultural disruption was placed on the schools and not the parents or their cultures. In the epilogue, the task force elaborated three main considerations drawn from the research. One involved privileging the training of local teachers, which has occurred in the eastern Arctic. The other two involved consultation and local control, a shift in thinking about cross-cultural education. I provide excerpts here:

It would be too easy to suggest no action be taken without prior full and meaningful consultation between all the interested parties; such a procedure could become a very comfortable way of postponing things. It is more important to suggest... that new initiatives be subject to on-going evaluations with full participation of all those who take part in the initiatives or are affected by them....

Local school committees are a top priority in the opinion of the task force. No other structure at present could better ensure the peoples' participation in northern school education. No more is it possible or acceptable to continue asking native people to ascribe to an educational policy or adhere to its objectives and validity without their significant involvement and understanding. (AINA, 1973, pp. 153, 154)

I have focussed at some length on these reports because they encapsulate many themes that have been, and still are, prominent in the fields of Inuit, First Nations, intercultural and minority education. These include the problem of cultural incompatibility when teachers are not from the indigenous culture and curriculum does not represent the culture or values of the local populations, and the lack of control by local representatives of the communities.

1.7 Cultural difference theory

In the fields of minority, cross-cultural, and First Nations education, concern over cultural incompatibility gained prominence during the 1970s. A sociological explanation for school underachievement, the cultural difference or cultural discontinuity model focussed on the communication, social, and learning style differences between indigenous and minority students and the ways they were expected to learn in EuroCanadian and EuroAmerican schools (Jacob & Jordan, 1993a; Vogt, Jordan & Tharp, 1993). This represented a shift away from blaming the child and her or his culture, to placing responsibility for school failure within the institution, or at the very least in the discontinuity, especially in terms of communication styles, between school and home cultures (Erickson, 1993; Philips, 1993). Trueba (1988) wrote that culture is central to the way students learn, and Erickson wrote that cultural difference leads to miscommunication in the early grades that can escalate to distrust and resistance in later grades. Ogbu (1993) summarized cultural difference research as focussing on "cognitive style, communication style,

motivational style, classroom social organization and social relations, interaction style, and, nowadays, ‘literacy’ and ‘writing’ styles” (p. 84).

Early work examining the thesis of cultural incompatibility occurred in Hawaii, where Hawaiian children did not generally do well in schools (Vogt, Jordan & Tharp, 1993). In the mid-1970s the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program resulted in reading gains for at-risk Hawaiian children. It relied on adaptation of instructional practice, classroom organization, and motivation techniques towards those experienced by Hawaiian children at home. For example, the ‘one person at a time’ rule was dropped, allowing for greater participation in a format comfortable for the children; peer helping was encouraged instead of insisting on independent work; and direct praise of individuals was de-emphasized in favour of indirect praise and praise to groups, which was found to be more effective.

The success of the program was challenged on the grounds that it was just good pedagogy that would work anywhere (Vogt, Jordan & Tharp, 1993), but this hypothesis was investigated by transferring the program to the Navajo Rough Rock demonstration school in Arizona, where “what was culturally compatible and educationally effective for Hawaiian children was not for Navajo youngsters” (p. 61). Vogt, Jordan and Tharp concluded that cultural compatibility is a contributor to school success, while cultural incompatibility detracts from the likelihood of success.

Macias (1987) did ethnographic work with a First Nation in the Papago Early Childhood Head Start Program, a program that approached cultural discontinuity from another direction. Instead of preparing teachers to teach in culturally compatible ways, it prepared pre-school students to expect school-culture routines that were very different from their home environments. The Papago pre-school teachers created experiences to help students learn skills and behaviour for success in school, but reduced the impact of discontinuity “by incorporating Papago experiences, values, and ways of relating into that experience” (p. 373). They were able to teach incompatible ways of being without eroding children’s appreciation of their Papago culture. Macias (1987) wrote that the success of the preschool could be seen through its popularity, community support, and success in preparing children for kindergarten. Unfortunately, there was

no data on how children from the program adapted to school life, what their school achievement was like, or whether their identity as Papago was actually protected by teaching the foreign school culture through a culturally congruent pedagogy.

Although the cultural difference model (called the “communication process explanation” by Erickson (1993)) is intuitively appealing and enjoys some empirical support, it is not certain how cultural congruence fosters scholastic achievement or how discontinuity hinders success. In ethnographic work examining school counsellors of similar and different backgrounds to the students they served, Erickson (1975) found that social identity and communication style affected the encounter, with better outcomes for students who shared characteristics with the counsellors. This raised the possibility that cultural difference may work by disadvantaging minority and indigenous students through subtle or overt ethnocentrism, especially through teachers from the dominant culture who hold lower expectations of “different” students. This explanation fits with Spindler and Spindler’s (2000) observations in the 1950s and is more sinister than the neutral explanation that inadvertent misunderstanding and disadvantaging of students results from invisible communicative or cultural differences.

Other more neutral explanations suggest that familiarity in culture or language patterns may foster greater enthusiasm during lessons, or greater feelings of competence, and therefore increased learning (Erickson, 1993). Familiarity with context may also mean that more content is accessible to learners (Au, 1980) or that, feeling more comfortable, students are able to direct more energy to their learning (Erickson). Another explanation for why increasing cultural compatibility may benefit groups who have been marginalized rests on the symbolic affirmation of students and their community sent by the structuring of the environment in familiar ways (Erickson), and the negative message about culture carried by incompatible structures (D’Amato, 1993; Møller, 2005).

Some criticism has been levelled at cultural difference theory. Watt-Cloutier (2000), an Inuk from Nunavik, expressed concern that “academic standards and rigour have been lowered in the name of respect for the different ‘learning styles’ of Aboriginal peoples” (p. 115). She did not contest the need to take cultural differences into account, but wrote that lowering expectations

because of cultural difference was a form of racism that destroys self-esteem. Paul Ongtooguk (cited in Korhonen, 2006) also warned against over-interpreting differences in learning style and providing students with a curriculum full of meaningless activities. Similarly, McCarty, Lynch, Wallace and Benally (1991) thought that focussing on learning style and omitting complex social and historical process could lead teachers to use debilitating pedagogies with Aboriginal students. Ogbu (1993) wrote that cultural difference theory could not explain the success of some minorities despite cultural differences, and Mohatt (1998) noted that culturally compatible teaching in culturally incompatible institutions can fail, suggesting that power dynamics may be more important than culture.

1.8 Cultural difference studies with Inuit

Much has been written, but few studies have been conducted concerning Inuit schooling and culturally responsive pedagogy – teaching that reduces the discontinuity between home and school cultures. Those studies that do exist are primarily ethnographies involving Inuit or Yup'ik⁹ teachers who teach in ways that are different from most Qallunaat teachers.

Lipka (1990, 1991), in his work in Alaska with Yup'ik, used the videotaping of classroom lessons to analyze Yup'ik teachers' approaches. He interviewed Yup'ik teachers during their viewing and analysis of the lessons and found that they use a “different sociolinguistic style than that used by mainstream Anglo teachers” (1991, p. 212). He found that “with content of interest to the students and with familiar sociolinguistic rules, the students engage enthusiastically in class discussions” (p. 215). The structure and content of the lessons and teacher interactions reinforced critical Yup'ik values, although, Lipka wrote, this aspect “evades Anglo viewers of this tape who do not share the same context and underlying values structure of the lesson” (1991, p. 218). Lipka concluded that *social relationships* are crucial in indigenous education, that they create “conditions that make learning feasible and likely” (1991, p. 219). He thought that western

⁹ Yup'ik are a related group living in southwest Alaska. 'Inupiat' is the term parallel to 'Inuit' used in northern Alaska (Brody, 2000, p. 317).

academic content could also be learned in discourse styles and social organization that support Yup'ik values.

Canadian scholarship on cultural compatibility includes the work of Leavitt (1991), Corson (1992b), and Stairs (1988, 1991, 1994a/b). Leavitt discussed culture-based education from his experiences teaching adult Inuit and First Nations students. He contended that native culture must become the basis of pedagogy, but was not specific about what warranted his claim. Similarly, Corson provided a compelling review of culturally appropriate education occurring abroad and argued that even unintentional miscommunication could have dire consequences. Stairs (1991, 1994a) identified differences between Inuit and Qallunaat conceptions of learning, based on her experience working with the Kativik School Board¹⁰, an Inuit-run school board in Nunavik. She advocated working towards culturally-based education by employing more indigenous teachers. Citing personal anecdotes, she suggested that adopting Inuit ways in schools might not be well received by all Inuit, and wrote that cultural negotiation was necessary to determine how Inuit schooling should be structured.

Crago and colleagues have done the most comprehensive work on cultural difference in Canadian settings, focussing specifically on communication patterns. In one study Crago (1992) explored communicative interactions of Inuit children and their caregivers using videotaping of family interactions, interviews of Inuit women by an Inuk, and observation notes from various Arctic communities and situations. She found pronounced differences between language socialization patterns in Inuit families and classroom discourse patterns. These differences, she wrote, caused difficulties for Inuit children learning English. Crago recommended that second language learning for Inuit be grounded in culturally congruent communication patterns. She warned that these patterns are central to cultural identity and that by denying the students' culture, consciously or unconsciously, Qallunaat teachers were participating in prejudice she called 'ethnism.'

¹⁰ The Kativik School Board was created as an 'Inuit controlled' school board as part of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (Vick-Westgate, 2002).

Crago (1992) and Crago, Annahatak and Ningiuruvik (1993) also noted that contact with Qallunaat schooling had resulted in Inuit caregivers changing their communicative patterns with their children, by, for example, asking children to name things and to use Qallunaat politeness conventions that were otherwise seldom used by Inuit. Crago noted that the schools had not reciprocated by adapting patterns to suit Inuit ways. Crago et al. (1993) speculated that this cultural shift could be interpreted as acculturation, or as an adaptation chosen by Inuit caregivers in the construction of a new identity to fit the rapid social and cultural changes of the previous 20 years. The former explanation suggests the need to redefine education, while the latter may show acceptance of aspects of the western schooling. In either case the authors thought that the schools should also be a part of a process of redefinition, and noted that even after many years of ostensible Inuit control of the Kativik School Board in Nunavik, classrooms still appeared very southern.

In related research Eriks-Brophy and Crago (1994) described an ethnographic video study of Inuit teachers in three communities in Nunavik. They found a number of differences between mainstream and Inuit teachers' discourse routines, including: Inuit teachers' more frequent use of directives; Inuit teachers inviting the whole group to reply without ever asking students to bid for the chance to answer by raising their hands, and a consequent overlap in utterances by both teachers and students; long interactional sequences instead of question and answer sessions; few positive or negative evaluations of student answers; and the effective use of peer modelling. These routines, they noted, "promoted important Inuit values of respect for others, cooperation, and responsibility for the peer group" (p. 114) and suggest that "problematic educational situations" may result when Inuit children are taught by non-Inuit teachers (p. 115). In later writing on both of the previously described studies, Crago and Eriks-Brophy (1994) added that aside from unsuccessful educational outcomes, cultural differences can lead to deficit interpretations by teachers, the risk of culture loss, extra strain for students, and "a pressure for assimilation imposed by teachers upon the children and their families" (p. 44).

Crago, Eriks-Brophy, Pesco & McAlpine (1997) also investigated 8 Inuit and 6 Qallunaat teachers' discourse styles through videotape analysis and found that differences in the way turns

were allocated resulted in Qalunaat teachers reprimanding Inuit students for ‘speaking out of turn.’ They also found that, unlike Inuit teachers, Qallunaat teachers publicly judged student answers, which may have caused a reticence to participate, and a lower tolerance of peer interaction led Qallunaat teachers to interpret helping behaviours as ‘cheating.’ Crago et al. suggested that by noticing instances of miscommunication, Qallunaat teachers would have a chance of adopting patterns that better matched children’s home competencies, leading to greater success.

These studies provided some compelling evidence that cultural congruence in communicative and cultural patterns is desirable for increased learning, and that incongruence disadvantages Inuit learners. They clearly demonstrated one benefit of having Inuit teaching Inuit, and provided hope that Qallunaat teachers could learn discourse patterns that support Inuit culture and Inuit student learning.

1.9 *Learning, tradition and change, and small steps toward Inuit culture*

In 1982 the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Special Committee on Education (NWT LASCE) tabled its report, *Learning, tradition and change in the Northwest Territories*, which called for substantial modifications to the education system. The committee was formed because of the “high drop-out rate, poor comprehension, poor parent/teacher relationship, low recruitment of Native teachers and foreign curriculum for a northern lifestyle, lack of proper high school facilities, and lack of continuing and special education facilities” (NWT LASCE, 1982, p. 6). The Committee held 43 public hearings in 34 communities in the Northwest Territories, listened to Qallunaat “experts” and accepted written submissions from the public. It reported on concerns that were commonly voiced. These included: students leave school unprepared for traditional life and unable to compete for jobs; no consensus on which languages to use for instruction; low level of achievement in the communities compared to major centres; irregular attendance and discipline problems that are symptoms of boredom due to an irrelevant curriculum and culturally unprepared southern teachers; and, centrally set policy and programs not accepted in the communities.

Concern about control was an area of great focus in the report, and the authors noted that “whereas some persons may consider that devolution of authority in education has already occurred because elected representatives of communities can make major decisions with respect to education, many others would disagree” (p. 40). Even though local education authorities were vested with the power to approve “all school policies, procedures, programs, and activities” (p. 53), the Committee felt that the Department of Education in Yellowknife still retained ‘total control.’ It recommended the creation of elected school boards with community representation and wrote that the boards should have the authority to shorten the school year from 200 to 170 days to give families time to be on the land pursuing traditional activities and teachers a chance for program development and training (p. 52).

The Committee also called for the decentralization of curriculum control, putting decisions in board hands, but with “participation and decision-making at the community level... The community must have maximum possible control over education” (NWT LASCE, 1982, pp. 73, 74). Community involvement in program development was a priority, repeated in the report:

We assume that parents and community organizations will participate actively in the establishment of priorities in their children’s education.... Parents...reaffirmed their commitment to two principles long honoured in Canadian education: PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY and LOCAL CONTROL OF EDUCATION. (p. 77, emphasis in original)

The authors wrote that attendance depended on informed parents who felt ownership of the schools, effective teachers with skills, knowledge and attitudes appropriate for northern teaching, relevant programming and “evidence that going to school will make an important difference to the quality of life both before and after graduation from school” (p. 78).

This was a landmark document that precipitated significant change in education in the Northwest Territories, and resonates with some of the major thinking in the literature on cross-cultural education. In the years following the release of the report, 3 school boards were created in the area that is now Nunavut, each including representatives from the local education authorities. In 1985, the Baffin Divisional Board of Education (BDBE) became the first school board in the

Northwest Territories (Colbourne, 1989) and, in 1989, the BDBE published *Piniaqtavut: Integrated Program*, a guide designed to help teachers move toward culturally appropriate teaching through the suggestion of culturally relevant themes. More Inuit teachers were hired and the development of resources in Inuktitut was stressed to support Inuit teachers in the primary grades, while Inuktitut was taught as a subject at higher grades. ESL materials were created to recognize the reality of the vast majority of classrooms in the eastern Arctic (Van Meenen, 1994, p. 293), and work soon started on *Inuuqatigit: The curriculum from the Inuit perspective* (NWT ECE, 1996). Created by a group of 12 Inuit educators with the assistance of many elders, *Inuuqatigit* broke new ground both in terms of indigenous curriculum and in the culturally appropriate way in which it was created (Aylward, 2006).

Despite substantial change, including some decentralization of control in ways compatible with the letter of the LASCE's recommendations, the desired change in spirit did not fully materialize. Although substantial and important groundwork was laid for further changes to schooling, the school remained very recognizable as a Qallunaat created and controlled institution.

1.10 Structural theories

Beginning in the 1970s, John Ogbu (1987, 1992, 1993) promoted the thesis that cultural discontinuity or cultural difference theory could not adequately explain why minority students often struggled in school. He postulated that “the crucial issue in cultural diversity and learning is the relationship between the minority cultures and the American mainstream culture” (Ogbu, 1992, p. 5), and between the minority culture and the schools that White Americans control.

In making his argument, Ogbu used comparative data to illustrate the ability of students from some minority groups to overcome cultural differences and succeed in mainstream schools, even though their home cultures appear less similar to EuroAmerican culture than other minority groups whose children often fail. He contended that the type of minority makes a difference in school success, with “voluntary minorities” – people who immigrated to the United States voluntarily – generally achieving school success, and “involuntary minorities” – people who were

brought against their will, or who were colonized – generally underachieving in schools. Ogbu attributed this differential performance to the development of “secondary cultural differences,” an oppositional identity arising in response to poor treatment by the dominant culture. He postulated that this made it more difficult to cross cultural/language boundaries in school, creating problems with social adjustment and academic performance that are “extensive and persistent” (Ogbu, 1992, p. 10). School learning, he wrote, is equated with losing one’s cultural identity, especially since students may lack role models who have achieved school success and maintained cultural group membership.

Along with threatening their identity, the material payoff of jobs following school success may not be expected as strongly by involuntary minorities, as society has systemic barriers to employment for their cultural groups. This, Ogbu (1987) wrote, reduces involuntary minority students’ motivation to cross cultural boundaries and adapt to school routines while at school. Ogbu’s theory of school failure has also been called the “perceived labour market explanation” (Erickson, 1993, p. 32) and has been lent support by other comparative research (e.g., Gibson, 1993; Luciak, 2004). Peer pressure may also discourage getting good grades, and, “although making good grades is strongly verbalized by students, parents, and the community as a desirable goal, there is less community and family pressure to achieve it” (Ogbu, 1992, p. 11).

Ogbu (1992) suggested several ways to address involuntary minority underachievement including counselling to help students see that they can play by the school’s rules without becoming White, addressing inequality in society, and encouraging involuntary minority communities to actively encourage academic striving. His position has been criticized for misrepresenting African American school behaviours (Foster, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995), for seeing culture as fixed rather than fluid, and for blaming ‘oppositional behaviour’ on historical oppression while discounting his own data showing “enduring, systemic and structural racial bias among teachers and in the school system in general” (Foster, p. 573). Ogbu has also been criticized for underestimating the economic mobility experienced by involuntary minority groups (Trueba, 1988), for exaggerating the use of education by African American professionals as a ‘ticket to leave’ their communities (Foster), for ignoring class stratification (Foley, 2005), for

assuming diverse groups' relationship to dominant culture and schooling are similar (Lipka & Ilutsk, 1998), and for putting too much emphasis on student and family responsibility and too little on what schools should do differently (Gibson, 2005). Nevertheless his work remains influential (Foster).

1.11 Resistance theory

D'Amato (1993) wrote that neither cultural difference theory nor Ogbu's sociostructural theory could fully explain minority underachievement, as some minority students overcome cultural differences and some 'involuntary' minority students do not reject schooling and their teachers. Resistance theory, he wrote, interprets failure as the result of student insurrection, caused or exacerbated by the very structures of schools. These include the exercise of power over children through compulsory attendance, teacher control, and teacher dominated evaluation, and the lack of respect sometimes shown to students by teachers. D'Amato saw that for student success the motivation for accepting authority must be sufficiently compelling or else group resistance would result.

Au and Mason (1981) found that two different teachers teaching the same students on alternate days met with vastly different student behaviours, crediting the difference to the way the two teachers interacted with students. Erickson (1993) also stressed that if children and parents believe in the legitimacy, content, and aims of schooling, resistance might not develop. This, he wrote, might be true even "if the cultural style of classroom interaction is very discontinuous with that of the children's early childhood experience" (p. 47). This suggests that cultural difference and sociostructural theories can suggest outcomes, but cannot predict them in specific circumstances. Teacher and student agency are not reducible to formulaic typifications (D'Amato, 1993). D'Amato argued the need for making schooling intrinsically enjoyable, for reducing competition in schools, and for teachers to earn the respect of students rather than using role authority and expecting compliance.

1.12 Quick recap

To this point, several themes have been woven together that I will recap here before continuing. I began by describing current problems in Nunavut schools in terms of low graduation rates, assimilation and cultural disruption. I then described the beginnings of schooling in the eastern Arctic, first with a disinterested State, and then a State that used schools to help secure Arctic sovereignty by moving Inuit to settlements, in part by pressure exerted through compulsory schooling. It became clear that government officials thought that assimilation into EuroCanadian society was inevitable for Inuit and that the schools would help to assimilate them. Although some anthropological work was being done that raised concern about discriminatory treatment of minority students by mainstream teachers, common explanations for school failure of minority and indigenous students invoked genetic deficit or cultural deficit explanations.

As the 1960s became the 1970s, the idea of cultural difference as an explanation for school underachievement gained favour. In Canada several studies of education in the NWT were undertaken and the idea surfaced in reports and in policy that the goal of schooling should be student competence in both a subsistence and wage labour economy. The Arctic Institute of North America report accused Arctic schooling of threatening culture and identity and advocated strongly for community guidance of education, culturally congruent pedagogy, and culturally relevant curriculum. It also noted that not all northern residents share the goal of cultural inclusion in the schools.

In the early 1980s the NWT LASCE report was again highly critical of schooling in the Northwest Territories. Amidst many concerns about threats to indigenous culture and recommendations aimed at lessening the damage, the focus of the report became decentralization of governance of the education system and community control of education. Also in the mid-1980s, in Arctic and Canadian contexts, ethnographic studies demonstrated the power of cultural congruity to enhance learning and also documented some disadvantages of teaching across cultures without understanding cultural difference. By the mid and late 1980s serious efforts were underway to try to make schooling in the eastern Arctic more relevant for Inuit students. At about this time in the United States, Ogbu's (1988) hypothesis was popular, that although cultural

compatibility might help with classroom interactions and student achievement, cultural difference theory was not enough to explain minority and indigenous school success or failure. Both Ogbu's structural theory and resistance theory suggested that the relation of the marginalized group to the mainstream group needed attention, shifting theoretical focus to one already suggested by many studies, issues of power.

1.13 Power/lack of power & rhetoric

In 1987 a seminar was held in Iqaluit called *Inuit control of Inuit education: Self-determination in the Circumpolar North* (Farrow & Wilman, 1987). In her address, Mary Simon, President of the *Inuit Circumpolar Conference*, an international advocacy group for Inuit, said:

Inuit must not only participate in our northern system of education, but be able to profoundly influence its policies and priorities.... All of our goals and aspirations are in some ways tied to education: for ourselves, our children and future generations. (Simon, 1989, pp. 43, 48)

Mirroring many earlier calls for consultation with Inuit and input from communities, this sentiment also reflects Article 15 of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, adopted September 13th, 2007, which states, in part: “Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education” (UN, 2007). Despite many substantive changes to the schooling of Inuit in the 50 years since it became widespread in the eastern Arctic, by the late 1980s, and through the 1990s, Inuit still did not exercise much control over the education of Inuit students. There are many reasons for this.

From my own experience teaching in Nunavut, I recall one District Education Authority's (DEA) willingness to accept decisions made by Qallunaat school staff, whether or not the decisions met with widespread community approval. In my master's work (Berger, 2001) I was puzzled by reports that one Inuit community had elected many Qallunaat to the DEA, and that several DEAs had approved very southern-style discipline codes. The reason may be that “the legacy of colonialism has left tremendous power imbalances between Inuit and Qallunaat”

(Tompkins, 2002, p. 407), contributed to by the Inuit tendency to defer to authority (Annahatak, 1994; Briggs, 1970; Brody, 2000; Napartuk, 2002), and the feeling of *ilira* (fear) Inuit historically had around Whites, who were often in a position to grant or withhold benefits (Brody). Some may also have accepted the colonial message of inferiority (Nicolas, 1996; Ryan, 1989; Tompkins). White administrators, White DEA members, White teachers, and White community members may all enjoy disproportionate influence.

The Qallunaat school structures inherited by the Nunavut Department of Education and in which DEAs must work also hinder true Inuit control. Douglas (1994) wrote that the workings of the DEA in one Nunavut community were very difficult for her to understand; the differences between Inuit and Qallunaat decision-making processes may be so great as to seriously constrain DEAs in their dealings with the Qallunaat institution of schooling. Furthermore, when “control” is transferred to indigenous peoples, structures like accountability measures often remain in place that make true change difficult or impossible, meaning that local control is more chimerical than real (Kawagely, 1995; Kirkness, 1998a; Maguire & McAlpine, 1996). As Stairs (1994b) wrote, “local control is not an automatic guarantee of deeply negotiated indigenous education” (p. 160), and as McLean (1997) cautioned, capacity to govern depends on more than simply the authority to make decisions. While DEAs could be excellent vehicles for including community voice and control in Nunavut schools, they may not necessarily be very effective at doing so, something pointed out recently by the Iqaluit District Education Authority (2005b) and by DEA representatives themselves (Minogue, 2006).

At higher levels, the Government of Nunavut, elected by an overwhelmingly Inuit electorate, cannot yet be considered to truly represent Inuit ways and voices, or to be able to exercise unfettered Inuit control over education. Based on a territorial model borrowed from the Northwest Territories, of which Nunavut was formerly a part, it carries within its structure “cultural values that are part of a dominant culture” (Inuit Qaujimagatuqanginnut Task Force, 2002, p. 7). This is another deep-seated barrier to authentic Inuit control. Furthermore, the Government of Nunavut and its Department of Education are also embedded within the powerful EuroCanadian society (Ryan, 1989); true transfer of control to Inuit will require adopting Inuit-

defined standards of measuring the effectiveness of schools, which might entail eschewing EuroCanadian standards (Stairs & Bernhard, 2002). As with First Nations education, this will be a troubling proposition for the governments ultimately providing funding (Hookimaw-Witt, 1998). True control “implies the means to determine resources rather than simply to manage the resources allocated by others” (Goddard, 1997, p. 220). Funding for education in Nunavut originates with the Government of Canada. The Government of Nunavut does not operate with an unlimited budget, with the means of determining resources, or without competing priorities. Social conditions in Nunavut are the most strained of any province or territory (NSDC, 2000), and these conditions create real roadblocks for the Government of Nunavut in earmarking large sums of money for the initiation of major school change, a circumstance that reduces the true agency exercised by the Government of Nunavut.

These conditions have led to some promising initiatives that remain largely unfulfilled visions. *The Bathurst Mandate* (Government of Nunavut [GN], 1999), also called *Pinasuaqtavut: That which we’ve set out to do: Hopes for the future*, set an agenda for the GN in its first 5 year term (1999-2004). It included the commitment to “begin the re-writing of the K-12 school curriculum, to emphasize cultural relevance and academic excellence, to be completed over the next 10 years” (p. 7), a process that has produced some new curriculum but will not nearly reach its goal by 2009. At the start of its second mandate, the GN set an agenda for the following 5 years in *Pinasuaqtavut 2004 - 2009* (GN, 2004). Commitment to basing the GN on *Inuit Qajimajatuqangit* – traditional Inuit ways and knowledge (Wenzel, 2004; see also Appendix D) – became prominent, including the commitment that “our education system will be built within the context of Inuit Qajimajatuqangit” (GN, p. 15). It stated that “land and language skills and respectful pride in our cultures and languages are fundamental for adults and children” (GN, p. 15). An explicit commitment to instruction in Inuit languages was also made: “Children should be able to receive instruction in their first language” (GN, p. 15), reiterated in policy in the Nunavut Department of Education’s *Bilingual Education Strategy 2004-2008* (NDOE, 2004) and recently in the proposed *Nunavut Language Protection Act* (GN, 2007a). This latter legislation would give the Department Of Education until 2019 to comply. A recent report by T. Berger

(2006) concluded that millions of dollars are needed from the Government of Canada to realize the vision of transforming schooling in Nunavut to a culturally responsive bilingual system.

The literature suggests that there may be some further obstacles to the implementation of local control. Lipka (1989) believed that the transition to communities feeling ownership of their schools would be a slow process. One problem is that “generational differences in small Native communities are sometimes quite profound, making it difficult to determine the community’s voice” (p. 229). Lipka and McCarty (1994) wrote that “internal community conflict” was a factor affecting the reform process, noting that some Yup’ik board members were against moving away from all-English instruction (p. 275). Maguire and McAlpine (1996) saw some southern teachers making efforts to adopt Inuit pedagogy, at the same time that some Inuit parents wanted to maintain “traditional signs of mainstream schooling, such as grades and marks” (p. 231) and Stairs (1994a) encountered some resistance to the idea of “Inuitisation” of the schools. Freeman, Stairs, Corbiere and Lazore (1994) cautioned that community controlled schools sometimes end up transmitting only western values; perhaps, they wrote, a legacy of residential schooling. As Nunavut struggles to make changes congruent with its rhetoric and policy, scholars are increasingly pointing to power imbalances, past and present, as foundational factors in the underperformance of schools serving minority and First Nations students. Battiste (2000) cited cognitive imperialism/cultural racism as the problem, since schools for First Nations students have been based on European rather than First Nations worldviews, implicitly and often explicitly denigrating First Nations cultures. With European knowledge projected as “universal, normative, and ideal,” current curriculum “marginalizes or excludes Aboriginal cultures, voices, and ways of knowing” (Battiste, 2000, p. 193). Ladson-Billings (1995) wrote that many explanations for school failure do not question the legitimacy of schools in their current forms. She argued the need to go beyond ‘culturally congruent,’ ‘culturally appropriate,’ ‘culturally responsive,’ or ‘culturally compatible’ pedagogy to ‘culturally relevant pedagogy.’ This is pedagogy to help minority students “accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequalities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (Ladson-Billings, p. 469). To truly challenge the status quo of schooling, local control is thought to be essential. Agbo

(2002b), working with First Nations in the United States and Canada, argued that “unless there is a genuine devolution that entails the empowerment of First Nations communities to provide an education that is specifically suited to each community, schools for Aboriginal children will remain mediocre in quality” (p. 281).

At the classroom level, Cazden (1990), in research echoing the Spindlers’ 1950s work, wrote that “in any society where groups have differential power, if teachers from the dominant group ‘do what comes naturally,’ the result is apt to advantage children from their own group and disadvantage others” (p. 300). She referred to this process as differential treatment or structural racism. St. Denis and Hampton (2002) found many studies pointing to racism as having a major negative impact on many First Nations students’ school experiences, and Cummins (1988) wrote that minority students could be ‘educationally disabled’ when interacting with teachers who hold unquestioned assumptions based on dominant-culture middle class values and priorities. Cummins and Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) also wrote that the power relations between educators and minority groups must change, as domination results in interactions that cause minority students and their parents to internalize shame: “Consequently, they perform in school the way educators expect them to perform – poorly – thereby reinforcing educators’ perceptions of them as deficient” (p. 5).

At a time when rhetoric makes it sound as if Nunavut is soon to have a reinvented system of schooling, but when progress is nevertheless slow, there is more and more focus in the broader literature linking power at the system and classroom levels to the underachievement of schools with First Nation, minority, and Inuit students. On Cummins’ (1988) framework for measuring institutionalized racism, Nunavut’s schools still fail in all four key areas – a sign that power still rests with Qallunaat and not with Inuit.

1.14 The need for Inuit control

In the literature on Inuit, First Nations, minority and cross-cultural education many authors write that indigenous or local control of education is crucial. Following years of working with Yup’ik teachers and communities in a consultant capacity, Lipka (1989) went beyond the idea of

community *involvement* in the creation of culture-based schooling, asserting that the community must initiate changes in the curriculum, as otherwise “the school still knew what was best” (p. 224). He suggested that the traditional relationship between school and community must change to one where the school serves the community and schooling is seen “as supportive of the community’s efforts to face the future – their own future in their own way” (p. 216). Similarly, Cummins (1988) wrote that “minority students will be empowered in the school context to the extent that the communities themselves are empowered through their interactions with the school” (p. 141). The need for communities to be empowered fits with the view that schools that support indigenous culture might ultimately be necessary for the cultural vitality of indigenous populations (Bunz, 1979; Kawagely, 1995; Simon, 1996; Stairs, 1988).

Harris (1990) wrote in an Australian context, arguing for indigenous control of indigenous schooling to reduce the negative effects of unequal power relations on student learning. Not having clear authority, he wrote, undermines the status of indigenous parents and teachers, providing a disincentive for students. The schools will always be alienating, Harris argued, until they are reformed by indigenous people to become their own.

Watahomigie and McCarty (1994) wrote that in an American First Nations setting successful change is most likely to occur with parental and community involvement. In one community this involvement led to the success of reforms aimed at strengthening the Hualapai language and to including local ways of knowing in the school curriculum. Parental involvement was, they wrote, a prerequisite for genuine bicultural education.

Harrison (1993) noted that in minority-directed education there are cases where indigenous culture is privileged in the classroom and cases where western education is emphasized. Reporting from 10 years of experience with Yup’ik education in Alaska and 4 years work at a Maori tribal centre in New Zealand, she wrote that cultural difference and structural models are incomplete explanations of minority student school failure. She wrote that the perceptions of parents and other stakeholders must be taken into account as each setting is unique, with some Alaskan communities wanting success in the cash economy for their children while others prioritize the maintenance of language and culture. She wrote that since a strong

cultural identity for children is desired by many Alaskan and Maori parents and is thought to increase school achievement, and since other cultural groups are unable to provide schooling that supports students' cultural identity, parents must oversee the schools.

Community control meant that parents in Alaska and New Zealand felt empowered by the authority to make decisions. When communities see their priorities reflected in schools, community members and parents are more apt to be supportive of the school (Harrison, 1993). Harrison pointed to the success in Alaskan communities of structural changes, especially the hiring of Alaskan Native teachers that gave community members a stronger voice in the schools, and to the success of the *Te Kohanga Reo* in New Zealand, early childhood language nests that are guided by a philosophy of self-determination and empowerment. She wrote that academics know little about the viewpoints of parents of minority groups, and that it therefore makes the most sense for educators to rely on local direction. Parents must control staffing, programming, and program evaluation, and must believe in positive outcomes if they are to support schooling. This community empowerment, Harrison wrote, was imperative.

Since schools socialize children into society, school experiences can impact the cultural survival of a group, making control over education essential (Barman, Herbert and McCaskill, 1987). Without such control schooling remains an alien intrusion (Vallee, 1972, p. 37).

1.15 Negotiating schooling

Short of a complete change in the governance of schooling or a redefinition of indigenous education (as advocated, for example, by Simon (1996) and Kirkness (1998a)), the theme of negotiating changes to schooling with people from the communities is prominent in the literature on Inuit education (Armstrong, Bennett & Grenier, 1997; C. Barnhardt, 1999; Corson, 1992b; Douglas; 1994; LaFrance, 2000; Lipka, 1989, 1994; Lipka & Ilutsk, 1998; Stairs, 1991, 1994a, 1996; Williamson, 1987). To some degree this has been happening slowly in Nunavut for many years, as changes such as the use of Inuktitut as a language of instruction from K-3 move schooling slowly away from a purely southern model. This has happened more explicitly in other jurisdictions in the circumpolar north.

Barnhardt (1999) wrote that in one community in Alaska, “most of the significant changes in the school in recent years were attempts to recognize and meaningfully integrate what is important and valued in the life of the community with the teaching and learning which occurs in school” (p. 105). The entire community was involved in choosing what knowledge and skills to teach during a consultation process that ensured that “the goals developed were clearly those identified and desired by a wider cross-section of the community than is typically represented on advisory boards or strategic planning committees” (p. 105).

Stairs (1988) wrote about the negotiation of culture-based schooling in Nunavik, a process driven by Inuit educators creating ways to incorporate Inuit ways and values into schooling. She wrote that “a strong Inuk sense of cultural identity combined with competitive ability in the qallunaat world comprise the Inuit educational aim” (p. 323). She also said that there was no consensus over how to reach that goal, or over the bicultural balance in the schools. While many favoured an Inuit cultural base for education, believing that it would protect identity and provide a solid base for learning a second culture later on, a vocal minority favoured a strong economic base with limited cultural inclusion. Stairs worked with the Kativik School Board in Nunavik for many years, but it is not clear on what she based her thoughts, or whether there were particular people who favoured the cultural-base or cultural-inclusion approaches.

A decade later Armstrong et al. (1997) documented a process in Nunavik called *Satuigiarniq*. It aimed at providing opportunities “for all stakeholders to involve themselves in reclaiming and redefining an education system which will remain true to Inuit culture and values while preparing children for the modern world” (p. 7). This process involved the training of community representatives who then carried out community consultations through a variety of strategies, leading to “community ownership of the process.... If education was truly going to be different, everyone agreed, the stakeholders would have to be involved in the entire process” (p. 8). They provided no indication of the results of the consultations.

Negotiation of schooling with First Nations has also been approached through participatory research (Agbo, 2001, 2003), meant to determine community wishes *and* move the school in the identified directions. In one Mohawk community a “two-worlds” approach was

desired as community members wanted the schools to preserve their culture while students learned the “skills required to survive and flourish in the mainstream American society” (Agbo, 2001, p. 45). This has been a frequently articulated goal in Inuit and First Nations education (Aylward, 2006).

1.16 The need for community voice

In the history of schooling in the eastern Arctic there have been many calls for community control of education and some indication that there is no easy consensus within communities as to the proper purposes of education. In the literature there are competing and sometimes complementary explanations for the underachievement of marginalized students, but the control of schooling by parents and communities, it is thought, would increase the likelihood of school success (R. Barnhardt, 1991; Cummins, 1986; Harris, 1990; Hookimaw-Witt 1998; Kenny, 2002; Kirkness, 1998a; Lipka, 1989; Simon, 1996).

Without community involvement and parental support for the schools, less likely to be realized as long as schools remain foreign institutions, students will not flourish (Cummins, 1986). And without authentic Inuit involvement in defining the purposes of education, and therefore the structures, curriculum, and methods to be employed in the schools, the schools will remain foreign institutions, imposed from without and colonial in nature. Control of schooling by Inuit would mean that it could be redefined to support Inuit cultural values and, after more than half a century of assimilation, begin to work for Inuit and support the vitality of Inuit culture. In the event that, under Inuit control, the decision was made to maintain schools based on a Qallunaat model, many of the benefits of true local control might still accrue. Students would see that the community had authority and valued the school structure (Harris, 1990).

This message has been repeated by many. Stairs (1988) wrote that, “Indigenous determination of the knowledge base driving educational development is perhaps the most fundamental point of indigenous control over the educational system” (p. 318). Harrison (1993) wrote that “minority schooling issues will not be fully understood or resolved until members of the dominant society learn to *listen* to what minority people have to say” (p. 163). Jordan and

Jacob (1993) wrote “that solutions to educational problems will be population – and situation – specific, and that what is good educational practice for one population and in one setting may not be good educational practice for another population or in a different setting” (p. 255).

1.17 Recent consultations in Nunavut

Two recent processes have solicited the thoughts of Nunavut residents about what they would like from schooling in the future, the *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq* consultations (Aylward, 2004) and the Nunavut Education Act consultations (NDOE, 2006). Results from both consultations were made public while I was doing fieldwork for this research.

In 2003/2004 the Nunavut Department of education sponsored the *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq* consultations, three studies meant to find out what residents of Nunavut think “about how our schools should look in the future” (Aylward, 2004, p. 4). The *Executive summary of the Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq (Learning for the Future) consultations* (Aylward), first released publicly in March, 2006, synthesized the findings from the studies, individually called; A) *Community Consultations*, B) *Survey of Secondary School Educators*, and C) *Survey of Nunavut Students K-12*.

The *Community Consultations* included 12 communities, those where the local DEAs indicated interest in taking part. Nunavut has a community consultation model (Nunavut Department of Education Curriculum and School Services, n. d.) that guided the data gathering. It suggests using small group or individual meetings for those who might be afraid that their opinion would be unpopular, or who do not like public meetings, along with public meetings and meetings with special interest groups. The actual consultation consisted of community meetings, focus groups, and radio call-in shows, with District Education Authority involvement and consultants who co-ordinated the process (Aylward, 2004). It is likely that both Inuit and Qallunaat community members took part in each community, but this was not specified, and the influence of Qallunaat participants on the outcome cannot be known. Key questions included: “What are the core knowledge, skills and attitudes expected of Nunavut graduates?” and, “What graduation options do we need to be offering Nunavut students?” (Aylward, 2004, p. 5). Key

findings included “that establishing a strong identity, being able to communicate widely, and living a healthy life are first priorities for Nunavut graduates,” and “community members most often requested that Nunavut graduates have a strong foundation in traditional Inuit cultural skills, values and beliefs, and be bilingual (Inuktitut/English)” (Aylward, p. 6). Higher academic standards were also desired.

The *Survey of Secondary School Educators* probed teachers’, support staff, and administrators’ thoughts on issues related to reducing the number of students leaving school before graduation, using a questionnaire with closed and open-ended items. All grade 7-12 educators in Nunavut were surveyed, with 213 (48%) respondents, of whom 43 were Inuit. Respondents indicated that Inuit culture and land skills were student strengths and that courses to capitalize on this would improve the probability of students graduating (Aylward, 2004, p. 9). They also desired the increased involvement of parents and expressed concern about a perceived lack of student engagement.

In the *Survey of Nunavut Students K-12*, students from 22 schools in 18 communities responded in various media to questions about learning, schools, teachers, and their ideal experiences. Findings included that students want emotionally and physically safe schools, with the chance to learn experientially. Highschool students connected school success to job skills but also indicated the need to learn Inuit cultural skills like land skills. Some also noted the need to learn more Inuit language, history and worldview (Tompkins, 2004, p. 21).

The *Executive Summary* gave a synopsis of the findings:

In all three consultations, students, parents, educators and community members called for consideration of Inuit language and culture in Nunavut schooling beyond the present cultural inclusion and co-curricular approaches. The principles of *Inuit Qaujimagatugangit* need to come alive in schools. The consultations revealed that education stakeholders would like Nunavut graduates to have a strong foundation in traditional Inuit cultural skills, values and beliefs as well as being bilingual (Inuktitut/English). They want students to graduate with a strong sense of who they are as Inuit.... Requests were made by youth, elders and parents for more Inuktitut courses and instruction in English as a second language. (Aylward, 2004, pp. 12, 13)

Even more recently, the Nunavut Education Act consultations took place in 2005 and 2006, soliciting community input into a proposed new Nunavut Education Act¹¹. Schooling in Nunavut is currently governed by the Northwest Territories Education Act, as a previously proposed Nunavut Education Act was withdrawn from consideration in 2002 (Minogue, 2005) amidst concern that it did not represent the wishes of the people and that more consultation was necessary. This time a committee appointed by the Nunavut Department of Education visited each Nunavut community and held public meetings for input. The findings, reported in May, 2006, in a newsletter called *Made-in-Nunavut education act: What we've heard from Nunavummiut so far*, included that "Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit needs to be incorporated into every aspect of the education system" (NDOE, 2006, p. 1). In the newsletter Education Minister Ed Picco wrote that: "the creation of a new Education Act will mark a fundamental shift in the delivery of education in Nunavut. We are committed to creating an Education Act based on Inuit Societal Values and the views and beliefs of Nunavummiut" (p. 1).

The newsletter also pointed to enhancing the role of District Education Authorities, improving curriculum and resources, addressing "absenteeism, bullying, and drop-outs," increasing guidance functions, providing alternatives to suspensions, implementing suicide prevention programs, creating alternate highschool programs, implementing the *Bilingual Education Strategy* (NDOE, 2004), and addressing inclusive schooling. The new Act was originally scheduled for consideration in the spring of 2006 (NDOE, 2005), but was tabled in November, 2007.

Both of these consultative processes provided the clear message that residents of Nunavut want Inuit language and culture to become integral parts of the education system. Both were broad public processes, involving both Inuit and Qallunaat; little can be known from them about the desires or motivations of individual Inuit. It is not clear who took part in the consultations in terms of people's gender, educational backgrounds, participation or lack of participation in traditional activities, or involvement in wage-employment; it is not clear whether the findings can

¹¹ The proposed Education Act was tabled in legislature in the late stages of this writing and is discussed in Chapter Six.

be said to represent most Inuit. Furthermore, given the power imbalance between Inuit and Qallunaat (Tompkins, 2002), and Inuit reluctance to express disagreement or disapproval (Briggs, 2000), it is not certain that largely public processes can adequately access Inuit thoughts relating to a topic where colonialism and a power imbalance has, and still does, exist. For example, the day after I presented preliminary findings at an open meeting in Tuktuulik, an Inuk said to me that she had been about to say something, but then realized that there were teachers present! To allow space for individual expression and a safer avenue for dissent, and to increase the possibility for nuance in the broad findings of these studies, work was needed that specifically encouraged these possibilities.

How the recently articulated goals of increasing Inuit language and culture, or basing schooling in Inuit culture may be approached in policy, is not clear. Congruence between the values of EuroCanadian/Qallunaat school culture and Inuit culture will not be easy to reach (Corson, 1992b; Douglas, 1994; Lipka, 1989; Ovando, 1994; Stairs, 1991, 1994a), and conflicting values can cause “tremendous internal conflict...when an individual tries to live according to two value systems that in some ways contradict each other” (Henze & Vanett, 1993, p. 124; see also Peshkin, 2000). More detail in the wishes of Inuit might help practitioners and policymakers in the reinvention of schooling in Nunavut.

1.18 Significance of the study

An in-depth look at the questions of what Inuit value in the current schools and what they would like to be different has practical significance for educators and policymakers, both at the local school and District Education Authority levels, the regional school operations¹² and territorial Nunavut Department of Education levels. I have described how theorists believe that local histories and situations vary, necessitating situated work and local control (e.g., Harrison, 1993). To understand school underperformance, Moll and Diaz (1993) wrote that it is essential to

¹²After the creation of Nunavut the new Government of Nunavut centralized control of education and changed the 3 boards of education into centres of school operations.

understand “the dynamics of material, local settings” (p. 78). This descriptive case study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) in one community, using ethnographic methods (Agar, 1996; Wolcott, 1999), helps to answer questions about Inuit perspectives in a way that broad initiatives cannot, and it serves to confirm key findings from the two broad consultations described across different demographics. It should help to inform school change in Tuktulik, and help to inform policymakers in their interpretation of the results of the *Sivuniksamut* and Education Act consultations by providing more detail about Inuit desires for schooling in one community, and exploring factors influencing those desires. It might also be used to lobby policymakers at the national level.

The exploration of community member ideas and desires has theoretical significance; although ethnographies have explored the cultural difference explanation with Inuit and Yup'ik teachers and students, and structural theories seem intuitively to resonate with some conditions of Arctic schooling, there is no work in the literature on Inuit education that involves parents' and community members' views of schooling in such a way that theories of school failure could be confirmed, refuted, refined or extended. In the broader literature, the theories of resistance and cultural difference seem to have been born and refined without substantial work with parents or community members to examine what factors are salient *for them* in their positions of support or resistance to schooling. This case study of Inuit thoughts on Inuit education contributes to theories in the broader literature exploring school underachievement, and examines the applicability of theory generated in other contexts to the circumstances of schooling in Nunavut.

1.19 Summary

In the Canadian eastern Arctic there exists a largely Inuit population served by schools that, from their inception, have been instruments of colonial policy. These schools continue to assimilate Inuit students to EuroCanadian norms and values, posing threats to the well-being of students and to the vitality of Inuit culture. The literature suggests that Inuit should exercise control over Inuit education if student achievement is to increase, and schools are to become supportive of, rather than damaging to, Inuit culture. There are real barriers to true Inuit control, but the recent

Sivuniksamut and Education Act consultations moved in an encouraging direction of seeking Inuit voice and input into appropriate aims of schooling in Nunavut. They provided a clear message that more Inuit language and culture are desired in Nunavut schools. As broad government initiatives, they provide snapshots of Inuit ideas about appropriate purposes of schooling. The current work complements and extends these initiatives, describing further Inuit visions of what schooling might in fact look like under true Inuit control, the context in which these desires exist in one community, and obstacles to student learning.

2. Methodology

If anthropology is to play a useful and progressive role in the process of decolonization, it will ultimately require a political commitment in support of Indigenous peoples and an unambiguous recognition of the colonial role played by mainstream social science paradigms.

(Menzies, 2001, p. 33)

In this chapter I describe the conceptual frame, methodology, and methods of the study. I also discuss some of the challenges encountered in trying to be respectful as a researcher in an indigenous setting, and describe ways I might have done this better. I begin by discussing the reason for situating myself.

2.1 The need to situate myself

In Section 0.1 I wrote a brief personal introduction and described how I came to be interested in this research. I did so because as the researcher I am the instrument (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2001; LeCompte & Shensul, 1999; Merriam, 1988; Oakley, 2000; Wolcott, 1999); my analysis and writing are filtered through my experiences and beliefs. Historically, White men have written accounts “constructed around their own cultural views” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p.8), in the colonial assumption that their own worldview represents reality for everyone (Walker, 2003); I attempt to take responsibility for my approach and views by being as transparent as I can about them, and by saying how my background might have influenced what I saw (Wolcott, p. 121).

As well as in the personal introduction, I have inserted my own thoughts and my experiences as a teacher into the text at various points and in subsequent sections detail my approach to the research. As Thomas (1993) noted: “The penetration of values is unavoidable, and the solution is not to try to expunge them from research, but rather to identify them and assess their impact” (p. 21). Wolcott (1999) noted the importance of researchers situating themselves vis-à-vis the group being studied, and, as the research takes place in a community where I lived and worked, it seems especially important for me to do so. My own story affects my interpretation (Selby, 2004).

I am aware that reflexivity, or writing oneself into the text, has been criticized on a number of grounds, including as being narcissistic and as being a methodological move meant to increase ethnographic ‘authority’ at a time when writing about others’ experience is seen as problematic (Pillow, 2003). I have, of course, tried to include only things that might be relevant – things that help you (and me) see how my location influences the research process (Pillow). Schram (2003) wrote that in some research traditions one’s position should be clear throughout, without becoming an irrelevant self-display or a political polemic. Keeping this in mind, I have been guided in part by the logic that too much about me can easily be ignored, while too little might leave gaps for some readers.

I am also aware that my ability to be ‘honest’ about myself is limited by the limits of my self-knowledge – and I am not the same person I was as I considered the research 3 years ago or while doing fieldwork. I am comfortable with Pillow’s (2003) notion of ‘interrupted reflexivity’ – an admission that knowing is tenuous – both knowing myself and knowing others. I also appreciate her advice to challenge readers to challenge their assumptions as they read this work; what you make of it will depend, to a great extent, on who you are.

In the writing I try to be clear about what I “heard” and what conclusions I have drawn, about what I would claim with some certainty that Inuit participants want, and when my speculations are based on what I heard and what I have read (Thomas, 1993). Pillow (2003) wrote that we need to challenge “the representations we come to while recognizing the need to find meaning” (p. 193). Being as clear as I can be about who I am and what I believe should, I hope, help with those tasks.

2.2 Respectful research and ‘gaining access’

From reading I have come to believe that “the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 2). Whereas my master’s research was conducted with good intentions, I aspired to conduct this PhD research within an anti-colonial, decolonizing frame (Dei, 2000; Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Pihama, 2002; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Colonization caused an assault on Inuit culture and colonialism continues

to threaten Inuit with culture loss and assimilation to EuroCanadian norms. As a defining feature, Tuhiwai Smith wrote that “colonialism specifically excluded indigenous peoples from any form of decision making. States and governments have long made decisions hostile to the interests of indigenous communities” (p. 150). It was important for me to include Inuit in decisions concerning the research, a tenet of respectful research with indigenous peoples (Lipka, Mohatt, & The Ciulistet Group, 1998; Menzies, 2001; Pihama; Steinhauer, 2002; Tuhiwai Smith; Weber-Pillwax, 1999).

I received support for the research from community members I spoke with in November, 2004, on a preliminary visit to Tuktulik. The University of Victoria's *Protocols and principles for conducting research in an indigenous context* (2001) recommend consultation from the early planning stages of the research. At that time, the mayor (an Inuk) and both principals (both Qallunaat at the time) were also supportive, and the Hamlet Council approved the research in January, 2005. In April, 2005, I wrote a letter describing the research to the newly elected District Education Authority [DEA], and asked a community member to translate it. She graciously offered to present the research to the DEA at their next meeting, and did so. Unfortunately they had some questions that she could not answer (did I have a PhD?; was the research approved by the Nunavut Research Institute?), and they were concerned that the research might cause tension in the community.

At the same time I had written to the Qikiqtani School Operations outlining the proposed research, which, at that time, included a component of working with teachers in both schools following interviews with community members. The Director, a Qallunaat, was concerned that the ethics of securing permission from the teachers would be insurmountable, given high teacher turnover, that the schedule for school closures was set long in advance, and that the school component of the research would take valuable contact time from teaching.

I began to think of removing the in-school component, a component designed to leave something of immediate value in the community. I flew to Tuktulik to the last DEA meeting of the school year in early June, 2005. At the meeting I spoke of my orientation to the research and of steps to ensure that tensions would not arise and grow. I was asked if I had official permission

to conduct the research and I explained that I would seek it after I was certain that they felt comfortable with the research. Most of the DEA members were unilingual Inuktitut speakers and this communication took place through an interpreter. They asked for me to call during the following week after they had a chance to discuss the research amongst themselves. When I did I found that they, too, were concerned that the in-school part of the research would take time from teaching, and they were unhappy that I did not have official permission to conduct the research.

I removed the in-school component from the research methods, had the new description translated, and called in early September to ask for permission to attend the first DEA meeting to describe the new research plan. A DEA member said that I should not come, but should apply for official permission. I sent a letter along with the new description to all DEA members, and proceeded to apply to the Nunavut Research Institute for a research license. In early February, 2006, I attended a DEA meeting to describe my ideas for informing the community about the research and to give the DEA an opportunity to comment. I had the Nunavut Research License and Lakehead Ethics approval with me, and left copies for the DEA at their request. I met with them again during the fieldwork to inform them of progress, provided them with a preliminary summary of the research in Inuktitut and English, and will provide a copy of the dissertation (in English) and a summary in both languages.

When I removed the in-school component from the research it was important to me that I replaced it with another way to try to create something of immediate value to the community, more tangible than the ‘policy implications’ of the research. Like Kulchyski (2005), I wanted to contribute what I could, or as Tuhiwai Smith (1999) put it about the usefulness of researchers, “Can they fix up our generator? Can they actually do anything” (p. 14)? I decided to volunteer in the community and at both schools, helped with the breakfast program at the highschool and took 7 classes from the elementary school cross-country skiing. As well as academic results from the research, I am also committed to communicating the findings to different audiences in ways that might make a difference – in particular to policymakers but also to teacher candidates who will inevitably teach across difference, and to Qallunaat teachers in Nunavut.

I strove to conduct research that was respectful and supportive of Inuit. Menzies (2001) wrote that a “colonial research ideology...puts the accumulation of knowledge ahead of the interests of the people studied” (p. 20), and wrote that non-Aboriginal social science researchers must make their research part of a process of decolonization for it to constitute a meaningful contribution. In part, he wrote, this involves doing research *with*, rather than *on*, Aboriginal peoples. Menzies (2004) also wrote that researchers have often left Aboriginal people with nothing; research has the potential to cause harm and the researcher is responsible to ensure that it does not.

The intent of this research was to explore Inuit ideas about schooling to generate knowledge. This knowledge, it is hoped, will benefit the people who took part. More knowledge of Inuit wishes should help policymakers make decisions that reflect Inuit wishes, and may be used to pressure policymakers to make or to fund those decisions. This is a decolonizing goal in that a school system responsive to Inuit needs and desires contrasts with the historical and present reality of a school system created elsewhere and not truly under Inuit control.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999, p. 15) wrote that dissemination of results is never a ‘one-off’ exercise, and that “sharing is about demystifying knowledge and information and speaking in plain terms to the community” (p. 161). Too often audiences have been only academic to the exclusion of communities where the research took place (Jolles, 2006). To ensure this was not the case, I returned to Tuktulik in November, 2006, to present preliminary findings to the community, giving an opportunity for feedback before I began the writing of this document. At an open meeting advertised by poster and on the local radio, with refreshments and door prizes, I spoke to about 35 community members. In June, 2007, I returned to Tuktulik with a 6 page initial summary of the research. An English copy was put in each mailbox and the Inuktitut translation was made available at the Hamlet Office. I summarized the research over the local radio, using an interpreter, and asked for comments and especially corrections if people, whether or not they had participated in an interview, felt that their views were not represented accurately. Several ways of reaching me at no cost were described, including in Inuktitut via an interpreter. The preliminary findings presentation and written summary served as ways to keep the community informed about

the findings and my thoughts, and as an opportunity for feedback that could have led to an adjustment of the results, with community members seeing the work several months before its completion. I will be sending copies of the dissertation and summaries in both languages, and will visit Tuktulik again in spring, 2008.

In retrospect, I feel that despite my efforts to involve the DEA in a meaningful way during the definition of the research, and despite making substantial changes to satisfy the DEA, I fell short of the goal of co-creating the research agenda with the community. Unfortunately, the result is probably closer to the ‘researcher inspired project’ with modifications following community input, described by Menzies (2004). Ideally, I would have preferred to have been invited into a community to study something the community had defined as valuable, rather than acting on an idea that originated with me, but my base in southern Canada and my desire for the process to proceed quickly, due in part to financial considerations and time requirements of a PhD program, impacted my ability to do this.

During the planning stages of this research a colleague asked me why I thought that as an outsider the community would trust me. This is a theme that Agar (1996) framed as asking for trust without earning it. My answer, in part, is this: Although I am an outsider to Inuit culture, I was known in the community because I taught grade 7 there from August, 1997 to June, 1999 and made subsequent visits in 2001, 2003, and 2004. This familiarity helped with my acceptance in the community. Still, I remain concerned about representation and the idea that I might be speaking for, or on behalf of, Inuit – that I might ‘get it wrong’ or that even ‘getting it right’ might be disempowering. My logic for proceeding was that, while I am an outsider in Inuit culture, I am an insider in Qallunaat school culture, and it is there I think that change is needed, not in Inuit students or their families (Jordan and Jacob, 1993). Because of my positioning, I may be able to be heard in an inequitable system in ways not available to most Inuit. I will try not to speak for, or on behalf of, Inuit, but, as Wolcott (1999) put it, to present Inuit views “*as understood by the ethnographer*” (p. 138, emphasis in the original). I have undertaken the work in a ‘spirit of advocacy’ (Kral & Idlout, 2006), and in awareness that it is still possible for me to “make matters worse” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2001, 287).

2.3 A postmodern lens

The problem of ineffective schools in Nunavut and the assimilation of Inuit through schooling is a multilayered, complex problem. During the research I was aware of being positioned “amidst contradictory and complicated issues of power, ownership of knowledge, and political and economic contexts” (Schram, 2003, p. 4). My perspective was situated and partial, and was an outsider position. I worked in a context where the ontologies and epistemologies of those I worked with may have been quite different from my own (Kawagely, 1995).

Postmodernism demands “rejecting universal, simplified definitions of social phenomena...the focus is shifted to the complexity of lived experience” (Dei, 2000, p. 115); its potential lies in “its ability to force re-examination of what we think is real” (Thomas, 1993, p. 25). I expected multiple and contradictory positions to be expressed by participants, and did not search for a unifying theme or theory to explain all of the data. Nor have I sought traditional validity in terms of findings representing *the* truth, though like Oakely (2000) I understand that “most people operate as though reality exists” (p. 20), and to claim that it does not would be to dismiss that real problems exist as well.

I do not presume to be a neutral conduit for Inuit voice, or to write on behalf of Inuit, but try to make my position and analysis transparent. As Hicks and Gwynne (1996) suggested, research and writing do not provide a view of reality but yield a product of the interaction of people with a researcher, in this case people in Tuktulik with me, a middle class White male doctoral student. This work concerns values and is inherently political, the writing a construction rather than a window to reality, and my socio-historical position is reflected in my understanding (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2001). Still, through systemic inquiry I have attempted to do more than perceive the world I expected.

2.4 A critical stance

The research was conducted in a critical frame, where the political nature of the ethnography was salient (Creswell, 2002; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 2002). My explicit intent was to gather knowledge that might support Inuit in redefining schooling on their own terms if they so

choose. Menzies (2001) wrote that research calls for “political engagement and recognition that involvement in research with First Nations will be a political act irrespective of the researcher’s intentions” (p. 26). I am asking here not only “what is,” but what “could be” (Thomas, 1993, p. 4), and am involved in an exploration of possible avenues for change. I am more interested in contributing to “overthrowing injustice” than in “uncovering truth” (Menzies, 2001, p. 31). I hope to contribute to schools becoming “sites of hope,” not “sites of further marginalization” (Tompkins, 2002, p. 407). I believe that “research should take place because it is required as part of a strategy to address a particular problem, concern, or situation; thus it is action-oriented and political in nature as well as intent” (Archibald & Crnkovich, 1995, p. 107). In this case the research was not action-oriented, although it is intended to inform future action and is meant to be political. I am committed to acting as an advocate after the research (Fetterman, 1993).

I am also interested in the functioning of power and with establishing collaborative and non-exploitive relationships with participants, aware also that “those relationships affect the story being told” (Schram, p. 36). This stance critiques ‘objectivity’ and ‘neutrality.’ My intention was to have an advocacy role (Schram) in research that was explicitly political (Thomas, 1993) and I approached the study thinking that something was wrong (Wolcott, 1999).

2.5 Purpose of the study – Inuit thoughts on Inuit education

This research explores what Inuit want from the schools in Tuktuulik, Nunavut, and examines obstacles to student learning in that context. It complements and extends the work of the *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq* (Aylward, 2004) and Education Act (NDOE, 2006) consultations by documenting the views on education of Inuit in one Nunavut community across many demographics, and it also paints a picture of other factors impacting students’ school experiences.

2.6 Research questions

Guiding the research were the following questions:

1. What do Inuit parents and community members like most about schooling in Tuktuulik?
2. What changes to schooling would Inuit parents and community members like to see?

3. What impacts Inuit students' ability to learn in school?

The first research question provided eclectic answers. Some of these appear in Section 4.1.2, but they are not the focus of this work.

2.7 An ethnographically informed case study

The research used ethnographic methods with Inuit parents and community members in one Nunavut community to examine Inuit thoughts on education. A descriptive and interpretive case study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) of Inuit ideas about schooling, bounded by the community of Tuktulik, this research is primarily ethnographic in nature – what Spindler and Spindler (1987) called a “case study with an ethnographic base” (p. 22). The case study is an in-depth study of a bounded system (Creswell, 2002). The ethnographic approach honours the socio-political and historical context and uses culture as a lens to understand behaviour and belief (LeCompte & Shensul, 1999).

One community was chosen for more in-depth work rather than diminishing attention by attempting to study several locations (Wolcott, 1999, p. 88). Fieldwork took place from January 27th to May 30th, 2006, although my understanding of the context benefited greatly from teaching grade 7 in the highschool in Tuktulik (August, 1997 to June, 1999) and from four visits to the community since. Two more return trips occurred from November 10th to 17th, 2006, when I presented preliminary findings to the community, and from June 22nd to 25th, 2007, when I delivered a summary of the findings. Fieldwork was conducted in one community, interacting with the people (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2001). This helped me to describe and interpret cultural behaviours of Inuit (and Qallunaat) related to education and cultural patterns in their attitudes and beliefs about it (Wolcott, 1999), while seeing things “in their entirety rather than only in parts” and within the broad social contexts in which they occurred (Schram, 2003, p. 69). I used semi-structured interviews, observation, participant observation, and document review to explore the research questions.

Case studies are particularly useful for exploring contemporary issues when the context is likely to be important (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Whereas survey research might

have focussed on a few variables, for example by asking the same questions of people in different communities, the case-study approach allowed the emergence and consideration of many variables related to one phenomenon in one location. Case study assumes complexity and that interpretation and description make more sense than measuring (Merriam). Part one of the findings – Inuit wishes for schooling – is more descriptive, while part two – a look at reasons why the schools underachieve – is more interpretive, as in the latter case theoretical assumptions held before data gathering are explored (Merriam).

Traditionally, Wolcott (1999) wrote, ethnography was about comparison, though it is now often more about description. Typically characterized by long periods of fieldwork, today it is often more focussed and time in the field is shortened (Agar, 1996; Wolcott), but still maintaining elements of being “holistic, cross-cultural and comparative, long-term, based on firsthand experience, undertaken with explicit intent” (Wolcott, p. 243). Prior familiarity with the setting, such as I had, can lead to a compressed design with less fieldwork than in traditional ethnographies (LeCompte & Shensul, 1999).

2.8 Community and school profile

Nunavut has 23,500 Inuit and 3,500 Qallunaat in 27 communities ranging in size from under 200 to about 6000 (Searles, 2002). This study was conducted in one community located in the Qikiqtani (formerly Baffin) Region. Tuktulik (a pseudonym meaning ‘place of caribou’) has about 1200 residents, 93% of whom are Inuit (Statistics Canada, 2001). Demographically, Tuktulik shares a number of characteristics of most small Nunavut communities. The majority of non-Inuit residents are from southern Canada and came to Nunavut for well-paid employment, often as civil servants. For example, the Senior Administrative Officer of the Hamlet, all five nurses, all five RCMP officers, all certified teachers at the highschool, and three-quarters of the Government of Nunavut employees are Qallunaat. Almost all are transient; over 50% of Qallunaat had been in the community for one year or less, and fewer than 5% for 5 years or more (extrapolated from Statistics Canada, 2001).

Many Inuit are not involved in the wage economy and many pursue ‘subsistence’ activities, primarily hunting and fishing and their related technologies¹³. Many are also involved in artistic endeavours, principally printmaking and soapstone carving. There is high unemployment in Tuktulik, almost wholly among Inuit, although many who are unemployed do not claim social assistance, but rather share resources with family and relatives (Hicks & White, 2000). Median total income in Nunavut is 25% lower than in the rest of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2004).

The median age in Nunavut is 22.1 years, compared to 37.9 years in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2004), with crowded housing (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2007; Tester, 2006), high levels of marijuana and alcohol abuse (Spitzer, 2001), high infant mortality, and an expected life span that is 10 years shorter than the Canadian average (Statistics Canada). High rates of suicide are also found in Nunavut, particularly among the youth (Minor, 1992), and Tuktulik has lost many young people to suicide in the past 10 years.

Like all Nunavut communities, Tuktulik is remote; that is, it has no road access to southern Canada or to other communities in Nunavut. There are two schools in Tuktulik. The elementary school, with about 190 students, is staffed by 7 Inuit and 3 Qallunaat teachers, and the high school, with about 90 students who attend regularly, by 7 Qallunaat teachers and two Inuit language specialists. Both schools employ a student support teacher (formerly called a program support teacher), usually Qallunaat, whose role is to support teachers in developing and implementing programs for students with special needs (LeFebvre, 2001). Typically, both schools employ Inuit as student support assistants and administrative assistants, and have in the past had Qallunaat principals. At the time of the research, the elementary school principal was Inuit and the secondary school principal was Qallunaat. The secondary school also employed an Inuit school/community counsellor.

13 Kulchyski (2005) uses the term ‘gatherers and hunters’ to remind readers that in many situations the gathering work was the most critical to survival. While this may not have been the case in the Arctic, and while men may have, and may still, comprise the bulk of the hunters and fishers, women’s roles have been and continue to be crucial in enabling hunting.

Teacher and administrative turnover is often high at the secondary school. For example, following the 1999 school year, 6 of the 7 Qallunaat secondary school teachers and the principal all left and were replaced for the following year. In the next 8 years the school employed 5 different principals. Staffing is much more consistent at the elementary school, where most teachers are from the community and remain in their positions for many years.

Nunavut schools teach just over 9000 students, 96% of whom are Inuit (Iqaluit District Education Authority [IDEA], 2005a). Curriculum from K-9 is from the Northwest Territories and from the Western Northern Canadian Protocol, while grades 10-12 use Alberta curriculum (NDOE, 2004). Nunavut schools graduate few students (NSDC, 2000), between 25% and 35%, compared to the Canadian average of 75% to 78% (IDEA). In real numbers, the number of graduates climbed from about 60 per year to almost 140 per year during the 1990s, and then stabilized (IDEA); in Tuktuulik many students stop school before graduation, some as early as in the elementary grades. As well as early school leaving, Aylward (2004) reported widespread criticism of schools in Nunavut for educating to lower standards than elsewhere in Canada. That concern was voiced at a public meeting in Tuktuulik when I taught there, and was part of the motivation for this study.

The continued presence of Qallunaat in Tuktuulik filling prestigious and well-paid jobs, jobs that the *Nunavut Land Claim Agreement* reserves for Inuit if qualified applicants are available, attests in part to the failure of the schools in Tuktuulik to educate Inuit students to higher levels (T. Berger, 2006). Along with the past and current poor performance of the schools in educating Inuit students, dissatisfaction in the community about the role of the Qallunaat school in an Inuit community arose in public meetings and conversations with parents during my time teaching in Tuktuulik.

In terms of demographics and schooling, Tuktuulik shares many characteristics with Nunavut's 26 other communities, although Inuit culture and language use varies considerably. Schooling has contributed to the cultural disruption brought about by colonization and change, and educational outcomes in the current school model are well below results expected in mainstream settings.

2.9 Data collection

The principal means of data collection was 74 semi-structured interviews with Inuit adults (18 years and older). Observation, participant observation, and document review contextualized and supplemented this information.

2.9.1 Interviews. Although direct questioning and interviews may be seen as invasive by Inuit (Bould, n. d.; Lipka, 1989; Searles, 2000), and has in the past yielded spurious answers in attempts to educate the interviewer about the inappropriateness of the practice (Fossett, 2001, p. 7), if conducted respectfully, semi-structured interviews allow participants to explore topics with the researcher without anxiety about confidentiality, or the judgement of others, which is sometimes a concern in small communities. Without a rigid agenda, open-ended questions allow the participant to co-create the agenda of the interview, highlighting what he or she sees as important (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1998). The focus of the interviews did vary widely. Each new interview was part of an interactive process as some ideas from earlier interviews and from participant observation were raised and discussed, increasing what Lather (1986) termed ‘face validity.’ Analysing the data as it was collected and feeding some of it back in subsequent interviews allowed the analysis to inform the data collection, as suggested by Jordan and Jacob (1993).

Data collection for the *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq* (Aylward, 2004) and the Education Act (NDOE, 2006) consultations took place largely through focus groups and community meetings. I used interviews instead of focus groups for two reasons. I was cognisant of the District Education Authority concern about the possibility of the research creating tensions within the community and wanted methods that reduced the likelihood of public criticism. Interviews provided a more intimate setting that allowed participants to express their views without the fear of being judged by others in the community. I also accepted Wolcott’s (1999) caution that, in focus groups, domineering individuals can command floor-space, making them poor venues to get at what individuals think (p. 205).

The interviews I conducted were expected to last approximately one hour, but varied considerably, from 15 to 90 minutes. Most of them took about half an hour. I asked participants whether they were comfortable being tape recorded or if I should take notes. Forty-nine participants were tape recorded while for 25 I took notes. I also gave the interviewees a choice of venues since interviewing people ‘on their own territory’ can make them feel more comfortable (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2001). Interviews took place at one of the three places in which I stayed while in Tuktuulik (43 participants), a visitor center loaned to me by the Hamlet Office (12 participants), people’s homes (14 participants), or their places of work (5 participants), after their preference. Fifty-one interviews were with individuals, 10 were with pairs, and one was with three people, all also according to participants’ preferences. Though Hammersley and Atkinson wrote that ‘audience’ can distort things when more than one person is interviewed, I found that participants often had fun and sparked ideas in each other. People may also have been more relaxed when there was more than one person present, a person of their choosing. One person was interviewed twice at her request.

The initial interview guide (Appendix B) included questions about demographics (participant age, gender, amount of schooling, and occupation), participant memories of schooling, the best things about the way the schools are, and things that participants would like to see different in the future. Not all questions were asked in all interviews, and follow-up questions were asked that did not come from the guide, as the interviews evolved (Jacob & Jordan, 1993b). The interview guide soon grew as I added questions arising from discussions in previous interviews. For example, if a participant did not mention elders, I often said: “Some people have said that elders should be more involved in schools. What do you think?” Agar (1996) noted that because of the emergent nature of ethnography it is not possible to specify all the questions that you will ask before you are in the field.

During the interviews, I tried to listen more than I talked (Jacob & Jordan, 1993b), but sometimes I found that I was too focussed on what I would ask next to listen intently. Some participants answered questions very briefly, without elaboration, while others went far beyond the questions to discuss related and sometimes seemingly unrelated topics. Several times when I

tried to pause long enough to be sure I was not cutting off a participants' answer, the participant asked me if I had any more questions! The shortest interviews might have resulted from participant discomfort with what Hammersley and Atkinson (2001, p. 95) described as status differential, with me a male, in many cases older than the participant, and in a higher status and more privileged position. For some participants, some of the questions might not have been framed in a way that made sense, something Wolcott (1999) noted as essential to successful semi-structured interviewing. In one case my questions were unnecessary. After the initial demographic questions, the participant spoke uninterrupted about schooling for over 20 minutes, then stopped and said that she was finished.

Interviews were transcribed and coded during the fieldwork. In the first two months, this always happened within two weeks of the interview, and often sooner, giving me the opportunity to feed back into the interviews ideas that recurred amongst participants, or that seemed especially interesting in terms of the goals of the research. This was a form of participant validation that increased my confidence in what I was hearing (Lather, 1986). After the first two months I had conducted interviews with 44 Inuit and I spent the next weeks catching up with transcription and doing preliminary coding. This allowed me to have an overview of salient findings which in turn resulted in the inclusion of new questions to probe areas of interest and test ideas arising from the coding (Agar, 1996; Wolcott, 1987).

After this interval of reflection, I created a new interview guide (Appendix C) but I found myself reluctant to ask all of the questions in the guide. Certain questions did not feel right and were not asked. The questions that I did not ask varied somewhat from interview to interview. Perhaps this was an unwillingness to be "pesky," as Spindler and Spindler (1987) wrote that ethnographers must be. Perhaps my intuition about which questions would be well received and best answered guided my decisions. Wolcott (1999) noted that direct questioning can seem 'extractive' in an age where researchers try to be collaborative, and this may have caused some of my resistance. He cautioned that "although you might get the information you need, you may damage your chances for learning more.... Ethnographers do not want to earn reputations as people who pester with incessant questioning" (pp. 52, 56). Agar (1996) wrote that one should be

oneself, and in asking what I was comfortable asking I was being myself, although in that way I may have missed some learning. I also wonder if, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2001) suggested, the failure to ask new questions might have been “an artefact of laziness” (p. 117) inspired by comfort and familiarity? Shah (2004) noted that interviews are social events, and wrote that following conventions of social interaction might result in *not* getting answers to all research questions. She also noted her own hesitation in questioning during cross-cultural interviewing. I recognize that the complexity of data collection by interviews was compounded by the cross-cultural nature of this situation.

I tried to take an open and sharing stance during the interview, and offered my thoughts and feelings if asked, or if the situation warranted it since this is thought to improve the quality of data generated (Reimer, 1996), and is a matter of symmetry and fairness in the feminist tradition (Schram, 2003). Oakley (1981) wrote that “finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her personal identity in the relationship” (p. 41) and Reimer wrote that “the pretence of neutrality on my part as an interviewer may have been counterproductive... I suspect I would understand more about Inuit women’s lives... if I had taken a more reciprocal approach to interviewing” (p. 97). The amount that I shared varied greatly, as some interviews proceeded quickly and others were more conversational.

Differences in Inuit and Qallunaat communication patterns may impact the interview and cause misunderstanding (Crago, 1992). Moquin (2004) cited Annahatak, an Inuk, who said that Inuit “don’t put in everything; we give good hints and let people think” (p. 15). Shah (2004) pointed out that in cross-cultural interviewing, researchers might make false assumptions about culture-related phenomena that do not fit their cultural frame of reference, jeopardizing the interview and interpretation. My previous experience living and working in Nunavut and the reading I have done about Inuit and Inuit culture might have mitigated the effects of me being non-Inuit, at least to some degree, but it would not have removed those effects entirely.

Along with style, language provided a challenge during this research. Dorais and Sammons (2002) wrote that “English encounters problems when it tries to penetrate the Inuit way

of thinking; anything connected with the expression of one's innermost self is usually uttered in Inuktitut" (p. 108). Although they wanted to be interviewed in English, several participants acknowledged that it would have been easier to discuss matters in Inuktitut. One said: "*I'm sorry, English is not my first language; I have a hard time finding words sometimes.*" At times participants seemed to struggle to understand a question, or asked for it to be repeated. I sometimes asked if it would be easier if I could speak Inuktitut, and this was affirmed in most cases. One participant said, "*it would be a lot easier to speak to you in Inuktitut, and easier for me to talk instead of English. It would help a lot if you speak Inuktitut.*" That questions were framed by a Qallunaat in English, and that most participants responded in English, their second language, may have limited the findings to broader concepts that 'translated well.'

Since I do not speak Inuktitut and used an interpreter for 7 interviews, in those interviews detail may also have been lost (Larsen, 1995). In addition, with an interpreter there is the danger of over interpretation (Buur, 1999) and a loss of control (Agar, 1996). Five of the interpreted interviews took place with a trained interpreter who was familiar with, and respected in, the community, and two were conducted using family members who were present and volunteered at the time the participant expressed an interest in being interviewed. All three who interpreted were also participants in the study, which gave me the opportunity to examine whether their views corresponded closely with those for whom they interpreted. The appearance of differences increased my confidence in the accuracy of the translation. It was also quite obvious when on several occasions an interpreter excitedly answered one of my questions, before stopping and interpreting it for the participant, and then interpreting the answer. I had several passages controlled for accuracy by an interpretation service in Iqaluit and they were deemed to be good. Some loss of nuance will have limited the depth and discrimination in some of the findings.

My main interpreter also served in some ways as a "key informant" (Agar, 1996). We often talked casually while waiting to go on the radio or while waiting for an interview, and I was able to ask many things about the community and about Inuit culture.

I am unavoidably a representative of the colonizing power, a Qallunaat, and I was probably also perceived as a representative of the education system. This might have stopped

participants from relating negative experiences with the school system, or with Qallunaat generally, in the interview setting (Thisted, 2002). Møller (2005) found that during interviews on tuberculosis in Nunavut, Inuit did not criticize Qallunaat or the healthcare system explicitly, but she found that in casual settings they sometimes did. This may be because, as Farmer (1999) noted, in a formal interview the “anthropologist and informant are not separate and equal; both are caught up in a global web of unequal relations” (p. 6); the perceived power imbalance may be much greater in an interview than in casual conversation (Møller). I learned much about Inuit perceptions of Qallunaat during casual conversations, and I learned much about how Qallunaat in Tuktulik act by observing, and interacting with, them.

2.9.2 Observation & participant observation. Observation and participant observation allowed data from the interviews to be contextualized and provided perspectives that were not available to me in the formal context of an interview (Searles, 2000). They also provided direct evidence of things in the schools and the community (Jacob & Jordan, 1993b). In Agar’s (1996) words, “participant observation means you are actually there” (p. 9). Participant observation enhances the quality of data as well as the researcher’s ability to analyse the data (Dewalt & Dewalt, 1998).

Observations and participant observations that felt relevant were recorded in fieldnotes. When I took part in discussions in the highschool staffroom, took elementary students skiing, played hockey with the ‘oldtimers,’ or discussed schooling casually, I was a participant observer. When I took part in an impromptu baseball game and saw a parent come to get her child, when I watched as people left to go hunting, and when I saw everyone cheer for the winner of the bingo jackpot, I was an observer. I recorded things that were said and things that I saw that related to Inuit culture, Inuit wishes for schooling, Inuit/Qallunaat relations, obstacles to learning, and related topics.

While in Tuktulik I took part in two “School Improvement” meetings sponsored by the Department of Education involving both schools, with community members invited. These provided valuable data in a very different forum that served to confirm some of what I heard in

interviews. I also took part in two days of inservice workshops conducted by Qikiqtani School Operations aimed at informing highschool teachers about the *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq* findings (Aylward, 2004), and the probable response of the Nunavut Department of Education in changing schooling to honour the wishes of Nunavut residents. This afforded me the opportunity to interact with Qallunaat highschool teachers and to communicate some of my initial findings to them and to hear their responses. These, and many other opportunities over the four months of fieldwork and the subsequent visits, provided important information. While the interviews provided much of the data for many of the findings, observation and participant observation often supported the findings. They were also of primary importance for the findings in Section 4.3 (Prejudice, Colonialism and Disempowerment).

2.9.3 Document review. Document review provided a context for current policies and directions for change at the school system level, and helped provide a temporal, social, and political frame to aid in interpreting data. Statistics (primarily from Statistics Canada), reports (e.g., Aarluk Consulting, 2005; T. Berger, 2006; Martin, 2000a) government documents (e.g., Aylward, 2004; NDOE, 2004, 2005, 2006; NWT ECE, 1996), and newspapers (primarily NewsNorth & Nunatsiaq News) were among the documents considered. As Wolcott (1999) noted, “for an ethnographer *any* document that proves valuable as a source of information can rightfully be considered an archive” (p. 59).

2.9.4 Participant selection. Any Inuit resident of Tuktulik who was 18 years of age or older and who consented to be interviewed was included in the study. Early in my stay in Tuktulik I described the research on the local radio, with an interpreter, and asked for volunteers. This was repeated after one month, near the end of the second month with a special appeal for people with full-time wage employment and elders to volunteer, and once again near the beginning of the fourth month. Descriptions of the research and the consent forms in both Inuktitut and English were hung prominently at the two grocery stores. In the final two weeks of May, 2006, I sent an email to all Inuit employees of the Government of Nunavut, describing the study and including a

list of questions that I would ask in an abbreviated interview, should that be preferred on the basis of time constraints. A \$20 honorarium was given to each participant.

In the beginning, there were also several people who I knew well and felt comfortable enough to ask whether they would like to be interviewed. I was, however, very aware that it might be difficult for an Inuk to say no to such a request and I did not want people to feel pressured. As Kulchyski (2006) wrote, ‘yes’ can sometimes mean ‘no.’ In 11 cases I interviewed someone I had asked, usually after they had shown some specific interest in the study. Several others who expressed interest in the study and agreed to be interviewed when asked, were then repeatedly unavailable. When I realized that their participation might be more my desire than theirs, I gave them a card with my phone number on it and left it to them to make contact. A number of people asked me in person during chance meetings in the community, but the majority phoned me, and some just knocked on the door. One agreed to be interviewed after being asked by my interpreter.

2.9.5 Participants. Seventy-four adult Inuit took part in interviews. This represents between 10% and 12% of the adult Inuit population of Tuktulik, depending on whether the number of active charts in the Tuktulik Health Centre (about 1400), or the Statistics Canada (2001) census data adjusted for 2006 (about 1200), is taken as the most accurate estimate of the total population. Participants included 43 women and 31 men. It is not clear why more women took part. It may be that, as in EuroAmerican settings, women have less power and fewer possibilities to have their voices heard publicly, and might thus use alternative venues (DeVault, 1999). Møller (2005, p. 20) experienced a similar, though somewhat more pronounced, gender imbalance in her research on tuberculosis in Nunavut.

In part, the sample was a snowball sample (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Knapik, 2006). People who called often said that they had heard from someone who I had recently interviewed, and sometimes partners, adult children, or friends called soon after an interview. Six people from one family participated, and five from another, but with 40 different family names represented in the sample, despite pockets from certain families, the sample was broadly based.

Participant ages were as follows: Two were 18 or 19, twenty-two were in their 20s, twenty-one in their 30s, twelve in their 40s, ten in their 50s, five in their 60s, and one each in their 70s and 80s. This closely mirrors the age demographics in Nunavut and in Tuktulik (Statistics Canada & Nunavut Bureau of Statistics, 2005). Eleven of the participants were 55 or over and thus qualified to pay a reduced ‘elders’ fare in the local taxi.

Eighteen participants had full-time wage-employment. The sample included teachers, school support staff, cashiers, and municipal and territorial government workers. Fifteen participants had part-time or itinerant wage-employment, 37 were not employed in wage-labour (several were of retirement age) and 4 were in highschool. At least 19 earned money through the production of arts and crafts. From a count of full-time and part-time positions in Tuktulik, and considering data from Statistics Canada (2006), it appears that this distribution was roughly representative of the wage-labour status of Inuit residents in Tuktulik, with full-time wage-employed Inuit adults slightly underrepresented.

Twenty-four people stated that they took part in land activities – hunting, fishing, and camping – and many more said they would if they had the equipment. Fifty-eight said they took part in land activities, carving, sewing, or drawing, all things considered to be traditional Inuit activities (Brody, 1991). The question was not asked of all participants.

Three participants had never been to school, eight had completed between Kindergarten and grade 6, thirty-five had reached grade 7, 8 or 9, seventeen had completed grade 10 or 11, seven had graduated from grade 12, and 4 were in highschool. Many had also taken courses at Nunavut Arctic College, including 2 who had bachelor’s degrees earned in Iqaluit. Two participants had some post-secondary education in southern Canada. It is very common in Nunavut for mature students to return to school at the college level, or enter diploma or degree programs through an access program, without having graduated from grade 12.

No broad statistics could be found to assess how representative the participants were in terms of the formal educational achievement of Inuit in Tuktulik or Nunavut, although there are some indications. An Iqaluit District Education Authority report (IDEA, 2005a) noted that using Statistics Canada 2002/2003 census data and using *Pan-Canadian education indicators 2003*

administrative records data, different graduation rates are calculated. These varied from 25% to 35% in Nunavut, while the graduation rate in Canada was between 75% and 78% early in the millennium.

Although precise comparisons are not easy to make, in terms of highest level of schooling, participants in the study were at least roughly representative of adults in Tuktulik and Nunavut. Relatively few Inuit have graduated from highschool, and very few from university. Many stopped school in the intermediate grades, and many older people, who would have had to leave their communities to proceed past grade 3, did not do so.

Seven of the participants were people I taught in the late 1990s as a grade 7 teacher, and many others were people I knew, or knew of through a brother, sister, daughter, son, or other relation whom I taught in the late 1990s. Ethnographers might avoid some people and favour others (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2001), and, although this may have occurred to some extent in this case, everyone who expressed interest in being interviewed was invited to take part. This included many people I did not know.

2.10 Data analysis

I transcribed all audiotapes from the interviews (49 participants) and typed notes taken during interviews where participants preferred not to be recorded (25 participants). I made 69 fieldnote entries recording observations and thoughts arising from participant observation. I coded all of this text, and notes made following the School Improvement and inservicing sessions, using the qualitative software program Atlas.ti.

I began transcribing in the first weeks of the research and was able to raise emergent themes in subsequent interviews, increasing what Lather (1986) called face validity, where at least a subsample of participants see emerging categories and analysis and are able to comment on them. After two months of fieldwork I caught up in the transcription of the first 44 participants, and did preliminary coding. Some codes, such as the desire for more Inuit culture, were expected from the literature (e.g., Aylward, 2004), and others identified themes I saw recurring across interviews, such as the wish for the schools to be stricter. This strategy followed

Agar's (1996) suggestion that the initial coding should identify blocks of text that focus on the same topic. After completing the fieldwork and transcriptions I added fieldnotes and coded all remaining text, then re-read all of the initial interview transcripts. I then considered the contents of each of the codes individually, and thought holistically about relationships across codes and in relation to the literature on Inuit wishes for schooling and the failure of schools serving minoritized populations. Through iterations, coding went from descriptive categories to groupings of related codes (Jacob & Jordan, 1993b). Sometimes during the recurrent process of coding I needed to reconsider previously coded data in light of new codes (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2001). The idea of 'culture' provided the overall frame for interpreting the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 29).

During the analysis I was conscious that my own subjectivity influenced my interpretation (Peshkin, 2000), and that I am unavoidably part of my material (Hastrup, 1986; Okely, 1992). Sometimes I had help in identifying my own biases as my partner, Helle Møller, a Danish researcher in medical anthropology, was with me through much of the fieldwork and during much of the analysis and writing. Through extensive discussions at all stages I was pushed to defend my ideas and consider alternative explanations. I was caught a number of times being so close to the school culture that I responded as a teacher at the highschool and not as a researcher, a role response identified by Wolcott (1987) as a possible pitfall of ethnographic research. In this writing I have tried to distinguish between what people said and what I thought about what they said, but of course even the choices of which quotes to use are mine. I have sometimes included frequencies to indicate how many participants shared sentiments that I report, and I discuss counter-examples where they exist.

Møller (2005) wrote that in analysing her data she needed to be aware that people she interviewed told the stories they did for a reason. She used semi-structured interviews, and could not, at first, always understand the connection of participants' stories to her questions. This was also the case for me, especially when participants told what seemed to be only tenuously related anecdotes, and I found, as Wikan (1993, p. 196) did, that I sometimes needed to work hard to understand what people said and why they said it. In many cases knowing the person, or knowing

some of the relationships and something about the community, was helpful in analyzing data.

2.11 Trustworthiness

In ethnographic work the validity that characterizes most quantitative research is not always sought (Agar, 1996) and is considered by some to be a “mask of authority” (Denzin, 1997, p. 7). Some researchers do strive for generalizability (Agar, 1996; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), though in the past others did not think it attainable (Spindler & Spindler, 1987). Traditionally, validity suggested that the findings must reflect reality (Oakley, 2000), a difficult concept to marry with postmodern thought claiming that reality is socially constructed and changing, not fixed. Some qualitative researchers instead use the concept of trustworthiness to determine the ‘value’ of the work (Oakley).

It is important to me that this work “rings true” (Denzin, 1997; Schram, 2003, p. 97) and that participants would think it honest and caring (Muecke, cited in Oakley, 2000). Its trustworthiness or credibility rests on whether others accept the “relationship between my facts and my reasoning,” and its worth depends on its usefulness for others (Peshkin, 2000, p. 6). I try to show clearly on what I base my accounts in order to be trustworthy (Malinowski, cited in Oakley). In this study confidence or trustworthiness comes from several sources.

As mentioned earlier, what started as an opportunistic sample (Agar, 1996) of interviewees broadened as I made special invitations to groups who were underrepresented in the earlier stages of fieldwork. This included elders and those with full-time wage employment. Although all were still welcome, and people from other demographics continued to participate, the representativeness of the sample improved. Agar called this theoretical sampling; it increased the trustworthiness of the findings as representative of adult Inuit in Tuktuulik (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2001). Though I do not claim to know the views of all Inuit adults in Tuktuulik – the findings remain my understanding of what I heard from those I interviewed – the broad sample and large sample size increases the likelihood that the views expressed are representative (Dorais & Sammons, 2002).

Data source triangulation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2001) increased my confidence.

What I heard in the interviews was often contextualized by observation and participant observation. It was sometimes supported by casual conversations with people who had, or would later, take part in an interview, and in some cases by the way I saw people interacting with children. For instance, when a parent showed up at 11 pm to ask her son to come home from a spontaneous street baseball game, it supported what she had said about parental involvement and support of children. The two School Improvement meetings also yielded data from another forum that served to contextualize and confirm what I heard in the interviews. I also observed things at the meetings that had not arisen in interviews, and was then able to ask subsequent participants about them to support or refute my understanding.

'Face validity' (Lather, 1986) grew as I checked some of what I heard from earlier participants with later participants in the study. This is a form of iterative participant validation, where, instead of each participant reading a transcript of the interview and confirming my interpretations, subsequent participants were able to support or refute what I had heard and what I was thinking of it. This could theoretically be extended indefinitely (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2001, p. 230), but I only did it with findings that recurred frequently in early interviews, and I did not ask all subsequent participants. In interviews where I raised ideas from previous interviews, I always did so after participants first had the chance to respond to my questions with their own ideas; I usually raised the thoughts of others as prompts when a participant seemed stuck. There is a tendency to give more weight to unsolicited accounts (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2001) so when I asked I always listened carefully for whether a participant's agreement or disagreement went beyond a "yes" or "no." As people added their own ideas it increased my confidence substantially. In reporting results, however, I provide frequency counts to distinguish between participants' spontaneous expressions and those that were prompted by my specific questions.

The possibility for participant validation also occurred when I spent a week in the community six months after the initial fieldwork. At that time I presented preliminary findings for consideration and comment *before* writing the findings of the dissertation. Community members had the opportunity to hear what I found and some of the things I intended to recommend. This led to some further conversations, and provided an opportunity for disagreement, although only

for those who chose to attend the presentation (about 35 Inuit adults). Thirteen months after the initial fieldwork ended I returned again to deliver a six-page written summary of findings and recommendations and presented an abbreviated version, with interpretation, over the local radio. A number of conversations during the brief trip served to confirm some of what I heard and had been thinking. As Agar (1996) wrote, taking work back to participants can become additional data, and can help prevent reporting things that are inaccurate or that participants or the community might not be happy with. Respondent validation, though, is not wholly unproblematic (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2001). Participants may not pay attention and respond to research returned to them (Stake, 1995; Wolcott, 1999) and they may disagree with findings whether or not they are ‘true’ (Oakley, 2000).

Some key findings correspond closely to the findings of the *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq* (Aylward, 2004) and Education Act (NDOE, 2006) consultations. This correspondence with research done independently in other communities in Nunavut helps to substantiate this account (Agar, 1996).

Several other things also raised my confidence in the findings. As patterns began to emerge and I formed ideas about what participants might say, I sometimes asked the reverse of what I expected, in order to challenge my ideas (Agar, 1996). It was a strategy to encourage participants to “disagree with what you think you’ve learned” (p. 144). For example, in one interview when the participants spoke about including more Inuit culture in the schools, I asked if it could not be learned in the community. The two responses: “*they could learn it at the school too,*” and, “*nobody wants to go somewhere when it could be in school,*” increased my confidence in participants’ conviction and helped to confirm that I was not leading them with questions, my ideas, or the ideas of others. Agar (1996) called this ‘falsification’ and thought it especially important when repetition, rather than data from several different methods, supports a finding. It adds credibility, especially for the reader not accustomed to ethnography. This may be crucial if the reader believes that “in-depth interviewing and ethnographic observations may only bring us nearer to the truths that flourish inside researchers’ heads” (Oakley, 2000, p. 72).

I have included frequency counts for key findings to show that the findings did not come

only from key informants, and that I “didn’t just pick twenty stories to support [my] case and ignore two hundred that contradicted it” (Agar, p. 44). Including frequency counts can also help readers to judge the strength of findings better than using words like ‘most’ and ‘sometimes’ whose meanings are not always clear (Agar). Using quantitative data with observation and interviewing “makes possible the extension of generalizations” (Spindler & Spindler, 1987, p. 4). That the findings are generalizable to more than the people I spoke to is important if the work is to have an impact on policy. Policymakers are less prone to pay attention if they do not know who was involved in qualitative research or are not convinced that it was conducted systematically (Agar, 1996), and policymakers may, in general, pay more attention to numbers (Tester, 2006).

Tuktulik is a remote community in Nunavut with many similarities to other communities in Nunavut. In their study on Inuit hunting and identity, Condon, Collings and Wenzel (1995) claimed generalizability of their findings from Holman in the Northwest Territories to all of northern Canada, since “social, economic, and political dimensions of social change are roughly the same throughout the North” (p. 32). This may be a bit enthusiastic. There are some salient differences across communities in Nunavut, for example in use of an Inuit language, which is much more widespread in Qikiqtani communities than in the Qitirmiut (formerly Kitikmeot) communities of Kugaaruk and Kugluktuk in western Nunavut, and is more often the mother tongue in Tuktulik than in Iqaluit (Dorais & Sammons, 2002). There are also differences in the schools, in part because DEAs have considerable latitude in making decisions and because community involvement varies. Eisenhart and Graue (1993) wrote that school settings vary because they reflect the different social organization of every community. In Nunavut, Pulpan (2006) wrote that the school in Sanikiluaq, a Nunavut community in south-eastern Hudson Bay, is considered special by educators in Nunavut for the amount of traditional Inuit cultural skills integrated into the school program, a clear indication that local variation exists.

Due to differences in the communities and to the nature of ethnographic research I do not claim that these findings represent the views of Inuit in other Nunavut communities. The work, however, was not intended to show what all Inuit want from schools. The *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq* (Aylward, 2004) and Education Act (NDOE, 2006) consultations provided a broad

snapshot across Nunavut communities; this work was meant to examine ideas in one community, looking for support or refutation of those findings across different demographics, and for the addition of nuance. This study is useful in helping to contextualize the broader work, but it also points toward what should be considered in new policy formation and implementation. Many obstacles to student learning may, for example, exist in other Nunavut settings in roughly similar forms.

2.12 Limitations

As a Qallunaat researcher I am an outsider in the community and in Inuit culture. My ability to understand and interpret Inuit ideas and beliefs about education is limited by my location as a White, southern Canadian academic, and by my inability to speak Inuktitut¹⁴. Inuit perspectives may be hard to capture in English (Tompkins, 2006). My experiential knowledge of Qallunaat school culture is much more extensive than my acquired knowledge of Inuit culture. The representation I generate of Inuit views of schooling and some of the changes needed to make schooling meet Inuit wishes is filtered through the lens of my position and experiences. Although I have tried to make these transparent in the work and to position myself for the reader (Okely, 1992), and although I took the findings back to the community and invited comment, the representation is unavoidably a Qallunaat one.

One way that my identity and beliefs might have worked as a filter was in the area of spirituality. Several participants mentioned prayer in the school, but I did not begin asking subsequent participants about whether religion should be included or become more prominent. Had I done so, I might have been able to report strong support for increasing a religious or spiritual dimension in the schools. The findings of this study should be viewed as preliminary.

Gaining ‘access’ can limit findings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2001; Peshkin, 2000). Due to the wishes of the Tuktulik DEA this research was conducted in ways that were planned to avoid creating tension in the community. In the writing I have not focused on or emphasized

¹⁴ “The language of the colonizer is far from a perfect tool with which to imagine another kind of world” (Tompkins, 2006, p. 150).

conflict.

I did not enquire about sexual orientation in the study. Although I did not feel it was central to the study it is likely that students who are gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered face extra struggles in and out of schools. This is the case in other jurisdictions where they are at increased risk of violence, suicide, and dropping out (de Castell & Bryson, 1998).

Though the sample was self-selected it was demographically representative of Tuktulik and Nunavut in many dimensions. Still, it is possible that some residents may not have wanted to speak to a Qallunaat researcher, or may for some other reason have chosen not to take part in the research. Despite efforts to make a summary of the findings available and to encourage feedback, some views may still not be represented here.

2.13 Ethical considerations

This research was undertaken following the guidelines established by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (Medical Research Council of Canada, 2003) and the *Ethical conduct for research involving humans* (Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies, 1997), and respecting the *Ethical principles for the conduct of research in the north* (University of Victoria, 2001), including securing the informed consent of all participants. My responsibility extends throughout this research and beyond the writing. As Menzies (2004) cautioned, researchers must think about implications for those we write about, even beyond our own lifetimes.

I aimed to have the community fully informed about the research. I heard from several participants that researchers sometimes arrive and are gone almost before the community knows about it. I used the local radio to describe the research in English and Inuktitut, and I also described the research to people I met, and asked if they had heard me on the radio. I posted descriptions of the research and the consent forms in both languages in prominent positions at both grocery stores. Early in the fieldwork I addressed teachers at the highschool about the research as Qallunaat are less likely to listen to the local radio, and volunteered to help at both schools in any capacity as a volunteer.

On the radio and on the consent forms (Appendix A) there was a general description of

the questions that I asked in the research. In retrospect, I regret not having posted the interview guide. Aylward (2006) considered full disclosure of the questions to be a sign of respect. I held the probably mistaken belief that some of the answers might be 'purer' if participants did not consider the questions beforehand, and of course the interview guide grew as interviews progressed. This should not have deterred me. One participant said that I should have given her the questions beforehand so she could have had 'better' answers, and many participants indicated that the interview was much easier than they had expected. This indicated to me that there was some tension around the decision to take part that could have been assuaged by having the interview guide available. Some people may have chosen not to take part because of uncertainty regarding the interview process.

The description of the research and consent form were somewhat problematic. In order to satisfy requirements for the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board and the Nunavut Research Institute, the form became long and detailed. Some participants seemed to struggle trying to read the form. I began to ask prospective participants if they would like me to describe it to them or if they would like to read it themselves. Most chose the former and I was careful to mention all of the major points in clear language and to provide them with a copy of the form. That was a reasonable solution, but, while I respect the need for fully informed consent, in the future I would pay more attention to simplifying the language, and would advocate for less detail in some sections to make the form more accessible. Agar (1996, p. 232) expressed similar concerns and discussed the possibility of a paperless oral consent procedure, recorded before the interview.

The Lakehead Research Ethics Board required there to be a box for the participant to check if they agreed to have the interview audio-taped. I think that is a good idea, and would go further to suggest that there should also be a box saying, "I would prefer that the researcher take notes." Of course, if the researcher demands recording and that is made very clear in all communication about the research, the former would suffice, but I found that a number of prospective participants were relieved when I said that I would take notes if they preferred. The existence of only one box might pressure someone who is sitting in your home and has just read a

lengthy consent form, leading to discomfort that could easily be avoided. Some participants were nervous about their proficiency in English or their ability to answer the questions, and were therefore glad *not* to be tape recorded. Like Olofsson (2004), I found that some people were nervous about being interviewed, even though they later found it to be fun. Shah (2004) wrote that interviewees in cross-cultural situations can be under pressure due to unequal power relations, and often experience anxiety. It seems especially relevant in these situations to do everything possible to reduce participant discomfort (Menzies, 2004).

Other standard ethical research protocols were clearly detailed. I chose to use a pseudonym for the community, as did Tompkins (1998) in writing about her experience as a principal in Nunavut. This does not seem to be common practice, but some of the participants expressed concern about whether there might be repercussions from what they said and seemed happy to know that aside from their own anonymity I would not be using the community's name. This does create a problem in terms of acknowledging individuals, and does not give people the opportunity to have publicly recognized ownership of their words and ideas as suggested by the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies (1997). It also meant that people's individuality and agency were removed as they ended in homogenizing categories like 'elder;' they may have been less mysterious as real people (Kulchyski, 2005). In this community, where there was concern about creating tension through the research, I think that full confidentiality might have been appropriate, but a more respectful route would have been to involve the community in making that decision (Kral & Idlout, 2006).

Ethical considerations stretch beyond the formal requirements of research ethics boards (Cole, 2002; Wolcott, 1999). As described earlier, I attempted to define and conduct this research respectfully through consultation and by returning preliminary results to the community. I will also provide the Tuktulik DEA, the Hamlet Office in Tuktulik, the Nunavut Research Institute, Qikiqtani School Operations and the Nunavut Department of Education with this dissertation, and will deliver copies of the dissertation to be placed in the school libraries in Tuktulik.

3. Inuit culture, language, elders, and higher academic standards

The key findings of this work are written in two chapters. In this chapter I report what I heard from Inuit about what they want from the schools, and in Chapter 4, I report what I heard and saw of obstacles to student learning. The common thread of colonialism, its legacies and current forms, appears in both.

Participants' words are in italics with a number referencing the transcript from which the quote was taken, an indication of whether the participant was a woman or man, and the age range of the participant. An "i" is included after the transcript number if an interpreter was used. The 18 and 19 year old participants are included with people in their 20s, and elders are designated with an "E." I have used these identifiers to show the reader how responses cut across sex and age categories and that I have not drawn quotations from only a sub-group of participants. Wolcott (1999) suggested connecting description to particular persons or groups rather than being vague. In areas where the information given may be sensitive or in instances where including the information might lead to identification of an individual I have omitted some or all of the identifiers.

I transcribed the recordings in their entirety and when quoting participants edited lightly for reader understanding and clarity. Jacobsen (2004) reported removing self-corrections, stuttering, and facilitating words like "yes" and "no" from transcripts with her Greenlandic participants. I did this and also made minor 'corrections' to syntax and grammar, taking care not to change meaning. Wachowich (1999) and Kulchyski, McCaskill and Newhouse (1999) took a similar approach.

Three themes that are congruent with the sparse literature on Inuit wishes for schooling (e.g. Aylward, 2004, 2006; Aylward, Kuliktana & Metok, 1996; NDOE, 2006) emerged early in the interviews as important to participants. Soon, in interviews where they were not raised by the participant, I began to ask explicitly about them. These themes were the desire to have more Inuit culture in the schools, to strengthen students' Inuktitut language skills in the schools, and to include elders in schooling in Tuktulik. These things were often closely connected by participants. I explore each aspect of these often connected desires consecutively here to help

make the relative strengths of participants' wishes clear, but much overlap is inevitable and the division is somewhat artificial. Following these three themes a fourth, the need for higher academic standards, is presented. It is important to note at the outset that while I report on things people would like to see done differently, there were many general expressions of support for the schools and for teachers (see Section 4.1.2).

3.1 Inuit culture

It is difficult to measure how much 'Inuit culture' exists in the schools in Tuktuulik. With an Inuit principal and vice principal in the elementary school, 7 Inuit classroom teachers in the primary and junior grades, two Inuit language specialists in the highschool teaching Inuktitut as a subject, and Inuit student support assistants in both schools, the potential exists for Inuit ways of being and cultural skills to be a part of schooling. While the degree to which Inuit adults in the schools teach or model Inuit culture is not known, the desire for more Inuit culture to be a part of schooling in Tuktuulik was the most salient and consistent finding in this study. It held across age, gender, highest level of schooling achieved, wage-employment status, and whether or not the respondent participated in 'traditional' Inuit activities like hunting, sewing and carving.

Of 74 participants, 37 people expressed the desire for more Inuit culture in the schools without being asked about it directly. These included question and answer sequences such as:

1) P: Tell me something that you remember from being in school. Some memory. Something that you liked or that you didn't like.

What I liked back then is ... we used to go out on trips – hunting trips, traditional trips.... We kept our traditions back then. I think they're losing their traditions these days, the students. The hunting skills. We used to have shop teachers teaching us to do crafts and stuff. Today we don't see that in schools. (5: M/30s)¹⁵

2) P: What do you think is most important for kids here in Tuktuulik to be learning in school?

15 (5: M/30s) identifies the quote as coming from transcript 5, from a man in his 30s.

Cultural traditional stuff. I think it's really important because they're unfortunately losing our traditional way of life, slowly but surely...

P: Ok, so you think it would be good if in the schools they were able to learn [cut off by participant]

More traditional skills. (72: W/40s)

3) P: What about the schools is good that should stay the same do you think?

I believe you need a little bit of change, 'cause we're losing our culture, Inuit culture.... Like in the old days we used to go out hunting a lot. Like long distance. Stay there for at least a week or so. Our guide hunters, they used to teach us how to skin the caribou. (27: M/40s)

4) P: Are there things about the way the schools are in Tuktulik that you could imagine being different in the future – changes to make?

She wants the traditional living of Inuit being taught in schools. (40i: W/E)¹⁶

In several cases the statement was not in response to a specific question. For example, a woman in her 30s said spontaneously: “*I wish there were more Inuit culture things in the school, rather than teaching them in English. Inuit ways*” (59: W/30s).

In addition to the 37 participants who declared the desire for more Inuit culture in the schools without prompting, 23 more participants did the same when asked. The questions varied. Sometimes I said I had heard that more Inuit culture should be taught in schools and asked for their ideas; at other times the conversation led to a probing question like one of the following:

1) P: How about traditional things, things like Inuit games or things like the chance to come out to hunt or to trap, or to just be overnight out on the land? Should there be more of that in the schools? Or should the schools stay more teaching them math and science and English?

¹⁶ (40i: W/E) identifies the quote as coming from transcript 40, through an interpreter, from a woman who is an elder (55 years old or older).

Besides that, they need to go hunting too, to learn how to hunt. 'Cause I remember they used to take us out there, the students. We used to go out there and learn how to hunt, and tell a story about what was it like in the old days out there. (13: M/30s)

2) P: Ok. What about Inuit culture? Is that important that they also learn Inuit culture?

Ya, it's important. We are Inuit.... It's our culture; we're brought up by our family, who are Inuit.

P: Yes. Do you think it would be okay then if kids learn Inuit culture in their homes and the community and then Qallunaat things in school? Or do you think there should be some more Inuit culture in the school too?

I would like to see Inuit culture in the school. More than English. (67: W/E)

3) P: When you say about losing traditions, what do you hope when your daughter is finished school? What do you think it is important for her to have from her traditions, that she might learn in school?

I want her to go in a school program where they're taken out.... That way she will know her traditions. (18: M/40s)

Another 7 participants expressed the importance of Inuit culture without stating clearly that its presence in the schools should be increased. One elder, for example, said that “*some of the people of my generation have completely lost their culture, especially the ones that were forced to live in residential schools. Those are the ones I think suffered most*” (37: M/E), and a recent highschool graduate said: “*Traditional. I really feel it should have been in school, and I saw that, and it helped and I really liked it*” (57: M/20s). Through an interpreter an elder said:

In the old days even after he started working in school, he used to think the subjects are just outside the school; like for Inuit, Inuit tradition teachings would be just outside.... It goes all the way down to the land. Out to the land, like through hunters. You have to live it too.

P: Does that mean he thinks it would be hard to bring that knowledge inside the school?

Ya. Other communities, we hear they take them out onto the land, students, and teach them traditional stuff out there. And they're always talking about it now.

P: And does he think that would be good if we did that here too?

Even, they build igloos just outside of the houses. Outside of the community. Just a little outside. And they would build an igloo; you know, those traditional things.
(33i: M/E)

Although the desire to increase Inuit culture in the schools might be inferred in these cases, I have counted them separately in order to be transparent.

For 5 participants there were no utterances that were clear enough for me to code regarding culture in the schools. In some cases this was due to interviews with more than one participant, where one person answered a question or made a statement and the other's agreement or disagreement is not known. In a few cases the interview focussed on other areas that were important to the participant, and in the early interviews I had not started checking with participants who did not themselves raise the issue of Inuit culture in the schools. In one case a participant said that the schools should be about 20% Inuit culture. In retrospect, without knowing how much culture he presently believes to be in the schools, it was not possible to determine if he felt there should be more.

Two participants said something else about Inuit culture in the schools. One said that students should get to decide whether or not to study Inuit cultural skills and one expressed concern that Inuit ways would not help students after graduation in pursuing further education. One person in casual conversation also expressed concern that cultural skills would take time away from academic subjects and might better be learned in the community.

These numbers should not be misinterpreted as a scientific evaluation. In some cases there was contradiction or ambiguity in what a participant said that made it difficult to place. The overall result, however, was an overwhelming endorsement of increasing the teaching of Inuit cultural skills and values in the schools.

3.1.1 Reasons for wanting more Inuit culture in the schools. Participants indicated a number of reasons for wanting an increase in Inuit culture in the schools. These included the desire to stem the loss of Inuit culture and the need to pass on culture to future generations, the current usefulness of the knowledge and its role in maintaining the ability to survive, and the positive effect that learning about Inuit culture has on learning in general.

A man in his 30s said that people should learn the old traditional way of life, that it would be good, “*cause people are losing their knowledge*” (17: M/30s), and an elder said:

I'd like to see more Inuit involved, 'cause we don't want to forget our traditional life, and we want to pass them on to the future, 'cause the future won't know anything about Inuit ways. Like I've forgotten about my Inuit ways, that my mother experienced; I didn't experience them. I only see one-third of it. (30: W/E)

A recent graduate in his 20s said that it is important “*to keep the tradition alive,*” and that “*the stuff is needed to hunt*” (34:M/20s), and another graduate in his mid-20s said:

What I'm most worried about the younger generation is, they're not hunting as my generation used to. They're not hunting as much. They can speak the language but they're losing their hunting abilities. There's a lot of very knowledgeable elders out there that know the areas out there and I think students should be more exposed to a lot of the elders and go out on camping trips. (73: M/20s)

For many participants Inuit cultural skills had both intrinsic and practical value. A number of people related them directly to survival. A man in his mid-20s said: “*students should learn more about hunting. We used to go for a daytrip, an overnight trip. That should be going on.*” Asked why, he said: “*To survive on the weather. Up north – how we survive*” (62: M/20s). A man in his late 30s, when asked what's important to learn in schools, said: “*Traditional clothing, travelling out of town; it's a very important part of surviving*” (60: M/30s). Others spoke of the need to be able to build igloos for shelter when hunting and to understand snow conditions. A man in his late 40s said that students should do land trips as part of school because, even if you have a job, “*you still have to go out hunting to get food. You know how to survive there, you will survive. A lot of young people die out there 'cause nobody teaches them. They tell them, they*

don't show them how" (28: M/40s). This participant's words speak to more than school curriculum, pointing out that the pedagogy must fit the content. Inuit have traditionally learned by watching and doing (see Section 4.2.2); to teach Inuit cultural skills in a non-Inuit way might have disastrous consequences.

Another reason given for wanting more Inuit culture to be taught in schools was the positive benefits for students and their learning. A woman in her early 50s said that Inuit skills are very important for students' self-esteem (38: W/50s) and a recent graduate in her early 20s said: *"Maybe if more life skills were put into the school. More traditional activities like sewing and camping and things like that. I think would be better"* (66: W/20s). Asked why, she said that doing cultural activities would provide students with a good break from academic tasks and would therefore help them to learn. Another graduate said that he thought cultural activities would help to keep kids interested in school, and said that:

Going through those cultural adversities, I think it really helps you develop the strength that you need to proceed in life, and I think there needs to be more cultural stuff in school 'cause I don't see it anymore. When I was in highschool we went on camping trips with elders, we went on qammutik trips, dog team trips, and went on boating trips and... we all learned a lot of stuff from it and up 'til today I see a lot of confidence in my generation. But the new generation I don't see very much confidence in hunting anymore or they're like, they're slowly losing their culture as far as I'm concerned. (73: M/20s)

He credited some of his success in post-secondary studies to the will to persevere, instilled in part by Inuit teachers who:

Taught us how; they disciplined us in a way, that, how our elders used to do it... From a young age we're taught what we're not supposed to do and what we're supposed to do... What I'm trying to say is the disciplining part, the younger people don't know how to respect as much as my generation were taught in school. There was a very strong Inuktitut in my generation, and I don't really think they're as strong anymore. (73: M/20s)

This participant too highlighted how things were done, the underlying values, as well as what was

taught. His reference to “Inuktitut” likely meant “as an Inuk,” or “according to Inuit ways and values,” rather than meaning the Inuit language. The word “Inuktitut” means, literally, “in the manner of an Inuk” (Brody, 2000, p. 317).

Besides learning that helps to make students resilient, many people said that they or their children enjoyed learning different cultural skills. In the literature, Stairs (1994a) suggested that learning traditional cultural things might alienate youth who need to know who they are and where they are going before they are ready to learn about the past. One elder said that she had heard people say, “*that was then and this is now,*” (65i: W/E) as a reason to avoid learning traditions like sewing. Another participant also said that students are “*so confused. They don’t want to be Inuk, they don’t want to be Qallunaat, they don’t know what they want to be, or what they want to look like, so it’s so confusing*” (3: W/40s). While there may be resistance from some students (as there is resistance to anything in schools by some students), from many comments in interviews and from observing many people involved in Inuit cultural activities, it is clear that they are attractive and desired in the context of schooling. For example, one woman in her late 20s said her young daughter drum dances and “*likes to learn old traditional ways*” (51: W/20s). She would like her daughter to be able to learn those things in school. A woman in her 30s said:

We used to make qammutik or tuq [ice chisel], anything that can be used for hunting. I really enjoyed sewing. Mitts, parka, big mitts. I used to enjoy making those. Beading, making hair clips – what do I remember? It was fun making those things – Inuit stuff. (64: W/30s)

A man in his 30s said:

For boys we used to make qammutik, ulu, and the knife, and it was an experience for us because we didn’t know how to make these things, but it was an experience for us, and it was great. (17: M/30s)

While many things can now be purchased, and some tools like the ice chisel have been largely replaced by the ice auger, most of the cultural skills named are still useful and used today. They are not relegated to the past.

Nor was it only things from material culture that held interest for students. A Qallunaat teacher at the highschool described how motivated a student was in a new social studies course that deals with Inuit history and land claims issues. What was so amazing, he said, was that the same student in another class seemed very unmotivated. Learning things from and relevant to Inuit culture were described by participants as motivating.

As well as providing enjoyable experiences in school, the value of learning about culture was evident in the comments of several participants who made reference to intergenerational stressors related to loss of culture. In one instance a man in his 40s said that youth resist going out on the land because they do not know how to be out, preferring instead to “*stay back home and watch tv or do some crazy stuffs*” (27: M/40s), while another said that when they do go out, youth sometimes do not understand what their parents expect of them (25: M/20s). The alienation of youth from elders has been described in the literature as one consequence of rapid culture change (Minor, 1992). If the schools were structured to value, preserve, and strengthen Inuit culture rather than to undermine it, this alienation might be reduced.

Two other ideas arose that suggest teaching more Inuit culture in schools would be good. One woman in her 40s talked about the students whose parents cannot afford the equipment needed to be on the land. She said:

Today I hear kids, “I wish I could go out on the land.” That’s all they do now, is wish. ‘Cause the parents can hardly afford, if they’re not working anyway, they can hardly afford a snowmobile or a canoe, or everything, that the more fortunate ones can. So, a lot of kids would like, “I wish I could learn how to shoot geese. I wish I had a snowmachine to go fishing.” (72: W/40s)

Incorporating more Inuit culture into the schools would help to mitigate the disparity of opportunity in learning the traditional land activities that are otherwise principally available to those who are better off economically.

Finally, one participant indicated a tangential benefit of increasing the cultural content in schools: “*If you have increased cultural activity in the school it will also bring parents in because they know some stuff too. They know their own culture, and I think it would help with self-esteem*”

(72: W/40s). Increased parental involvement was desired by many and appears in the literature as important for school success (e.g., Cummins, 1986). In the Nunavut community of Sanikiluaq, the principal described how cultural activities served to draw parents, some of whom had very poor school experiences themselves, into the school (Kavik, 2007). More will be said on parental involvement later (Section 4.1.5).

3.1.2 Desired elements of Inuit culture. Many participants named specific aspects of Inuit culture that should be in schools. Land skills were repeatedly named, as were sewing and making hunting equipment in the workshop. Some participants described more foundational ways of being Inuit, such as the Inuit way of discipline mentioned earlier, and Inuit teachers and student support assistants described ways they bring Inuit culture into school, and resources they wish they had to make it easier. Here is a sample of what was desired.

A man in his 30s said: *“I want them to learn how to go outside of the town. Like, elders help them and move them to other camps, so they know what’s going on outside of the town”* (14: M/30s), and a woman said: *“I wish they could let the students go hunting for a while instead of just staying in school, so they could learn about the land, how to survive on the land”* (59: W/30s). A woman in her early 20s, a highschool student at the time of the interview, wanted:

Learning about this land, like, going out; let the elders do what they used to do in the past to survive. I want to be able to see that, like how they did it and why or what. I want to learn about it – like about this town, not anywhere else. Like about us, really. (24: W/20s)

An elder said:

Igloo building; that I don’t want to get lost. Cause you’ve gotta be an expert to make an igloo, ‘cause you’ve gotta be warm. And making clothing, in my Inuktitut way, and language. That’s the part I don’t want them to lose. (30: W/E)

Another elder said:

Inuit ways have to be taught in schools too. Like they have to, if they're gonna take them out on the land, then they have to teach them to make an igloo. Snow should be taught to students too, the difference of snows. (42i: W/E)

Indoor activities that support land activities were also frequently described:

I believe the shop is closed at the school because it used to be open and kids, boys and girls, were taught Home Ec and Shop. But I don't think that's been going on for a while. And if they're taught that maybe they'd have more Inuit culture. How to make qammutiks, spears, and anything. And girls learning how to sew. (36: W/40s)

At the time of the interview there was, in fact, a short duration sewing program taking place and an elder was working with a teacher and his class in the shop building a qamutik for sale at a fundraiser. That the participant was not aware of this may speak to a need for more communication between the school and the community, something explored in Section 4.1.3b.

The relatively newer Inuit cultural skills of carving and drawing, now considered traditional skills (Brody, 1991), were also mentioned. A man in his 30s said, “*some people are saying I want to be a carver, or I want to be an artist. Ya, we need that too, in the school*” (13: M/30s). Medicine and the knowledge of plants were also named, as were skinning, softening skins, and sewing kamiks and mittens.

Most participants did not specify when cultural activities should be introduced, but those who did were clear that they should start early. For example: “*They should also be introduced in the elementary school. Going on a little trip. Learning how to read the land so you can learn when you get older*” (72: M/20s). This is reminiscent of Bruner’s (1960) spiral curriculum, introducing important concepts early and building on them later. For some participants, what could be learned on the land was clearly more than just isolated skills related to being on the land. One said: “*You can learn a lot out on the land or from experience of going out on the land; there’s always lots of things to do*” (43i: W/E), and, in answering a question about what makes a child a good learner, another said: “*I’m not blaming the school, the schools, but it would be better for them to learn more. Some of them never left town to go out on the land out there; that’s the*

only way they can learn” (67: W/E). The mother of a child in grade 3 said that learning to go on the land was the most important thing for her daughter to learn, and said that everybody likes to go out, but that it is work to go out. She said: “In the olden days we learned by watching and doing and life is still like that. You have to do something to better your life skills” (38: W/50s).

Although most of the “Inuit culture” named to be taught in (or outside) schools consisted of typical Inuit practices like hunting and sewing skins, it is important to note that for many Inuit the concept of isolated skills and knowledge does not exist in the same way it does in western scientific tradition (Bielawski, 2005; Thorpe, 2004). For Inuit, actions have historically been connected holistically to all of life (Stairs, 1992). Outside school Inuit typically learn technical skills together with character skills, whereas inside schools these are “frequently pulled apart and never reassembled” (Watt-Cloutier, 2000, p. 118). Calling for Inuit skills to be included in schools, then, suggests the need to structure school practices so that skills can be taught embedded in Inuit ways and values.

A few people explicitly named less visible aspects of Inuit culture, closer to values and attitudes than skills. One woman in her 20s wanted to learn more about Inuit culture, “*like staying together as Inuit,*” and said:

Teach the students what [elders] know about Inuit culture. When I make a mistake or something that I don’t know... I’m trying to understand what my grandfather used to say to me. It makes me get more open to the other people and it makes me awake. He used to say if you’re gonna have friends don’t try to let your friends get down.... If you have clothes and they don’t, give them, if you have food share it. (47: W/20s)

And an elder, when asked about the most important things about Inuit culture that the younger generation should learn, said: “*Be pleasant and be nice to the students. They should be taught to be nice all together. To be pleasant and kind and understanding. That should be taught in schools” (52i: M/E).*

I think it likely that most participants, in thinking about how the schools could be different, were guided at least in part by what they had experienced. I think most would have

found it difficult to imagine a radical departure from the EuroCanadian school model, the only model of formal schooling to which Inuit have been exposed (Watt-Cloutier, 2000). As Saul (2001) pointed out, Germans, used to seeing American courtroom dramas on television, believe that their judicial system functions in the same way. It is the only image they know and they just do not imagine that their system is different (p. 143). No one in this study said that the schools should be disbanded or entirely reinvented. Still, in wanting Inuit cultural skills and Inuit ways in schools, and in noting that they must be taught differently, a restructuring that would base schooling on an Inuit worldview and suffuse Inuit values into the way schooling is conducted is necessary – at the very least in the aspects of schooling meant to teach Inuit ways and skills. When an elder said that the schools should “experience” students into jobs, or another that elders must teach the skills, “*because we learn by seeing or hearing*” (64: W/30s), a different pedagogy based on a different epistemology is described. Adopting these suggestions would change the schools dramatically.

Many participants mentioned that in the past there were more cultural activities connected to the school, and many also said that it seemed like more was happening in other communities’ schools. For example: “*I don’t know if they’ve got the people who help the kids in the workshop, like we used to do, like we used to make toy sleds, qammutik*” (6: M/30s); “*We used to. The boys used to make those and we girls used to sew*” (7: W/30s); “*You know, boys would go to the shop; boys would go to the shop, and we’d go sewing.... It’s not like that anymore*” (11: W/30s); “*In some places I found that they do cultural stuff – here I don’t see it too much – I’d like to see that more, cultural stuff*” (2: W/40s);

Some Inuktitut learning, like going out. Going out actually. Going out and watching people fishing or sealing or you know, just be on the land. There’s a lot of other settlements who do that. They get in newspapers and that – we read about it. We see them on tv – what they’re doing. We don’t have that here. We do, sometimes – should be more maybe. (28: M/40s)

In the 2005/2006 school year the highschool ran a short duration sewing program and a program to build a qamutik (sled), both employing one elder and one Qallunaat teacher. No

hunting trips or spring or fall overnight camps took place. The one day fishing trip with the whole community invited, an annual event in the late 1990s when I taught in Tuktulik, no longer took place. Some thought that liability issues had stopped the trips, a limitation on school hunting trips in Sanikiluaq noted by Johnny Meeko (cited in Pulpan, 2006, p. 114), though newspaper stories during the time of the fieldwork documented different outings connected with schools in other communities in Nunavut.

It is difficult to know how much time people would like devoted to Inuit cultural skills. As the desire for more Inuit culture in the classroom was reported across Nunavut communities (Aylward, 2004; NDOE, 2006), it seems that even somewhat more active cultural inclusion programs than exist in Tuktulik are not enough meet the wishes of Inuit community members across the territory. A school official suggested that due to problems with the budget an unusually small amount of “cultural activity” was taking place during the year of my fieldwork. I was concerned that the perception of a lack of cultural activity might have been skewed if the year of the research was unique, but I checked with several participants who said that the lack of activity was not limited to the recent past – that land trips, for example, had not taken place for many years.

3.1.3 How much Inuit culture? I chose not to ask how much time should be spent teaching Inuit cultural skills. This might have suggested a school model where more time spent on ‘culture’ meant less time spent on ‘academic’ subjects, a problematic way to frame things. Participants overwhelmingly expressed the desire for more Inuit culture in the schools, and some did quantify or qualify the amount of Inuit culture that they would like to see in the schools.

One participant said that she did not support the government’s position of incorporating *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (Inuit ways and values) into the schools as she felt that it would hold students back at the postsecondary level. The concern about postsecondary opportunities for students influenced some people strongly. It is easy to understand as formal schooling was introduced, and to a large extent is still sold, as the way into the wage economy, an economy that

is overwhelmingly dominated by government jobs requiring paper qualifications. In this context, focusing on typical academic skills seems to make sense.

In support of learning Qallunaat ways in school participants made statements like:

“Cause we have no choice. We live up north. We have to know the Qallunaat ways as well as our own ways because we have to survive in the north” (42i: W/E), and:

Wherever I go, there’s something written in English or the ingredients are in English, or the criteria is in English; then, I think it’s very important that the system, the way it is, that it’s still that way but it’s just that timeslot in cultural and traditions being taught. I think that would also help. (2: W/40s)

When asked what is important for students in Tuktulik to learn, an elder said:

It would be very nice for kids to have work experience like in the workplaces, like in the offices and that. It would be very beneficial for students to learn that while they’re in school. Even if you try to teach them the traditional stuff they’re not going to go back to living in an igloo. We can’t change the life backwards to the old days. (52i: M/E)

I asked him if it was important that students still know some of their traditions and the answer was circuitous; elders need Inuit food so hunters are needed. I asked if the school should remain academic, or include hunting. Through an interpreter, he answered:

Like in the old days we didn’t have all the tv and electrical things. He feels that the Inuit traditional way of living could be included in the schools. Like even if we’re not gonna live it anymore, there’s part of it that we’ll always be with. While you’re growing up you had everything, all the tv and stuff. But we didn’t have that. So Inuit way of living should be part of school. (52i: M/E)

The need for wage employment was a powerful influence on some people’s thoughts about schooling, and the perception that some cultural skills are less used existed as well. One man said:

Just so long as it's in there somewhere, 'cause today they don't use that very much, especially our younger generation. It would be nice if they could teach some of that in school.... I would want them to keep the heritage stuff in the school, but I wouldn't say a lot of it. But definitely I want the kids to know some about the past at least. (70: M/40s)

As Ryan (1989) pointed out in an Innu First Nations context, when people are forced to engage with EuroCanadian society on its terms, there is enormous pressure toward the norms and ways of that society. With that in mind it is perhaps surprising that only 10 participants qualified their statements about including Inuit culture in the school with a caveat about the importance of typical Qallunaat school subjects, or with an acceptance of the schools largely as they are.

One participant who quantified his desire for more Inuit culture spoke of what would amount to a sharp increase:

Should get more Inuit culture in the school now because mostly kids are working on paperworks now and learning more English. I'll say maybe it would be better for like 51 to 49% Better for people to learn more Inuktitut and cultures. Like I said, 51%, and 49% English; that'll be ok for me. (17: M/20s)

Another, who did not specify an amount of Inuit culture that would be acceptable, expressed disdain for a school that graduates students without cultural competence. She said most of the graduates “*don't know their own culture. Or don't even sometimes understand it*” (W/30s).

Henze and Vanett (1993) questioned the ability of schools to educate for competence in “both worlds” – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Stairs (1994a) quoted an Inuk who was concerned that “Inuitizing” the schools would confuse students, and Moquin (2004) cited Annahatak's concern that dealing with the past before the future might alienate Inuit youth. One elder in this study said: “*They should get a separate school for Inuit cultural ways,*” (65i: W/E) and noted that Inuit sewing takes place outside of school. Asked if it is better outside the school she said, through an interpreter:

It's ok for her to do those sewing things somewhere else because it's always mentioned on the radio. Students are happy. Even though there are students at the

school, outside they are learning too. They show off their sewing to everyone when they are done; making parka, amautik. (65i: W/E)

Most participants, though, were clear about the appropriateness of Inuit culture in the schools. I have already mentioned asking one elder if it would be okay if kids learn Inuit culture in their homes and Qallunaat things in school. She said: “*I would like to see Inuit culture in the school. More than English*” (67: W/E). I have also mentioned suggesting to two women that perhaps culture could be learned outside the school, to which one replied, “*they could learn it at the school too*” (58: W/30s), and the other said: “*Nobody wants to go somewhere when it could be in school*” (59: W/30s).

This sentiment resonates with opinions expressed during two School Improvement meetings, when community members were invited to work with school staff in tackling problems and thinking of the future. Following a video on school changes in the Nunavut community of Hall Beach, an elder said: “*They were taught cultural things – they were observing and then doing it. I found that very impressive.*” Another elder said that she could see what children in the video were doing – sewing and carving – and that an outcome to schoolwork is not often seen. She said it is good to have an outcome. It seemed that all community members present over both days (about 11 on the first day and 22 on the second) supported the goal of increased Inuit culture in the schools, and lists of specific skills to include mirrored those named by participants in the interviews.

Whether or not schools could educate for excellence in “two worlds,” these findings indicate an almost unanimous agreement that more Inuit culture should be present in the schools. This sentiment was overwhelmingly expressed by participants and resonates with the recent *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq* (Aylward, 2004) and Education Act (NDOE, 2006) consultations. While not quite unanimous, and while qualifications were expressed, this finding was consistent across age, sex, highest level of formal schooling, wage-employment status, and participation in traditional activities. One man in his 30s, who said he had considered moving south so that his children would receive a more rigorous education, and who said he does not take part in hunting or other traditional activities himself, still said he would support Inuit cultural activities in the

schools. He joins almost everyone else who expressed a codeable opinion.

3.1.4 Further thoughts. It was clear from participants that they want more Inuit culture in the schools in Tuktuulik, but can Inuit culture be taught in schools? Ingold (2000) wrote that the knowledge used by hunters is only transmissible in practical application and through long experience in particular environments. This may be part of an argument that schools are unlikely places to develop the skills needed to become an expert hunter (Henze & Vanett, 1993) and points to the futility of trying to teach hunting skills through reading or while sitting at a desk in a classroom. This is probably the case for a number of land-related skills like building and living in igloos and repairing snowmobiles. But sitting at a desk in a classroom and learning from books is a typically Qallunaat way of going to school. Schools in Nunavut had in the past, and to some degree still have in the present, limited land-based program components. These could be expanded.

In the late 1990s one school in the Kivalliq region asked community members what cultural skills should be taught. They designed an age-appropriate curriculum, hired a coordinator and hired elders to teach small groups. Attention was paid to how Inuit elders typically ‘taught.’ The program was reported to be highly successful (Berger, 2001), although it could only be run for part of the year due to lack of funding. Lack of funding is usually a question of political will and prioritization and does not constitute an inherent barrier to learning Inuit cultural skills in or outside schools as part of a school program. It may not be possible to learn skills in school to the level of expert, but that is a poor argument for leaving them out almost entirely. Third party funding and sporadic and inadequate funding are not enough to run the land and cultural skills programs essential for all students (IDEA, 2006).

There are also arguments against the inclusion of traditional skills in school curriculum. Stairs (1990) reported concern expressed by Inuit elders and younger leaders that traditional skills and ways of knowing might be trivialized by formal educators, and Rasmussen (2000) advised that in order to protect Inuit culture it should *not* be brought into schools, as schools are antithetical to so much of Inuit culture. Similar concerns were voiced about indigenous

knowledge in India (Sarangapani, 2003). This provides an argument for changing the way schooling is done in Nunavut, for making it resonate with Inuit culture. It may be that adding on some 'Inuit' skills and teaching them from a Qallunaat perspective will leave no one satisfied. Inuit parents want children to be Inuit through experience (Stevenson, 2006a). So far, the 'handicrafts' approach to Inuit culture has lacked challenge and real world relevance and much more than that is needed (Watt-Cloutier, 2000).

Joanne Tompkins (1998), past principal at a Qikiqtani school, made efforts to have Inuit culture integrated into the entire school program. She thought that seeing Inuit culture as a separate part of school was patronizing and positioned it as not 'real,' 'living,' 'vibrant' or meaningful today (p. 71). She wrote that an increase in Inuit teachers and team theme planning helped the Inuit perspective to inform teaching. This possibility was evident in one interview in the current study as an Inuit teacher described teaching young students through the theme of 'seals.' The curriculum, pedagogy, and beliefs underlying the lesson were all Inuit-influenced, despite taking place in a school. Unfortunately the teacher needed to use art to instruct students on naming parts of the seal, as no budget was available to procure the real thing.

It was clear to me from spending time in Tuktulik that the hunting tradition is alive and well, with many people preferring country food and the sharing of that food commonly practiced. Despite major social, cultural and technological change, hunting and the traditional Inuit worldview persists (Dorais, 2005). Many of the changes may be superficial, with basic orientation to life, core values, and connection to the environment relatively unchanged (Kublu & Mallon, 1999, p. 2). Land-skills are still highly valued. Although shorter land trips may be replacing longer periods spent on the land, even young people who may be less active in hunting and fishing "continue to view land-based harvesting as central to a sense of Inuit identity" (Condon, Collings & Wenzel, 1995, p. 31). Besides economic benefit, Condon et al. noted that the hunting ideology positively impacts people's physical and mental health and community integration through sharing. They also noted that the decline in hunting amongst the youth was in part attributable to inadequate training due to the demands of western schooling, and that in a rapidly changing world, hunting gives self-worth as youth struggle for identity.

Procuring and eating country food has been and remains important to Inuit identity for many. The food is different from Qallunaat food, and the way people eat it may be different too, reinforcing Inuit values like autonomy (Searles, 2002). Kishigami (2006) found that many urban Inuit living in Montreal still prefer traditional food prepared in traditional ways. Gombay (2005) reported that in Nunavik country food is still tied to morality and a sense of place, with fewer producers and more people wanting it. She found that the philosophy of equality behind the sharing of food had not disappeared with settlement living. There is no doubt that Inuit culture is vibrant and resonates strongly with historical Inuit culture. The desire for more Inuit culture in schools is not nostalgia for the past or an attempt to learn old ways and values with no applicability in today's world. The land remains a locus of identity and an important source of food (McIssac, 2000).

The desire for Inuit culture to be prominent in schooling is not just a Tuktulik phenomenon. Pulpan (2006) noted that the majority of people in Sanikiluaq want traditional Inuit knowledge integrated into schools. McNabb (1991) documented the desire of Inupiat in Alaska to have Inupiaq values in schools taught by Inupiaq, so students grow up with Inupiaq and not Western values. The Ciulistet Group of Yup'ik educators has worked for many years to bring Yup'ik culture into Alaskan schooling (Lipka, Mohatt & The Ciulistet Group, 1998). Before consultations for the new *Nunavut Education Act*¹⁷ began, the Nunavut Department of Education (2005) circulated a booklet asking for input. They wrote that some Nunavut residents wanted a culture program and some wanted the whole system to reflect Inuit culture. They asked for comment on the question: "What changes should the Department make to ensure Inuit culture is reflected in the standard school program?" (p. 11). Students from the university preparation program called *Nunavut Sivuniksavut* responded with a call for a pan-Nunavut standard for including Inuit culture in the schools (*Nunavut Sivuniksavut* Students, 2006), noting that some places like Iqaluit have too little. They compared the lack of Inuit language and culture with the strong presence of French language and culture in Quebec schools.

17 The proposed Nunavut Education Act was tabled in November, 2007 (Bell, 2007a; GN, 2007b).

Just prior to the creation of Nunavut, The Nunavut Social Development Council (1998) held an Elders' Conference where knowledge of the land was deemed essential. Delegates expressed the view that the school system has a negative impact on youth and society causing a loss of self-esteem and culture. A list of important traditional skills to learn in schools was created (pp. 18, 19). At the Nunavik Elders' Conference in 2005, elder Norman Snowball said that students all across Nunavik lacked knowledge of the land and said that a pilot project teaching land skills once a week was not enough. He called for full-time staff to teach land skills to every student (cited in Lowi, 2006). These views echoed those of elders in the past (Evic-Twerdin & Wilman, 1989). The lack of a vibrant cultural component in Nunavik schools, like the lack in Nunavut schools, seems to be a step backwards from the early 1990s when elders were hired regularly to teach in Quaqtaq (Nunavik) and Igloolik (Nunavut) schools, and school activities were sometimes held in outlying camps (Dorais, 2005).

As with elders, youth also saw the need for more Inuit culture in (and outside) Nunavut schools. In the *Survey of Nunavut Students K-12*, part of the *Siviniuksamut Ilinniarniq* consultations, young students frequently drew pictures *outside* the school to represent their best day in school (Tompkins, 2004). Some older students named land based skills and sewing as important in schools, and some said more language, history, and worldview was needed. Tompkins wrote that although students often named visible aspects of material culture, Inuit understandings of aesthetics, justice, beauty, kinship, childrearing, caring and an understanding of the past including colonial relations were critical to prepare youth for the challenges they face (p. 23). One student commented that without schools students would know their language and culture, and students asked for spaces in schools for cultural pursuits. In Tuktuulik the highschool has a 'skinning room,' but when I taught there, and at the time of fieldwork, it was used for storage.

Responding to Inuit wishes for Inuit culture in the schools appears to me to be a matter of fairness and human rights. An argument could also be made, however, for its instrumental value. Deyhle (1995), in her work with Navajo in the United States, found that firm rooting in their culture led Navajo students to greater academic success, a finding confirmed in British Columbia

First Nations in a recent study across 200 communities (Chandler, 2007). Highschool teachers in Nunavut in the *Survey of Secondary School Educators* (in Aylward, 2004) thought that students would be more likely to graduate if courses on Inuit culture and land skills were included, capitalizing on student strengths and interests. And in describing research on suicide and happiness conducted in Nunavut, Kral and Idlout (2006) wrote that traditional values were thought to be foundational for living a good life. If schools in Nunavut erode Inuit language and culture and replace it with Qallunaat culture, this replacement will be experienced by students as an assault on their identity, making it more difficult for them to succeed in highschool (Tompkins, 2004). Along with the more global benefits of making schools supportive of Inuit culture, in this study there were participants who described learning Inuit skills in school as being enjoyable. It is easy to imagine that, even in the context of a mostly Qallunaat school, the inclusion of relevant and enjoyable learning would help keep students attending, making academic success more likely.

I do not view Inuit culture as monolithic or static, nor do I believe participants who wanted more Inuit culture in schools held that view either. One person I played hockey with missed games sometimes as the days grew longer because he was out hunting, but sometimes he cut hunting short to get back and play hockey. Although many Inuit identify strongly with land skills, one does not need to practice land skills to feel Inuit (Searles, 2006).

Searles (2006) expressed concern that if an essentialized image of Inuit culture is created, perhaps by those arguing to preserve it, Inuit who do not fit the image may be marginalized. The findings of this study suggest clearly that it is not only politicians or an Inuit elite who say that Inuit skills and values are vitally important and should be protected. Land may have become the symbol of cultural identity (Wachowich, 2006, p. 126), but it is apparently a symbol shared by almost all of the Inuit in this study. If schools are transformed to honour this connection, many currently marginalized students may have the chance to excel.

3.2 Inuktitut (& English)

When I was hired in 1997 to teach grade 7 in Tuktulik I received no orientation to Inuit culture or Inuit learners, and found out 4 days before school started that my students had switched from Inuktitut as the language of instruction to English when they entered grade 5. Ten years later an orientation for Qallunaat teachers new to the North, if it exists, is undertaken locally without funding from the Nunavut Department of Education, and most students still change abruptly from an Inuktitut to an English environment in grade 4, 5, or 6. This model has been called an early exit or weak-bilingual model (Martin 2000a). It is thought to undermine students' mother tongue (Dorais & Sammons, 2002) and disadvantage students academically (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988a)¹⁸.

Back in 1997, feeling under-prepared to teach Inuit students effectively, I experimented and invented my way through two years, took the only night-school Inuktitut course offered, and arranged a week of private Inuktitut instruction as professional improvement in my second year. I learned some of the basic structure of the language and how to say simple things. This helped me to understand some of the typical mistakes my students made in English, but I did not and do not speak or understand Inuktitut.

In the current study, perhaps in part due to the poor preparation of Qallunaat teachers, and to a model of schooling that erodes first language competence (Dorais & Sammons, 2002), support for Inuktitut in the schools in Tuktulik was very strong. Perhaps this was due to the close connection of language, culture, and worldview (Gardner, 2000). Of the 74 Inuit interviewed, 23 said, unprompted, that they wanted more Inuktitut taught in schools or that the teaching of Inuktitut should be strengthened. Eighteen more said the same when asked, and a further 25 respondents made statements that demonstrated their belief in the importance of Inuktitut. Eight made no remarks about Inuktitut that could be coded.

In several cases ambiguous or contradictory messages about the use of Inuktitut in schools was given, a phenomenon not unusual in interviews (Agar, 1996, p. 164). For example, when

¹⁸ Unfortunately, the first members of the Baffin Divisional Board of Education were told by an 'expert' that research showed that there was no loss of the first language from 'studying' a second language in school, 'bolstering' the early-exit model (Isherwood, Sorensen & Colbourne, 1986).

asked if grade 4 was the right time to change from Inuktitut to English, a man said: *“It doesn’t really matter if they don’t learn Inuktitut. For me anyways. ‘Cause they’re Inuit anyways, see”* (14: M/30s). He felt that students would learn Inuktitut outside school and said that more English should be learned, citing his own trouble communicating in English. When asked if it would be easier for him if I could speak Inuktitut he concurred, then said that schooling should be in Inuktitut *“all the time,”* and that Qallunaat teachers should learn to speak Inuktitut. Shortly thereafter, he said: *“It would help a lot if you speak Inuktitut. That’s why I want Inuktitut in schools, and English and French, and everything”* (14: M/30s). Interviews, like life, are often ‘messy’ (Agar), though it was usually much easier to ascertain a person’s position than in this example.

The 23 unprompted or spontaneous expressions indicating a desire for more Inuktitut were often responses to a question about what should be different in the schools. Two typical examples are given here: *“In my mind I hope they learn more Inuktitut to get to know their traditional stuff, so their traditional stuff will remain alive”* (54: M/30s); *“I want them learning Inuktitut and Inuit ways, because they’re forgetting, and we can’t just rely on people, you know, like me”* (30: W/E). Similar replies were given by 18 people whom I asked about increasing the amount of Inuktitut in the schools.

Of the remaining 33 participants, 25 said, either directly or indirectly, that Inuktitut is important, but did not say clearly that its teaching or usage should be increased in the schools. They said things like:

I’m glad the students are being taught [finals] in Inuktitut, because in between our years and today’s I don’t think they were taught in Inuktitut for a while. But it’s coming back and I find that my kids can read pretty well in Inuktitut. (36: W/40s)

In three of the cases I inferred the importance of Inuktitut from expressions of worry about language loss.

Of the remaining 8 participants, in some cases language was not discussed, in a few the answer was cryptic and not amenable to coding with confidence, and in several cases with more

than one interviewee only one responded and the other's view is not known. Although eighteen participants suggested that there should be more English taught or that it should be introduced earlier, there were no statements suggesting that any participant did not value Inuktitut, and no suggestion that Inuktitut should be removed from the school. The closest to this was one person who said that perhaps English should become the language of instruction from the early grades, but that same participant also expressed happiness that Inuktitut teaching is strong in the early grades.

3.2.1 Reasons for wanting more/stronger Inuktitut. A number of participants said they were happy that some young children have strong Inuktitut skills, that the daycare includes an elder who teaches traditional songs and games, and that Inuktitut instruction is rigorous in the early grades. For example: *“My daughter, she’s excellent in English writing, but I prefer her to know more [syllabics]. But she knows more Inuktitut than me. You know, she knows the finals more than I do”* (10: W/30s), and, *“like daycare... that’s where they pick up Inuktitut.... Especially Inuktitut songs that we haven’t heard for 20 years. And it’s coming out of daycare kids”* (11: W/30s). Another participant said: *“I think the younger students are being taught our very strong Inuktitut language now, this year.... ‘Cause I heard a young kid saying something I haven’t heard for 7 years, and it suddenly clicked in there and I knew what it meant”* (46: W/40s).

Despite these positive signs, many expressed concern about language loss. Some of the reasons people worried included: *“My children’s Inuktitut is more English than anything else. They may be speaking in Inuktitut, but they’re putting their words together in Qallunaatitut”*¹⁹ (1: W/50s), and: *“[Students] shorten it, right? They understand it but we don’t”* (3: W/40s). Through an interpreter, an elder said: *“[The young are] kind of speechless now... they can’t really finish the word without saying it in English, which these older people can’t really understand”* (32i: M/E). Code switching was described by several people: *“There’s also that mixing of two languages. I don’t like that. And just saying the ending of it. No wonder we’re losing the language. Because we’re only using parts of it”* (68: W/50s); *“Some of the people are taught very*

¹⁹ Qallunaatitut means ‘like a Qallunaat.’ It could mean Qallunaat ways, but in this case it means English.

mixedly. We still live with my elderly parents. My two daughters speak mixedly so they can't understand" (55: W/20s).

The role of the schools in weakening the language, and the potential role of the schools in strengthening the language, was sometimes directly noted. One elder said:

There's lots of things to learn in Inuktitut yet they're not being taught in school. They can learn a lot in school.... Like they don't even know how to speak properly anymore.... They've dropped so many words that they don't really know how to put their words together. (43i: W/E)

Another elder said: *"They learn Inuktitut first, the first 3 years of their life in school, and then they drop that and go to Qallunaaq school. They forget their Inuktitut"* (40i: W/E). This appears to be a strong condemnation of the early-exit or weak bilingualism model currently in place in most Nunavut schools, which may play a role in Inuktitut that is *"more like baby-talk Inuktitut"* (72: W/40s). It echoes the concerns of an elder from Igloolik who said that young people have so much to do, going to school and learning White ways, that they are forgetting their language (Uyarasuk, 1999). One elder said that her grandkids *"don't know their own language, because they're not always with us.... 'Can you get that thing to me?' I say the word and they say, 'What is it, what?' They cannot understand"* (67: W/E). Schools contribute to the alienation of youth from elders when they do not develop the home language (Hernandez-Chavez, 1988), or worse, school erodes language because students spend most of the day in an environment where it is not used (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988a). There is a correlation between years in school and poor Inuktitut, which suggests that schooling in English is directly responsible for erosion of the Inuit language (Dorais & Sammons, 2002, p. 63). Unfortunately transitional programmes where students leave instruction in their mother tongues at an early age result in domination by the majority language, and poor school achievement (Skutnabb-Kangas, p. 27).

Jacobsen (2004) wrote that in Greenland, after 25 years of Home Rule and language policy focussed on preservation and revitalization, many Greenlanders take for granted that Greenlandic (a language closely related to Inuktitut) would not disappear. Twenty years ago researchers thought the continued existence of Inuktitut was assured (Stairs, 1988), but that was certainly not

the case for participants in Tuktuulik in 2006. Concerns over complete language loss and loss of depth in the language were frequently articulated by participants in this study, and this was confirmed repeatedly as very few participants chose to read the Inuktitut version of the consent form. When I started asking why they chose to read the English version, people almost invariably said that they could, of course, read the Inuktitut version, but that it would take them longer than reading it in English. Even northern newspapers, several said, are usually read in English, with the Inuktitut story sometimes consulted if the meaning in English is not clear. One person said that with syllabics you need to sound the word out piece by piece instead of using word recognition, but another said that fluent reading of syllabics is just a matter of practice.

Practice may be difficult to come by. Unlike in Greenland where different genres of literature are available in Greenlandic (Pedersen, 2004), in Tuktuulik there is little available to read in any language, English or Inuktitut – not comics, not magazines, not novels. One cannot buy a book, magazine, or daily newspaper in Tuktuulik. In Greenland the first Greenlandic novel was published in 1914 (Thisted, 2005), but in Nunavut there are almost no syllabic texts of general interest available (Dorais & Sammons, 2002, p. 67). A clear preference for reading English, and greater facility in it, is a warning sign since language survival is linked to literacy (Stairs, 1990). In a recent test of Inuktitut literacy in Iqaluit over half of the 121 Inuktitut speaking highschool students claimed to be illiterate or failed the test (Dorais & Sammons). The creation of children's literature in Inuktitut from the mid-1980s to mid 1990s (Tompkins, 2006) helped with early literacy in Inuktitut. Much more is needed to sustain these gains through to the higher grades.

In the early 1970s syllabics were seen as “essentially Inuit” and people worried about their disappearance (Brody, 1991). Dorais and Sammons found that in Iqaluit, Kimmirut, and Igloolik, the majority of people were equally at ease, or more at ease, reading English than Inuktitut, and concluded that schooling “seems to have been detrimental to literacy in Inuktitut” (p. 14). Perhaps what was more surprising was the fact that the level of schooling did not seem correlated to ability in spoken English.

Concern about language loss was often connected to people's identity as Inuit. This link between Inuktitut and cultural identity has been found in studies in Nunavut and Nunavik

(Dorais, 1995; Dorais & Sammons, 2002; Tompkins, 2004). In the current study people said things like: *“That little kid’s pure Inuk. I would not believe that little kid was speaking English instead of our language”* (17: M/20s). When I asked why one participant wanted stronger Inuktitut in the schools she said: *“‘cause I’m Inuk. We’re the last generation that can speak in Inuktitut before we lose it. Other communities have lost it”* (59: W/30s). An elder reported that she had scolded her granddaughter from Iqaluit, who was not able to speak proper Inuktitut: *“You’re not turning White!”* She also said: *“The new generation they don’t know how to hunt, they don’t know how to speak fully Inuktitut. They’re lost”* (67: W/E).

Concern was also expressed that without “Inuit skills” children would have low self-esteem, and that without good Inuktitut, English would be harder to learn: *“Either they have to learn their ways, Inuit ways, or I don’t think they could follow English ways”* (3: W/40s); *“Not learning Inuktitut means you can’t learn English.... Kids need to be around more elders. The more Inuktitut they learn the better English they’ll learn”* (50: W/30s); *“I also believe in there’s a saying that when you have your mother tongue, language proficiently, then you can survive anywhere”* (37: M/E). These instrumental reasons for learning Inuktitut complement the intrinsic reasons, and echo research on language learning (Crago, 1992; Cummins, 2000; Curtis, 1988; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988a; Tosi, 1988; Wright & Taylor, 1995). They also echo some of the logic that may have been used when the weak-bilingual model was introduced in Nunavut. Although the intention may have been to gradually expand Inuktitut instruction as capacity built, the teaching of an indigenous language can still be colonial if the intent is only to facilitate the learning of a dominant language (Skutnabb-Kangas). In that case the first language in fact becomes a tool in speeding the acquisition of the dominant language, to the detriment of the first language.

A number of practical reasons were also given by participants for wanting Inuktitut as the language of instruction in the higher grades, or at least for having Inuit teachers who are able to translate concepts into Inuktitut while teaching in English. One recent highschool graduate in his early 20s said that English had been his biggest stumbling block: *“Hardest thing for me going to school was mostly the English part; like sometimes it was very difficult for me to understand*

some of the things that were being taught in school because of English” (56: M/20s). Another recent graduate, a woman in her early 20s, said that it is discouraging when you do not understand, and that people drop out because they do not understand:

I've seen a lot of students growing up and dropping out because they don't know how to speak that good English, and so when someone's teaching you in a language that's not your own, you don't understand anything and then it really becomes discouraging for people. (66: W/20s)

This resonated with the sentiment expressed by a woman who stopped school in grade 9. Asked if it would have helped if her teachers had spoken Inuktitut, she said yes, that she had felt “*stuck in the middle*” (47: W/20s), caught not fully understanding English, and caught between Inuit and Qallunaat ways. Perhaps worse than frustration, Honkala, Leporanta-Morley, Liukka and Rougle (1988) noted that making students learn in a second language, a medium where they are unable to express themselves most accurately, may lead others to perceive them as less intelligent, a judgement students themselves can come to internalize.

In short, participants want more/stronger Inuktitut taught in schools. Concern was expressed about loss of language, the relationship of language to culture and identity, and the need for strong Inuktitut to facilitate the learning of English.

3.2.2 Support for English. As well as overwhelming support for Inuktitut, many participants expressed support for learning English in the schools. Eighteen said either that there should be more English taught or that English should be introduced earlier. Some said that more or better Inuktitut and English should be taught, a stance that can be understood as wanting students to become more proficient in both languages. A further 20 said something that indicated they think English is important. Thirty-six made no utterance about English that was amenable to coding.

There are many reasons that may explain the desire to have students develop increased competence in English. English is a “high status” language (Pedersen, 2004) in Nunavut and people connected it to success in school and therefore entry into the wage economy. Good English is seen as necessary to get a good job, a finding consistent with those from a community

in Nunavik, where people viewed English as a tool, a means to an end (Dorais, 1995). The ubiquity of English was also noted, as was the need for strong English skills in order to continue studies in the south. Two examples of reasons for wanting students to learn English well, were: “*I want my kids to learn more English so they can have a good job anywhere they go*” (51: W/20s), and: “*He hears that school, education counts a lot when it comes to finding jobs. When you live up here in the north, you have to know both now, Inuktitut survival, and Qallunaatit as well*” (33i: M/E). In this case “Qallunaatit” probably refers generally to Qallunaat ways (including English).

Writing about Pond Inlet in the 1970s, Brody (2000) noted that all conversations between adults took place in Inuktitut, though adults wanted to learn English to increase their political effectiveness and chances of finding work. Parents, he wrote, were at the same time concerned that their children, learning only English at school, were not developing adequate competence in Inuktitut. Access to jobs is a powerful force, and there is no consensus on whether the recently introduced *Inuit Language Protection Act* (GN, 2007a) will do enough to prioritize Inuktitut in the workplace (Bell, 2007b; CBC News, 2007a; Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, 2007). Interviews for this study took place before the Bill was tabled. When asked if he had done anything to help his kids be successful in schools, one elder said:

I do try and help them, especially with comprehension of English. I'm even more into it than with Inuktitut. Because now the fact that our government today is very slow in that regards. They keep talking about eventually one day it will be an Inuit working government; I don't see that happening.... Mind you I still teach them Inuktitut. (37: M/E)

The importance of strong language policy is underlined by participants' valuing of English because of its importance for success in wage employment. The impetus to speak English (at the expense of Inuktitut) is just too strong if social and financial well-being, social status, and overall security come from entering the dominating society (Brody, 2000, p. 200).

If the new *Language Protection Act* steps are strong enough to make Inuktitut the *de facto* working language of all levels of government in Nunavut which is by far the largest employer, it

would raise the status of Inuktitut in the arena of work, weakening the dominance of English. This would add one more reason for people to value strong first language skills. Pedersen (2004) reported that Greenlandic is not threatened as much by Danish, since Danish is not a world language, as other indigenous languages are threatened by English. The ubiquity of English puts real and constant pressure on Inuit languages in Nunavut.

Along with the omnipresence of English and its connection to school success and wage employment, some other reasons may also help explain why some people want more English taught, or English taught earlier. Some people in their 40s and 50s mentioned their own experiences in strict schools where they were forced to speak only English, and noted that their English is generally better than that of people in their 30s and younger. This observation resonates generally with my experience of interview participants' facility in English. Although it might seem to suggest the desire for an all-English environment in schools, concern about what might be lost was voiced as well, and it is unlikely that being forced to learn in a second language was responsible for relatively strong English skills. It is more likely that the high expectations placed on students was key (Watt-Cloutier, 2000). Furthermore, Inuit students in western Nunavut whose language of instruction is English from K-12 enjoy no greater success in school than their counterparts in the east (T. Berger, 2006).

While the advantages of being bilingual are obvious, Qallunaat living in Tuktuulik may play a role in Inuit support for English at the expense of Inuktitut. This may be unintentional in most cases and may often arise from misunderstanding. For example, at a public meeting a Qallunaat educator praised the community for keeping Inuktitut strong, as evidenced, he said, by the fact that kids always speak to each other in Inuktitut. Without speaking the language or asking Inuit about it, Qallunaat may easily mistake language use with depth and competence. They may accept basic competence as the goal rather than the ability to use the language at a high level (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988a), something articulated as desirable by many participants. And without an understanding of the mechanisms of language loss, Qallunaat teachers may suggest dangerous practices. For example, one participant said that a teacher once told her she should speak English to her children at home, and two Qallunaat teachers said to me that they thought that an all-

English classroom environment might be best. Although well-meaning, implementing this strategy would speed loss of the mother tongue (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988a) and would probably slow the acquisition of competence in English, as Inuktitut could not then be used as a bridge to help students understand. The direst consequence of suggesting such things may be the message they send, which is that identity must be erased for success, leaving parents and children internalizing shame (Cummins & Skutnab-Kangas, 1988). While the action might be well-intentioned, it may also be motivated by what Skutnabb-Kangas (1988a) called ‘cultural linguicism’ – the belief that the mother tongue is of less value than English. The suggestion that parents use English in the home might be made without the knowledge that the use of the majority language in the home is connected to loss of culture (Appel, 1988).

In one case I heard a long-time Qallunaat community member criticize T. Berger’s (2006) report that demanded federal funding to strengthen Inuktitut in Nunavut’s schools and communities. He said he did not want his tax dollars “wasted” on a “dead language” and likened the situation in Nunavut to the one in Quebec, where, he said, “they should realize that they’re Canadians. They should learn English, forget French, and get on with it.” There are many Qallunaat living in Tuktuulik who would not agree with this view, and I have no direct evidence that local Qallunaat beliefs about language are important, but I suspect such views form one more assault on Inuktitut – one more push towards English.

One other thing may explain the reluctance expressed by some to an expanded usage of Inuktitut. A number of concerns were voiced about capacity problems if the schools were to move toward using more Inuktitut as a language of instruction. For example, an elder said:

If they start using that more in school they could do that, but it’s kind of hopeless the way things are going now. Even Inuktitut teachers ask questions like, “How did they do this? How did they do that?” If they don’t know that, then they don’t know the description for it. Then that means they have a lack of Inuktitut too.

A woman in her 40s said: “*Younger Inuit teachers don’t really know our culture – what’s the use of them trying to teach it if they themselves don’t know it?*” She said that younger teachers’ Inuktitut is different and sometimes needs correction.

In many cases the decreasing capacity in Inuktitut was explicitly linked to the passing of elders and with them their knowledge of language and culture. One elder said:

There's lots of reasons why I want people to learn Inuktitut. I really want Inuit teachers to be taught Inuktitut. Real Inuktitut. Solid Inuktitut. There's only very few people, elders, who know real Inuktitut left.... There are only few of them and they'll be gone in no time.

A woman in her 50s said:

Maybe we still have a slight time, because there's still elders around. Very slight. Because, my Inuktitut's not perfect anymore. It was never perfect anyway – compared to my parents' Inuktitut – because I was in school most of my life in my younger years. (1: W/50s)

In other cases people made a direct link between language loss and the loss of land skills on which the language is based. A few made detours during the interviews to tell me about specialized vocabulary connected to the land. One person said:

Like if I say something in Inuktitut, a real proper word, some people tend to say, "gee, I haven't heard that word for so long".... Of course you don't usually do those activities you did before there were so many English people came up to your settlement.... You tend to lose certain words, a real proper word.... I hope I don't. (3: W/40s)

A man in his late 20s connected language to land skills and survival:

I would like to see more Inuit culture by Inuktitut. Most people are having trouble pronouncing Inuktitut words.... One day if you go hunting, what about if you don't know about the snow? And if you were lost and made a little shack for yourself to survive. But remember, pukujaq is no good to build an igloo – or an example like that. So maybe it'd be better for people to learn more Inuktitut and culture. (17: M/20s)

Language for snow is essential for success in hunting and for comfort and safety on the land (Brody, 2000).

Thirty years ago, Brody (1991[1977]) wrote that sometimes younger Inuit could not understand older people's sophisticated language. He distinguished between *inuttitummarik*, correct Inuktitut with a wide vocabulary, and *inumarittitut*, sophisticated language related to wisdom and knowledge of the land (pp. 51, 52). At least some of the loss described by participants may be loss of the latter kind of language, a reflection of the change from camp to settlement life. This loss is also occurring in Greenland, where some students are concerned that they do not speak 'real' Greenlandic. This may be mitigated to some extent by efforts to create new words and therefore expand the language (Pedersen, 2004). The degree to which students learn language related to land skills probably depends to a great extent on their exposure to land experiences, and to the elders who possess the knowledge.

Most Inuit in this study said that they want students to learn more Inuktitut in school. Many also said that students should learn better English. The need for strong bilingual education for indigenous peoples to maintain culture while gaining access to mainstream society has long been articulated (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988a). The Nunavut Department of Education, following two studies conducted on the language of instruction many years ago (Corson, 2000; Martin, 2000a), wrote that many had expressed the desire "to establish Inuit languages as the primary languages of education" (NDOE, 2005, p. 7).

This belief is also articulated in the Department's *Bilingual Education Strategy 2004-2008* (NDOE, 2004). This policy calls for ESL programs in the primary grades, the use of Inuktitut (in eastern Nunavut) as a language of instruction right through highschool, the creation of improved curriculum and resources in both languages, and improved teacher training and support. These things will be crucial if strong bilingualism is to be achieved. Unsuccessful programmes lack bilingual materials and successful ones need well-trained bilingual teachers (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988a, p. 28). In Tuktuulik, those teaching English must understand Inuktitut. Untrained bilingual teachers are preferable to highly trained unilingual speakers of the dominant language, especially for young children (Skutnabb-Kangas). It is not enough to teach in the mother tongue only in the early grades. For a chance at active bilingualism instruction must be in the first language right through senior highschool (Tingbjörn, 1988).

Implementing the *Bilingual Education Strategy* would do much to honour the desire of Inuit participants across all ages, educational backgrounds, and employment status, to preserve and strengthen Inuktitut while developing greater competence in English.

3.2.3 Further thoughts. It is clear that Inuit participants in Tuktuulik are concerned about language loss and want more and stronger Inuktitut taught in the schools. The issue is not just one of language, but of the culture and worldview that are inherent in and best transmitted by the language (Kirkness, 1998b).

When Brody (2000) was taught ‘real Inuktitut’ in Pond Inlet in the 1970s he was taught language *and* how to use it – when to stay quiet, how to be modest, and how not to be definite about things not totally certain or under his control so that he would not inadvertently lie. The attention to truth and modesty, he wrote, are profoundly important features of Inuit psychology and culture, and they rely on the ability to use Inuktitut expertly (p. 319). The school system’s goal of replacing Inuktitut with English is tantamount to ‘clearing minds,’ comparable to the colonial enterprise of ‘securing lands:’ “And the loss of the words that hold history, knowledge and heritage devastatingly compounds all other forms of dispossession” (Brody, p. 220). Language supports most elements of identity and is therefore crucial – its loss threatens all other elements (Tulloch, cited in Dorais & Sammons, 2002, p. 124).

Language is not *just* language. Kublu and Mallon (1999) described how Kublu’s resume *felt* entirely different when translated from Inuktitut to English. They noted that people shift personalities as they shift language. Much is at stake as language is lost. Inuit elders view language loss as the most serious threat to Inuit culture and are especially concerned about the decline of fluency and comprehension among the young (NSDC, 1998, pp. 6, 23). People in the Qitirmiut region, where most loss has occurred, care very much about their language (Aylward, Kuliktana & Meyok, 1996, p. 1). As noted earlier, some researchers have blamed the schools for weakening Inuit languages. This is true in Alaskan Yup’ik and Inupiaq communities as well as across Nunavik and Nunavut (Dorais, 2001), while in Labrador and in the western Canadian Arctic the Inuit languages have almost disappeared (Stairs, 1988). Manning (1976), one of the

first Inuit school teachers, reported being slapped for speaking English in school; despite her experiences, she recommended teaching in Inuktitut and teaching about Inuit culture at a time when Inuktitut was first being adopted as the language of instruction in the primary grades in many eastern Arctic schools.

The early-exit model with Inuktitut as the language of instruction from K-3 may have been a good start in transforming schooling in Nunavut, but it has not been enough. With so much of schooling taking place in English, “a couple of hours a week of mother tongue instruction is more therapeutic cosmetics than language teaching” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988a, p. 29). The early transition can be seen as a “more humane way of assimilating” (p. 40). Words are lost causing speaking difficulties and students in highschool are not challenged to think in Inuktitut (Nunavut’s Language Commissioner, Eva Arreak, 2001, p. 60). Southern Canada dominates the North economically and politically, making English the dominant language despite the large Inuit majority and despite the fact that Inuktitut is the most common mother tongue. Situations where one language has greater social value (diglossia) can lead people to relinquish their language, believing that it is not useful for earning a living. This has happened to some extent in Alaska and western Nunavut, and may be happening in eastern Nunavut where employed parents speak more English to their children than unemployed parents (Dorais & Sammons, 2002).

Most people I asked said they speak to their children wholly or predominantly in Inuktitut, though some said they speak half-and-half, and some knew of Inuit parents who addressed their children in English. This may be an attempt to link their children to English – a source of power (Kublu & Mallon, 1999, p. 6). It is known from Greenland where two Greenlandic parents sometimes speak Danish to their children to improve their chances in school, despite the Greenlandic language being seen as a strong marker of identity (Chemnitz, 2005). Greenland has also struggled with the issue of language in schooling, with Greenlandic largely replaced by Danish in the 1960s and 70s, then returning to prominence after Home Rule in 1979. Students continuing to Denmark for postsecondary education often have trouble with academic Danish and get teased by peers at home for speaking poor Greenlandic. Greenlandic school reform in 2001

was meant to strengthen Greenlandic/Danish bilingualism (Langaard, 2005). Parents in Greenland want their children to speak their mother tongue and a second language (Inerisaavik, 2000).

What is to be done if Inuktitut is under threat from English, school language policies and practices contribute to the threat (Martin, 2000a), and if schooling threatens not only language but the worldview and interaction patterns of Inuit culture as well (Stairs, 1990)? In schools, it is possible to teach in ways that support and strengthen Inuktitut (Stairs). For example, participants in the current study praised the daycare and good teaching in early grades for helping young students to develop strong Inuktitut skills, and Tompkins (1998), as principal, spearheaded many changes that increased the visibility and prestige of Inuktitut in one Nunavut school, especially through a focus on relevant programming. Individual teachers' and principals' efforts are vital, but cannot stand alone.

Martin (2000a) recommended extending the use of Inuktitut as a language of instruction for core subjects throughout the highschool. This model has been adopted by the Department of Education in their *Bilingual Education Strategy 2004-2008* (NDOE, 2004). Though some progress has been made in the creation of new curriculum in Inuktitut from K-7, its creation has been 'haphazard' and its implementation 'uncertain.' Qallunaat principals are not usually able to supervise or guide Inuit teachers, leaving them largely on their own (Dorais & Sammons, 2002, p. 62). Furthermore, very few Inuit are qualified to teach content at the higher grades, making Martin's recommendation and the *Bilingual Education Strategy* seem unrealistic (Dorais & Sammons).

Capacity is certainly an issue, but it is not the only problem. A participant noted that should a certified Inuit teacher wish to teach Inuktitut as a subject at the highschool level, a job currently done by Inuktitut language specialists who are not certified teachers, her or his salary would drop sharply. Teaching 'core' Inuktitut to highschool students would mean being paid as a para-professional instead of as a certified teacher. This seems to be a clear indication of the low value assigned to Inuktitut in the current school system, an indication that power is being exercised over the disenfranchised by the dominant (McCarty, 2003, p. 148).

New legislation tabled in June 2007, by the Government of Nunavut (GN, 2007a) aims to protect Inuktitut and Innuinaqtun (the dialect spoken in western Nunavut). The *Inuit Language Protection Act* would create a Minister of Languages and an Inuit Language Authority to determine new terminology and standards for the language, and would demand that most services and signs be in an Inuit language (CBC News, 2007a). Section 8(2) of the *Act* would commit the GN to providing schooling consistent with traditional Inuit values, schooling that produces highschool graduates fully proficient in written and spoken Inuktitut (GN). It would also commit the GN to producing materials for early childhood education in Inuit languages, and to promoting Inuit language development during early childhood.

The obligation to provide full competence in Inuktitut will first take effect in 2019, perhaps as an acknowledgement of a capacity problem at present. New funds to train Inuit teachers are to be made available to try to address the problem (Nunavut Department of Culture, Language, Elders & Youth, 2007). This legislation may be a step in the right direction, but it is easy to be cynical about policy and legislation in light of slow progress towards implementation of the *Bilingual Education Strategy*. A call was made recently for an influx of millions of dollars from the Government of Canada to revitalize Inuktitut and reinvent Nunavut's education system as a bilingual system (T. Berger, 2006). It was met by the then Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Jim Prentice with 'concern' but no commitment for funding. "Prentice pointed out Nunavut already spends more money per capita on education than any province or territory in Canada" (Windeyer, 2006, p. 18). Almost everything costs more in remote Arctic communities, making this a spurious excuse, at best.

Research suggests that schools are excellent places for language reclamation. Students perform best in their mother tongue and it does not slow their acquisition of English (McCarty, 2003). Parents, community members, and students in Tuktuulik expressed their wish for Inuktitut competence to be strengthened by the schools. It is time for rhetoric and policy to become action.

3.3 Elders

There's no better way to say it than to hope for it. I hope some day that there will be more elders in the school.

(2: W/40s)

It was clearly expressed by participants that a school program which seriously addresses Inuit culture and language will need to draw on the knowledge and experience of elders. Twelve people, without prompting, declared that Inuit elders should be a part of schools, or have a bigger role in schools, and 42 more said the same when asked. There was no indication that I could code from 19 participants (many of whom were not asked), and one person said that as long as more Inuit culture is taught it does not matter whether it is by elders or others. The desire to have more elder involvement in schooling joins the desire to increase Inuit culture and the desire to strengthen Inuktitut in schools as close to unanimous across all demographic categories by all who expressed an opinion.

Defining who an elder is in an Inuit context is not easy (Kusugak, 2003). I asked several people how I would know if someone was an elder and met with limited success in finding a definition. For the study I have determined to call any participant 55 years of age or older an elder since that is the age at which a person gets an 'elder discount' in the taxi in Tuktuulik. Four participants were aged 55-59, and 7 were 60 and older. I do not know whether participants, in asking for greater involvement of elders in the schools, meant older people generally, or a subset of those who are older and are recognized amongst their peers as especially knowledgeable. I suspect that many feel that all of the older people in Tuktuulik experienced life that was much different from settlement life, and that they therefore possess knowledge of the past and of Inuit culture beyond that of most younger people. Many participants who were in their early 50s, and most who were older, lived on the land as children and young adults before moving into Tuktuulik.

Elders' expert knowledge of Inuktitut and Inuit culture were mentioned frequently and were the pre-eminent reasons expressed by participants for desiring more involvement of elders in the schools. Participants said things like:

Because they know everything. That's the only way we're gonna know about our

culture – from elders. (58: W/30s)

If they're gonna be taught traditional stuff in school there would definitely have to be an elder in the school. Elders more like. (52: M/E)

There should be more elder people joining as a teacher.... They've seen lots of things more than us, so that would be great if there were some elders to educate kids. (4: M/30s)

It would be a lot better. They know what happened in the 1940s, 30s, that we don't know. (59: W/30s)

In teaching I think it would help, because I know I don't know a lot of words that elders use. And maybe it would be good in that way for elders to go to the schools and teach these words.... A lot of those words, they could be lost forever if we don't start teaching kids today. (48: M/30s)

I don't know where in the transition part they are losing their expression, especially with our culture. We have a lot of expression, facial expression, and I think if you create more programs where there's elders in the schools, these expressions will follow through and help. (72: M/20s)

A part of culture mentioned specifically by several participants was connected to survival. A man said that elders should teach “*how they survived in this kind of big weather.... 'Cause the little people who are the kids don't know what they know, so they've gotta guide them on how to survive in this Arctic – cold Arctic*” (26: M/30s). And an elder said, through an interpreter:

Like in the olden days if there's not enough snow, if there's not a proper snow they would stomp on it and harden it and make an igloo out of it. It was like that. Like especially in the fall if they're still lacking snow then they would do that. Those are the useful things. Those are the kinds of things that have to be taught because we have to survive the north. This is supposed to be taught by people who are older than her. Somebody with experience. (42i: W/E)

Some participants spoke directly of identity in connection with the desire to see more elder involvement in the schools. One elder said that she would really like to see elders working in the schools, and when asked why, said:

Inuit, even grandparents like us, we're not turning into Whites. Even though if some of us could work in the office or anywhere, like stores, or any job available, we're not turning White. So we have to do something another way too, like to use our culture. (67: W/E)

A woman in her 40s said:

When I was younger, we used to have elders come in all the time and they used to do a lot of storytelling and some sewing.... It's a really good memory for me to think like, because you're in school and you're going to be with these Qallunaat all day, but an elder comes in and wishes that we will have a good day – even says a prayer with us, each class, and that would give a sense of self-worth. (2: W/40s)

Others expressed concern about the gap between elders and youth and said that having elders in the school might help. A woman in her 20s said:

'Cause elders seem like they don't have time to educate us. We don't really see each other. We don't really go and talk to them about what they know. Maybe they would be more open if they were hired by the school and teach what they know. (47: W/20s)

There is alienation of elders from youth in Inuit communities (Kral & Idlout, 2006; Minor, 1992), something that might be lessened by an increased presence of elders in the schools.

Along with describing elders' expert knowledge of language, culture, and how to survive, and expressing concerns about identity and a generation gap, many people made reference to their own memories of elders visiting their classrooms and to the positive impact on learning that comes with elder involvement in the schools. A man in his 30s said that “*kids would learn easier*” (60: M/30s) and a woman in her 30s that “*to learn they need elders. We had elders when I was going to school*” (50: W/30s). A woman in her 40s said that “*it could boost the school, I know, if the elders were more involved*” (2: W/40s), and another that it used to be that elders came in to the school, and kids “*used to be excited to learn the real meaning*” (39: W/40s). A student support assistant said that it would be good if more elders came in as students “*really like elders coming in,*” and said that having them in the school “*makes the students feel supported by*

the community.” A man in his 40s said:

I think when an elder is in the school in a class a lot of students will pay more attention to the elder. I feel that a student usually sits more quietly when there’s an elder in the class.... So elders being in school would be very good I would think. ‘Cause I hear from my kids whenever an elder had gone to their class they were always talking about, “wow, this is what happened years ago, and how come it doesn’t happen like that nowadays?” We hear something like that from some of our kids. It would be definitely good if elders could go in there more often. (70: M/40s)

As with learning Inuit cultural skills, people said that elders used to be more involved in the schools, and that they are more involved in schools in some other communities. One person said that “*nowadays elders seem like they don’t go there anymore. Because back in the ’80s they used to come to all classrooms and tell a story about the past*” (13: M/30s). Another said that “*in Northern Quebec they’ve had elders in schools, even teaching, and one who goes in to read from the Bible and talk about the stories for about an hour in each class*” (35: W/50s). It seems that at a time when the Government of Nunavut says it is committed to basing schooling in Inuit culture (NDOE, 2006), the perception of people in Tuktulik is that there is less culture and less elder involvement than some years ago.

While there was little indication of how much elder participation was desired in schools, participants did say how elders might be involved in schooling. Some said that elders should be hired as guides for land trips and to teach sewing and tool and qammutik making. Some said that elders could teach Inuktitut to the Inuit teachers and language specialists to strengthen their skills, or could co-teach the Inuktitut classes at the highschool. One said that having elders teach would be good for students’ Inuktitut, but she said that the person should not just sit and speak but “*should be teaching real Inuktitut*” (3: W/40s). She said that elders could come in and do something real – show students how to do something. If that happened then the language learning would take place in the context of learning cultural skills. Another also spoke of pedagogy when she said: “*They have to learn how they could make anything. I would like elders to go to teach Inuit way because we learn by seeing or hearing*” (64: W/30s). As noted earlier, it may not be

enough to teach “Inuit cultural skills.” The way skills are taught, and by whom, are of crucial importance (Lipka, 1989).

Although one participant said that there is currently no elder involvement in the schools, two Inuit teachers said that they invite elders to teach certain cultural curriculum and that they consult elders for specific knowledge. Neither school has an elder hired to just be in the school, as one school in the Kivalliq did (Berger, 2001). Another participant also mentioned that Inuit teachers consult an elder for specific vocabulary that they themselves do not know. It should be noted that there are several elders employed as classroom teachers at the elementary school, a matter of concern as their retirement means a great loss of knowledge and experience. One of the teachers also said:

We want to have more elders. That’s what I try to keep saying every time I go to Iqaluit for a conference or PI or anything. Or somebody comes. I always told them to have elders to be with us – and we never had the elders.

With the exception of one person, everyone who expressed an opinion about elders in the schools said that there should be more elders involved. For this to happen there needs to be formal ways to include them. One elder (who likely considers herself too young for that designation) said:

If we start talking to the elders and bring out our ideas of what should be taught then they’d definitely agree with us, the elders. They’re just kind of waiting for people to come up with suggestions. Like they don’t go out and say, “I want to do this for you.” You have to ask them nowadays. (42i: W/E)

The level of support expressed for an increase in elder involvement in schools suggests formal involvement well beyond occasional volunteering, and may involve creativity and a restructuring of typical school routines. Larose noted that classrooms are not ideal for storytelling and that there can be problems in bringing elders into school settings (cited in Rasmussen, 2002). In the Nunavut community of Sanikiluaq elders are hired for special celebrations (Kavik, 2007), and in one model used in a school in the Kivalliq region of Nunavut elders taught a community-

generated cultural curriculum to small groups (Berger, 2001). Tompkins (2006) reported on Inuit principals' real struggles in including elders, but ultimately the real possibility and benefits of doing so. The specifics of how to make elders an integral part of schooling should be worked out in consultation with communities; that elders should have some fundamental role in the schools is clear from the current study's findings.

This should happen now. In speaking about strengthening Inuktitut, one person said: *"Maybe we still have a slight time, because there's still elders around. Very slight"* (1: W/50s), and another, through an interpreter: *"Although maybe some people have other ideas, but to her she thinks that before the elders are all gone that they should start schools like that, like involve the elders with education more now"* (40i: W/E).

3.3.1 Further thoughts. Inuit participants wanted elders involved in the schooling of students in Tuktuulik. In Inuit culture elders were valued for their knowledge and experience which helped them make decisions at times of uncertainty (Fossett, 2001). Despite great changes it is apparent that many people still hold elders in high esteem and believe that much can and should be learned from them.

Including elders in schools will require consideration and restructuring. The need for teaching credentials may need to be waived and elders will need support and flexibility around timing and scheduling (Battiste, 2000). Elders can be used as sources of strength, knowledge, responsibility and direction. They may be used to teach the teachers, and should be properly paid (Medicine, 1987). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples said that elders must have an active role in schools and must be compensated appropriately (in Castellano, Davis & Lahache, 2000). Martin (2000b, p. 65) concluded that elders should be actively involved in teacher education courses and inservicing to increase the capacity of Inuit teachers to teach in real Inuit ways. Pulpan (2006) wrote of vibrant cultural teaching in Sanikiluaq, where elders were celebrated as crucial to the programs' success. He noted the dependence on adequate funding.

The *Nunavut Siviniqsavut* Students (2006) commended the highschool in the Nunavut community of Arviat for having a space for elders and thereby bringing Inuit traditional

knowledge into schooling. District Education Authorities wanted elders hired to teach students Inuit traditional knowledge (Karetak & Flynn, 2001) and elders said they would like to see elders teaching older students and those training to teach language and culture (NSDC, 1998, p. 20). The Nunavut Department of Education itself wrote that expertise from the community in the areas of culture and language should be used (2005, p. 6). Despite this support in rhetoric, people in Tuktuulik want more elder involvement in the schools. According to a school official, no money was available to realize this desire.

3.4 Discussion: culture, language, and elders

I was surprised at the strength and consistency of the findings about the inclusion of more Inuit culture, the strengthening of Inuktitut, and the desire to increase elder involvement in schools. Although these themes appear in recent consultations (Aylward, 2004; NDOE, 2006), I expected that some people might be concerned that learning about culture would take time away from academic subjects (AINA, 1973; Maguire & McAlpine, 1996; Stairs, 1994a; Lipka & McCarty, 1994). One person did express this view in casual conversation, and one participant did voice the fear that learning about traditional Inuit ways would disadvantage students who want to go on to postsecondary studies. Many also noted that “Qallunaat subjects” are very important at school, but the overwhelming finding was that Inuit language and culture are clearly important to participants and schools are seen as appropriate venues for their promotion.

It would be wrong, however, to leave the impression that participants’ views fit into neat boxes with no contradictions. For example, the participant who was concerned that including Inuit ways would disadvantage students in postsecondary studies also said that younger Inuit teachers sometimes need help with the language, because “*our Inuktitut has to be strong.*” Valuing Inuktitut in school thus coexists with a concern that learning about and through Inuit culture might disadvantage students in postsecondary education. In another example, a participant who suggested that English might become the language of instruction from the early grades also said that she was happy about the strong Inuktitut instruction in the early grades. Other participants also said things that seemed contradictory.

Some of this probably stems from the power of the institution of schooling and the role schools typically play as gatekeepers for high status wage employment. Currently in Nunavut almost all of those jobs, in fact almost all jobs, are in different levels of government. In a push to meet the requirements of *Article 23* of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*, which requires the Government of Nunavut workforce to include a representative percentage (85%) of Inuit, many Inuit have been hired into junior positions (T. Berger, 2006). More senior positions require specialized post-secondary education, and competition for the replacement of junior positions can be intense. Many people identified schooling as important for students' future, and English as important for their school success. This situation might create enormous tension, as action to support children's economic future may seem to conflict with actions to support identity and the preservation of culture (Douglas, 1998).

The juxtaposition of school success with Inuit culture may, in fact, have been artificially framed that way by Qallunaat. At one School Improvement session, a Qallunaat consultant said that Tuktulik students might be left behind those of other communities who learn in English right from Kindergarten, a disturbing prospect. It is, however, unlikely to be accurate, as students from western Nunavut who learn in English right from Kindergarten do no better than students in the east, as noted previously (T. Berger, 2006).

Other Qallunaat seem to subscribe to similar myths. I once heard the author of a report on "successful" schools for First Nations students say that First Nations parents, when faced with the question of increasing Native cultural content *or* spending more time on reading, almost all choose the latter. The question, posed that way, is misleading. It constructs schooling as a place of scarcity, and discounts the possibility that reading may improve when students identify with the school and feel good about themselves and more connected to their culture (Deyhle, 1995; Whiteck, Hoyt, Stubben & LaFramboise, 2001). It unfairly and unnecessarily puts parents in the position of choosing between culture and economic success. As one person in this study said: "*Traditional stuff. As well as the learning in academics. They can have both. Shouldn't be hard to have both*" (28: M/40s). In the Yup'ik village of St. Mary's in Alaska culture and academic achievement did go together – people could have both (R. Barnhard, 1990).

Henze and Vannett (1994) cautioned that schools, in anything like their typical EuroAmerican form, could not be expected to educate Native students for cultural competence. They argued that schooling takes so much time that the skills needed to be an excellent hunter simply could not be learned. While that may be true, I do not believe that most of the participants in this study expect students to learn Inuit cultural skills in school to the level of expert hunter, what Brody (1991) said was meant by the word *Inummarik* – the real Inuk. It is true that to be useful to a hunter caught in a sudden storm, some skills like igloo building need to be well enough developed for an igloo to be built – and this skill, in this context, was specifically named by participants. But a functional igloo can be built by someone who is not an expert, and the ability to do so would mean continuity with the past that, participants suggested, would be of enormous value. Many indicated that Inuit culture need not be *the* focus of schooling, but should be a part of it. This goal should be attainable, though not, perhaps, without considerable restructuring in terms of *thinking* about the schools.

Elementary schools in Nunavut are already well-positioned to increase the amount of cultural content owing to the majority of Inuit teachers at the primary and junior levels – teachers who intimately know much historical and contemporary Inuit culture, and who are connected to the community in a way that would facilitate finding and hiring elders. These teachers' natural Inuit teaching mode must be allowed to filter into the school (Stairs, 1988). For some of the land skills that participants would like children to acquire, and for cultural skills to become an integral part of school programs, broader initiatives are needed. While an individual teacher could take students out of the school more often, satisfying one participant's desire for students to be on the land more, even just to walk a bit out for tea, camping and hunting require the support of guides. In highschools in Nunavut, where few Inuit teach, a program using local elders and experts would be needed.

This might be modelled on a program used in one community in the Kivalliq region of Nunavut described earlier (Berger, 2001). Lack of resources, however, constrained the program to a small part of the year, as lack of funds reportedly stopped teachers in Tuktuulik from hiring more elders to support them in their teaching.

The deeper core of Inuit culture, including proper ways of being and interacting²⁰, were named less frequently than visible elements of culture as things desired in the schools. As described in Section 3.1.3, this may be because there is no precedent and it is simply not thought of as an option by most people. Still, many participants spoke of closely related issues including the way children's behaviour patterns are changing, and teacher behaviours like yelling that go against Inuit norms. They also spoke of Inuit ways of teaching and learning that point to foundational elements of culture that may not be easy to see. These will be discussed later (Section 4.2.2). I cannot state with certainty that all participants would like to see Inuit ways permeate the way schooling is done in Tuktuulik, what Stairs (1988) called a "culture-based" model of schooling, and what the government set out as a goal in the *Bathurst Mandate* (GN, 1999); however, it would be antithetical to approach the teaching of Inuit cultural skills from a Qallunaat school perspective. To seriously address Inuit culture and language in schools and to incorporate elders in schooling will require challenging basic assumptions about western schooling. Simply adding things to the mainstream curriculum, what Stairs called a "cultural inclusion" model, would result in superficial treatment (Tompkins, 1998). This would ignore fundamental differences between Qallunaat schooling and indigenous educational modes, following most North American attempts to add culture into schools through an external process (Stairs). Much more is needed.

Inuit wishes for more Inuit culture, language and elders in schools must also impact overall satisfaction with the schools. Community and parental support are important for schools to be effective and this support is more likely if the school fulfills community expectations (Cummins, 1986; Harrison, 1993; Lipka, 1989; Ogbu, 1992). If people feel that the schools are lacking something, and especially if the lack results in a devaluing, ignoring, and assaulting of Inuit identity and culture, it should be expected that community support will not be optimal. More will be said about this in Section 4.1. The distance between what participants in the study would like from the schools and what currently exists also indicates a gap in the realization of community control of schooling. Taken together with the recent territory-wide consultation

²⁰ Appendix D contains a list of some values held by many Inuit.

processes (Aylward, 2004; NDOE, 2006), these findings suggest that, despite the creation of Nunavut, Inuit still do not control schooling if control includes having the means to make schooling more congruent with the wishes of the people. While any effort to do this fully would take time, systemic problems like a lack of funding to hire elders signal that rhetoric and practice may be substantially divorced from one another at this juncture.

3.5 The desire for academic excellence

I have a feeling; I always feel that our kids are being cheated out of that system. 'Cause they can't compete when they go to college or university down south. (M/E)

Most participants expressed the hope that their children would do well in school and graduate from highschool, and almost a third of all participants (n=23) said they would like the schools to educate students to higher academic standards, although I only asked about this in a few cases. Some said that academic standards should equal those in the rest of Canada. One elder said that education, like the justice system, operates on a different standard in Nunavut:

And I don't like that. I want my kids to have the same standard as you would anywhere down south. As I said, two of my kids have jobs, and they're training on the job, and some of the time they're struggling in their jobs, because of the same system that we flew up here, with the standard not being high enough.

The same elder said the “*younger generation today, even when they complete grade 12, I see that as being grade 9 or 10.*” He described how he had been required to redo grade 10 when he travelled to Fort Smith for grade 11, and then had to redo it again the next year when he travelled to Winnipeg (despite passing each time). He said: “*I've seen the younger generation who have completed grade 12 here and they try to do their university down south and they can't; they're not equipped to do it.*” The experience of Northern students in post-secondary institutions confirms this participant's perception (Watt-Cloutier, 2000).

The desire to have schooling on par with other places recurred frequently amongst those who said the schools should be stronger academically, as did the feeling that schooling is less

rigorous than it was, and that this limits students' possibilities for post-secondary education. One participant mentioned that in Greenland schooling is stronger and people are learning to be engineers, "*even though they speak their own language too*" (W/40s), and a recent graduate who did some highschool in the south said there was "*kind of a big jump in the level they were teaching.*" Several people noted that Tuktulik is behind Iqaluit, as evidenced by students being put back a grade: "*And when they moved them to Iqaluit they both went one grade down each. That's a big difference if you ask me*" (M/40s). A recent graduate in his 20s also said that schooling in Tuktulik does not prepare people adequately for *Nunavut Sivuniksavut*, the Ottawa-based post-secondary access program for Inuit (M/20s).

People who said academic standards should be higher often cited the possibilities that would be opened for students if schooling was more rigorous. One said that if students "*were taught to be in committees or organizations then they would be able to get jobs much easier. Instead of locally they could be looking out elsewhere*" (i: W/E), and several said that with stronger academics attending university would become a possibility. A number of people also expressed the desire for an increase in the number of graduates in Tuktulik, where, in the year of the fieldwork, one person at a School Improvement meeting said that 4 of 12 people in grade 12 would graduate.

Several recent graduates said, either spontaneously or in response to a question, that schoolwork should be harder. One, who said he was generally happy at school, said he was sometimes bored because the work was too easy (M/20s), and another, when asked if school was challenging enough, said:

Well, for me I guess it would be better for the students to have a harder school. It would make things more interesting, and would be a lot easier to understand how things go, like the kind of jobs we would want. (M/20s)

It should be noted that there is no "academic" or university-bound stream at the highschool; most of the courses offered are Alberta curriculum "applied" or college-bound courses. I asked the highschool teachers one day in the staffroom about how many students might be capable of doing

academic level courses. Though everyone could think of some students, they concluded that staffing would not allow the courses to be offered (though they were open to the idea of coaching students who did self-study on modular courses, if they were available).

Three participants said that they felt so strongly about the issue of academic standards that they had, or would, consider moving south. One said:

I've really thought seriously about moving down south because of the schools here.... School up here is not as challenging as down there. It's not up to the education down there. And I know my daughter is smart enough that she would be able to go and do well down there. (M/30s)

Many participants speculated about why academic standards might be lower in Tuktuulik than elsewhere. One teacher thought that formal assessments would help so that the next teachers would know where students were at, and said:

One day the higher education authorities can see that they aren't at grade level and will do something about that.... They should be more serious about students' education.... They don't seem to have a goal of where [students] will be when they are adults, and are not providing the steps needed to get there.

The importance of teaching curriculum at grade level was noted and some mentioned the need for more books, or “*just newer materials. Like with some of the textbooks we had here in grade ten they look like they were 20 years old. They looked like they've been here since the community has been here*” (W/20s).

A number of people expressed concern about the lack of homework given to students. It is hard to gauge how much homework is actually given by teachers in Tuktuulik, and of course it may vary greatly. I saw an elementary school student working on math homework and her aunt suggested that she did it frequently, while a woman said that her son in elementary school had homework “*maybe twice*” (W/30s) last year. Two recent graduates in the same interview also reported doing different amounts of homework, while another recent graduate wished that there had been more. One woman in her 50s said:

My daughter ... maybe a few pages of homework during all the time that she was in school. But then when I was in school and at that grade, I had tons of homework. And those are the things that taught me to get the knowledge and education that I have now. Those are the things that taught me. (W/50s)

A man in his 40s tied homework to achievement:

I wish they can bring some more homework home but they don't. My son was taking homework home... his grades went up quite a bit. Instead of Cs and Ds he was getting As and Bs when he was taking homework home. Now that he's not doing any more homework it's kinda gone down to Bs and Cs now again. If they bring homework maybe their grades will stay up a little bit higher. (M/40s)

Homework was also raised as necessary for achievement at the second School Improvement meeting, where an administrator at the highschool said: "Homework is important. Perhaps it has been dropped as it was never returned."

Several people criticized the practice of social promotion and it was also denounced by several people at the School Improvement meetings. One participant said that kids get confused, and another that it did not make sense that kids just had to show up in order to pass. I believe that some people see social promotion as a sign of low expectations.

Participants offered many ideas as to why the academic standards in Tuktulik schools might be lower than in Iqaluit and in other parts of Canada. Almost a third said they wanted higher academic standards and many more said that they want more highschool graduates, and, specifically, that they want their own children to graduate. With a highschool graduation rate in Nunavut of 25-35% (IDEA, 2005a) and few Inuit continuing schooling after grade 12 it is easy to understand the concern for higher standards.

3.5.1 Further thoughts. The literature documents many examples where lower academic expectations are held of minority and indigenous students (Pashagumskum, 2005; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002, p. 21). This can happen unintentionally as middle-class White teachers bring their unexamined assumptions to their interactions with minority students, leading to an

overrepresentation of minority students in vocational programs (Cummins, 1988; Deyhle, 1995; Suarez-Orozco, 1993). If these assumptions manifest themselves as low expectations it can be demeaning and students can come to believe that they are less intelligent than others (Gilmore, Goldman, McDermott & Smith, 1993).

Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2000) wrote about the devastation caused to Inuit children in Nunavik who internalize low expectations from their school experiences. The school system, she wrote, “challenges our youth so little that it undermines their intelligence.... The watering down of programs, the lowering of standards and expectations is a form of structural racism that we must make every effort to stop” (p. 115). It is thought that high expectations might be especially critical for minority students (Henze & Lucas, 1993).

Thinking back as a grade 7 teacher in Tuktuulik, where my first priority was that students should look forward to coming to school, I speculate about when I did not push students enough academically and worry that may have sent the message that I did not think that they were capable. In that case my good intentions would certainly have had disabling consequences. The line between low expectations, appropriate challenge, and overwhelming students is not always easy to find, especially in contexts where there is a wide range of academic levels in each class.

In my first year of teaching my class cut cardboard pieces and made model houses in cooperative groups, then measured and designed their own. The activities were very successful, and we then went outside where I wanted students to measure and draw real buildings so that we could later make models of them. Chaos ensued, and a chorus of people saying ‘*iqiana*,’ a word that means ‘boring’ or might mean ‘too hard.’ I was frustrated that students did not even seem to be trying. When I thought back on it that evening I realized that I had missed steps in preparing students for the new task, leaving it out of their reach (Henze & Lucas, 1993, citing Vygotski). We never went back to the activity. In retrospect, what I justified at the time as not being worth the tension and frustration and the possibility for rupturing my relationship with the students might have been a flight from responsibility, and might have been perceived by the students as a lack of faith that they could learn. How could one of them become an architect if I gave up so easily on their ability to draw and model rectangular buildings?

Concern about lower standards has been voiced in Nunavut (Aylward, 2004; Martin, 2000b; NDOE, 2006) and in other jurisdictions. First Nations parents in British Columbia were concerned that teachers and administrators held low expectations of their children and a focussed on graduating students rather than preparing them for further studies (Wilson & Napolean, 1995). Erickson (1987) reported that African American students were often counselled into vocational streams by White counsellors and Navajo youth face similar systemic barriers to reaching university (Deyhle, 1995). Alooktook Ipellie (1993), an Inuit artist and author, wrote that guidance counsellors with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs ‘worked hard’ to steer him toward a practical career. As noted earlier, at the highschool in Tuktulik no ‘advanced’ courses were even offered, leaving little to aim at for students left feeling unchallenged by their courses.

The Nunavut Department of Education acknowledged that parents are worried about school standards (NDOE, 2005) and reported hearing this again in the recent Education Act consultations (NDOE, 2006). With real indications that academic standards in Nunavut schools are in fact low (IDEA, 2005a) and the desire expressed by participants for schools to adequately prepare students for jobs and further schooling, it is necessary to look at factors that influence the academic success of students in Tuktulik.

4. Factors influencing the academic success of students in Tuktulik

In this chapter I present findings that help to explain the underperformance of Nunavut schools, and identify things that facilitate the success of Inuit students. I examine the themes of: 1) parental and community support for the schools and for students, 2) (in)congruence between school and home, 3) prejudice, colonialism and disempowerment, 4) dysfunctional corollaries of colonialism, and 5) the connection between schooling and work.

4.1 Parental and community support for the schools and students

One of the tenets of the literature on the failure of schools educating students who are marginalised is that community and parental support of schooling and students is necessary for widespread student success (Agbo, 2002b, 2007; Barnhardt, 1991; Cummins, 1986; Eisenhardt & Graue, 1993; Harrison, 1993; Lipka, 1989; Ogbu, 1992). This support cannot be the fulfilment of a duty, garnered on the premises of the school. It must be genuine, motivated by a feeling that the school is responsive to community wishes (Pashagumskum, 2005). In the context of American minorities Ogbu suggested that while support for schooling might be vocalized, pressure to achieve in school might not be put on these students by their parents. In this section I consider different indicators of parental support for schools and students.

I begin providing context by describing some of the participants' own school experiences, some of which were described as good and some as harrowing, and I speculate about the effect these experiences may have had on community feelings about the schools. I then present participants' expressions of support for the schools and some of what they said is best about the schools before describing other changes participants desired – changes that might help align the schools with community wishes and lead to an increase in support from the community. I look at reasons for supporting the schools related to purposes attributed to schooling and I end by describing the many and varied ways people said that they support students' learning, and by discussing how all of these different factors might be interpreted as indicators of a general ethos of support for students and schooling.

4.1.1 Good and bad school experiences. After asking general demographic questions I asked participants what it was like when they went to school. Most said that it was good, but 25 (many of whom had also said that it was good) described very harsh practices, abuse, or bullying. Many more participants may have had bad experiences and not mentioned them; I did not ask specifically for negative experiences. I present some positive descriptions first. One man in his early 30s, who stopped school in grade 7, said:

There are a lot of good things I remember in school.... I remember going out hiking mountains, or going out on the land, or playing something in gym.... I can remember mostly going out on an exchange trip – that’s the part I really liked the most back then – heading down to Stratford, Ontario. Yes, that was the best part of my life I’ve seen in school. (4: M/30s)

A woman in her 40s who stopped in grade 9 said: *“The school was good to me. I can’t find any fault - bad things in school or with teachers. Like everybody was kind to me, good to me. Encouraged me a lot”* (3: W/40s), and a woman in her 30s who stopped in grade 7 said: *“I can say back in the ’70s teachers and students were friends. Everybody did everything together”* (10: W/30s). A woman in her early 20s who stopped school in grade 11 but was planning to go back said that school *“was fun”* (16: W/20s), and a woman in her 50s who went to grade 4 said, *“just going to school made me happy I guess”* (35: W/50s). An elder described how difficult it was to enter a school where he needed to speak English, but said that being in school was exciting for him (52: M/E). Asked what it was like to be in school a recent highschool graduate said, *“it was the best memory I had”* (56: M/20s). He enjoyed hanging out with friends and said, *“it really helped me; it really helped me to succeed, in life and through the workforce”* (56: M/20s).

Caring teachers were described by participants, often spontaneously, and sometimes in response to a question about whether they had a favourite teacher. Teachers were described who counselled students to stay in school, listened to students’ troubles and were trusted, kind and funny, and who did their best to help students understand. It was not unusual for people to name and describe a favourite teacher from 30 years ago and participants often recalled things vividly, like how a teacher always encouraged a student to do her best and hounded her to quit smoking to

improve her athletic performance. One person liked his math teachers who were encouraging and nice to the students and another's favourite teacher helped him a lot and was seen to be nice to everybody. A man in his late 40s described how a teacher he liked very much visited students in their homes. In the *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq* consultations students were clear about what made a teacher a good teacher, and, like most people in this study, it was friendliness and caring that students named most (Tompkins, 2004). Caring teachers and good relationships between teachers and students help keep youth in school (Deyhle, 1992).

It is probably more natural and easier for people who themselves had good experiences in school to support schooling and to be actively involved in schools. If this is true, it bodes well that so many people described their school experiences as good and that they remembered caring teachers and fun activities. Unfortunately, not all of the experiences described were good. Twenty-five people described bullying, abuse or other harsh practices during their schooling, including 6 who named a convicted sex offender who taught in many communities across the north and who sexually abused many people in the school in Tuktuulik. Lizi Kiviq (2007), principal in Sanikiluaq, said that many parents in her community are reluctant to come to the school following bad experiences they had in school; it makes sense that difficult and especially traumatic experiences might make parents reluctant to involve themselves in schooling and more ambivalent about the whole enterprise.

I will omit the details shared by some participants, but include some of how they experienced school when the now incarcerated sex offender was teaching at the highschool. This is not comfortable, but it is important for people to know. A student in recent consultations said that she wished teachers understood how students' lives are (Tompkins, 2004). Understanding what some of their parents suffered may help:

It was bad, bad, bad, bad; that time it was bad. Bad days for me. (M/30s)

I never moved, ever. Ever ever ever if he was in my sight, and he never made eye contact with me. (W/40s)

Remember that I told you I dropped out from little to older? I went back. I was

about 12, 11. He was my teacher and he was bad.... I had to... not go back to school. (M/30s)

Another man in his 30s also said that he stopped school because a teacher abused him and many other boys and said he could not tell his parents about it, while yet another in his 30s said that he was molested by two teachers.

Many participants also described abusive and harsh practices and sometimes connected them to students stopping school. A man in his 30s said:

I've seen others including me not getting respect from teachers and not wanting to go to school anymore.... I've had ear pulls before by teachers and hair pulled or dragged. I've seen those too which got me not wanting to go to school anymore, which I wanted to finish up, and I've been hearing teachers shouting at kids too much which is not good, and they're shouting at them and the kids start not listening more. It's better if they don't shout at them - that way they'll listen more. It's better if the teacher doesn't shout at them. That's what I've seen before, and that's what I've had before.

A man in his 40s said:

Teachers were kinda more or less not really abusing but very close to abusing most of the students I was going to school with. But uh, other than that I think it would have been a lot better if we had different teachers then, but school was ok, it was just the teachers.

Some of the harsh treatment described was in the form of corporal punishment, sometimes in the service of stopping students from speaking Inuktitut, or from speaking at all. A man in his late 40s said: *"Some of the teachers were mean, very mean. Encouraged me not to speak my language. Punished me. I just thought that was part of everything."* An elder woman said that she did not learn much in school because students were not allowed to speak. Here is our conversation:

P: Do you remember what it was like to suddenly go to school and it was all English around you?

Uh, that time when we were in school when I start remembering. It was only in English, and also we don't have to talk. It was so quiet. I didn't learn in school. I mean not very much. Because we don't have to talk.

P: You were supposed to stay quiet?

Staying quiet.

P: Just listening to the teacher and then doing work?

Ya. It was amazing. Like every time when we talked, he just used a yardstick, going around banging our hand. So that's why don't talk, 'cause we don't wanna get hurt.

P: Even if you were speaking in English? You weren't supposed to speak in English either?

No.

Explaining that his parents did not use corporal punishment, another elder said, *"it was scary for me to be treated that way by a teacher."* Brody (2000) noted that the absence of corporal punishment of children and gentleness in Inuit child rearing was commented on by early missionaries and explorers (p. 318), and Balikci (1970) wrote about its absence amongst the Netsilik, an Inuit group. Some participants did say they were spanked by their parents; this may have been a practice adopted from Qallunaat culture.

Descriptions of corporal punishment in school were most frequent from older participants while many people in their late 30s talked of sexual abuse. Younger participants also described inappropriate teacher behaviours including pinching, lying about students, and picking on students. One participant, a student attending grade 12 at the time of the interview, said that a teacher told the class that he would lie to the principal about a student, and then proceeded to do so. The same student said that her grade 5 teacher was her favourite teacher, *"because she didn't yell at people."* In the last 8 years two Qallunaat teachers were forced to leave the community due to misconduct, and one parent, who said her son had been poked in the face by a teacher, asked: *"Why do some teachers need to bring their anger to school and take it out on kids?"*

In recalling their own experiences in school a number of participants also mentioned bullying, in some cases severe enough to make them stop school. Bullying was mentioned related to being smart, being short, wearing thick glasses, talking a lot, being shy, having left school and returned and having weak Inuktitut skills following hospitalization in the south. A man in his 40s said: *“It was hard. Growing up in schools. Lots of mean kids back then.”* One young man, a recent student, described having difficulty with a classmate since elementary school:

And that guy tried it, tried to come around me when I tried to leave him alone and he kept swearing at me and I had to do something about it. He would say everything just to upset me and try to what? Give me a hard time. He almost broke my ribs right here. He punched it about 4 to 5 times, and it was very excruciating. That’s how I have been feeling about school right now.... That was the most difficult part of my life. Quitting school until now.

The desire for physical and emotional safety was a key concern of students across Nunavut in the recent *Survey of Nunavut students K-12* (Tompkins, 2004).

Whether current, in the recent past, or in the more distant past, their own bad experiences at school and the knowledge that troubling things have happened at the schools may make it harder for parents and community members to support the schools. Memories of feeling disrespected or insecure at school might make it harder to take an active role in schooling and this may be especially true in contexts where a power imbalance exists, such as has been and continues to be the case between Qallunaat and Inuit (Brody, 1991; Tompkins, 2002). Although this study is not able to definitively connect difficult past (or ongoing) school experiences to current attitudes towards the schools, several participants did make an explicit connection between their experiences and schools today (cf. Pashagumskum, 2005). In one case a person advocated for cameras in all classrooms to protect students, in another for a third party to be present at all student/teacher meetings and in a third for teachers to check on each other at dismissal time to be sure all students have left safely. In all cases the recommendations were made to avoid situations of abuse similar to those in the past.

Most participants remembered liking school and could name teachers and activities that

they were happy about, yet many students described difficult and sometimes terrible experiences that have left deep and lasting impressions on them, and everyone in this small community knows of the criminal acts that occurred in the highschool. Sociostructural theorists link historical (Ogbu, 1992) and current (Foster, 2005) injustices in schools and in society to resistance by minority parents and students. It would not be surprising if past and continuing trauma makes community support for schooling less likely to be strong and active. Nunavut educators might need to make extraordinary efforts to encourage parents who have had difficult school experiences to feel welcome in the schools.

4.1.2 Stated support for the schools. Despite the very bad school experiences reported by some participants, no one said that schooling was unimportant and some gave specific examples of things they liked about the schools (something I asked about directly). Others spoke of practices that show personal and community support for the schools both in the past and in the present. These were unprompted expressions as I did not ask participants directly about whether or not they supported the schools but rather asked what they liked and what they would like to be different. Part of my confidence that people in Tuktulik value schooling and support the schools comes from descriptions of how parents support their children's learning, which I discuss at the end of the Section 4.1.5.

Indications of support for the schools ranged from the local stores trying to keep students out during school hours to happiness at increased numbers of graduates, a point mentioned by several people; for example: "*It's good to see there's more graduates every year than there was back then*" (11: W/30s). One participant was very direct about his support: "*I support schools, the way they handle themselves up there, the higher school.... I think they have good, strict rules that are understandable for the students*" (5: M/30s). Many parents said that it was important for their children to go further than they themselves had in school.

Several people showed support for the schools by comparing today with the past, saying, for example, that the schools are better today with better ways to learn and better things, like computers (39: W/40s). One said he wanted his nieces and nephews "*to learn. I want them to stay*

in school, 'cause I think today's a lot better than before.... I think it's a lot better today" (14: M/30s). Another said that teaching is good, and, *"every year they try and change things for teaching – getting better. Better learning. I think they do that every year"* (18: M/40s). I did ask several people if they felt welcome in the schools and all said yes. One said, *"Yes, very. Nowadays, yes"* (M/40s), so I asked him if it had been different before. He said:

Not before; it was hard before. And they weren't communicating very well, and they would get into arguments and shouting matches like that before I remember. 'Cause nobody, neither side could understand too much. Now they do, and they try to help. These teachers nowadays try to help a lot, which is good.

Many things were named as good about the schools today and it can probably be assumed that things people are happy about tend to increase their support for the schools. There were few trends in the things people liked. They ranged from the university qualifications of Qallunaat teachers who bring expert knowledge to the community to the two most commonly mentioned, being pleased that computers are available and that Inuktitut is now taught. One person said:

The best thing about the schools here today is that they have more learning stuff than we did before, like they have computers.... They are also learning Inuktitut, their own language, which we didn't have when we were here. (6: M/30s)

Another said:

That Inuktitut part I like, and Home Ec., that part I like. And I want them to learn the computers, 'cause that's the only thing we're gonna rely on. Computers, and we're not gonna give them up any more since they're around. And that's the part I like – school having computers. (30: W/E)

Some gave more general answers, like this man in his 30s: *"Both schools. I think we're lucky to have schools, to learn, have something to do, learn about the Earth more as they grow"* (54: M/30s), and a woman in her 20s who was happy that students learn new things every day. A man in his 20s expressed satisfaction with teachers: *"I think the teachers are good so far and that's why students keep on going, and that's what I like"* (17: M/20s). Other specific things people

noted were the breakfast programs at the schools, the ability of students at the highschool to sign out, the possibility for some mature students to return to highschool, and the teaching of family relations in school.

A number of people made spontaneous declarations of support for the schools and the things people like probably work to increase their support. There were also many things desired by participants for schooling in the future.

4.1.3 Desired changes to the schools. Many participants described changes they would like to see made to schooling in Tuktulik. These may provide avenues to increase support of schooling. The most voiced changes were described in Chapter 3 – an increase in the amount of Inuit culture in the schools, the strengthening of Inuktitut (and English), the inclusion of elders, and higher academic standards. This section documents other changes thought important by participants and things with which they expressed dissatisfaction.

4.1.3a Discipline issues. Many participants voiced their dislike of the policy of suspending students. Some suggested alternative ideas for disciplining students and many advocated returning to stricter schools where respect would be a central feature characterizing relationships. These ideas were also discussed at the two School Improvement meetings. Concerns were voiced that it is not right to suspend students, that students, once suspended, would not want to go back to school, that they will ‘get the hang’ of just hanging around, and that they will get left behind academically. Alternatives to suspension suggested by participants included assigning chores, having the student help students with special needs, using peer counselling to help the student understand the effects of his or her actions, having the student do extra work or stay for detention, and inviting the parents in to hear what happened from the students’ peers. One person said he thought suspensions were fine, an Inuit teacher at the second School Improvement meeting was concerned that there might be increased violence or disruption without suspensions, and a community member said that if students are suspended work should be sent home with them. In the *Siviniksamut Illiniarniq* consultations concern was also expressed

about the efficacy and consequences of suspending students (Tompkins, 2004), and the *Nunavut Sivuniksavut* Students (2006) advocated in-school rather than out-of-school suspensions.

A number of comments were also made about process, with several people expressing concern that the defender in a fight sometimes gets suspended instead of the aggressor and that shy people sometimes get blamed and do not defend themselves. For general discipline one person said that if teachers talked to students peacefully it would help, preferably with the assistance of someone who could translate, and another said that students should be told that they did something wrong in a firm and pleasant way, without yelling. An elder said that teachers:

Should be more strict. Not just yelling. You know. Kids get tired of teachers yelling at them. Not strict; that's not strict. If you want to be strict you correct, with the words. To tell them you should be doing that, not this and that. Not just yelling at them.

Participants also voiced concern about students being sent home if they were late for class. At the time the highschool rule allowed students into class for 15 minutes after class started and gave teachers the power to send them home if they came later. One person said that when she was a student, they “*told us to come to school even if you're late – now they say 'if you're 5 minutes late go home.'* That makes me think that I'd get bored if I came late often and kept getting sent home.” She said she would get turned off and would find it discouraging. A man also said:

They have this when you're late you get suspended. If it was like that and I was going to school, I'd be late on purpose just so I would be suspended. And I think that's what's happening with some students nowadays. They don't want to go to school – they're late. That way they get suspended for the day or something. Why not if they're late put them in the corner for about 15 minutes, be quiet, and then put them back in class? Stay in class but put them in their seat afterwards. “Don't do it again. This is what happens every time you're late.” And they will learn not to be late that way.

This type of response, advocating punishment that does not remove a student from class, came up frequently when I asked people what alternatives there might be to students being sent

home or suspended. Many people said that the schools should be stricter in dealing with these problems. One said that *“there’s hardly any strictness. And I think strict people are the ones you learn from.... It’s good to have strictness in education.”* An elder said:

Nowadays kids in school don’t pay attention to anybody anymore because they’re not being disciplined the right way. As older kids in school, like in the older days, we were more disciplined. We were scared to say no to our teachers, like we respected them.

Many spoke of a lack of respect. This participant and several others referred to corporal punishment and acknowledged that teachers are no longer permitted to use it. Another elder also described how corporal punishment had made people *“think twice,”* but she said that *“thinking back sometimes you just hate that person in a way.”*

Putting the person in the corner was the most popular idea for dealing with lateness or minor discipline problems. An historical account of this punishment comes from Vallee (1967):

On the rare occasions when the teachers have had to punish a child, they have learned that such traditional [Qallunaat] punishments as forcing a child to stand in a corner are without any effect except to make all the children, including the deviant, laugh uproariously. One punishment we witnessed which turned out to be apparently effective was administered to a child who had laughed aloud at an inappropriate time: he was deprived of the privilege of being first to read the lesson. This was defined as a drastic punishment by the class. (p. 163)

It would seem like the Qallunaat practice eventually became common before being abandoned again. A school official at a School Improvement meeting was dismissive of the idea as unworkable, but I think the concepts involved must be paid heed. The corner solution was described as a way to express dissatisfaction with a person’s action without excluding him/her or interrupting her or his learning. Participants, in asking for schools to be stricter, may have been expressing the desire for educators to have higher expectations of students. One person said that her favourite teacher was strict and that it helped students to be determined. She said he inspired *iliranaqtaq*, a being afraid which entailed wanting to please the teacher and live up to his

expectations. As mentioned earlier, not having high expectations can have devastating effects on students (Watt-Cloutier, 2000). Punishment in the form of shaming is not an idea that I am personally comfortable with, but if suspension – tantamount to ostracism – is the alternative, shaming may be much more appropriate. Historically, Inuit used embarrassment to maintain harmony and it was a much less invasive intervention than ostracism (Bould, n. d.).

It is dangerous to look at discipline problems out of context, as they may be symptoms of systemic problems (NWT LASCE, 1982) and might most effectively be addressed by focusing on improving programming rather than by punishing students (Tompkins, 1998). That being said, in one community in Nunavut, Berger (2001) reported a strict discipline policy that included the use of suspensions for “bad behaviour.” Said to be a success by several Qallunaat participants, the community was reported to have been a part of the policy’s creation, although it was not clear what that involvement had entailed. In the present study, the issue of a discipline policy was raised in the second School Improvement meeting and it was confirmed that a policy passed by the DEA in 2002 was still active, although one teacher reported in an interview that it was not used. Discontent with policies and practices related to discipline issues may mean a reduced level of support of the schools from parents and other community members. Re-examining current policies and practice and acting on community input should increase school support.

4.1.3b Communication between school and parents. Though some people noted that communication had improved, the need for more communication between the schools and parents was mentioned by many participants. The desire for more information from the schools was voiced in several different contexts. A parent in her 40s said of the whole school program:

It’s rarely talked about that parents are not informed enough about their children, of what exactly the curriculum is, even though, in the beginning of the year, it’s up to us to find out. The first semester, it’s up to the child and the parent to look at the timetable and share. I mean, it’s already there, but how can you make it more welcoming, more attractive to the parent?... I wonder if some more information nights or something to help parents understand what’s actually happening at the school would be good.

A parent in his 40s, frustrated about frequent school closures for inservicing and meetings, said,

“a lot of times they don’t even tell us why they are meeting.” A parent in her 30s speculated about specific content: *“Dramas, I don’t know if they do dramas anymore. I don’t know if they do geography anymore. I don’t get to hear this stuff anymore.”* A parent in his 30s, concerned about social promotion, said, *“Sometimes I’ve been thinking ‘what are they doing over there?’ They’re just letting these kids pass just based on attendance or what? I’m not sure what’s going on over there.”* And a parent in her 40s wished that parents were notified by teachers about academic and general streams. She said there should be more communication between parents and teachers and suggested that *“maybe a superintendent should look into this ‘cause the parents don’t understand that they need to go to academic to go to university. Maybe there should be a document explaining how to get into university.”*

Apart from the likelihood that parents may not support the schools as much as they would if they were well informed, it is unlikely that parents who do not know what is needed to prepare for postsecondary schooling will be able to support their children effectively in preparing for it. There is, in fact, a set of three brochures called *Check it out!* to help students who are considering university, published by the Nunavut Department of Education Curriculum and School Services, described in the resources guide *Sanasimajut [prepared materials]: A summary of teaching and curriculum materials produced for use in Nunavut schools* (2005). Unfortunately, like other resources in Nunavut, information is not very helpful if it is not known about and accessible (Berger, 2001). I spoke casually with a young woman who had just graduated from grade 12, and with her mother. The young woman said she was interested in studying at college, but her mother said it would be impossible due to the cost of tuition and living expenses. They were unaware of resources available in Nunavut to help cover those costs. The need for communication about preparation for further studies, including information about the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students program, is great.

A recent graduate echoed the concern about lack of preparation for university. He felt that while other students might have received some guidance, he was labelled as someone headed for the workforce, and, by the time he had thought about university it was too late. He advocated preparing students early for elementary school, then in elementary school for secondary school,

and “*same thing in highschool, they should be prepared by that to go to university.*” He said that students need to know about the application process, tuition, and what organizations provide funding. I commented that without that knowledge you might not know how to do it; he replied, “*or you don’t even know about it!*”

The concern about communication from schools to parents was also raised at both School Improvement meetings. At the first, people speculated about why few community members were in attendance. Although a school official noted that the meeting had been announced over the local radio for several days in a row it was generally agreed that many people did not know of the meeting and a commitment was made to publicize the next meeting better. The second meeting had more community participants. The mission statement for the school written by one group included the sentence: “*the people of Tuktulik would be more involved if they are informed about the education system.*”

One participant suggested many means of improving communication between the schools and parents and did not place all of the responsibility on the schools. She said:

If a student was missing more than two days then maybe they can phone their parents and ask. So far I haven’t seen that, so I think that should improve. And also the communication. There can be interpreters in meetings; how they can improve the attendance, especially. When the language becomes a barrier then it doesn’t come across clearly to a parent or to a teacher especially, so I think parents should be more available and open to the teachers if they want to see their children succeed in education and graduating.

She also recommended a newsletter and a student council to improve communication and said that students fall through the cracks and drop out because of lack of support:

We just suddenly see someone walking down the street who should be in school, but why does the mother not speak up, or the dad? Or is the school not following up on them?... That’s why I said that I think there should be follow ups.... If there’s support it would be good.

This parent said that, though it is not easy to hear that her child is late, *“those are the things you want to hear too, because you want to fix it.”* She was upset that she first heard about absences at parent/teacher interviews long after they had occurred and she recommended events to help new Qallunaat teachers feel at ease and get to know parents.

Following the School Improvement meetings a staff member at the highschool expressed disappointment that the schools had been criticized for a lack of communication. She said that the school is active and often announces things on local radio. It may be that despite efforts to communicate with parents even more is needed. This agrees with Brody’s (1991[1977]) finding that Inuit desired more communication from government, even though “considerable time and effort” (192) had been spent in doing so. In one community in Nunavut, Tompkins (1998) worked to get good news about the school out into the community, with students reading their work on the local radio and creating a bilingual newsletter. In a study investigating the parental involvement in schooling of Cree parents in one community, Pashagumskum (2005) also found that parents wanted more communication from teachers.

4.1.3c Other desired changes. Some further specific school practices were reported that participants would like to see changed or introduced that may impact their level of support for the schools. Several people wanted health-related practices or content in the schools, including daily activity, healthy living, and education about sex and drugs. Smoking near schools was criticized. A coach to instruct sports was desired and participation in sports was said to help students in school because sports make you healthy. Several people said that physical education classes at the highschool should play more than indoor soccer. A man in his 20s said that students might attend highschool more if *“they have gym more often instead of paperworks. I guess all or mostly all school students would go to school. Just for the participation, and after that do something about paperworks.”* A man in his 40s was glad that there are more evening sports than before, but wished for even more. He said that it keeps kids out of trouble and wanting to be at the school. This resonates with an initiative in Kugluktuk where academic participation was successfully encouraged through sport, at the suggestion of the students (*Nunavut Sivuniksavut Students*, 2006). One woman who works in the elementary school said students like gym, but like

having fun and activities outside even more. One person at a School Improvement meeting said that academic subjects were more important than Gym. Crago (1992) wrote that Inuit parents value physical competence highly.

Both Inuit teachers who were interviewed and several participants asked for better resources or more curriculum in the schools. A teacher said that the lack of textbooks and other books in Inuktitut means that she has two jobs: *“We have to make everything! And we read math from textbooks, and translate into Inuktitut, or on the papers. Back and forth, back and forth. Every time after school.”* A woman in her 40s also expressed concern about photocopies being used at the schools instead of books. She felt that if there were books people who worked more quickly could work ahead and not get bored; she said it might result in more serious students and fewer dropouts. She also thought that some students who could be in university probably are not, *“cause they’re slowed down by others who are slower, and by lack of textbooks.”* The *Bilingual Education Strategy* (NDOE, 2004) calls for more resources and curriculum in both languages. Aside from the possibility that outdated or inadequate curriculum and resources might erode support for the schools, it clearly might hinder a teacher’s ability to teach and therefore hinder student learning in more direct ways as well. The lack of adequate curriculum and resources is a perennial problem (e.g., Berger & Epp, 2005; NDOE, 2005; NWT LASCE, 1982).

Together with better curriculum and resources several people advocated for more inservicing, and, in one case, an orientation for new Qallunaat teachers. One teacher was very happy with the two School Improvement meetings as they gave teachers at the elementary school a chance to get to know the teachers at the highschool. A student support assistant in the elementary school said that more training would have been helpful and that students would be helped if the two schools worked more closely together, and a teacher at the first School Improvement meeting suggested that if the Inuit staffs at both schools got a chance to work together it would be good. A number of people thought that opportunities for more professional improvement would be beneficial for teachers, although three people suggested that teachers should be well-prepared before starting and thought that closing schools for inservicing and

meetings was problematic. An elder at the first School Improvement meeting said that “*when you don’t understand the lifestyle and culture of students it’s a problem,*” and a man in his 50s said:

What they should do when they hire teachers is have an orientation period before they start teaching and tell them what to expect and what to do if they get into a situation that they can’t handle. Because if you don’t understand the culture you’re going to get angry, you know, because you don’t understand them and they don’t understand you. So they should be orientated before they start teaching.

The NWT LASCE (1982) said the same, and O’Donoghue (1998) and Berger and Epp (2005) found that Qallunaat teachers wanted help in learning to teach Inuit students. Aside from the implications for parental support of teachers and schooling, the possibility to work together and improve skills is likely to increase teacher effectiveness, as Tompkins (1998) demonstrated in one community in Nunavut.

A number of people wanted more personal attention for students in various ways. One woman in her 30s said that if she was a teacher she would be sure to let students know individually that she would work with them if they were willing, another that she would encourage students not to give up and to have hopes and dreams. She said that she would not put students down. One student recommended that students, teachers, and principals try to communicate more and said that some teachers only seem to help certain students. A woman in her 30s would like teachers to discipline students “*one-on-one, not in front of all the students, so they won’t be embarrassed.*” She said that sometimes teachers yell at students publicly.

Inuuqatigit (NWT ECE, 1996) and Crago (1992) also suggest a private approach to discipline.

Access was another concern raised by several people. It is not uncommon in Tuktulik for students to leave school in their teens and then to want to return in their late teens or early 20s. Neither the current Education Act nor the proposed one guarantees the right of students over 20 years of age to return (GN, 2007c; IDEA, 2005b) and for several years prior to the research these youth were denied access to the highschool. Several participants said that the school should allow students to return and some noted that it used to be, but was no longer, possible to gain a highschool equivalency certificate through Nunavut Arctic College in Tuktulik. One man in his

20s said that those responsible would get a better name if the school became accessible to returning students, and said: “*sometimes when they deny a student he may go crazy and think he has nothing else.*” This participant pointed out that in the south people would have the option of finishing highschool at night school, with no age limit, and felt that should be available in Tuktulik.

Another change desired by several people was the inclusion of practical experience in highschool. A man in his 50s remembered the trades training he had as a student in Churchill, and a man in his 30s wanted it to be possible to apprentice in trades at the school. A new trades school has been announced for Rankin Inlet as the Government of Nunavut sees it as a priority to train Inuit in building and related trades, but this is still far from Tuktulik. Two elders spoke of on-the-job training, in one case training students to be dental therapists and in another to work in offices. One recent graduate described his involvement in the Student North Apprentice Program (SNAP), a program he said is no longer available. It provided him with motivation to finish school and helped him prepare for further studies.

A number of other changes were suggested by a small number of people and they are simply listed here: report student abilities without exaggerating; bus highschool students; use crossword puzzles to learn word meanings and facts; have a daycare in the school; offer more training to DEA members; do not bribe students with rewards to do things that should be expected; increase fun activities in schools like activity or pyjama days; teach a third language (six people said this); teach how to function on committees and in organizations; teach more computer science or word processing; teach word processing in syllabics; teach musical instruments; build lockers to minimize losses, blame, and sometimes bullying; get more school supplies; get more space; say more prayers; build a preschool; reduce teacher turnover; implement a rotary system; stop bullying; create an Inuit university; implement an upgrade year in highschool to strengthen students’ English across content areas.

People will always have suggestions for how to make schooling better and the existence of such ideas alone does not signal a lack of support for the schools. It is, however, reasonable to expect that if the schools responded to the major changes desired by Inuit – more Inuit culture and

language, more involvement of elders, higher academic standards and higher expectations, more respectful and consistent discipline measures, and better communication between schools and parents, support for the schools would increase. These issues were not just mentioned in passing, they were often described with considerable passion.

It has been suggested in the literature that involvement of the community in decisions about schooling is critical for school success (Cummins, 1986; Harris, 1990; Harrison, 1993; Lipka, 1989; Watahomigie and McCarty, 1994), and the Nunavut Department of Education (2005) has agreed that parents should be actively involved in decision-making. A participant said as much – that elder and parent involvement in decision making would help students develop the confidence they need to succeed. Unfortunately, while the School Improvement meetings involved community members in setting priorities for the schools, as will be discussed in some detail later there was no real chance that the process would lead to change (Section 4.3.6). The failure of schools to respond to the wishes of the community must undermine school support.

4.1.4 Support and the purposes of schooling. Some of the support enjoyed by the schools came from the roles people saw them fulfilling or trying to fulfill. If schooling has purposes held to be important and are seen to be doing a good job in helping students (or the whole community) reach those goals they may enjoy stronger community support (Harrison, 1993; Lipka, 1989). Key among the purposes for schooling that generated support in Tuktulik was the school's role in preparing students to find wage employment, while the school's role in promoting and preserving Inuit culture was desired but was not seen as being fulfilled. These purposes for schooling are discussed here.

4.1.4a Preparation for wage employment. Various questions provided a window into the purposes of schooling, including asking what was most important to learn in school and what was the most important for students to be able to do when finished grade 12. Sometimes information arose spontaneously from a completely different question, like when I asked a recent graduate what the hardest thing about going to school was and he said getting up in the morning, but that he had done it in order to have a job so he could afford to hunt. The connection was

frequently made between schooling and wage employment. It will also be explored further in Section 4.5 with respect to its probable effect on student motivation. Here, I am interested in its effect in generating parental and community support for schooling.

One participant, when asked why he thought that English and math were the most important things in school, said: “*Only thing that can get us a job I think*” (62: M/20s). Another said that math, English, science, and in Nunavut, Inuktitut, were the most important subjects because they would expand the opportunity for finding a “*decent job.*” He did not finish highschool himself but said that he likes seeing others gain knowledge in a time when it is a lot better to be a graduate. Though it is not as easy as it has been to find work, he said it is much more likely for grade 12 graduates, even though the job might not be good (20: M/20s). This seemed to be the cornerstone of his support for schooling.

Many others also said that learning in school would help students to get a job after graduation and said that was, or would be, part of the way they would encourage their children to go to school. For example, a mother of a pre-school child said that she will tell him to stay in school and finish so that he will find more jobs (21: W/20s), another that she tells her nieces and nephews to stay in school to get better jobs (23: W/20s). One young woman said that she herself returned to school because she realized she “*wasn’t going anywhere*” without school (24: W/20s) and a successful young carver said that he had gone back because he did not expect to keep carving forever (M/20s). An elder said that “*education counts a lot when it comes to finding jobs*” (33i: M/E) and another, when asked what is most important for students to learn at school, said: “*I have two boys here; because I’m not gonna be here all in my life, I’m gonna be gone sometime, someday, so I want them to have a job. Like me; I’ve been working since I was 16*” (W/E). A teacher in the study said that she asks her students what they want to be when they grow up and tells them that they must try hard and do well in school – that it is important in order to get good jobs. Douglas (1998) wrote that people in the Nunavut community of Arctic Bay also saw schools as intimately connected to future work.

Some suggested not only that the schools should be preparing students for jobs but gave advice on how to do it better. Several said that job shadowing or co-op placements would help.

One elder said: *“If there’s a dental therapist they could have students in there too learning how to do his job”* and said that they should look into *“experiencing kids in different jobs”* (42i: W/E).

Another elder said: *“It would be very nice for kids to have work experience like in the workplaces, like in the offices and that. It would be very beneficial for students to learn that while they’re in school”* (52i: M/E).

While most of the comments suggested that graduating from grade 12 would be a stepping stone directly into the workplace, a number of participants named preparation for further training like Nunavut Arctic College and university as reasons to go to school. Preparation for further education may reflect the same goal of students finding a job or finding a better job. One parent said she wanted her children *“to graduate, have a good job, be rich – have everything that I never had,”* then said it would be good if they went to university and became doctors (51: W/20s). Another participant mentioned doctors and lawyers as the things that schooling should lead to (15: W/40s) and one person was explicit that school should get students *“ready for university.... So they could be ready for the south, if they want to go to university in the south”* (48: M/30s).

One person said clearly that preparation for finding work should be the main goal of the schools (1: W/50s) and another that the system of schooling *“impos[ed] on us is a working education. To be able to support yourself and work and be on your own, to learn how to live on your own at your own pleasure”* (68: W/50s). This participant was clear about the education system being imposed and it is clear from her words that the ultimate goal is independence, a typically EuroCanadian ideal. Others also saw the need for preparation for wage-employment or further studies as problematic. Here is part of one conversation:

P: What do you think is most important that kids learn from school?

What is important? It’s important that, a future for them. There seems to be no other way for a future than for now. They have to stay in school for future. Not our culture but White culture future.

P: So you think that it’s important that they learn those things to help them with getting a job and working?

Ya, ya. You know, to make a living. When we are gone, who's gonna look after them like that? They have to do it by themselves and learning from the school.
(67: W/E)

I detected some regret in the response and asked later in the interview if she had spoken with some sadness. She said there was much sadness, but that the situation in Tuktulik is better than in other settlements where young people speak only English.

Most people saw one purpose of schooling as a way to prepare for the wage economy but many said that graduating from grade 12 does not guarantee a job. Despite the current reality in Tuktulik, with too few jobs for all graduates, the connection between schools and wage-employment is probably the main reason for parental support of schooling and for parental encouragement of children to do well and stay in school. The schools, at least in their current forms, are not well-positioned to fulfill other roles and this may be why the connection of school to work was so salient.

4.1.4b Schooling to strengthen and preserve Inuit culture and language. As described in some detail in Section 3.1 and 3.2, very many people wanted an increase in Inuit culture and language in the schools. This can be seen as a call to make the preservation and strengthening of Inuit language and culture a central part, or central purpose of schooling. Positive comments regarding the use of Inuktitut in schools and the opportunity to take part in cultural activities in the past suggest that these activities engender support for the schools and could lead to an increase in support for the schools in Tuktulik in the future. Here I report some things participants described that are, or could become, part of the purpose of schooling, although they may be, or may need to be, embodied in ways of doing schooling rather than being taught explicitly in schools.

Several people spoke of the importance of learning how to live, in one case “*like normal Inuit*” (67: W/E) and in another “*in a good way*” (40i: W/E), intimating a harmonious family life. Others said it was important that children learn “*how to take care of other people*” (60: M/30s) and about “*being with friends*” (47: W/20s). One man described how he tells his preschool daughter that in school she is “*gonna learn how to be Inuk, one person in school with other kids.*”

That's what we're trying to teach her now" (26: M/30s). Another participant said it is most important that her daughter *"learns how to be around people and be a good girl and it's important that whatever she's taught that she takes part"* (38: W/50s), while an elder noted a decline in respect for parents after children enter school and wondered if schools could do more to help students be better people (37: M/E). Another elder said: *"Be pleasant and be nice to the students. They should be taught to be nice all together. To be pleasant and kind and understanding. That should be taught in schools"* (52i: M/E). Perseverance was also described as something to be taught (2: W/40s).

Many of these suggestions are congruent with *Inuit Qajimajatugangit*, the catchphrase used for traditional Inuit ways and values (Wenzel, 2004). They can all be considered elements of Inuit culture, and join the more visible elements like land skills described in detail in Section 3.1. In some cases participants were happy that they occurred to some extent in the schools and in others they were described as wishes. They are elements of the socialization of students, something that has typically been to Qallunaat rather than Inuit norms in Nunavut schools. Some of the examples above appear to be things that teachers in Qallunaat schools in the south might also claim as aims of education, but the ways that "being with friends," "taking care of people," or "being kind" would look in Inuit culture may be different than in Qallunaat culture. To teach living like a "normal Inuit" or being a "better person," certainly culture-specific concepts, will require basing schooling in Inuit rather than in Qallunaat culture. For many Inuit the idea of being smart is about these things, about behaving appropriately as an Inuit adult (Briggs, 1970, 1998; Stern, 1999).

Much of the support for the schools in Tuktuulik comes from the perception that schooling is needed to get a job, a better job, or at least to increase one's chances of doing so. Schools are also seen as places where Inuit culture, including ways of being, should be taught to a much greater degree. The lack of fulfilment of this role probably tempers support for the schools, support that could be increased if the school system took its role in supporting the vitality of Inuit culture seriously. Dorais (2001) reported ambivalence about schooling in Nunavik where, he wrote, people are critical of the lack of local content *and* are concerned that the schools do not

adequately prepare students for entering the labour market.

It might also help to look at the purposes of schooling from the perspective of what is seen as ‘successful’ education. In the literature, First Nations author LaFrance (2000) wrote that producing “socialized citizens who meet the needs of the community” (p. 103) would mean success, while Watt-Cloutier (2000) thought Inuit students should be prepared for the challenges of life “in their own time and place” (p. 114). Inherent in both of these conceptions is the need to make a living *and* to be culturally competent.

4.1.5 Expressed support of student learning. Community support for the schools is probably most important if it translates into children feeling supported in their learning and in knowing that their parents support school goals. Parental support of First Nations students was found to be important in students’ decisions to leave or to stay in school (Deyhle, 1992). Many practices were described that are evidence of parental and family support of student learning. In the interviews I asked participants if they did anything to support their children’s or other students’ learning. Very many things were described and I will report them shortly, but I fear that I may have missed hearing about many things. One parent who seemed at a loss to tell me anything she did to help her child learn said spontaneously, much later in the interview: “*I have a daughter who is very smart. She can sing lots of Qallunaatit songs and Inuktitut songs*” (W/20s). When I asked how her daughter had learned the songs she said, “*by me – she can learn very fast.*” It may be that to hear more of the many ways people in Tuktuulik support children’s learning I would have needed a whole series of questions on the topic. The question, asked directly, may simply have been inadequate to help people think about the sorts of things that I, as a Qallunaat, would immediately recognize as ways of supporting students’ learning. What I report here may be only a small sample of what people actually do.

Findings fell on a continuum from people who reported putting pressure on their children to do well at school to several instances where people had not been supported by their own parents to stay in school in the past. The overwhelming sense I had was that people wanted their children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews to do well. Many people said that they wanted their

children to do better than they themselves had done in school: “*That’s what I tell my kids to do – you can do better than me*” (10: W/30s). Many reported giving advice about how to act in school and encouragement about staying in school, as well as going to parent-teacher interviews, teaching things and helping with homework. Some samples will illustrate.

Some people, like this participant, described providing a basic level of support for students:

I don’t involve myself in the school anymore. None of my kids are in school anymore. I got two of my grandchildren. I just make sure they’re in school and I come home. I mean they’re doing pretty good.... I mean I try to keep in touch with how well they’re doing in school – that’s about it. (W/50s)

(Some months later I was in this participant’s home and saw her grandchild working on a book of learning games where different tasks were to be done. She had provided the book and I saw her translate the English instructions into Inuktitut for the child.) Many people said that they attend parent/teacher interviews but otherwise do not have much contact with teachers or schools. Many also said that they talked to their children regularly about school; for example:

I know myself what my kids are doing when they’re in the school and what expectations they have from the teachers. I try to talk to my kids every day, just to find out how are things in school, at lunch time and after school. (M/E)

Some mentioned specific things they do, like helping a child in grade 3 to have proper manners and “*to be well-rested and fed so she can concentrate*” (W/50s).

Some parents of preschoolers said that they wanted their children to do well in school and would help them, but were not certain about how they would help. It may be that with the actual situation some years in the future the question was framed in a very Qallunaat way – asking for certainty about something that cannot yet be known for sure (Brody, 2000). Other parents did detail what they would do to support a preschooler once school began, like the parent of a toddler who said that along with counselling his daughter not to get in trouble:

Before she goes to school I wanna do some planning first, like talk to her... tell her that her grandma's going to be teaching, my sister's teaching, my cousin's teaching. And make some new friends, and if you get into trouble just walk away from them. (17: M/20s)

There were a few participants without children who said that they did not talk to their nieces and nephews about school, but most people said they gave advice about how to act in school or encouragement about staying in school to their children or relatives. One said about his nephews:

I haven't talked to them, but I taught them – when you go to school, look at yourself. Don't look at anybody else's stuff. Do your work, and that's going to make you a perfectly good life if you do your work with your own opinion. But you can ask the teacher if you need help. (13: M/30s)

Advice to students included: listening to the teacher; paying attention; getting along with classmates; working hard; not fooling around; going to school to get a good job; reading; and being good to others. One parent said:

I tell them to listen to their teacher and behave. They won't behave they won't learn anything, if they're just like going around. Like other students. They won't learn. And I tell them, even [my partner] encourages my kids. If they don't behave in school they won't learn anything. That's what we tell them. (74: W/30s)

Many participants also reported receiving support and encouragement from their parents when they were in school, or, for those in school at the time of the study, encouragement to stay in school. One said that his mom wanted him to finish (49: M/20s), another that his parents had told him to go to school (46: M/20s), and one that her mom had “*encouraged us to go to school every day*” while her father had always made breakfast (51: W/20s). An elder also said that his parents had encouraged him to go to school during periods when they were in the community, though they lived in an outpost camp (52i: M/E), and one person said that her mother had encouraged her to go back after she missed months of school following the accidental death of a

close relative (64: W/30s). One recent graduate who trained for periods in the south described how critical support had been in his schooling:

The most important part of learning was my parents. They were supportive of me. They were always there when I was in need. And being able to eat. Not being hungry. Keeping in touch with my peers. It was hard though, to be on my own training, and away from home.... It's important to have support from your community, your peers, your parents especially. (73: M/20s)

A student who returned to highschool after an absence said that her mom is really trying to support her, that she is very aware about what her mom thinks of her work, “*and if she’s happy with it, it makes me want to do it more*” (24: W/20s). A recent graduate also said that his parents had been “*very supportive,*” waking him up, preparing meals and encouraging him to return to school when he left for a while. He said, “*I tried to do my best and they really helped me*” (56: M/20s). Another recent graduate said that having strict parents who enforced curfews and did not allow drugs had helped her to succeed (W/20s).

Many people described strong support of student learning, including telling a child that she *must* graduate from grade 12, stressing to a child that he should read because it is so important, and persuading/driving/encouraging a child to finish highschool because there is “*no choice*” – expanded opportunities come with a highschool certificate (20: M/20s). There were also many accounts of people teaching children a variety of things.

One parent said that reading English was important and she introduced it to her children before they began it in school, another indicated that she taught her daughter songs in Inuktitut and English, a third that he and his partner were teaching letters and numbers to their preschooler. A young mother said she read books and taught her child to write in English and Inuktitut, and an older mother that she helps her daughter to read Inuktitut. Help with comprehension of English was named by an elder who said that he also translates Inuktitut in his home. One parent said that his 7 year old daughter’s English skills were excellent. He said that they teach her and she learns from Qallunaat friends, so I asked if they did anything to help her learn Inuktitut. He said they speak Inuktitut and sometimes read with her: “*She likes to come to us and read with us, so we*

read with her” (M/30s). One parent started teaching her children English with the alphabet when they were very young and another read English and Inuktitut books to her children and had them sew. One parent said that her children ask all sorts of questions about everything and she and her partner answer them.

Participants also reported helping their children with homework or being helped by a parent, although homework was not reported to be given frequently. One person said he and his partner help if they can when asked, but that their children rarely ask, another that she did math homework last night with her 6 year old and he is good at it. A man said that there is a place at home where his daughter can do homework, and that they both try to help, although *“her Mom mostly helps”* (M/40s). I asked one person about her niece who I saw doing math worksheets during a previous visit: *“When she needs help she asks one of us, and if we think that she’s gonna do well we just leave her until she asks for more”* (36: W/40s).

Not all felt helped or able to help. I asked one man in his 40s if he talked to his children about school. He replied: *“Yes, yes, and we talk a lot about school. But I try helping them with their homework; I can’t do it, it’s too hard, too complicated.”* He said that he could help with English but not with math. Another parent also said that her son’s homework was too difficult for her to help with. One recent student said that it was sometimes very hard to do homework at his house because *“there’s lots of things going at the house at once, and it’s very complicating sometimes”* (M/20s), and a recent graduate said that he did not talk much to his parents about school, that he only had a little bit of homework, and that he did it in his own room.

There were many other eclectic signs of support for student learning, like an elder who spoke of being proud of her daughter, the first one in the family to reach grade 12, and a woman who told her 7 year old daughter that she would go to parent/teacher interviews every year, even though her daughter said it was not necessary because she was doing fine. When her daughter asked why she was always inquiring about how things were at school, she told her, *“Cause I’m your mother and I have to know too”* (7: W/30s). One parent reported home-schooling her daughter for one period a day because she was unhappy with the content and tone of a class at the highschool and felt it was important for her daughter to learn. One person flew to Iqaluit to

support a daughter who was struggling and considering leaving school, but who persevered and graduated from grade 12. Another parent told me that her daughter in grade 3 is:

Really into writing and spelling. So I ordered her two textbooks for math and English. She loves those. Those I wish kids would be able to take home, what I have at home. Two thick textbooks like that, all math one, and the other is all English. (11: W/30s)

Still another bought her daughter a toy laptop that sounds out letters in English to help prepare her daughter for the introduction of English in school, and an elder described praising a child to encourage her to do well even though her work was not too good. One participant asked me if I could talk to a former student of mine who had recently left school to try and convince her to go back.

Elementary or highschool photos and diplomas hang on the wall in some homes in Tuktuulik and I heard from two people about incentives they offered their children to stay in school and graduate, including skates, a snowmobile, and a bank account. Some participants showed their engagement in their children's schooling by describing what their children were learning, difficulties they were having in school, or the grades they had received in the past few years. One said:

There are times you feel you have to speak to the teachers, and you can't just ignore it. You know, you can't just let it be – slide by you. Whatever happened up there, you know, you hear about it, you go there. (W/30s)

While there was much support of student learning described by participants there were also signs that this was not always the case and a desire was expressed by some for parents to do more to support their children's learning. The participant quoted above, who said that she would support her daughter more than she herself was supported, said, “*my parents weren't strict at all with my schooling*” (W/30s). She said that her father did not like schooling because it made her lose her Inuit culture. Her one sister who continued in school, she pointed out, had left the community 30 years ago and had not returned.

Deyhle's (1995) finding comes to mind that, for some Navajo, family relations and proximity to home are a greater measure of success than academic achievement or job status.

Several other participants related stories that might indicate a lack of support for student learning or for schooling, but it is difficult to 'read' the reasons for the actions. In one case a participant said that her mother had not trusted her when she said that the math teacher had kicked her out of school; in another parents had not listened when their son told them about abuse by a teacher. One person was kept out of school because she was being bullied, another following an illness, and another to do chores. Without access to the parents' points of view it is impossible to know what motivated parents' decisions, though it was evident that the participants were often unhappy with the decisions. These examples were from the past, but it would be unsurprising if the traditional Inuit prioritization of collective well-being and family ties did not sometimes still collide with the Qallunaat schooling demand for punctuality and attendance (Douglas, 1998).

Much support was voiced for student learning. Acknowledging that parents want their children to succeed may help educators to respectfully build bridges to parents, further increasing that support.

4.1.5a The desire for more parental support. More parental support and involvement was named as desirable by several people and arose as well at the School Improvement meetings. One parent said she felt welcome but that it would be awkward to just show up at the school. She hoped that occasions would be created to facilitate parental involvement in the schools. A recent graduate and parent of preschoolers discussed the strong support that he had experienced from his parents, but agreed that not all students have that support. He said:

I think we have to find a way to support them. Having, I don't know, parent gatherings. These parents have to be more involved. They have to show support. Some of these parents don't have education themselves so it's also their issue too probably. They have a hard time accepting that they don't have an education and they might feel shy to go to an event like that. Like to go to the school. They might be a bit shy from other parents.

An Inuit teacher at the first School Improvement meeting called for more support from parents and more teamwork between staff and parents. She said that *“it gets difficult without parents’ support”* and said that though she invites parents to her classroom they do not come. In an interview a teacher was concerned that at the last parent/teacher interviews she only met parents from 11 of her 17 students, leading her to speculate about whether giving report cards at the interviews would help to bring everyone in. Other participants also noted that *“parents need to teach their kids too, not just the teachers.... Parents need to be there too - I need to be there too.”*

Inuit teachers and school support workers who took part in the study wished for more parental support for student learning. One said that support with homework would be good as there are always excuses for why it is not done and several mentioned low turnouts at parent/teacher interviews as problematic. One said: *“I find that kids wish that every parent would come.... A child still expects, at least come and see what they do. That’s all they ask is for parent interaction.”* One elementary school teacher said she sees only about 60% of her students’ parents, and at the highschool, of over 100 students one person said between 10 and 15 parents come. She acknowledged that there are sometimes other activities going on that compete with parent/teacher interviews, but said:

It doesn’t take all night, but I see that a lot; only a few parents do come. To me, it seems like they don’t care about their students. But I bet they do too, in their certain ways, but I just look at it that way.

This participant suggested that the parents in fact do care about their children, something that I think is very likely. Her close association with the Qallunaat school and its discourses may have led her to her initial judgement.

I have frequently heard Qallunaat teachers interpret parents’ absence at parent/teacher interviews as a lack of concern for the child’s progress or for the child. I have heard it in southern Canada too. It has also been documented amongst former teachers from Nunavik (Fuzessy, 2003). Gibson (1993), however, documented highly motivated and successful Punjabi students in a

California highschool where “teachers seemed to assume that for children to excel academically their parents had to participate directly in school affairs” (120); though the Punjabi parents valued schooling greatly they did not become directly involved. Inuit parents should not be expected to perform the roles dictated by western norms (Pashagumskum, 2005, p. 8).

There are reasons to suspect that some Inuit parents might support their children’s schooling thought they do not often take an active role in it or attend parent/teacher interviews. Historically, once a teacher was identified parents did not interfere as to do so would have been disrespectful (Okakok, 1989). Qallunaat teachers’ communication style may intimidate some Inuit parents and going to school to be told of the problems one’s child is having may be very uncomfortable (Douglas, 1998). The need for parent/teacher interviews might not be apparent to all parents; for instance, going to the interview be told that everything is fine might seem unnecessary. This was in fact reported to be the view of a 7 year old who told her mother that she need not go to the meeting because all was well (her mother went anyway). In a First Nations context Wilson and Napoleon (1995) noted that facing authority and adversity is difficult for parents and that parents may need personal contact and a reason for coming.

It is likely that parents will become more involved in schools when the involvement becomes more meaningful (Reyner, 1992). Battiste (1987) reported an increase in parental involvement with Mi’kmaq control of schooling and McCaskill (1987) documented in-depth parental involvement in Akwesasne, where parents took part in determining educational policy. Corson (1995a) also noted many benefits when parental involvement took the form of decision making. Tompkins (1998) lamented the tendency to blame student underachievement on lack of community involvement, writing that the actions of schools largely determines the level of community support and involvement; for instance, increasing communication from the schools might encourage parents to become involved (Agbo, 2003). Watt-Cloutier (2000) wrote that Inuit parents are told that they must be involved but are not sure what they should do and have trouble making sense of what the schools are trying to do. It would also be easier for parents to be involved if the things asked for by the schools did not in some cases necessitate relinquishing Inuit values (Douglas, 1998).

One parent who was very supportive of schooling detailed many things that she did to help her primary-aged children in school and said she often asks them what they want to become when they grow up. Her daughter's career choice would involve many years of higher education, and she reported saying to her daughter: "*But you're going to spend all your time in school!*" *That's what I tell her.*" She thought that a career involving a 4 year university degree would be more fitting, and I was unable to determine just what it was about the long time in school that was unattractive. It may be that there is so little experience with postsecondary education that the idea of 6 or 7 years of it after highschool is almost unimaginable. This situation was an unusual one.

Several parents said they enforced bedtimes as ways they tried to help their children with school, and some said that other parents ought to do so as well. The area is one of contention. Brody's (2000) description of a conflict between Inuit parents and Qallunaat teachers in Pond Inlet in the 1970s cautions that for Inuit the autonomy of the child has been paramount and asking Inuit parents to enforce bedtimes might be deeply uncomfortable for some. One person said: "*Especially the kids that are a little bit older, they don't want to be kinda listening to us telling them to go to sleep.... They're trying to come up with any excuse to stay out another hour*" (M/40s). One parent said that her young children go to bed by 10:30 pm and it helps them get up on time for school (W/30s), but another that she tries to have the kids go to bed, though "*when I can't reach them, they're on their own*" (W/E). This must be understood in the context of a small, isolated community where people know each other and where kids might play from one end of town to another without telling anyone where they are going (Brody, 1991, p. 215). I saw another parent, who said in an interview that she tries to have her son in bed at a reasonable time, arrive at a spontaneous game of street baseball to ask her son to come home. Some parents, uncomfortable or not, think about bedtimes and try to have their children rested for school the next day.

There were, however, people ranging from 5 years old to 25 years old at the baseball game, and it went on when I left near midnight, under a streetlight and with some light still in the sky. I remember a grade 7 student when I taught in Tuktuulik who was having trouble staying awake at the beginning of the day, late in the spring. When I asked her what time she had gone to bed the night before some of her friends said gleefully that she had not. The school's need to have

rested students may collide strongly with the Inuit valuing of autonomy (Brody, 2000; Douglas, 1998), and with a tendency to become “upside-down” (Stern, 2003) when ‘nights’ bring little or no darkness. Reluctance to set bedtimes or difficulty in enforcing them should not be equated with a lack of concern or support for education, though schooling, in its current form, may suffer.

Like in other places, a parent’s inability to help or effect a desired change should not be viewed as a lack of interest or support. One participant described how her mother was called in to the office and admitted to the principal that she did not know how to deal with her daughter. As a 14 year old she said it startled her and she tried to do better. Her mother continued to wake her up, saying, “*you said you’d go to school, get up right now.*” But she was not always able to get up. In her words:

This was the time in my life that I was starting to experience, you know, outside life. Just starting to be on my own at fourteen; I mean, not on my own, but out there, you know. Like, we wouldn’t be allowed, we could play outside all we want when we were kids right – but there’s a time in your life when you realize there’s life out there – and you want to be out there you know. You leave behind your school.

This participant certainly said she was supported by her mother who wanted her to stay in school. That she did not choose to do so does not change that.

Participants described many ways that they support student learning or were supported in their learning. These ranged from providing basic support to teaching school content knowledge and helping with homework. Sometimes support was given but not received, and sometimes parents felt unable to provide the support that they wanted to give.

4.1.6 Parental & community support for schooling: Further discussion

The literature suggests that for student success in schools it is necessary that parents and communities support schooling (Cummins, 1986; Lipka, 1989). Ogbu (1992) theorized that, while expressing support for schooling, parents from minority groups might not pressure their children in the same way that majority-culture parents do.

I found evidence of good school experiences but also that many people had poor experiences in the schools in Tuktuulik and elsewhere, including suffering widely-acknowledged sexual abuse and being subjected to punishments that induced fear and hatred. There is also much to suggest that the schools are currently seen as designed to fulfil only one of the two main purposes expressed as valid aims of schooling. Most support for schooling was based on the perception that schooling is needed to secure better paying jobs in the wage economy, but the need for schools to also play a role in the preservation and promotion of Inuit culture and language was resoundingly expressed. Despite this lack, and despite the many things participants wished were done differently at the schools, it is clear that in direct and indirect ways there is much support for the schools and for student learning in Tuktuulik.

This support may not be the same as the “pressure” Ogbu (1992) wrote about coming from some EuroAmerican parents, although some elements of support were described that are similar, such as helping with homework, reading to children, teaching songs, words and the alphabet, and enforcing bedtimes. While the desire for children to do well in school is widespread, it is problematic to expect Inuit to “pressure” their children like some Qallunaat parents do. There are signs that some Inuit parents have changed basic patterns of communicating with their children to prepare them for success in school, while the schools have done little to adapt to Inuit culture (Crago, 1992; Crago, Annahatak & Ningiuruvik, 1993). Expecting Inuit parents to pressure their children as some Qallunaat parents might is to expect them to be like Qallunaat.

This is not to say that parents have no responsibility, or that children do not need a solid foundation and good care to thrive. Of course they do, and some issues around care are discussed in Section 4.4. It is to say that parental support of schooling and of student learning probably *ought* to look different in an Inuit community than in a predominantly Qallunaat one (Douglas, 1998; Pashagumskum, 2005). And schooling ought to look different too. If educators are interested in increased levels of success for Inuit students the focus should be on creating schools that are responsive to community wishes, a move that will result in more support and parental participation (Tompkins, 1998).

If educators wish to increase parental attendance at parent/teacher interviews, for example, they may need to explore what is important about the process and how it could be made meaningful to those parents who choose not to come. Rather than seeing low parental turnout as lack of support for students or schooling, it could be seen as a lack of commitment to the process of parent/teacher interviews, or as a sign of barriers to parents showing up. It might also be remembered that students can be academically successful with very low levels of direct parental involvement with the school (Gibson, 2005). Educators have a better chance at being respectful, and a real chance at reassessing typical Qallunaat school routines to see if, and how, they might be valuable in Inuit settings, if they can think critically about what is often taken for granted.

Many parents in Tuktuulik may support schooling, yet put less pressure on children to do well in school than some parents in Toronto or Vancouver. Rather than focus on this difference, or hope that Inuit parents will act like some Qallunaat parents, it might be more productive to focus on what is important to parents in Tuktuulik, and what could be done differently in the schools.

4.2 (In)congruence between school and home

Cultural difference theory holds that communication, social, and learning style differences between indigenous students and school environments serve to slow learning and affect school success (Erickson, 1993; Macias, 1987; Vogt, Jordan & Tharp, 1993). Work has been done in Inuit contexts that supports the contention that Inuit culture, including communication styles and preferred modes of teaching and learning, differs from Qallunaat culture and the school culture found in most Qallunaat classrooms (Crago, 1992; Crago, Annahatak & Ningiuruvik, 1993; Lipka, 1990, 1991; Okakok, 1989). Ignoring the difference can lead to poor school performance (Crago, Eriks-Brophy, Pesco & McAlpine, 1997). Crago and Eriks-Brophy (1994) noted that apart from unsuccessful educational outcomes, cultural differences can lead to deficit interpretations by teachers, extra strain for students, and “a pressure for assimilation imposed by teachers upon the children and their families” (p. 44). Williamson (1989, p. 168) called the results of schooling in the north “shameful,” with discontinuities resulting in slowed linguistic, social,

and mental development of students.

While the current study was not designed to rigorously test cultural difference theory, I did ask questions about how participants learned to do things outside of schools and what made someone a ‘favourite teacher.’ I was also attentive to things that I saw and heard that suggested a lack of fit between people’s school and home experiences. In the community sphere people often learn in ways that are significantly different from Qallunaat ways. As I did not spend a great deal of time inside the schools, I cannot say with certainty how much Tuktulik schools currently differ from the Qallunaat school model that was superimposed on Inuit a half century ago (Douglas, 1994). There are, however, reasons to believe that Qallunaat teachers are unprepared to teach in a manner that responds to Inuit students’ culture, as will soon become apparent in my discussion. The lack of congruence between school and home culture probably impacts student learning directly. It must impact student learning indirectly too, as it sends the message that a foreign culture’s ways are better, thus devaluing Inuit culture (Cummins & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988; Møller, 2005). Here I present some of the areas where lack of congruence was apparent.

4.2.1 Some diverse areas of incongruence. The Inuit value of autonomy (Briggs, 1970; Brody, 2000) and the consequent reticence of some Inuit parents to make decisions for their children was evident. This may impact students’ ability to attend school consistently and punctually, a matter of concern in Qallunaat schools (e.g., Berger, 2001; Douglas, 1998; Maguire & McAlpine, 1996). Sometimes this value was shown subtly; for example, when I asked a parent if she was confident that her daughter would do well in school. She said: “*I’m confident. It’s them having to want to. I hope they feel that they have to go to school every day*” (11: W/30s). Another parent, who said it is the parents’ responsibility that children are in school, also said: “*As well as the child has to want to do it. Or it’ll be disrupting other kids in the school you know*” (28: M/40s).

I also observed a number of instances where parents did not act to ensure that their children were in bed early on a night before school. In one instance a grade 4 student was up until after 1:30 am. In the month of May when there is little darkness I encountered a spontaneous

street baseball game involving children and youth that carried on past midnight, a soccer game in the middle of town at 1:30 am, and a group of children on top of a nearby hill at 5:30 am, awake all night. One parent came to the baseball game and asked her child to come home, and one participant said that she enforces bedtimes for her young children, but it was apparent that many parents do not. Again, a historically strong Inuit value is to not interfere with another's choices (Briggs, 1970; Brody, 2000), and staying up all 'night' in the spring and summer is still common (Brody; Stern, 2003). A child:

is expected to make her own judgements, take her own initiatives, be clear about her own needs and preferences.... 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.... This belief is fundamental to the Inuit way of being in the world. (Brody, pp. 14, 31)

Asking parents to intervene, while understandable from a Qallunaat school perspective, can put Inuit parents in a precarious position (Douglas, 1998).

Punctuality and attendance were of concern to Qallunaat teachers in the highschool and one response, sending students home who came to class more than 15 minutes late, was documented in Section 4.1.3a. Without an appreciation of the Inuit value regarding autonomy and the circumstances in many communities that make adherence to the school schedule difficult, it is more likely that Qallunaat educators' responses to lateness and poor student attendance will be ineffective and even disrespectful (Berger, Epp & Moeller, 2006).

One of the most damaging potential consequences of Qallunaat teachers not understanding Inuit culture is that they may mistakenly believe that Inuit parents fail in their parenting (Brody, 2000, p. 30; Vallee, 1972, p. 36), thus closing doors and the possibility of cooperation with parents. One participant described how this might occur. She said that Inuit and non-Inuit cultures are very different:

Inuit are very patient, even though they don't really need to sometimes. But that's one of the biggest lifestyles we learn is patience, so I think that can be misinterpreted.... If I didn't know how to speak English and you were my

daughter's teacher and if I ignored something because I didn't know – even though I had the best interest in my child – and it would be seen that way, that I don't care at all. Even though it's not that way. It's the barrier; it's the communication barrier. (W/40s)

These areas of incongruity may cause tension or misunderstanding that affect learning. An ability to identify them as cultural differences might help Qallunaat avoid misjudgement that threatens to devalue students and their parents (Erickson, 1993). Incongruity in learning style might affect learning more directly.

4.2.2 Incongruence in learning style. The most salient way that Inuit experience was incongruent with typical Qallunaat school practice was in the area of learning style. I asked most participants a question about what they liked to do in their 'free time' and then asked how they had learned to do it. Most people did not learn to do things in the typical ways students are expected to learn in Qallunaat schools. I provide many quotes in order to illustrate the strength and consistency of the difference:

P: How did you learn to carve?

By watching. Nobody ever taught me how to do the shaping. I only did my own shaping by watching my father carve.

P: I know that you have a daughter who carves. Did you teach her, or did she learn by watching?

She only watched, like I did. And also I've got a 12 year old kid who's starting to do carvings by himself – I've never taught him how to do this or do that....

P: You draw as well, don't you?... And there are people in your family who draw too.... How did they learn to draw?

By themselves. (W/E)

A young person said he learned to carve from his brother: "*I was watching him. I think I was around 7 or 8 years old*" (25: M/20s). Another man said:

I learned it from the carvers.... Not this generation, but when I was growing up I saw it, and how can I try and do that. And I started grabbing just little stones, and I wanted to try. So I started trying out with a file, so I did. It took me a couple, couple, more like four or five hours to finish that soapstone. And I got hooked on it after I sold it. (6: M/30s)

Many people described learning to hunt in a similar way, from watching and taking part, with a limited amount of verbal instruction. Asked how he learned to hunt, a man said:

I used to follow going out hunting, my father-in-law... watch what he was doing. I learned from that. And other people. Some other people tell us, some guys go hunting. Do what they have to do to try and get the animal. Have to be very careful; in order to get the animals, you have to be quiet, or they will run off or swim off or fly off.

P: What about carving? How did you learn how to carve?

Mostly from watching. Then I tried. (18: M/40s)

Sometimes I asked whether people were told how to do something to test what I thought I was hearing (that most of the learning occurred through watching and doing):

P: How did you learn how to carve?

I learned it from my uncle when I was watching him doing carvings and I started. That was late 70s.

P: Did he tell you how to do it?

No, I just watched. (27: M/40s)

When I asked one elder how he learned to build igloos: “*Oh, by watching his uncles, who were hunters, and he was raised by his two uncles He was saying that he watched them build igloos a lot, when he was growing up*” (33i: M/E). The idea of repeated observation or practice arose often. As well as watching them “*a lot,*” this participant also said that “*it takes experience.*”

Balikci (1970) wrote that Netsilik Inuit boys' play imitated their fathers' hunting and fishing gestures, and that learning proceeded with absolutely *no* formal teaching and almost no questions asked. Learning through watching and copying the actions of others is not limited to the past. One man said he had recently shown two men how to skin a caribou: "*I taught them right there, like what I am doing; you know, just follow me*" (27: M/40s). And two recent grade 12 graduates in their early 20s said they had learned to hunt from their father: "*We would go out with him when we were growing up, just seeing how he's hunting, just by watching. Mostly from watching.*"

A learning process Stairs (1991) called "backwards chaining" that relies heavily on careful observation was also described. A young woman said that she made her first parka last year in a sewing group: "*A lady cut the pieces and I sewed it*" (19: W/20s). For her second parka, she cut the pieces herself. Another woman also said she learned to sew in this way (31: W/50s). In backwards chaining the entire procedure is learned in stages by watching an expert, with the more difficult parts attempted last.

These answers were typical of almost all participants. One person found the answer so obvious that she found the question bizarre. When I asked her how she learned to sew, she said: "*What do you mean*" (35: W/50s)? She had, of course, learned from her mother by watching and doing. In the home and community spheres Inuit learned, and still often learn, by watching and doing. Several participants described learning skills on the job. In one case a woman learned English from the nurses at the Heath Centre, "*listening and learning,*" while she worked as an interpreter. As did many others, she emphasized that, "*until today I'm still learning.... Also language. Everything*" (W/E). One elder was very clear that there was little direct teaching used in the community sphere when he was young:

By looking. We weren't taught. We watched our fathers; when we went out with them we watched our relatives. How they did things. They didn't try to say to us this is how anything.... Things like building an igloo I learned how to do it by watching.... Like the cracks; the guy was building the igloo he had to fill the holes. You learn by looking at it. (M/E)

He then connected the very different teaching methods he encountered as an adult at Nunavut Arctic College in Iqaluit with his inability to complete the program:

I found it more difficult when I went to college. In a college environment you listen to the instructor talking away all day long, never writing anything on the board most of the day. I found that difficult, myself, because I wasn't too sure what is it that I was supposed to do. I found it more difficult in a college environment than it was in a regular school.... Hands-on I was very good at. And throughout the course, the hands-on.... But when it came to paperwork... (M/E)

This account speaks to the difficulty of needing to learn in an unusual way. It also suggests that support or guidance in learning to learn in this foreign way might have made a difference. La France (2000) suggested that First Nations students needed mentorship in learning to navigate the university environment and the special ways of teaching found there. It is particularly interesting that the participant mentioned that the instructor talked “all day long.” Inuit grow up learning by listening to others’ stories (Brody, 2000), but that learning takes place in meaningful contexts. It may be that if teachers could create those contexts for their students that much learning could in fact take place through teacher talk.

A theme that occurred in many interviews was autonomy in learning. Several people said that when they learned to sew they did it themselves and asked for help only if they made a mistake. One said that she learned how to sew from her mother: “*If I ask her if I’m making a mistake she would tell me to make it like this or that*” (31: W/20s). One said she had watched her mother, but had learned herself. I asked if she asked for help if she made a mistake and she said no, she just left it and came back later (47: W/20s). Another woman also watched her mother: “*I used to watch her sewing. I never asked her anything. I just watched her. Behind her back I tried it and I could do it*” (64: W/30s). Even more independent, a young woman who made unique handicrafts said that she learned herself, just by trying (55: W/20s). Stairs (1994a) reported that Inuit, when asked how they learned to sew or hunt, commonly say that they learned themselves.

It was not only land skills that were reported to have been learned largely without being ‘taught.’ One person learned midwifery “*just from experience*” and another talked about the self-

esteem that grew from taking part in daily activities like fetching water and holding dogs while they were fed. Doing these things, although scary for a young child, taught her that she was capable. One participant reported learning to read Inuktitut many years ago after only very cursory instruction:

The Bible, you just learned by yourself you know. The preacher just tells you all what they sound like, what they mean. That's very easy actually. You learn in a day, you know. So you can read in a day. (28: M/40s)

In those days no Inuktitut was taught in school and the high rate of literacy in the eastern Arctic, even before schools, was due almost wholly to people learning to read in order to read the Bible (Dorais, 1995; Vallee, 1972).

It was, however, not just in the past that these orientations to learning existed. A woman reported having written a successful funding proposal after watching a researcher with whom she worked, and a recent grade 12 graduate who wanted to start a business himself said that he would not take further training but would learn it himself. An elder, in recommending an experiential approach to teaching in schools, even challenged the distinction between life and school. She said: “*Life is all education. Like by doing it experientially, life is all school*” (43i: W/E). Another elder said that to learn “*you have to live it*” (33i: M/E). Yet another elder said the education authorities should look into:

Experiencing kids in different jobs. ‘Cause you learn by hearing and seeing, not just by writing. Try to experience; it's the best education for anybody instead of just writing and hearing about it. Experiencing it would teach the person better. Those are the kinds of educations that need to be put up here. (42i: W/E)

The Nunavut Department of Education (2005) recognized that Inuit often learn through observation and practice, wrote that pedagogy must reflect this, and that job shadowing should be encouraged.

While the overwhelming majority of descriptions of learning were of learning by observation and by doing, a few instances were given of typical school learning. One Inuit teacher

said that reading a lot about ‘whole language’ had helped her to teach using a ‘whole language’ approach, and a young man said that in a recent course he had enjoyed the blend of hands-on and book learning. He said that while some people learn best by ‘hands-on,’ others learn best from reading (46: M/20s). One woman said she learned a lot about her job by reading manuals (72: W/40s), one that she learned a lot about herself by reading self-help books, and another that she liked English in school because she got to write essays and enjoyed “*practically doing something*” (11: W/30s). There is no doubt that Inuit can and do learn from texts and in typical Qallunaat school ways. Several participants said clearly that Inuit students should be challenged to learn in different ways, but this of course does not mean that they should only, or mostly, be expected to learn in typical Qallunaat school ways.

In order to prepare students for post-secondary education it is of course necessary to help students learn from complicated texts and from teaching styles like lectures. Not to do so would be to hold low expectations of students, a damaging state of affairs (Watt-Cloutier, 2000). Expecting students to learn in these ways by default, without teaching them how to do so, is pedagogically unsound. It is like teaching a second language as if it were a first language, a proposition that leaves students academically disadvantaged (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988a).

For many Inuit, epistemology – what counts or qualifies as valid knowledge, or how we come to know things – may be different than it is for most Qallunaat. The heavy weight placed on experience and on learning through observation and doing suggests the necessity of personal involvement in learning. That Inuit epistemology privileges personal experience appears in the literature (e.g., Briggs, 1970; Møller, 2005; Roepstorff, 2003; Stevenson, 2006a), perhaps most clearly summed up by Pauloosie Angmarlik (1999), an Inuit elder, who said: “I never say what I have heard, I only tell what I have experienced, because I do not want to lie” (p. 273).

Several older participants in this study made comments suggesting a similar orientation to knowledge. One described the troubles with an igloo built of snow that is too dense, commenting that if the wind is not blowing the air is bad inside. Through an interpreter, he said: “*It’s a fact because he’s gone through that – he’s experienced it*” (33i: M/E). Two other participants claimed not to know much about what was going on in the schools because they do not go into the schools

often (1: W/50s; 67: W/E). Although it turned out that both had substantial knowledge, they were reticent to claim it without first-hand experience in the schools. This mirrors participants in Møller's (2005) study who were reluctant to claim knowledge of tuberculosis that did not come from personal experience. It is an orientation to knowledge that does not claim to be universally applicable (Castellano, 2000), in stark contrast to Qallunaat 'scientific' knowledge. Knowledge, then, may not be just 'information' that can easily be transmitted; opportunities to learn may need to be created (Ingold, 2004, p. ix). It is not clear whether, or to what extent, the encroachment of western literacy has changed the Inuit orientation to knowledge, or whether younger Inuit might have different beliefs about knowledge and how to gain it than older Inuit.

Whatever their thoughts about what counts as knowledge, one participant described a consequence of ineffective teaching that, in terms of seriousness, goes far beyond failing to learn a concept or failing a course. He said that even people with jobs need to hunt and all hunters need to know how to survive: "*A lot of young people die out there 'cause nobody teaches them. They tell them, they don't show them how*" (28: M/40s). While the stakes may not be as high with fractions or with 5 paragraph essays, it is very clear that Inuit have learned, often prefer to learn, and value learning in ways that differ sharply from the often abstract and textually mediated ways that are commonly found in Qallunaat teachers' classrooms in Qallunaat schools (Stairs, 1994a). While it would be erroneous to only offer Inuit students hands-on, practical tasks, which would signify low expectations (Korhonen, 2006; Watt-Cloutier, 2000), it is a grave disservice to Inuit students to teach them exclusively in ways that do not honour their expected learning patterns. With no territory-wide orientation or inservice professional development for new Qallunaat teachers, they are often left wondering how to best teach Inuit students (O'Donoghue, 1998; Berger & Epp, 2005), a situation that must result in lower student achievement.

I asked a woman, who said that she had struggled and felt "*caught in the middle*" in highschool, if she thought an 'Inuit' style of learning could be incorporated into the highschool. She said: "*Maybe if they show it and teach it, it would be more helpful. 'Cause if we don't understand it we don't see it – it seems like there's nothing there in your head*" (47: W/20s). Another woman, a recent grade 12 graduate, said:

If they had more hands-on work or different ways of teaching it would probably help the students better. Especially it would lessen the language barrier because when you're showing someone how to do something, if you spoke only French and I only spoke Inuktitut, you could show me how to do something just by watching and then I could try it. (66: W/20s)

A few people also mentioned “paperwork” as being a disincentive for students, with one noting that it is a very different way to learn than in the past. He also said that testing might keep some people from attending school due to a fear of failing, as he, himself, had avoided school sometimes because he was “*afraid to fail my test.*” The western habit of testing is seen as inappropriate by many indigenous people (Corson, 1992b; Stairs & Bernhard, 2002), although some Inuit are calling for benchmark testing to measure the progress of students and identify weaknesses (IDEA, 2005a).

It is possible to use an approach to teaching and learning in Nunavut schools that respects the learning strengths of many Inuit students. One person said that a favourite part of school was working in the shop. While the shop teacher was Qallunaat, the student learned to make traditional tools by watching an elder who was also present (34: M/20s). A teacher also described how she teaches young students in a way that honours the ways Inuit usually learn:

Inuit people we watch and learn.... That's what I do always. Do the art first. Art. And then start teaching the students. Because when I'm just talking and talking they don't learn. Because they're only small students. So we don't, me, as a teacher, I do art first, from the beginning, and then I start using that art and then teaching the students each of my themes.

She also described her advice to a classroom assistant who might be called upon to teach in the next few years due to the imminent retirement of several Inuit teachers:

“You have to watch me and observe me and to learn.... You have to watch me. You have to learn the songs....” They've been in school just to help the teachers, but they have to learn first. I mean watching and observing and learning.

Inuit teachers are at an obvious advantage in terms of teaching in culturally appropriate ways, although Dull (in Nelson-Barber & Dull, 1998) noted that learning to teach in a western teacher education program can ‘educate’ indigenous teachers away from their natural ability to do this. Lipka (1990) also noted that indigenous teachers may be negatively judged by their non-indigenous colleagues and supervisors who may not understand the values embedded in their methods of teaching. For these reasons it cannot be taken for granted that Inuit teachers will feel prepared and able to teach Inuit students in culturally appropriate ways.

Unfortunately Qallunaat teachers in Nunavut do not currently receive an orientation to Inuit language, culture, or learning styles, except in some communities as decided locally (Berger & Epp, in press). This leaves them unprepared to teach Inuit students and less likely to be effective and respectful. Furthermore, with high Qallunaat teacher turnover, there are few Qallunaat teachers who remain in Nunavut long enough to learn a lot about Inuit culture and appropriate ways to teach Inuit students through their own experience (Tompkins, 1998). This problem was described by an elder who saw many principals come and go:

And like some principals have said that now that they’ve learned about Inuit they have to leave and it’s sad like that. Principals, after staying they’re starting to understand the community, the local people, but then they have to go. (33i: M/E)

Principals and teachers who do not understand the community or the people and who have little experience or expertise in teaching in ESL and cross-cultural environments are not in a strong position to help Inuit students learn.

There are some things that, from a learner’s point of view, Qallunaat teachers should know if they want to be effective. In response to questioning about favourite teachers, and in various other contexts, many participants named things that would facilitate learning, or things that teachers, ideally, would do (or how they would be) when teaching. These are things that may, to varying degrees, already exist or happen; where they do not, they are worth considering. One person said that “*the more interaction you get from a teacher the more you learn.... Getting to*

know the person in person of course... they interact in a way that they teach you person to person" (20: M/20s). Another said that more one-on-one teaching would be good (28: M/40s).

A number of participants said that personal contact was important, including the teacher being there for the student (24: W/20s), being nice (31: W/20s) and being kind (29: W/20s). One said that her teacher had been the only one who she could trust and speak to when she was being abused. These accounts of personal connection resonate with the literature that suggests that personal relationships are important for teachers of Inuit students (Aylward, 2004; Clifton & Roberts, 1988; Lipka, 1990; Stairs, 1991; Tompkins, 2004). Lipka, in Alaska, wrote that *social relationships* are crucial in indigenous education, and that they create "conditions that make learning feasible and likely" (1991, p. 219). An elder in Tuktulik said that teachers should not be harsh or sarcastic with students (52i: M/E) and a woman who stopped school at 14 said that students should be encouraged, especially at that age when they might be thinking of stopping school (11: W/30s). In some cases it was evident that good relationships with teachers had not been the norm for many students in the past. Some examples of this were described in Section 4.1.1.

Many recollections of favourite teachers had to do with their ability to explain clearly, in one case, "*by the words she chooses and the way she does it*" (21: F/20s). In another the teacher "*explained everything that I had to do so I could understand what to do*" (31: W/20s). A young man who had struggled with school said it was important: "*To make everything more understandable, because sometimes they usually they talk too fast ... because some kids don't understand the words the teachers talk about*" (25: M/20s). It is not surprising that in a second language environment the words chosen, the way things are explained, and the tempo of speech are important. It is also understandable that students struggle with learning in English, their second language, when ESL resources are not common in Nunavut schools, curriculum largely ignores the ESL aspect of the environment, and most Qallunaat teachers have not had special ESL training (Berger & Epp, 2005).

An anecdote illustrates the importance that cultural difference in the form of learning style might play in Inuit students' learning. During fieldwork my partner Helle Møller and I

volunteered to take students to the kitchen to make pizza and carrot cake. Two students were working on the carrot cake from a written recipe, with all of the ingredients, bowls and measuring devices set out for them. It was very difficult for the two to follow the instructions and at one point Helle intervened just in time to stop one cup instead of one teaspoon of baking soda from being used. In contrast, a young woman asked Helle if she could help with the ‘Danish Fourbread’ that Helle was making for a fundraising project. They made one batch with the woman following Helle at each step. When the bread was finished, Helle asked if the young woman knew how to make it. She easily recounted the steps and quantities used. While many factors may account for the differences in these two experiences, they served as a strong reminder that culturally congruent ways of teaching may be more comfortable and more effective.

Inuit epistemology suggests “that one learns best by observing, doing and experience” (Arnakak, 2000, p. 3), and the *Nunavut Sivuniksavut* Students (2006) suggested that “schools need to value the Inuit way of learning, like learning through experience, storytelling and just spending time together” (p. 4). Inuk Mary May Simon (1996) wrote that there was “no real separation between living and learning.... The primary means of learning was through observation and practice” (p. 58). Students in the *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq* consultations also expressed a preference for experiential, hands-on learning, and Tompkins noted that concrete, highly contextualized learning environments help second language learners (Tompkins, 2004).

While this study is not able to causally connect cultural incongruence to poor student achievement, it does suggest the continued strength of traditional Inuit ways of learning in the home and community. Participants’ recollections of the ways they learned things, their preferences for learning, and the ways they described teaching younger people, all point to a privileging of observation and participation as the best ways to learn. With typical teaching in Qallunaat classrooms not honouring this orientation and little support for Qallunaat teachers in Nunavut in learning to do things differently, it is likely that teaching in the Qallunaat classrooms in Tuktuulik is less effective than it could be. Furthermore, maintaining teaching routines that do not honour Inuit ways also sends a colonial message about the (supposed) superiority of Qallunaat ways, and works to condition students to expect Qallunaat pedagogical norms (Douglas, 1998).

Although it would not be a panacea, an orientation for new Qallunaat teachers and continuing inservice learning about culturally responsive teaching would help Qallunaat teach Inuit students. Using a whole language approach, for instance, stressing meaning over decontextualized skills, might be especially productive with Inuit students as it was found to be with Hawaiian students (Vogt, Jordan & Tharp, 1993), both of whom are used to learning things embedded in a meaningful context. Tompkins (1998) found that improving programming increased student success and self-esteem, and decreased time spent on discipline problems. She facilitated cooperative and supported learning groups that often ‘discovered’ things at learning centres which made the pedagogy more congruent with Inuit students’ learning expectations. Creative staffing and extra adults were sometimes needed, another indication that budgetary constraints can often hinder efforts to meet student needs (and may take extraordinary efforts to overcome).

Schools staffed predominantly with Inuit teachers and principals who are supported to teach and lead in Inuit ways holds the best hope for increasing learning through increasing cultural responsiveness. Inuit students will need instruction in and through typical Qallunaat learning routines to be prepared for most post-secondary education, as it is currently conceived, but it is colonial and academically hazardous to offer Qallunaat learning routines as the default condition.

Despite strong indications that learning style is important, and literature that suggests a preference for learning by observation and doing by many Aboriginal students, the concern exists that differences might not be as dramatic as perceived, that they might lead to stereotyping and low expectations, and that difference in learning style might come to be seen as a learning disability (Hodgson-Smith, 2000). Abdallah-Preteuille (2006) reminds us that an uncritical focus on the learning style of a cultural group risks ignoring differences within the group to the detriment of the individual. Similarly, Deyhle (1995) cautioned that well-intentioned teachers might believe stereotypes and come to erroneously assume that their Navajo students do not plan for the future or think abstractly, thus demeaning them. Hodgson-Smith suggested using stronger

learning styles to develop weaker ones, and warned that learning styles and pedagogy might not be as important as student feelings of loneliness, frustration and alienation.

4.3 Prejudice, colonialism and disempowerment

This section is concerned with colonization. By colonization I mean “the centering of the experience, beliefs, values and way of life of the newcomers and the displacement of the indigenous group to the margins” (Tompkins, 2006, p. 36). Tompkins cited Arnaquq and Pitsiulak who said that schooling in Nunavut had eclipsed Inuit ways, replacing Inuit epistemology, ontology and values with Eurocentric ones. When schools were first built in each community across the eastern Arctic they were structured and run on southern Canadian norms, ‘superimposed’ on Inuit ways of educating (Douglas, 1994). Despite changes in recent decades that shifted some control of schooling to locally elected District Education Authorities, saw the creation of *Inuuqatigiit: The curriculum from an Inuit perspective* (Aylward, 1996; NWT ECE, 1996), and the training and hiring of Inuit teachers in the primary and junior divisions, schooling in Nunavut continues to function on a Qallunaat model (Berger, 2005). Notwithstanding recent Government of Nunavut rhetoric about basing schooling in Inuit culture (NDOE, 2006; GN, 2004), the education system, in the words of the Nunavut Social Development Council, “is culturally flawed and only by incorporating the values of Inuit and using the Inuit language can it come to terms with Inuit society and help Inuit youth adapt to the modern world” (2000, p. 82)²¹.

I believe that most of the Qallunaat who teach in Nunavut have good intentions, want to do a good job, and work hard to help their Inuit students learn. Unfortunately they come to a context where colonization disrupted Inuit lives and where continuing colonialism and the power imbalance between Qallunaat and Inuit are still felt (Berger, 2005; Møller, 2005; Tompkins, 2002). Most come without specialized training in teaching Inuit or people from other cultures and most do not receive an orientation or formal mentoring on arrival (Berger & Epp, in press). They

²¹ I am concerned that the foundational work that has been done, and the real changes in some schools, especially those with many Inuit teachers and principals (see Tompkins, 2006), might be hidden in my work. These earlier and ongoing efforts are crucial in enabling the larger systemic change that is needed.

are set up to be less effective than they could be. This was described in Section 4.2 with respect to cultural (in)congruence, especially related to teaching and learning styles, but also in the potential misreading of culturally appropriate student and parent behaviours by Qallunaat teachers and the consequent likelihood of ineffective or disrespectful responses to issues such as lateness and absence.

This section examines signs of the effects of colonization and of continued colonialism in the forms of prejudice and actions leading to disempowerment, and links these to the inability of the schools to graduate most Inuit students. The effects are broader and more speculative than the direct effects of ‘cultural difference.’ These findings come from the interviews with Inuit and also from interactions with Qallunaat in the community and in the schools, and from my own experience as a grade 7 teacher in Tuktulik from 1997 to 1999.

As Brody (1991[1977]) was concerned that his observations of Qallunaat would be taken as unfair, so too am I. I hope that those who read this will do so with an open mind, aware that my motivation is to improve the school experience for Inuit students. Several incidents that occurred while volunteering reminded me how powerless a teacher can feel, and how difficult the job can be. Qallunaat who are drawn to living and working in Nunavut may have the best of intentions, but in the colonial context of Nunavut schooling, good intentions may not be enough to ensure respectful and effective school practices (Berger, 2007).

Before beginning to recount some of the past and current signs of colonialism from my fieldwork, I note that the imposition of a foreign school system without consultation and the continued existence of a school system that is more Qallunaat than Inuit are clear evidence of colonization and continuing colonialism in Nunavut. That Inuit students in the upper grades must learn almost exclusively Qallunaat curriculum, in Qallunaat ways, in English from Qallunaat teachers, and that Inuit culture and language are marginalized in schools, attest to this continuing condition. A number of other signs of colonialism and prejudice from the past and present were described by participants and people I spoke with casually, or were observed. These were not explicitly sought; the spontaneous accounts during interviews focussed on schooling suggest that for these participants colonialism is important in the context of schooling (Møller, 2005).

4.3.1 Past signs of colonialism. Historically, Inuit were said to defer to the authority of Whites (Annahatak, 1994; Brody, 1991; Napartuk, 2002). Whites often had the power to give or withhold welfare and accept or reject Inuit requests for credit, sometimes resulting in hardship and starvation. Brody translated the Inuit word *ilira* as a fear or awe of someone who had power over you and might use it unpredictably; the word was used especially by Inuit about Whites (Brody, 2000, p. 46). Many examples of power imbalance, including Inuit deferring to Qallunaat in the past, were described by people in the study. In one case a man in his 30s told his parents about an abusive teacher, but they felt they could do nothing about it. In another, a woman in her 40s said: “*Our teachers used to be very strict.... We used to be scared of White people all the time. We thought they were gods.*” In a subtle account, an elder described doing something to ease the pain of a medical treatment, the only time during many years at a hospital in the south that he “*ever did against what he was supposed to.*” A woman in her 50s said, “*we’re so used to when White people come up they control. We don’t want that anymore.*” One man in his 50s gave an account of resisting Qallunaat authority. He was sent to residential school:

We were told to learn English. They told us to forget our language. Don’t think our language. Don’t talk our language. And I think that in a classroom that’s what worked in teaching us English very fast. And people like me that were taught that way, I didn’t want to go to school. They had to drag me to school; I wanted to go be out hunting. I made a pact to myself. If you want me to learn your language I will learn it. I learned it.... But then I learned a bit too much I think. I start rebelling against Qallunaat telling me this way, this is supposed to be done this way. And I’d say, “wait a minute, maybe if you do it this way it would be easier.” That’s what they don’t like very much.

Fifteen participants lived on the land before their families moved into Tuktuulik, and many said that the reason they moved into town was because the children had to go to school. One man in his 30s said they moved in 1969: “*maybe for the government, because of the government. They want them to move here,*” and a woman in her 40s said they moved so she could go to school so her parents would get their family allowance. She said: “*That was a bribe.*” An elder said that his

family moved off the land, “*because back then people were asked to go to move into the communities so that we could be in school.*”

Awa (1999) reported that their family allowance was cut off for a child who they would not let go to school in Pond Inlet, and according to Brody (1991), southern institutions “were the spurs that hastened the people in from the camps” (p. 49). The move to settlements “was acknowledgement both of the Inuit dependence on Whites’ goods and services, and White hegemony over social, economic and moral life” (Brody, p. 188). Peter Pitseolak (1993[1975], p. 143) wrote that he left the land because his grandchildren had to go to school; he was afraid that if a child tried to leave school and walk back to the camp that she/he might freeze to death. Despite some benefits from the schooling that pushed many Inuit off the land, an elder said schooling came at great cost: “*Some of the people of my generation have completely lost their culture, especially the ones that were forced to live in residential schools.*”

Another elder said that the promise of schooling had not been realized. He said that the government had lied. Teachers, he said, had claimed that if you went to school every day you would find work with the government, but today lots of those people have no work. He was dissatisfied that school disrupted Inuit hunting and the promised jobs never arrived, saying that the government had forgotten Inuit. Moving Inuit from the land to the settlements, part of Canadian Government strategy to maintain sovereignty in the Arctic (Prattis & Chartrand, 1990; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994), caused massive disruption.

Along with schools came other southern institutions. Several participants mentioned the need for credentials as an imposition. In the healthcare sphere, power was taken from Inuit midwives as birthing was medicalized (Møller, 2005) and one participant described a situation that became dangerous when her advice was not followed. The Qallunaat nurses, it turned out, preferred to wait for the arrival of a doctor, jeopardizing the birth.

The slaughter of Inuit sled dogs by the RCMP was named by two participants, an action claimed by the RCMP to have been taken to stop the spread of distemper, but thought by some to have been a way to force Inuit into settlements by making life on the land impossible (CBC News, 2006). One man in his 50s described watching from the classroom window as his dog was

chased and shot and a woman in her 30s recalled watching her parents cry when the dogs were killed.

These and other stories about the past were a reminder that what Nungak (2004) called *The Great Cultural Earthquake*, massive change brought about by the colonization of the Arctic by Qallunaat, is very recent. It is recent enough that for Inuit in their 40s and 50s, major disruption is a part of their own memories.

4.3.2 Qallunaat control. During fieldwork in the winter and spring of 2006 I saw and heard many things that attested to continuing colonialism in Nunavut. Many were related to control remaining out of Inuit hands.

Brody (1991[1977]) wrote that in the first decades of the settlements, while the message conveyed to Inuit was that local control was desirable, everything was actually set up to block it. The locus of control is crucial. It has been shown that the more influence an individual has on the decisions that affect her or his life and work, the greater the health and well-being of the person (Marmot & Wilkinson, 2001). In the context of schooling, community control of the schools is thought to be imperative for the success of minority students (Agbo, 2002b; Cummins, 1986; Harris, 1990; Harrison, 1993; Skutnab-Kangas, 1998). In Tuktulik I saw both large and small instances of control still in the hands of Qallunaat or Qallunaat institutions.

Many key positions in the community are held by Qallunaat, including the majority of professional positions and some administrative positions. Some people noted that family connections were important in securing employment, and that this was also the case with Qallunaat who tended to favour family even when qualified Inuit were available. One person reported feeling repercussions when a complaint was made about a job given to someone from outside the community.

Status and power may still protect Qallunaat in Nunavut, some of whom I observed and heard about getting unreasonably angry. One man in his 20s said that Qallunaat get mad easily, “*especially teachers.*” I observed one Qallunaat get very angry when he learned that an Inuit employee had made a mistake. He made strongly prejudicial comments and showed physical

signs of anger that I found intimidating. I had been told that he tended to lose his temper easily and was told later by others that he was very hard to work with. The incident occurred in public and it shook me. His apparent feeling that it was alright to be openly angry and prejudicial seemed to belong to the heyday of British colonialism. It demonstrated a lack of respect that would quickly have resulted in dismissal in many circumstances in southern Canada. Ogbu (1993) wrote that “expressive exploitation” of minorities is based on the dominant group’s belief in their own superiority. The denigration of the minority culture negatively affects the perception of schooling and the response to it by minority groups.

I heard about other examples of angry Qallunaat, including someone who had “*been on a power trip*” when he first arrived and a teacher who was frequently angry with his class. I also overheard a teacher shouting at a student who was late getting to class in the morning. People anywhere can be angry, but when the anger is consistent and directed by Qallunaat at Inuit, it becomes part of a pattern of disrespect that is colonial. Brody (1991) reported that for adult Inuit showing anger was not acceptable and showed a lack of development. Inuit were, however, used to seeing Whites angry, judging them sometimes as ridiculous and sometimes to be feared (p. 172). Lange (1977) also reported that Whites were feared because they got angry easily. Being angry and feared without being challenged showed, and shows, an imbalance of power.

Many people said things that point to a lack of Inuit control in other aspects of community life. I heard that researchers often do not inform the community about what they are doing there, that people waiting for courses at Nunavut Arctic College do not always know when the courses will start, or even when they will know when they will start, and that locally elected bodies do not always know their roles and the scope of their power. One person said that a lot of boards and councils:

don’t know what kind of authority that they have. Because, and I don’t mean to be prejudiced, but because mostly the bureaucrats are Qallunaat people. For some of these people that are forever sitting on these boards getting re-elected and stuff, they still respect Qallunaats very much; they think they’re almost like gods. But a lot of them are now finding out how to be board members so they’re not just yes-people anymore, or trying not to be.

Another person said that it is easy for people in the north to be stripped of their rights. She wondered what it would be like “*if people started to walk in protest down to the Hamlet or to the Housing or Social Services or the school. These places, when something goes wrong.*” She had seen similar protests on television but could not imagine it happening in Nunavut. And an elder, through an interpreter, said:

She knows that Qallunaags have helped the Inuit a whole lot. She knows that for a fact. She’s not against any Qallunaags. But...we Inuit among ourselves have abilities to do things, so it would be nice to see all Inuit doing things together... running the life of the community. Just Inuit.

Even the Inuit arts and crafts economy is partly controlled by Qallunaat in distant places. Sometimes carvers offered me their work for well below what they would normally get for it, explaining that for the month only large carvings were being purchased by the arts cooperative, or that only work from certain carvers was desired. A group of Qallunaat in Toronto made the decisions (Ipellie, 1993), with significant consequences for those whose income depended on carving.

Instances of Qallunaat control were not always nefarious. Sometimes, like with the aforementioned carvings, ‘the market’ determined what was selling and what was needed from carvers. And elected bodies, as indicated by the participant quoted earlier, do need time to find their voices. Still, there are very many ways in which control continues to be outside Inuit hands.

4.3.3 Qallunaat privilege. Most Qallunaat living in Tuktulik are economically privileged compared to most Inuit. While unemployment is high amongst Inuit (Statistics Canada, 2006; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2007), most Qallunaat in Tuktulik are there for work and many are highly paid professionals. Many also have fringe benefits connected to their employment, including travel, the use of a truck, and access to a school gymnasium. Watching the pickup trucks one day it struck me that almost all of the private trucks were also driven by Qallunaat. Similarly, while many Inuit do not have an income that supports owning snowmobiles for hunting, some Qallunaat families have many, plus all-terrain-vehicles, boats, and indoor storage for their gear.

Housing is another area where the economic privilege of Qallunaat is very visible. Whereas Inuit in Nunavut often live in crowded conditions (Tester, 2006), Qallunaat usually have more than adequate living space, and often in units that are in better condition.

Qallunaat privilege can be seen in other ways as well. I was frequently asked if I could loan someone money. While some Qallunaat said they loaned money when asked and others said that they did not, the dynamic of Inuit borrowing money from Qallunaat speaks to the relative solvency of many Qallunaat. Privilege is visible in highspeed Internet access as well. The service provider confirmed that virtually all Qallunaat households, about 50, subscribed, while only 4 of about 250 Inuit households did. While this might in part be a matter of preference, the cost of computer equipment and monthly fees for highspeed access are prohibitive for many Inuit.

Tuktulik is a community with restricted access to alcohol and this provides yet another avenue to Qallunaat privilege. Although it is not legal to do so, many Qallunaat have alcohol mailed to them by friends and family in southern Canada. Fewer Inuit have that possibility. Furthermore, more opportunities to travel also mean more access to alcohol and the ability to bring it back to Tuktulik. On the other hand many Inuit who wish to drink alcohol rely on intermittent shipments brought illegally into the community, sold for about 4 times the purchase price in the south.

Alcohol may also be tied to a power imbalance between Qallunaat men and Inuit women. As a teacher in Tuktulik I heard rumours about Qallunaat men providing alcohol to young Inuit women in exchange for sex, something also reported to occur in the 1970s (Brody, 1991). During fieldwork there was some evidence that this in fact happens. It is a continuation of a power imbalance based in Qallunaat privilege.

4.3.4 Prejudice and assumptions. While conducting fieldwork in Tuktulik I heard many examples of Qallunaat prejudice toward Inuit and of Qallunaat attitudes that showed a devaluing of Inuit language and culture. This colonial attitude may especially impact Inuit students. It continues a legacy of discrimination and racism stretching back many years, and may be partly

based in colonial ideas equating technological advancement with moral superiority (Brody, 1991). Of the first representatives of southern institutions in the North, Brody noted:

Because they went north with commercial or ideological motives, they were intent on radical change in Inuit life. Many features of Inuit culture and personality were inevitably the objects of their criticism and distaste.... Missionaries, policemen and traders all expressed strongly negative attitudes towards Inuit.... Their attitudes and roles inevitably made them hostile to much Inuit life.... Only a few individuals from a limited range of personality types were chosen to become missionaries, policemen or traders, and these roles themselves encouraged further development of the self-righteousness and authoritarianism for which they had initially been chosen. (p. 25)

Prejudice was not something I set out to investigate, although I knew from my time teaching in Tuktulik that it existed in many forms. Some of the most egregious examples from my fieldwork were things said directly to me by Qallunaat. In fact, I heard few complaints from Inuit about Qallunaat, and heard more than once that for Inuit it is not right to criticize others, something appearing in the anthropological literature (Briggs, 2000; Ekho & Ottokie, 2000, p. 27). One Qallunaat said that there was no visible racial tension in Tuktulik, that it is a friendly community. I have also experienced Tuktulik as friendly and welcoming, but Inuit and the Qallunaat who spend only a few years in the community are largely separated from each other socially, much as in the days when Brody (1991[1977]) wrote about Inuit/White relations. At the two School Improvement meetings and at lunch during an inservice, Qallunaat teachers mostly sat with Qallunaat and Inuit teachers with Inuit. While not a sign of tension, it was a sign of division, a gap. Several Inuit commented that more should be planned to help Inuit teachers and community members get to know Qallunaat teachers better, and vice versa. Perhaps that would reduce the prejudice and faulty assumptions of Qallunaat, though, as some of what I heard was from long-time Qallunaat residents, it would be no guarantee.

Sometimes the prejudice took the form of making assumptions. I took part in a two day sports clinic with two other Qallunaat and three Inuit participants. The clinic leader was a Qallunaat from another community in Nunavut. He recommended reading a rulebook, but said to all of us that of the six of us only three would probably read it, and said he knew which ones. A

further comment about it being the ‘teacherly ones’ that would read it made it clear that he meant the three Qallunaat. The next day he reiterated his comment, perhaps unaware that one of the Inuit participants had been sitting reading the rulebook for some time. His assumption, stated publicly, could not have been motivating for the Inuit participants in the seminar.

I encountered assumptions again one day in the highschool staffroom when the conversation turned to fundraising. Only Qallunaat were present. Several teachers expressed the opinion that students would not do a thing to help with fundraising. They were adamant until a teacher who had been at the school longer gave an example of a team who did many things, which led another teacher to describe fundraising in another community that had raised over fifty thousand dollars. The assumption could easily have become a self-fulfilling prophecy, and may actually have held some of the teachers back from involving themselves with their students in projects that might have made a difference in their students’ lives and in their learning.

Some of the prejudice I encountered in the broader Qallunaat community in Tuktuulik was subtle. Several Qallunaat were interested in my findings about Inuit wishes for schooling, but then challenged the Inuit desire for more culture. The idea that Inuit should need to justify why they want more Inuit culture in the schools suggests an assumption about the appropriateness of Qallunaat schooling for all, an underlying ethnocentrism. A connected assumption that I found troubling was that several Qallunaat asked why elders would not volunteer to teach Inuit cultural things, “if culture is important to them.”

I have been asked this question by Whites outside the community as well. I think it ignores both the historical circumstances and common sense. No one would expect a Christian Living teacher at an Ontario Catholic school to be an unpaid teacher, or a heritage language teacher hired by the Toronto District School Board to work for free. While it might be reasonable to hope that a family member of a student would volunteer to help a class once in a while, expecting what should be an integral part of the school program to be delivered by volunteers devalues the program and is entirely unrealistic. To ask the colonized to teach for free what the colonizers set out to eradicate seems like an ultimate arrogance. Over 30 years ago Brody (1991) also found Qallunaat who expected Inuit to work for free (p. 130).

One Qallunaat educator said that with a \$100 honorarium, he considers a day in the school to be paid work, not volunteering. Qallunaat teachers, for their expertise, earn on average over 4 times that amount per day. This may also be a comment on what some Qallunaat see to be the value of Inuit knowledge in the schools in Nunavut. The continued centring of Qallunaat knowledge in Nunavut schools despite Inuit wishes for increased Inuit knowledge is a sign that colonialism persists in actions and attitudes. It is perhaps a reflection of the Canadian position on the rights, and especially educational rights, of indigenous peoples. Canada is one of only a few countries that voted against adopting the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs, 2007).

Some of the attitudes and ideas I encountered in Qallunaat, sometimes inside and sometimes outside the schools, were frightening. These included a statement that the unemployed people in Tuktuulik had no work ethic and the suggestion that it would be cheaper for the Canadian Government if all Inuit were moved to Iqaluit. One person said that no tax dollars should be “wasted” supporting Inuktitut and characterized it as a “dead language.” He said that the colonized have always had to assimilate fully or “flounder in misery.” During a discussion with several Qallunaat about student punctuality I was told that “Inuit parents don’t like to get up in the morning.” When I challenged the sweeping generalization the person said that Inuit are not lazy, “they just value work differently than Qallunaat.” Representations of Native peoples as lazy, wrote Tuhiwai Smith (1999), is “part of a colonial discourse that continues to this day” (p. 54).

I was shocked by these conversations and am certain that many Qallunaat in Tuktuulik would be too. But as Battiste (2005) wrote, we have all been marinated in Eurocentric thought. Even teacher candidates who say they want to make a difference usually have racist ideas based on Eurocentric assumptions (Schick, 2000). Racism may be universal in Canadian society and prejudicial attitudes the most resistant to change in Qallunaat teachers; it is incumbent upon all of us to examine our racist beliefs (Tompkins, 1998) – they guide our actions. Teachers can plan many things, but deep seated beliefs are visible in spontaneous responses (Cahill & Collard, 2003), and goodwill is not enough to overcome “assumptions and attitudes based on centuries of power and privilege” (Narayan, 1988, p. 35).

The literature suggests that racism may be a significant obstacle to educating Aboriginal youth (St. Denis & Hampton, 2002). Deyhle (1995) wrote that discrimination is fundamental to Navajo attitudes toward school, and that over half the people she interviewed left school feeling not wanted there, in conflict with teachers or administrators; in Tuktuulik, Qallunaat privilege and discrimination may affect Inuit parents' and students' attitudes toward school, making it harder to support schooling and easier to leave. Prejudice is perhaps the opposite of the kindness and caring valued highly by Nunavut students; it may manifest itself in inequitable treatment and teacher anger that can hurt (Tompkins, 2004). The assault on Inuit students' identity is a barrier to school success (Tompkins). Even of Qallunaat in Tuktuulik who did not openly express prejudice, I came to believe that very many think that, sooner or later, Inuit will come to live and work like Qallunaat.

4.3.5 Someday Inuit will live and work like Qallunaat. Some Qallunaat were very explicit about their beliefs that Inuit are living more like Qallunaat, will continue to do so, and should do so. Others, who would defend the right of Inuit to maintain their culture, still seemed to suggest in various ways that living and working like Qallunaat was, in fact, inevitable. In the 1920s the traders, police and missionaries worked to assimilate Inuit to southern life (Brody, 1991), and it seems like the logic of assimilation has not disappeared.

In March, 2006, I took part in a professional development session where a superintendent of schools was presenting Nunavut Department of Education ideas about possible future directions for schooling in Nunavut, called the *Multiple Graduation Options* (NDOE Curriculum & School Services, 2005). The highschool teachers and principal were part of the session and I noticed with some discomfort that we were 7 Qallunaat males discussing the future of Inuit schooling. At one point the discussion focussed on barriers to student achievement; specifically, on students arriving late to school. I suggested that the school might enjoy more support from parents and the community if the response to student lateness took into consideration the circumstances of the students and responded to community ideas about the issue. One person responded that people needed to get used to the structure of the school, and repeated it after I

replied that it would be worth considering whether the structure of the school could change to accommodate Inuit wishes. Another person said that changes do not help if they do not get students ready for the world of work, and said he equates school with work for his students when he explains to them the importance of being on time. A third person commented that working includes routine and consequences.

While I am not advocating a lowering of expectations, in these responses I read the belief that there is *one correct way* of doing things, and that is the schools'/EuroCanadian way. The possibility that another way might be negotiated, a 'third culture of schools' in Stairs' (1994a) terms, did not seem an option. I do not see this as surprising or as individual weakness, but rather as resulting from the blinders many of us wear from our socialization into Whiteness (McIntosh, 1995; Shore, 2003). Douglas (1994) wrote of the difficult paradoxes that would need to be faced in negotiating schooling to meet the needs of Inuit communities, but despite the topic of the professional development session, negotiating at a fundamental level, speaking about the very structure and underlying values of schooling, was not on the agenda. It seems like adding a course on some aspect of Inuit culture can be imagined, but it is much more difficult for Qallunaat connected to the schools to think of changing the way schooling is done. With the Innu in Labrador, Ryan (1989) wrote that the need to interact with EuroCanadian society placed some real constraints on what could be done 'differently.' Perhaps many Qallunaat make the assumption that EuroCanadian society is permanent and powerful, and that it is therefore Inuit who must change.

A similar assumption about the structure of schooling was visible at the first School Improvement meeting right when the day began. The speaker said that the goal was for everybody to achieve *success* and that the session would explore how things could be done better to increase student *success*. What that 'success' might look like was not up for discussion. Ignoring that the definition of success may not be the same for Qallunaat and Inuit was a colonial-style omission (Stairs & Bernhard, 2002). Despite failing to problematize 'success,' in the professional development and in the School Improvement meetings Qallunaat participants were supportive of the need for more Inuit culture in the schools and I believe they took part honestly committed to

the well-being of their students. Unfortunately, if the standard Qallunaat school routines and discourses are not questioned, the school will remain an assimilating Qallunaat presence in the community instead of one that supports Inuit aspirations and Inuit culture.

Another way that identification with Qallunaat school culture rather than with the community manifested itself was during an informal discussion in the staffroom. During my 4 months of fieldwork I was intermittently present in the highschool at lunch time and often took part in discussions about punctuality and attendance, students wandering the halls, and other topics. One discussion concerned a student who only attended school one afternoon each week to take part in a special sports and activity program. The opinion was expressed by several Qallunaat teachers that this should not have been allowed to happen. I asked if the arrangement might have benefited the student or possibly also the community in some way, and if it therefore might have been acceptable. The response was that school is a place of learning.

A narrow focus on schools only as places of academic learning is a Eurocentric view of the school's role and does not match current thinking that for schools to become places of success for indigenous students they must support the goals of the community (Cummins, 2002; Harrison, 1993; Lipka, 1991; cf. Tompkins, 2006, p. 174). I do not find the view unusual and in many staffroom discussions found myself easily slipping into a Qallunaat teacher role, thinking about punishments and rewards or other ways to solve 'problems' rather than thinking of the broader context in which the discussion was occurring. As a PhD student I have had much exposure to the literature on the schooling of marginalized students and have been involved in research and writing about the poor fit of Qallunaat schools in Inuit culture for many years, yet it is still sometimes hard for me to think broadly about Nunavut schooling. Many times while discussing this analysis with my partner Helle Møller, a nurse and anthropologist, she pointed out that my thinking came from the position of a Qallunaat teacher, identifying with the school and typical Qallunaat school circumstances. This prevented me from making other connections. As Wolcott (1999, p. 37) pointed out (citing Spradley and McCurdy), it can be hard to see things clearly in a culture you are familiar with.

Qallunaat teachers unfortunately arrive in Nunavut unprepared to teach Inuit students in an ESL environment. There is no Nunavut-wide orientation or mentoring process that would help them to learn about Inuit culture or learning styles (Berger & Epp, in press) and no mechanism in place to help them consider broader issues like the colonial history of schooling in the north or the current Nunavut Department of Education initiatives for change. Qallunaat teachers must sort through cultural issues on their own (Tompkins, 1998). The lack of culturally relevant curriculum and resources (NDOE, 2004) sends the message to teachers that while the rhetoric is about Inuit culture-based schooling, it is not really possible or valued. That Qallunaat teachers are poorly prepared and supported is clear. In the absence of formal support, this situation means that an extraordinary commitment is required from Qallunaat teachers who want to learn how to teach Inuit students 'effectively' and respectfully (Berger, 2007).

Conditions in some parts of Canada make it attractive for people to seek employment in other places to ensure the financial well-being of their families. Nunavut is a place that offers attractive wages and has traditionally drawn professionals from southern Canada to fill vacancies. In the 1950s the Canadian Government decided that wages and living conditions would need to be good to attract southern professionals (Brody, 1991), and, despite complaining by southerners about wages, this is still the case. In the early 1970s the average stay of southerners was short and teachers and other professionals were often in their first years of working (Brody). Today, teachers in early, middle, and late stages of their careers come to Nunavut. Many of the Qallunaat teachers in Tuktuulik at the time of the research were late in their careers, had been required by legislation to retire in their home province, and planned on teaching in Nunavut between 2 and 5 years to clear debts and position themselves for more comfortable retirements. Some had come to Nunavut without their families, resulting in a focus on their southern location as 'home' and their Nunavut dwelling as temporary. Itinerant northerners often do not view the northern house as 'home' (Paine, 1977a).

These teachers arrive with much teaching experience, but may not be in the best position to teach Inuit students in a school system trying, however haltingly, to move away from a colonial model. The Arctic Institute of North America (1973) concluded that teachers with no more than 3

years of teaching experience should be sought for the Arctic, since, they wrote, people with more teaching experience tended to be set in their ways. Kawagely (1993) wrote that teachers of Native students must “possess a high tolerance for ambiguity” (p. 161), something that may be less present in people who have become accustomed to teaching in a predictable system for many years. Older teachers may also be more comfortable with a transmission model of teaching, rather than a constructivist model. This type of teaching with minorities, wrote Cummins (1988), could lead to pedagogically induced learning difficulties as children are confined to passive roles.

Also problematic, teachers who know that they will stay in Nunavut for relatively short periods of time (whether they are retired older teachers or beginning teachers looking for some experience before moving south) may not have the same investment in learning about Inuit culture, or in contributing to change, that teachers who expect to spend many years in Nunavut would have. This does not mean that many of these teachers do not work hard; indeed, many Qallunaat teachers spend a great deal of time planning and creating resources for their teaching. Nor does it preclude the possibility of any person becoming a skilled teacher of Inuit students and an ally of Inuit in reinventing schooling in an Inuit mould. But the motivation for coming, duration of stay, and lack of support offered by the system mitigate against it.

This assessment might be hard for Qallunaat teaching in Nunavut to read. It is based on the observations I have detailed, but also in my own time teaching in Nunavut in Tuktuulik and supply teaching in two other Nunavut communities, and I do not exempt myself from this critique. Like Brody (1991) I hope to be clear about separating the people, who were welcoming, friendly and sincere, from their roles, and to acknowledge that many good ideas and promising practices were also discussed and were being tried by teachers, or used with efficacy. I also want to acknowledge how difficult it can be to teach in Nunavut. Student resistance can frustrate the most caring of teachers (Deyhle, 1995). Circumstances of northern teaching do not always leave time for reflection, nor does the system support or encourage it. There needs to be more heard from Qallunaat teachers; my choice here is to write other stories that I think are important (Kulchyski, 2005, p. 206).

Although I believe that very many Qallunaat in Tuktuulik, teachers and others, have the deep assumption that one day Inuit will live and work like Qallunaat, there were some who described ways of working with Inuit that acknowledged the possibility of doing things differently. In three cases I heard of respectful responses that dealt with the contingency of employees who were sometimes unable to be at work. In one case the employee was responsible for arranging for a replacement by calling one of two other people, in another the job was overstaffed to build in extra capacity and the employees rotated small amounts of unpaid leave if necessary. In the last case the workplace did what it could to get a replacement and the employer spoke honestly about the disruption it caused when an employee was absent. This was done without excusing the behaviour, without judging the employee, and acknowledging that there are many reasons why some people might have trouble being at work consistently in Tuktuulik.

Without a belief in the possibility of doing things in other than Qallunaat ways, assimilation must be envisioned, whether in the workforce or the schools. The message conveyed by this belief is one of Inuit inferiority, an assault on self-esteem (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988b). One consequence of this may be self-blame (Skutnabb-Kangas). One participant said: *“I regret that I didn’t graduate from school. I learned myself that I was not a very good student.”* Another said: *“I’m not qualified for nothing.”* Many people regretted stopping school and many blamed themselves. It appears that the colonial system has functioned to marginalize people and to make them believe that their position is due to their own shortcomings (Tompkins, 2004; Watt-Cloutier, 2000).

In investigating bilingual education programmes internationally, Skutnabb-Kangas (1988a) found that “a supportive learning environment and non-authoritarian teaching” (p. 29) reduce anxiety and contribute to success. High self-confidence is also needed, she wrote, something that comes from having a reasonable chance of succeeding in school, and from

favourable teacher expectations. One of the conditions for this is that the teacher accepts and values the child’s mother tongue and cultural group, and is sympathetic with the parent’s way of thinking, even though the teacher might have a different class background from the parents. (p. 29)

To be sympathetic to the parent's way of thinking, one must know something of that way of thinking – and be able to accept that one's own way is not the only way.

It would be unfair to blame individual Qallunaat for the failure of Nunavut's schools (Cazden, 1990; Spindler, 2000). As Cummins and Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) pointed out, the problem is “institutionalized racism/ethnicism/classism/linguicism in society (and in schools that reflect the broader society)” (p. 3); teacher/student interactions reflect this, disempowering students. Damaging interactions are caused by the underlying belief that others should act like Whites act (‘Anglo-conformity’) and by misconceptions about teaching minority students (Cummins, 1988). In the Nunavut context, with no orientation and little inservicing, there is no real way for most Qallunaat educators to come to know the research related to minority or Inuit education (Berger, 2007), and, in contrast to Cummins’ assertion that an Anglo-conformity orientation is not often overtly expressed, this was done quite clearly by some teachers and other Qallunaat in Tuktuulik. In other words, the scene is set, despite the best intentions of educators²², for interactions that are educationally disabling for Inuit students. Even where teachers believe that they are fair and just and supportive of all students, bias is likely to be present; bias that may be extremely difficult for teachers to see or even to accept (Spindler, 2000). Fuzessy (2003) found just this blend of good intentions and Eurocentric focus amongst former Qallunaat teachers in Nunavik.

Inuit have shown willingness to adapt to Qallunaat school routines while Qallunaat schools have been resistant to change (Crago, 1992). Participants in this study voiced support for the academic side of schooling, but also the desire for more Inuit culture. For significant school change that would align the schools more closely to Inuit wishes there must be more than rhetoric from the Department of Education, and the Qallunaat educators in Nunavut schools must believe that there can be new ways to do things worked out by and with Inuit.

²² Cummins (1988) wrote that “a genuine commitment to empowering minority students implies acceptance of the educator’s *ethical responsibility* to become informed with respect both to causes of minority students’ academic difficulties and strategies for helping students overcome these difficulties” (p. 136, emphasis in original).

4.3.6 Disempowerment. During fieldwork there were two School Improvement meetings, each from 9 am to 4 pm, where both school staffs came together and the community was invited to participate. The idea of the meetings, according to school officials, was to find ways to increase the success of students and a number of activities were planned to generate a mission and vision statement for the schools. Participants were also asked to think about what they would like to see from the schools in the future.

At the first meeting there were only 10 or 12 community members present. The Qallunaat school official who organized the sessions speculated about why the turnout was low, saying that perhaps community members felt alienated from the schools and had therefore not come. Someone from the floor noted that the sessions had not been well publicized and it was agreed that for the second session posters would be hung as well as more messages sent over the local radio. The sessions were held through the day, meaning that anyone with regular wage employment or anyone going hunting during daylight hours could not easily attend. Just over 20 community members came to the second meeting.

The sessions started with a disclaimer by a Qallunaat educator that “the required subjects are limiting.” He said that a local person was building a qamutik in the school but that “those things must be wrapped around academic subjects.” He also said that the high-stakes English exam needed to graduate is “culturally biased, but that’s what we’re up against, and maybe partly why we’re hearing students say ‘boring’.” Although the sessions would be, at least in part, ways to envision the future, it seemed clear from the beginning that not much change could really be expected.

During the first meeting we broke into groups to generate mission and vision statements and during the second meeting broke into groups again to consider all statements and synthesize new ones from our favourite pieces. Qallunaat and Inuit stayed largely amongst themselves in forming groups, and, while the Qallunaat teacher groups generated statements quickly it was clear that the time allotted was too short for some of the Inuit groups. In the second session the group I was a part of needed to translate the typed mission and visions statements from English into Inuktitut so that the unilingual speakers in the group could take part. There was no real time to do

this and to discuss ideas in any depth – the pedagogy of the session had not taken this into account, and the immense privileging of Qallunaat through the prioritization of English (Tompkins, 2006) went unremarked.

Despite the boundaries and the pedagogy a strong picture emerged from the mission and vision statements about what people valued and wanted in the schools. The mostly Qallunaat groups had named ‘community involvement’ and ‘local traditions and cultural activities’ in their statements. Many Inuit groups had named specific cultural activities as well as community involvement, specifically calling for the involvement of elders. Some Inuit groups were advocating much more strongly for Inuit skills in the schools, but Qallunaat educators were supportive. One Qallunaat teacher suggested moving away from Alberta curriculum and exams and another said that “culture and traditional values underlie everything.” It seemed like the kind of community involvement and consultation recommended by Armstrong, Bennett and Grenier (1997) and by Barnhardt (1999).

Then, near the end of the second meeting, an Inuk asked if this was “all just going to stay on paper?” There had been talks before, she said, but nothing ever seemed to happen (a comment also heard in Martin’s [2000b] consultations). No one seemed to know exactly how to respond. Soon afterwards an Inuk asked whether there would be more elders in the schools, since all had agreed that there should be. A school official said that, unfortunately, there was no money for that. I suggested converting a highschool teaching position into funds to hire elders, but a teacher said that was impossible, that there were just barely enough teachers to deliver the highschool program. I suggested that timing of some course offerings could be changed so the academic programme could be run with fewer teachers – even though that might mean it would take longer to graduate; another replied that without the Nunavut Department of Education changing credit requirements that was not possible. I explained how the timing, not the credit requirements, would need to be adjusted, to which he replied that culture should be across the curriculum, and that what was needed was new curriculum and more money.

Skutnabb-Kangas (1988a) wrote that school administrators often claim allegiance to principles of successful bilingual education but use “practical arguments” to mask the real

arguments. She wrote that if the political will exists, most problems can be solved in innovative ways. This circumstance reminded me of Brody's (1991) message that while it looks like local control is desired, everything in the system is set up to stop it. In the 1970s he wrote that Inuit: "soon realize that all fundamental decisions are still to be made by Whites" (136). The School Improvement meetings seemed that way – they seemed disingenuous. Consultation, without the possibility of change, is meaningless. I suddenly understood why many would choose not to take part in such consultations. As Deyhle described at a meeting between Navajo parents and Anglo administration, "even when Navajos speak they are seldom heard, contributing to a strong sense of disempowerment" (p. 410). To take part and see nothing change, yet again, must be deeply discouraging.

One participant asked to be interviewed again after the School Improvement meetings. She was in fact very pleased that people had spoken out during the meeting. In the first interview, several weeks before the first meeting, she had explained how some Inuit "*think that they have no right to speak up*" on matters like the way schooling is structured. Reticence to speak up, she said, was tied to a personal struggle for self-esteem, to feeling intimidated, and to difficulty communicating in English. Perhaps the School Improvement meeting provided a forum to *speak up* that was valuable for some, at least being heard by Inuit and Qallunaat teachers about what is important. Still, she expressed doubt about whether anything would be different, saying, "*I don't know if they're really going to do something about it.*"

There have also been meetings in the Qitirmiut Region of Nunavut aimed at finding ways of increasing Inuit culture in schools. Pizzo-Lyall (2006) wrote that, "my main reaction to this was that although they are holding these gatherings of people using their minds in new and creative ways, there is no change.... Why is it that Nunavut curriculum is not being changed? Nunavut is almost seven years old and we haven't seen a difference in the education" (p. 14). Community control of schooling is thought to lead to empowerment and success, building trust and parental support, as reported in Alaska and Aotearoa/New Zealand (Harrison, 1993); empty gestures without real control may lead to just the opposite.

4.3.7 Summary. I have documented some of the past signs of colonialism described to me by participants, some of the ways Qallunaat retain control in Tuktuulik, the relative economic privilege Qallunaat enjoy, and the prejudice and ethnocentric assumptions that I heard from some Qallunaat. Chief among these assumptions was the belief of many Qallunaat that someday Inuit will live and work like Qallunaat. Finally, I described two meetings that may have been disempowering, as a clear picture emerged about what Inuit want in the schools and the school response was that it was impossible to realize that vision.

A lack of control and relative poverty lead to poor health (Marmot & Wilkinson, 2001) and may impact Inuit students' performance in schools. Living alongside Qallunaat who exercise control and enjoy privilege may affect Inuit self-esteem. Faced with prejudice and the devaluing of Inuit culture, Inuit may internalize shame that leads to poor performance in school (Cummins & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988). Without meaning to, Qallunaat teachers may be involved in interactions with students that are 'educationally disabling' (Cummins, 1988). Recent research shows that First Nations in British Columbia with the strongest indicators of cultural maintenance have the highest graduation rates, whereas those with the greatest loss of culture have the lowest graduation rates (Chandler, 2007). In Tuktuulik, the pressure brought to bear on Inuit culture by Qallunaat and Qallunaat institutions provides a formidable obstacle to students' academic success. Some more of the mechanisms by which this occurs are described in the following section.

4.4 Dysfunctional corollaries of colonialism

I asked participants what had made them decide to stop school and what they thought might be obstacles to finishing highschool for students in Tuktuulik. There was a range of responses, many related to the intergenerational trauma (Weaver & Brave Heart, 1999) that is a consequence of residential schools and to the effects of oppression – “the aimlessness, family violence, alcoholism, the monotony of despair that comes with colonialism and dispossession” (Kulchyski, 2005, p. 111). Colonial processes are linked to violence and substance abuse as they change how people make a living, destroy languages and spirituality and assault family structure (Lane, Bopp

& Bopp, 2003, p. 22). Paternalistic treatment grooms people for dependence (Watt-Cloutier, 2000). When indigenous peoples repeatedly hear the colonizers' ideas and are subject to their attitudes and behaviours, self-destruction often results (Brody, 2000). In Aotearoa/New Zealand:

Violence and family abuse became entrenched in communities which had no hope.... Many indigenous activists have argued that such things as mental illness, alcoholism and suicide, for example, are not about psychological and individualized failure but about colonization and lack of collective self-determination. (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, pp. 146, 153)

Inuit in Nunavut earn significantly less than the average Canadian, have more health problems and die on average 10 years younger (Statistics Canada, 2004). Unemployment is high in Nunavut, and, as was found in southern Canada during the Depression; idleness can be devastating (Jacobs, 2004). All of these factors contribute to violence and hopelessness in Nunavut communities (Tompkins, 1998). Lack of control and independence have left people vulnerable to addiction: "The use of alcohol/drugs became a way of life for many, although few people understood why" (Watt-Cloutier, 2000, p. 120). Culture loss and social malaise go together (NSDC, 1998). "Addiction... is usually not comprehensible without an understanding of subjugation and racism, at least not if historical and population-based studies are to be believed" (Farmer, 1999, p. 14).

This introduction is meant to help understand, not to excuse, damaging behaviour. While teachers often blame 'problems in the home' for students' academic and behaviour problems (Fuzessy, 2003; Levin, 1995; Tompkins, 1998), another type of awareness and action might be motivated by an acknowledgement that the schools where many students struggle were and are part of the cause of the dysfunction that gets blamed for students' struggling. Schools cannot wait for community healing before making changes – they need to create relevant and empowering programs, even though social problems present obstacles to teaching and learning (Watt-Cloutier, 2000).

This section describes some things that Inuit participants said made learning difficult for some students in Tuktuulik. The findings described here are meant to be a part of the picture

illuminating obstacles to learning faced by Inuit students in Tuktulik. They are connected to other sections of this work and cannot, on their own, explain school leaving. The school system can make moves to address or ameliorate some of these issues. Action should be taken by the federal and territorial governments, and healing is needed. Obstacles described here include: drug and alcohol use, gambling, violence and abuse, problems in the home, and other obstacles including bullying, pregnancy, and poor relationships with teachers. These are not unique to Tuktulik; they are found everywhere and are often acute in the aftermath of colonization and in the continuing colonialism faced by many indigenous peoples around the world.

4.4.1 Drugs and alcohol. The use of drugs and alcohol were the obstacles to schooling most often mentioned by participants. Drug use was mentioned as problematic by 21 participants, many spontaneously and some after being asked. Some of the accounts were historic. One person said:

I was in school most of my life in my younger years. My parents are at home and I'm learning this, this Qallunaatitut game, and then I go home. I dunno, somewhere along the line we just got lost. And trying to adjust to a new, completely new different world. My generation was like from an outpost camp to a booze, a booze community. Ah like, an alcohol and drug community. And gambling. Something we never had before. And that just kind of, just kind of, how would I say it? What would be good; a fuzzy world – like you can see them, but not totally completely. (W/50s)

Another person described how his teacher tried to time home visits for the morning because his mother was an alcoholic. It worked a few times before his mother started drinking in the morning as well (M/40s). Most often it was participants' own experiences with alcohol or drugs that they described. When I asked one person why she quit school in grade 9, she said: “*Just like anybody else – alcohol. I started drinking, and doing drugs. Actually the drugs got me, and that's when I decided to quit*” (W/40s). At that time there was no highschool available in Tuktulik and students needed to leave the community after grade 7. Iqaluit, at the time, had a reputation as a place with easy access to drugs and alcohol (Brody, 1991, Paine, 1977b). Younger people, too, reported

trouble with alcohol that affected their schooling. A woman in her early 20s said that the first time she stopped school was in grade 7 when she was drunk all of the time, and a man in his 30s said he was removed recently from Nunavut Arctic College in Iqaluit because he came to class drunk. He said that part of him really wanted to learn, while part of him just wanted to party.

Many people said that drugs and alcohol are responsible for school leaving. When I asked him why he thought so many students leave school, a man in his 30s said: *“It has a lot to do with the social problems in town, like drugs and kids getting into drugs. I think that’s the biggest problem.”* Another person, a woman in her 40s, said, *“of course the number one thing is dope.”* Most people spoke of marijuana or hashish. One person said that people want to stay up all night and do crazy things in the summer when it is light all night, and another that the lack of places for youth to go contributed to the problems with drugs and alcohol. In the 1970s Brody (1991) noted the alcohol and soft drug use of youth and linked it to the void in young lives without hunting or other projects to give direction, leaving people with too much time on their hands.

Drugs and alcohol are expensive in Tuktuulik, both in monetary and non-monetary terms. People talked very openly about usage and cost. Alcohol could only be ordered legally, in limited quantities, through an Alcohol Committee at a cost of \$180 for 1.75 litres, or purchased illegally, when available, at \$100 for 375 millilitres. Marijuana cost \$60 per gram, perhaps enough to *“last 4 people 15 minutes.”* If available, the person who told me this said that she would smoke again later, and said that if she did not spend money on drugs she could have a truck, snowmobile, and all-terrain-vehicle.

In non-monetary costs, a woman in her 30s said she adopted out a child when she was having trouble with drugs and alcohol and that she feels badly smoking in front of her children; a woman in her 20s said that people are not sharing as much since they are gambling too much and smoking drugs. Another woman in her 20s said that while drugs and alcohol are not a problem for her, she has seen people become violent when they want drugs and several people noted that the high price of drugs and alcohol caused trouble for families. It was also noted that parental drug use made it difficult for some to support their children. Møller (2005) found that care of children, and care for people’s own health, sometimes suffered due to drug and alcohol use, and a woman

in her 40s expressed concern that there are “*more slow students because of people taking drugs and burning out their brains smoking drugs when they’re pregnant.*”

One recent graduate in her 20s said that smoking drugs had made her not want to go to school, and especially not want to wake up in the mornings. She felt that parental pressure not to use drugs had been helpful and said that she thinks drugs are a problem for many, but pointed out that there are problems with drugs in other communities, down south, and everywhere. There were also people who said that they did not use drugs, a woman in her 40s who said she never drinks before a workday, and a woman in her 30s who said she makes sure her children have what they need before using money for drugs: “*My kids are my first priority for everything.*”

There were very few times as a teacher or researcher in Tuktulik that I saw anyone publicly drunk or noticed that anyone had been smoking drugs. As a researcher and participant in the community I did hear much about alcohol and drug use. One participant missed an interview because he was drunk, and at a small gathering a woman recounted how she had been in a holding cell overnight for drunkenness “*at least 20 times.*” I heard that when people are in Iqaluit they are sometimes anxious to get home because they find it hard to avoid drinking when alcohol is so available. The historical experience with alcohol and the circumstances of intermittent availability may have worked to accustom some Inuit to binge drinking, as Hodgson (2007) suggested may have occurred with some First Nations people and as happens today with White people in ‘frontier towns’ like Fort McMurray, Alberta.

In other casual conversations I was asked if I wanted to buy drugs and several people asked facetiously if I could interview them three times, with it understood that three times the honorarium would buy a gram of marijuana. One person said that some people in town smoke \$60 worth a day, and several young men estimated that only between 15% and 20% of the adults in Tuktulik do not smoke drugs. A Conference Board of Canada survey in 2001 suggested that 32.5% of Nunavummiut, 4 times the national average, had smoked marijuana or hash in the previous year (cited in Spitzer, 2001). It should also be noted that alcohol is consumed regularly by many Qallunaat residents and drugs are used as well, although Qallunaat privilege works to moderate consumption while Inuit disadvantage tends to accelerate it (Brody, 2000, p. 251).

Drugs and alcohol cause learning problems when students themselves use them excessively, when parents use them such that they cannot care for or provide for their children, and when their use during pregnancy causes developmental difficulties. Long term heavy use of marijuana may also cause marijuana-induced psychosis (Qvistgaard, 2007). A Qallunaat healthcare professional suggested that marijuana use might be seen as self-medication, used by some to deal with anxiety caused by unemployment and other stressors. The inability to get onto the land that some described might also contribute to substance abuse (Brody, 2000).

Unfortunately, as one participant pointed out, there are few services available to help with addictions compared to in southern centres. The chronic under-funding of social programs in Nunavut is part of a larger pattern in the relationship between Canada and its Aboriginal peoples. Many of the stressors present in Nunavut communities are related to colonization and the disruption it caused (NSDC, 2000; Nungak, 2004) and to continuing neglect. These stressors include overcrowded housing, poor health, low median income and high unemployment (Chisholm, 1994; NSDC, 2000; Prattis & Chartrand, 1990; Statistics Canada, 2004; Tester, 2006). Unfortunately, much of the proceeds from the sale of alcohol and drugs in Nunavut flow south, removing funds from Nunavut that could otherwise be used in the communities.

Drug and alcohol use exact a heavy toll in Nunavut; people use them to improve their lives but suffer devastating consequences including loss of personal power and loss of freedom (Watt-Cloutier, 2000). This affects their ability to learn or to support others' learning. Many avenues need to be pursued in approaching the issue of drug and alcohol use. Changing the power imbalance between Inuit and Qallunaat may be a prerequisite for substantial change, and healing will be needed. Healing may take place through culture affirming initiatives like *Inupiat Iitqusiat* in north-western Alaska (McNabb, 1991), or in other locally-determined ways. Martin (2000a) suggested that since language loss is connected to social and economic problems, language promotion is important in a holistic community wellness strategy (p. ii). Malaurie (2007, p. xviii) suggested that addictive and harmful behaviours mark rejection of the assimilation demanded by the school system; reforming the schools system and re-educating some of the educators may be needed as well.

4.4.2 Gambling. After several participants had spontaneously mentioned drugs and alcohol as obstacles to student achievement I began to ask about them. One man in his 20s said: “*maybe the gambling is worse.*” I asked him to explain and his interview partner said, “*they cannot support their kids*” (W/20s), explaining that if kids do not get fed they cannot learn. Six people named gambling as problematic. Some of the gambling was officially sanctioned, like recreation and daycare fundraising bingos with jackpots of \$1000 to over \$5000, some took place in private residences with playing cards or marbles, and as a teacher I recall some taking place outdoors with students flipping quarters towards a shallow hole.

One woman in her 30s named gambling as an interest and said she did it twice a week, but that the real gamblers do it every day and there are a lot of real gamblers. Hodgson (2007) noted that the alcohol addiction of some First Nations people changes easily into gambling addiction. Many Qallunaat in Tuktulik also gamble, often by playing poker, and Jacobs (2004) pointed out that in part due to successful government advertising adult Canadians spend on average \$424 per year gambling.

4.4.3 Violence and abuse. In Section 4.1.1 I recorded some of the violence and abuse that students faced from teachers in the past. This had obvious consequences for learning and in some cases was reported to lead directly to students leaving school. It reverberates today as a number of people called for cameras in classrooms or other ways to ensure the safety of students in school (see 4.1.1). Some people suggested that the abuse of young males in the past is now being re-enacted as violence against women by those who were abused, something also mentioned by participants in Møller’s (2005) study on tuberculosis in Nunavut. Participants also told me that violence between caregivers and the abuse of children impacts children’s ability to learn.

An Inuit teacher said that students have become more violent and aggressive over the years. She said, “*as you know there are many parents with drugs, alcohol, violence, and the students bring it to the school and take it out on other kids/teachers.*” This fit with what a man in his 40s said, that he had been a “*very, very angry boy*” at school as a result of being physically abused by his parents. He said that he was quiet at home, but “*a free man at school.*”

A few participants said that violence in the home between caregivers led to anger and problems at school. Through an interpreter, an elder said:

If they go through a bad experience even as infants they can feel. If there's violence between the parents, children can feel, even when they're not able to talk, even as infants. If they grow up with that feeling and they see that constantly then they're gonna be angry when they grow up.

The participant explained that fighting gets from the home to the school: “*You can tell if during lunch time parents were fighting in front of the children; that child tends to run around, not pay attention, or they'll provoke their teachers or their classmates.*” A woman in her 20s said something similar when asked what makes a child a good learner: “*Raised in a different way – not an abusive way. 'Cause I've seen lots. The difference of a person being neglected or abused makes a child different. A child can become very violent when they're being abused.*”

I saw some evidence of violence and heard about violence that had occurred from other people. This included facial bruises on adults and children and sounds of struggle from outside or from adjacent living units. I was told about intimidation and about the violent behaviour of people's partners. As with the relative unavailability of drug and alcohol treatment, I was told several times that there was no one to talk to in Tuktuulik about this sort of problem, and there was no women's shelter.

One woman in her 40s said that people turn to drugs and alcohol in the absence of “stop-the-violence” programs. She said:

I've experienced violence, drugs and alcohol myself, and when people don't talk about violence then they'll tend to turn to substance abuse.... The stakes are high when you speak out.... Right now I'm by myself because of violence. Because I wanted to do something about it. I wanted it to stop. If I just took it and took it I don't know where I'd be right now.

She expressed the need for the Justice Committee, Healing Team, Hamlet Council, District Education Authority and the local MLA to work together on stopping violence. Zellerer (1996) reported on high levels of family violence in Nunavut, Peter Irniq, a well known Inuit elder, has

spoken out against family violence (2006), and Møller (2005) found health was compromised for some Inuit women by the violence suffered at the hands of their partners.

In *Too scared to learn*, Horsman (1999) wrote of many barriers to learning when children grow up with violence. These include having difficulty taking risks and finding meaning, spacing out or acting out, and having trouble trusting themselves or others. Treating the student with respect, a single person can have an enormous positive impact. She offered much advice about what victims of violence need in order to feel secure and to learn. These suggestions are beyond the scope of this work, but this area provides fertile grounds for professional development for educators who want to be responsive to learners' needs. Tompkins (2004) noted that children who feel unsafe at school will have a difficult time learning. This may be doubly true for children who have come from unsafe home environments.

In the past, separation of children from their families occurred both because of tuberculosis treatment that took parents of children south to sanatoria, sometimes for years at a time (Grygier, 1994), and because of residential schooling (Brant & Hobart, 1979; Brody, 1991; Hinds, 1958; Kallen, 1977; Pulpan, 2006). They impacted the transmission of parenting skills, as have the assaults of colonialism. Along with local efforts to heal, the Government of Canada needs to take responsibility for colonial policies. These caused and still cause disruption in Nunavut (Tompkins, 2004). More funding needs to be provided for social services and for local healing programs.

Brody (2000) wrote of the confidence and equanimity Inuit had for raising children, but also that the move to settlement life had started to change Inuit family life towards southern norms; this, he thought, was felt as the greatest loss by Inuit (Brody, 1991, 234). Grille (2005) noted that the parenting instinct "fails us, and is overcome by our instinct for self-preservation, when overwhelming life-stress combines with unhealed trauma from our childhood" (p. 22). Many parents in Tuktuulik live with the stress of poverty and unemployment coupled with trauma from the past. Supporting these parents in ways decided locally and congruent with Inuit values should be a priority for Canadians. While violence persists it will seriously impact students' abilities to learn.

4.4.4 Problems in the home. Other home-based problems were named or noted as obstacles to student learning. Sometimes this was stated generally, as when a woman in her 40s said that a lot of students tend to drop out because there are “*a lot of problems inside their homes and in school with their friends.*” A man in his 40s said that “*bad homes,*” alcohol, and drug abuse were the reasons why students left school before graduation. He suggested that I would have learned more from doing interviews in people’s homes, because “*you’d get a better idea of how some of the students are actually being taken care of.*” He was concerned with drug abuse and families not getting along, something he said was much different now than in the past.

Other specific difficulties were named, such as a woman in her 20s stopping school because of conflict with her stepfather: “*Every time I thought about bad things, I just left the school. I wanted to catch up but I couldn’t stop thinking about my problems.*” Another problem mentioned was hunger. A man in his 30s said he was happy for the schools’ breakfast programs as you “*can’t do much work when you’re really hungry, eh? I used to be like that.*” Several others praised the breakfast program as well and a woman in her 20s said that some children do go to school without having eaten. A Qallunaat healthcare professional said that there are clear signs of malnutrition amongst some children in the community. Apart from difficulty concentrating and learning due to hunger, malnutrition could affect children’s cognitive development, making learning more difficult (Meyers, Sampson, Weitzmann, & Kayne, 1989; Speller, 1978). Tompkins (1998) wrote of the need for breakfast programs due to the economic reality in one Baffin community. A local student survey found that more than half of the students came to school without eating (p. 76) and Tompkins cited research calling the provision of a meal the cheapest and most effective intervention to increase school success for disadvantaged children (p. 77).

One person spoke of difficult living arrangements, citing the need to live with friends while waiting for a place. Another person said that he still shares a room with his adult brother and that the arrangement is sometimes difficult. When he was in school he found it difficult to do homework at home. Tester (2006) reported on consequences of overcrowded housing in one Nunavut community, including poor health and a compromised ability to learn, while Tompkins

(1998) noted that in the community where she was principal students sometimes came to school exhausted as they had no bed to sleep in (p. 92). Poverty has an enormous influence on student learning. In Canada, socio-economic status is the strongest indicator of who will succeed in school (Levin, 1995). Teachers sometimes blame student difficulties on their background without adjusting instruction or insuring the creation of a strong relationship with these students or acting as their advocates (Levin).

Two participants said that some people have children too young to take care of them properly and one said that a student who had been abandoned by his parents was angry and aggressive in school. Several people spoke of family obligations that made them stop school, including babysitting siblings or nieces and nephews. The pull between schooling and honouring the values of kinship and family put some people in a difficult situation (Douglas, 1998). Until recently there was no daycare in Tuktuulik and at the time of the research the one daycare was available only for families with full-time employment. This means that in some cases if a student did not miss school to baby-sit, a parent or relative would be reprimanded or even lose his or her job for absence.

Several others stopped school when helping to take care of a family member who was ill, and one as she struggled to deal with her father's death. She said that her self-esteem had been low and she also had trouble with her classmates. When she decided to go back to school she was not allowed to because of her age, but after a change in principals she was allowed to return. She said she felt much better about school, saying her self-esteem was higher and she had a lot of support from her mother. Moquin (2004) reported many similar barriers that made returning to school difficult for women in one community in Nunavut.

An elder also told me of a boy whose father had died. The boy was very confused and found himself suddenly unable to go out on the land. She thought that it would have been very helpful if the opportunity to be on the land had existed through the school and said that his self-esteem suffered from the loss. She said:

It's very emotional to have kids who suffer like that. The kids who have no mother or no father, they go through so much. They're fighting with their emotions. And it would be nice to see them getting more help through the schools.

This idea fits with what Lipka (1991) wrote, that schools must serve communities rather than pursue a narrow academic focus if they are to be accepted and supported by communities.

There are some other problems faced by students and community members in Tuktulik. In the year preceding the research there were 22 deaths from accidents, natural causes, and suicide. Everyone knows or is closely related to someone who has committed suicide. As one participant said, “*we've lost so many youths to suicide here. It's all because of hopelessness. I mean, you've gotta have hope to live.... Those are people who have no more hope, absolutely. They take their lives.*” Hopelessness at the level that leads young people to contemplate or attempt suicide must make achievement in school seem like a very low priority. If you don't know if you will be here tomorrow, why try in school (Chandler, 2007)? Suicide is a concern in many communities in Nunavut (Hicks, 2006), and those close to friends who are struggling are also affected. As a student in Pond Inlet, S. P. Katsak (1999) once listened to three friends contemplating suicide on the same weekend, and spent much time helping some of her closest friends deal with being sexually abused.

Tuktulik is lacking in resources that might help to address youth suicide. While a youth centre opened in 2006 the budget for staffing it on a part-time basis came from the same pool that the Recreation and Social Services budgets are drawn from, meaning, in essence, that more activities for youth might result in a reduction in counselling services. One person put the struggle in human terms:

Right now at the school right, I've been figuring some students need a lot more help than usual. 'Cause some of the students have a hard time right now, 'cause they've been losing a lot more family than usual because of the suicide and all that stuff.

Another, who struggled in school, said she used to have two role models, but one committed suicide and the other died in a hunting accident.

Students struggling with issues in the home, whether overcrowding, hunger, loss, or other problems, will very likely be distracted from learning. They need increased support and understanding to help them deal with the issues while root causes such as poverty and inadequate housing must also be addressed.

4.4.5 Other obstacles. There were a number of other obstacles to student learning mentioned by participants. Fighting and bullying were named by many as having been directly responsible for them leaving school. I remember how difficult it was as a teacher in Tuktuulik to mediate student disputes and to try to understand what had happened when most or all of the exchanges occurred in Inuktitut, a language I do not speak or understand. The inability to speak Inuktitut is an enormous barrier for Qallunaat teachers and administrators in trying to maintain harmony and fairness, and in trying to keep schools safe places with a minimum of bullying.

Many people said that they had quit school because of a relationship or because of being pregnant. Several people said they regretted the decision. One participant went back to school as a young mother and another planned to go back when her child was a toddler. It was noted repeatedly that a daycare connected to the school would make it much easier to be a mother and student. When one woman said that *“liking boys so much made me quit”* it made me think about personal responsibility, historical circumstances, and the reality of the schools at the time she made the decision. Many people blamed themselves and said that they regretted the decision to stop school. The colonial enterprise succeeds when those who are marginalized blame themselves instead of the colonial system (Battiste, 2000). Although some people described terrible things that happened in the schools, very few criticized schools generally, and most of that was related to abuse or being bullied. Only one person was harshly critical, saying: *“I hated school so much. In the last year when I got pregnant I really wanted to go.”* It is clear that being pregnant was not the only, or even the key reason, for leaving school. This may be true in many cases, where many factors are involved and one event triggers the student’s decision to leave. One woman in her 20s who stopped in grade 9 said that her teacher kicked her out and told her not to come back anymore when she was late for recess, saying he did not want to see her face again: *“And I told*

the principal and he didn't believe me." An elder who missed school sometimes because her parents lived in an outpost camp said that her teacher had patted her head and said, "*I think you're not going to succeed 'cause you're not in school.*" Her daughter, who was interpreting, said that she never went back after that, but that the teacher had actually meant the comment as encouragement to attend more regularly. Teachers have enormous influence on students' decisions.

Other obstacles to learning and staying in school that people noted included: peer pressure from friends or siblings who are not in school; trouble with the law; the inability of some parents to help with homework because they are not familiar with the material; high teacher turnover that keeps teachers strangers; not getting along with teachers; social promotion that leaves a child unprepared for the higher grade; being distracted by thoughts of carving or the money it would bring; getting a job; and struggling with a learning disability.

4.4.6 Summary. Many obstacles to student learning and success in school were named by participants and observed as I interacted with people inside and outside the schools. Frequent use of drugs and alcohol by parents and highschool students, violence and abuse, and other problems in the home were noted as reasons for students struggling with school and stopping altogether. Many of these issues are tied to the disruption of colonization and the continuing power imbalance and life circumstances of many Inuit in Nunavut. Personal and community healing will be needed to address some of the obstacles, but recognition by the Government of Canada and reparations for the disruptions of the past, together with funding for efforts to decolonize schooling and address inequity in the present, are also needed.

Despite what are almost insurmountable obstacles, Nieto (1994) noted that some schools are successful with students coming from difficult life circumstances, but that little will change if educators blame problems outside the schools. The instructional policies and practices of schools make a difference and can create the conditions for schools to improve their performance. In one Nunavut school, steps to help children from families 'in turmoil' included giving children the chance to be helpers to support their feelings of self-worth, and creating family groupings where

learning, fun, and caring for each other were all important (Tompkins, 1998). Monday morning activities to ease students in the transition back to school have also been described (Berger, 2001). Teachers building relationships with students may be crucial for student success and well-being. In a context where much dysfunction is a legacy of colonialism, perhaps the most important thing is, in the words of a student in the *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq* consultations, for teachers to “understand what we go through” (cited in Tompkins, 2004, p. 46).

4.5 The connection between schooling and work

When relevant, I asked people if they had wage employment, if they would like to have a job and what kind, and if they thought that graduating from grade 12 would make it easy to find a job. Sociostructural theorist Ogbu (1987, 1992, 1993) wrote that for involuntary minority students such as African Americans, prejudice in society that forms a barrier to getting good jobs removes one of the main incentives for trying hard in schools and may lead to school leaving. If schooling will not lead to a job anyway, why try, and why tolerate prejudice while going to school? Ogbu (1993) wrote that for African Americans the discouragement persisted for many generations and may have prevented them “from developing a strong tradition of academic achievement” (p. 88). Although Ogbu’s work has been criticized (e.g., Foley, 2005; Foster, 2005), knowing what Inuit think about the likelihood that school success will lead to employment, or better employment, may help stakeholders to gauge whether students are motivated to do well in school based on employment prospects. This may provide direction for policymakers and educators.

When Inuit were moved into communities and government jobs came to Nunavut, all of the managerial positions were filled by Qallunaat and this remained the case for many years (Brody, 1991). The best paid jobs were held by White southerners (Paine, 1977c). Federal schooling of Inuit was originally conceived as vocational, with the logic that Inuit would be prepared to work as labourers in mining and other development expected in the north (Jenness, 1964). These jobs did not materialize, leaving many highschool graduates “in limbo” (Williamson, 1989, p. 165). Even just 20 years ago when Tompkins (1998) arrived as principal in a Qikiqtani community, there was high unemployment and Inuit were not employed at senior

levels (p. 18). The situation is somewhat different today. Article 23 in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement set targets for the Government of Nunavut [GN] in moving towards a representative workforce, where 85% of GN employees would be Inuit, mirroring the percentage of Inuit living in Nunavut (T. Berger, 2006). Since the inception of Nunavut in 1999, levels of Inuit employment in the GN, by far the territory's largest employer, have risen to about 44%, and qualified Inuit have priority when hiring takes place. By 2006 it seemed that the number was not set to rise further because of the shortage of highschool graduates pursuing postsecondary education (T. Berger).

In recent years, Inuit were hired into administrative and lower management positions in the GN without necessarily having completed grade 12. Bell (2006) wrote that hiring people without higher levels of formal education sent the message to students that completing grade 12 was not important, although T. Berger (2006) noted that the positions that do not require more schooling have already been filled. This section explores what Inuit participants thought about the link between graduating from grade 12 and finding wage employment.

4.5.1 Perceptions of the connection between school and work. Many people expressed support for schooling on the basis that it is needed to prepare for wage employment (see Section 4.1.4). Here I explore how strongly people felt that graduating from grade 12 would help young people secure employment. I asked some participants whether they thought it was easy for graduates to find a job, but the relationship between graduating and finding work often arose spontaneously in participants' answers to other questions. For example, when asked what was best about schooling in Tuktuulik, a woman said: "*The best is that they should stay in school and finish it. 'Cause when there's no work it's hard*" (8: W/20s). In later interviews I stopped asking about whether graduates could find work and began asking whether participants would support their children in pursuing postsecondary education in southern Canada. Fourteen people indicated a strong link between graduating and finding work, 13 said that graduating did not make finding work easy, and 6 said that graduating helps to find work but is no guarantee.

Looking back, I realize that in asking a question about whether graduating from grade 12

leads to employment I may have been unintentionally sanctioning the role of the school as preparation for wage-employment, something I am suspicious of in the Tuktulik context. Qallunaat-structured work and the individual drive to accumulate wealth may be antithetical to some Inuit values, a point made by Alfred with respect to Aboriginal values (cited in Kulchyski, 2005, p. 270). Performing the requirements of these jobs may require actions diametrically opposed to what many Inuit consider mature or intelligent behaviour (Stern, 1999). Helping students to secure this type of employment should not be uncritically accepted as a legitimate goal of schooling. Furthermore, an assumption that wage-employment would be desired by all was embedded in my question, and it proved to be inaccurate. The Nunavut Social Development Council (2003) noted that some Nunavut residents with sporadic or no wage employment lead fulfilling lives, and several people in this study said that full-time wage employment was not desirable.

Most people did connect school and work. Some of the ways people expressed the advantage of being a grade 12 graduate when looking for work included, “*you have to be a graduate today*” (10: W/30s), and, “*when you graduate it wouldn’t be a problem finding one, but when you’re not it’s kinda hard*” (26: M/30s). Through an interpreter, an elder said: “*he hears that school, education counts a lot when it comes to finding jobs*” (33i: E/M). One person, when asked if it is easy for graduates to find jobs said: “*Very. Very easy. Most of the graduates have good jobs now*” (28: M/40s). He also said that “*jobs are getting scarcer, and if you have good schooling you tend to be picked more.*” Some people expressed the connection between schooling and work by saying that “*it’s hard to find work when you’re not educated*” (54: M/20s).

A number of people said that graduating from highschool is an advantage but does not guarantee a job. One person said: “*In this day and age, like I said, if you were to have a high school certificate compared to a non-highschool graduate, you have more opportunities*” (20: M/20s), but he also said that it is not as easy to find work as it used to be. Another participant said that “*it’s pretty difficult by now when we’re not a graduate,*” but then said that graduates will not necessarily find a job: “*I don’t think so because some people when they graduate they don’t really have any experience about the job*” (17: M/20s). A Qallunaat who hired people periodically said

that candidates are assessed on their abilities to do the job and that preference is *not* given to people who have completed grade 12, suggesting that in some cases competence, not credentials, might be prioritized. One participant also pointed out that some people could actually do jobs that they do not have the paper qualifications for, a reminder of the colonial imposition of a system of credentialing that limits people's access to high status jobs by the institution of schooling.

Two grade 12 graduates interviewed together both had full-time jobs. The older one said that most of his peers who graduated also had jobs whereas the younger one said that only a few of the students he graduated with had jobs (56: M/20s; 57: M/20s). This may reflect the filling of available positions by Inuit in the years after the creation of Nunavut and a drop in available positions in the few years between their graduations. About his motivation, one said:

It was really expensive to have a snow machine. The only way to get a snow machine was to finish highschool and get a job. That's how I felt.... When I was in school I always wanted to go out hunting. Do some shootings, animals. And I was planning to go hunting more often after I finished highschool, and that's what I did. I reached my goal. (56: M/20s)

This participant drew a clear connection between motivation for schooling and later employment-related rewards. His logic explicitly connected the economic activity of wage-employment with enabling involvement in 'subsistence' activities on the land (cf. Dorais, 2001, p. 51; Kulchyski, 2005, p. 193; Purich, 1992, p. 50). It also raises questions about whether hunting is work or leisure (Kulchyski, p. 224). In Saqqaq, Greenland, it is the fishery that serves to generate cash needed to sustain 'a hunting way of life' (Dahl, 2000, p. 126). In Nunavut, the low price of sealskin following boycotts reduced the viability of living from hunting alone (Wenzel, 1991).

Many people said that it is not easy for grade 12 graduates to find jobs, because there are "no jobs available. They said it would be easier when we got Nunavut" (W/30s). One elder was vehement that there were not enough jobs even though teachers promised that if students went to school they would get work. He said: "They're waiting for work, but nothing.... There's no jobs here.... How many people only in the government? Not many people" (E/M). One person said that she could see that graduates do not get jobs easily, "because there's lots of graduates and

they're just walking around." I asked her why, then, she thought that kids would want to stay in school and graduate and she said: "*People have been saying that if you graduate there's more jobs available for you, but there's always nothing for graduates*" (W/20s).

One person said that finding jobs is hard because there are none, but said too that when there is an opening that some graduates do not apply, perhaps because of carving or due to drugs and alcohol (M/40s). I asked one graduate casually about applying for a Government of Nunavut job and he said that he was not interested in working in an office but would prefer practical work. I realized that I had made an assumption about the desirability of this work that reflected my particular EuroCanadian bias.

One parent at a School Improvement meeting said that it is discouraging when her son, who graduated from grade 12, applies for jobs and is not hired. At the same time there are people who have left school recently who have full-time or part-time jobs with the Hamlet or at one of the two grocery stores. Seeing this may weaken the motivation to do well or stay in school generated by the promise of future employment. Several people said that getting further training would be better, rather than trying to enter the job market right after graduating. In Holman, a small community in the western Arctic, an increase in wage employment opportunities requiring higher level skills reportedly led to more parental encouragement for children to go to school in order to increase employment prospects (Stern, 1999).

One Qallunaat teacher said that he tells his students that *his* job is waiting for someone who finishes and goes through university. While it is 'true' that many professional and upper management GN positions are available for Inuit (T. Berger, 2006), the prospect of graduating from an 'advanced' or 'academic' stream that was not offered in Tuktulik, then spending 3 to 5 years at a college or university in Iqaluit or in southern Canada, must be daunting. As I came to interview more and more people I realized that there were very few with postsecondary experience, and almost no one who attended postsecondary training outside of Nunavut. I will return to these ideas shortly. If the possibility of postsecondary training seems very remote it would probably not serve as an incentive to do well in school.

In terms of the prospects for employment created by graduating from grade 12, there was a

general feeling that graduating increases the chances of finding a better paying job, together with the recognition that in the current reality of Tuktulik there are not enough jobs for all graduates. I had the sense that people have come to believe in graduating from grade 12 as being good in and of itself, a measure of self-worth perhaps, detached from its utility in finding work – or in spite of the fact that it is no longer a guarantee. This may provide a strong, though perhaps nebulous, motivation for students. While completing grade 12 may currently be seen as providing an advantage in finding work, it is not certain that it will remain that way in the future. In one village in Alaska highschool graduates were just ‘hanging around,’ not fitting into the traditional or wage-labour worlds (Kawagely, 1995). The regional unemployment rate in Nunavut is 25% (Statistics Canada, 2006), but Purich (1992) suggested that because official figures only count those actively looking for work, and because there is so little work that many have given up, real figures are much higher. If a large corps of unemployed graduates builds in Tuktulik as more people graduate than leave their jobs, any motivation that might have derived from perceived labour market advantage might quickly evaporate.

Another sense I had was that graduating from grade 12 was seen by some as a terminal thing – *the* end to be achieved. This may in part have been because the school offered only ‘general’ level courses, making further studies difficult. When I asked about course level in the staffroom one day I was told that there were too few teachers to offer an ‘advanced’ stream and that only a few students would be capable of studying at that level. The teachers were open to discussing ways that those students could be supported in pursuing higher level studies, perhaps through independent work on modules. Still, I wondered if the reality of short-staffing and offering only one level of courses might be tied to the systemic racism of having low expectations of indigenous students (Watt-Cloutier, 2000), something Ogbu (1993) called a subtle mechanism operating against minority children’s academic performance. With no ‘advanced’ stream available the message must be that Inuit would not be able to succeed there. In a Navajo context youth were routinely streamed into the ‘general’ level, despite their ability, a move that served to protect white collar work for Anglos in the area (Deyhle, 1995).

It would seem that motivation to complete grade 12 is for some drawn from the

expectation of future gain in the labour market, but that the current situation in Tuktulik and the structure of schooling is not such as to encourage it strongly. It may also fade in the coming years.

4.5.2 Few people with postsecondary schooling. As the interviews proceeded I noticed that few people with postsecondary schooling and no one with postsecondary schooling outside of Nunavut had volunteered to be interviewed. I knew that one person with whom I had spoken casually had some years of university education in Quebec. I was concerned that the results of the study might be biased and so began asking people if they knew of anyone from Tuktulik who had completed postsecondary schooling outside of Nunavut.

Seven people said they did not, two said they knew of someone who had gone south and not returned, and three mentioned someone who had attended *Nunavut Sivuniksavut*, a postsecondary access program in Ottawa. No one named a Tuktulik resident who had been to college or university in the south. As one elder said: “*No. Never saw one. Never heard of one*” (67: W/E). And a woman in her 30s said: “*That’s just a dream for most Inuit people because they’ve never seen Inuit going to university. I’ve never seen a grad going to university from this community.*” She did say, though, that “*Inuit people if they really want to, I think they would see it and believe it*” (58: W/30s). It became clear to me that students in Tuktulik have very few role models of people who have left Nunavut to pursue their schooling. Dorais and Sammons (2002) reported that after 30 years of operation, the Iqaluit District Education Authority was ‘hard pressed’ to think of a graduate from Inuksuk High School who spoke Inuktitut as her/his first language who had completed university; the lack of role models exists in more than just Tuktulik. One person did say to me that as an Inuk she is not used to the idea, but that “*we’re getting there step by step*” (53: W/30s).

Students may find it difficult to imagine leaving Nunavut for schooling and returning to take up positions in the community, having had very limited exposure to role models who have done that. The idea that postsecondary schooling outside Nunavut might result in a person not returning may also make it difficult for students to imagine studying in the south. Ogbu (1991) noted that if students think that having success in school necessitates losing their culture, they

might resist schooling on those grounds, and this might easily be the case when the school is thousands of kilometres from Nunavut. Early employment training programs did speed acculturation by requiring Inuit trainees to leave their communities (Young & McDermott, 1988). Tuhiwai Smith (1999) wrote that education has been alienating for indigenous peoples and was designed to assimilate and remove them from their cultures and communities. In one case in this study a participant said that her father had not supported schooling as he feared that it would mean loss of culture. She reported that her sister was the only one who did well in school, “*and she’s been gone for 30 years*” (10: W/30s).

The fear of losing people might be well-founded. Once some Inuit children went away to school they did not return (Awa, 1999, p. 106), and 41% of the Greenlanders who travel to Denmark to study end up staying there (Chemnitz, 2005). Deyhle (1995) wrote that for many Navajo ‘success’ is defined as staying close to family, not in leaving to pursue employment in the city, and this may be true for many Inuit as well. Deyhle also noted that those going to school on the reserve, where job prospects were considerably more limited than in the city, did better academically. This seems to refute the idea that more motivation comes from perceived labour market rewards than from the quality of students’ experiences in school.

Other factors may also work to weaken the motivation to stay in school generated by the labour-market. It has been suggested that many Aboriginal women, if forced to make a choice between their cultural values and working for a colonizing authority, would choose cultural integrity (Kenny, 2002). This suggests that changing the structure of work might help to make completing school and getting a job more attractive. Job sharing and the possibility to take leave would help Inuit maintain connection to the land. One person was clear that being kept from hunting was the hardest thing about his job. So far, the potential in organizing work based on Inuit culture has been ignored (Jonsson, 1999), so it cannot be known what effect a more ‘Inuit’ labour-market might have on students’ motivation to complete school. Economic incentives may be powerful, but they are only one piece of a complex puzzle. The gap is wide between a hunting (or carving) way of life where the means of production are owned by the hunter and all decisions are his/hers (Dahl, 2000), and a hierarchical workplace of 9 to 5 with two weeks of holidays each

year. More palatable ways of working might considerably strengthen the motivation to do well in school.

4.5.3 Going south. As I began data analysis in the field I decided to add a question about whether or not participants would support the decision if a child or grandchild wanted to go to school in southern Canada and then decided to work and live there. I was interested in whether this seemed like an option for youth. Fifteen people responded to the question.

The first person I asked said, without hesitation, that she would be devastated (W/20s). Several said that they would be worried but supportive and most said that they would be supportive. A few people said that they had considered moving south to give their children a better elementary or secondary school experience. Almost all pointed out that the decision to go south would be the child's decision, not theirs. One said that it would be her daughters' decision, then added, "*that was my dream – university*" (55: W/20s). Another, speaking of hypothetical future children, said:

It would be their choice I guess, because we have our own choices now, what we did. I would tell them just to finish school first before anything and if they could go on I would just tell them, "achieve your goals." That's what I would do. If they want to live somewhere down south after they're done, what very few people could do, to live down south and have a job down there, that would be awesome.
(57: M/20s)

Although this participant would be supportive, there is the suggestion in his remarks that it would be difficult for anyone to make the decision to move south.

Two people who had some postsecondary experience outside of Nunavut took part in later interviews. One had travelled to the south a number of times during childhood and had adjusted well. The other had done well in his program but described how difficult it had been to leave the community, especially the first time. He noted that no one had met him at the airport in the south and that learning the bus routes, missing his friends and family, and missing goose hunting season had been extremely difficult. His program entailed two month blocks away, and from hearing him

speak I understood how daunting it would be for most Inuit in Tuktuulik to imagine spending 3 or 4 eight-month blocks away from home to complete a university degree. This participant and others recommended more opportunities like school exchanges and the Nunavut Youth Abroad Program²³ (Oosenbrug, 2006a) to help students experience being outside of Nunavut. He also recommended the creation of a more local version of Nunavut Youth Abroad that would see young people experience other communities in Nunavut. He said that “*being away from home is the tough part.*”

Until late in the 1990s people in some Nunavut communities still had to leave their communities to complete highschool. Many people in this study noted struggling when they were away from home in Iqaluit or even further afield. Manning (1976), one of the first Inuit teachers, said that it was not much fun for students to be far from home and that it led to homesickness and stopping school, in part because of missing family. Today, round-trip tickets to Ottawa cost between about \$900 from the cheapest to over \$4000 from the most expensive community – a sure deterrent to frequent family visits. There are recent reports as well linking homesickness to stopping school (Merkosak, cited in Oosenbrug, 2006a). Annahatak (1985, p. 8) wrote that the loss of identity connected to being separated from family would discourage Inuit students whose motivation to succeed would “be at war with” with their desire to maintain identity.

Several people in this research expressed support for the idea of their children studying in the south, but also concern. One said she would be happy but scared if her children went off to university; another, that she would not mind but would be worried because of the hard drugs that are available in the south. One woman would be very worried about crime or traffic accidents but said she would feel better if she accompanied her daughters, and she would try not to be in the way. While no place is totally safe, some of these concerns might be alleviated if funding was available for family visits before and during a student’s studies in southern Canada. One person

23 The Nunavut Youth Abroad program was the brainchild of Chris DaSilva, who noticed that students with some experience outside Nunavut often did well in school. Some were concerned that giving students experience in southern Canada and abroad would cause them to stay in the south, but this has reportedly not happened (Oosenbrug, 2006a).

who had lived in the south said that she herself had thought about living in Ottawa, but decided against it because in the North there is “*more freedom, more space. There’s just things you can’t get down there that you can get here.*” She also thinks about moving south for her hypothetical future children’s schooling, but is concerned about loss of culture, even in Ottawa where there are many Inuit.

While there was much support for children’s rights to do what they see fit, and some enthusiasm about the possibility of people moving south to attend university or work, it was clear that these would not be easy choices. The difficulty in leaving Tuktulik for the longer periods of time necessary to complete a university degree on-site may be insurmountable for most students. Students in many southern Canadian settings have the chance to visit universities during their time in highschool, and most have many opportunities to visit home and be visited by family members during their studies. Flexibility to visit campuses and the possibility to travel home or be visited frequently during studies may be necessary if Inuit highschool students are to be able to imagine themselves attending university or college. In a First Nations context, LaFrance (2000) wrote how important it is for youth to experience different career options and to understand their relevance to Aboriginal culture. She recommended university visits and virtual visits for people in remote communities, as well as mentors to support First Nations students so that the idea of studying at university would become possible.

Few Qallunaat choose to leave the south to become permanent residents in the north, though some live there for many years. Despite the wandering of western European cultures (Brody, 2000; Rasmussen, 2002), ties to family make a permanent move to Nunavut unlikely for most. Inuit generally value kinship and family to a greater extent than do Qallunaat (Douglas, 1998), and have a strong rootedness to *place* (Brody, 2000). Although about 17% of Canadian Inuit do live in southern urban centres²⁴ (Kishigami, 2006), these factors make high levels of outmigration unlikely (Brody, 1991), and must make long periods of absence for youth seem almost impossible. This is probably something to be celebrated as a sign that southern culture has

²⁴ Kishigami (2006) noted that half of the Inuit in Montreal had a non-Inuit parent, and that many expressed ambivalence about being in the south, sometimes living there to escape violence or homelessness.

not been accepted to the extent that a future in the south seems inevitable (Brody, 1991).

More programs like the Dalhousie affiliated nursing program, the McGill affiliated teacher education program, and the University of Victoria affiliated law program at Nunavut Arctic College may need to be offered in Iqaluit, or even closer to home. Most of those involved in the Akitsiraq Law Program credited its location in the north as having been very important to its success (Driscoll, 2006), also the case for the teacher education program (Dickens, 2006). Although these programs are expensive and may not be optimally adapted to Inuit culture, they provide an alternative to moving south that has proven to be much more accessible. They have been successful in educating Inuit who become role models, allowing students to imagine those careers. Perhaps the next step, as one participant said, is an Inuit university in Nunavut, teaching Inuit students in Inuktitut. While that might seem like an unrealistic and costly dream, the university in Nuuk, Greenland, exists as perhaps the smallest university in the world, a message to Greenlanders of what is possible for Greenlanders to achieve. It serves as a refutation of the alienation that results when education makes the demand that people leave where they live²⁵ (Saul, 2001).

I asked many participants what they would like to do or study. Most of the answers reflected things that are possible without leaving Tuktulik, or Nunavut. These included driving the water truck, being a cashier, being a printmaker, studying hairdressing in Iqaluit, studying law, learning to teach, buying and selling carvings, translating books to Inuktitut, and getting a trades certificate. Sandra Omik, a recent graduate of the Akitsiraq law program in Iqaluit said it had not occurred to her that she could be a lawyer: “I thought university was for people in the south” (cited in Oosenbrug, 2006b, p. 7). The recent visibility of the law program might be having an effect. One person said he hoped his daughter would be an engineer or electrician, something that would require travel. One person said her young daughter wants to be a doctor, but she suggested being a nurse instead. She said that becoming a doctor takes too much school.

²⁵ Greenland is huge, and the need to be educated in Nuuk does not ensure that students from outside the capital are not displaced. It seems that east Greenlanders who continue their educations and must do so in Nuuk or Denmark often end up living in one of those places, hours and thousands of dollars from home.

Although supportive of education, and although she said it would be okay for her daughter to study in the south, the fact that a nursing education could be completed in Iqaluit might be important in her considerations.

Students' choices and dreams might be partly bounded by what seems possible. Without options that students in Tuktuulik see as viable for pursuing a career, the idea of gaining employment through graduating from grade 12 and continuing to postsecondary education will probably not provide much motivation for them to persevere in school.

4.5.4 Summary. If we consider the failing of Qallunaat-based schools for Inuit students in terms of Ogbu's (1987, 1992, 1993) hypothesis, specifically that lack of connection between school and wage labour depresses student motivation to succeed in schools, there are some salient resonances. There is little doubt that in the eastern Arctic colonization played a major role (Brody, 1991, Paine, 1977d), limiting employment opportunities for Inuit. Success in school historically led only to low-paying jobs, while the high status jobs were held by Qallunaat (Brody, 1991; Prattis & Chartrand, 1990; Van Meenen, 1994). As *Learning, tradition and change* (NWT LASCE, 1982) noted, for years there may have been little evidence that success in school would lead to a 'higher quality of life.' Today, with high unemployment in Nunavut and unemployment amongst recent grade 12 graduates, the motivation to do well in school based on perceived labour market outcomes might be expected to be weak.

The views expressed by participants, however, paint a different picture. People generally believed that graduating from grade 12 would help in finding a job, if no longer providing a guarantee, and almost everyone spoke of the need for wage labour, even if it was sometimes with some regret. Furthermore, everyone seemed to value graduating and wanted all children to do so, even in the absence of a secure connection to the labour market.

That few people in Tuktuulik have been south for postsecondary schooling and returned to Tuktuulik may make it hard for students to imagine doing so themselves (Ogbu, 1991). That some who have left for further schooling have not returned may cause students to worry about loss of culture (Deyhle, 1995). These may provide barriers to even considering southern study as an

option, resulting in a reduction of career choices that might otherwise provide motivation for students to stay in school. The existence of high paying jobs in the professional and upper management spheres may be seen as unattainable and provide little motivation for students to stay in school. That the highschool does not offer an 'academic' stream means that, in any case, students would graduate unprepared for university studies – it may also send the message that Inuit are not capable of studying at higher levels, a damaging colonial message. Expanding the options for postsecondary education in Nunavut may provide the best chance of avoiding complete saturation of the labour market with grade 12 graduates. It would also provide new incentive to do well in school, as more possibilities would open for students who are currently quite limited in what they can easily imagine as career options.

Initiatives that might strengthen the motivation brought to school by its connection to work include: broad initiatives to create more employment in the community suitable for highschool graduates; systemic changes that result in the provision of an 'academic' highschool stream; increased communication with students and parents about preparation for postsecondary education; programs that take students to other communities and provinces to build confidence in being away from home; support for students and families in exploring southern postsecondary options and ensuring the ability to visit during programs; and the expansion of locally and regionally delivered postsecondary programs. These initiatives may help to strengthen the motivation that sociostructural theory (Ogbu, 1991) attributes to having a strong sense that doing well at school will be an advantage in the labour market.

All of this is written with Rasmussen's (2000) concern in mind; that the colonialist project has set out to 'dissolve Inuit society through education and money.' While I think Inuit should decide what sort of jobs and careers they would like, I also think that creative bending of the typical ways that Qallunaat jobs are conceived of and structured should be possible, and believe the western system of credentialing through assimilationist Qallunaat schooling should not be seen as inevitable or best. Schooling that is structured to socialize youth into Qallunaat social relations, fitting for Qallunaat work instead of Inuit community relations (Douglas, 1998), should be suspect. Whatever motivation does come from the connection of school to work may not be

enough to overcome resistance due to the pressure for assimilation, institutional racism and other barriers (Gibson, 2005). This motivation should not be relied on to encourage students through an assimilative process of schooling. Every effort should be made to make school a place worth being for its own sake, and to change schooling so that the door to economic stability is not opened at the price of accepting European culture as ‘superior’ (Gareau, 1995).

4.6 Further discussion: The colonial thread

This chapter explored reasons why Nunavut’s schools might underachieve, seen roughly through the lenses of different theories that try to explain the inability of western schooling to educate some groups of minority and indigenous students. I considered things that I was told, saw, and heard, but have not considered all factors influencing student success. For instance, the IDEA (2006) chronicled lack of intervention and remedial programs, a shortage of assessment services for students with special needs, too few classroom assistants, and other similar problems as contributing to poor performance. These are certainly important, but cannot, on their own, explain the very low graduation rates in Nunavut.

In this exploration I have come to believe that there is no *one* explanation for poor school performance that stands out above all others, but that there is a thread linking all of them. It was clear throughout my time in Tuktuulik, through the interviews, and while doing the analysis, that parents and community members support schooling and want children to do well. For the most part, the sort of “pressure” that Ogbu (1992) said some minority parents do not put on their children to do well in school was not seen. Support of students and the schools was easy to hear and feel, but it did not have the feel of the stereotypical southern middle-class parent rushing a child to do homework before taking her/him to skating and then piano lessons, or rushing to the school to intervene when something was not quite as it should be. Many reasons might account for this, and it should not be blamed for the failure of the schools. Parental pressure might make children in southern Canada accept things at school that are otherwise not very palatable (D’Amato, 1993), but the focus should be on schools changing to serve Inuit students and communities rather than on increasing parental pressure to accept schooling as it is (Gibson,

2005).

The sort of “pressure” that southern parents might bring to bear on their children in ‘support’ of their schooling may not feel natural for many Inuit parents and may conflict with fundamental Inuit values such as autonomy and correct ways of interaction, jeopardizing important family relations (Douglas, 1998). School personnel must think carefully about what they are doing when they ask parents to support their children’s schooling by adopting specific practices. While it is natural for any educator to want parental support for schools and students, if Inuit parents really need to act White for their children to succeed in school, the price is much too high. It is by no means all Qallunaat who think typical southern ways of ‘motivating’ and schooling southern children are best (e.g., Kohn, 1993; Neill, 1964; Postman & Weingartner, 1969) – it is unfortunate if Qallunaat in the north assume that they are inevitable or best in Inuit communities. Educators who want increased parental support should focus on what schools can do to make schooling something that parents can support.

There are many ways to be supportive of schools and children and many were described (Section 4.1.2 & 4.1.5). Section 4.1 (parental and community support for schools and students) described direct expressions of support and also related issues that might impact that support. While the schools today cannot change the bad experiences of students in the past, teachers and administrators can acknowledge this troubled history, work towards preventing abuse and disrespect in the future, and consider ways to make schools more inviting places for people who have bad memories of the abuses of power that took place there. Dissatisfaction was expressed about the lack of discipline in schools today and especially about the practice of suspension. The schools, DEA and community can together re-examine the student code of conduct to bring it more in line with community wishes. This process will probably only be valuable if educators are willing to try to do things differently. Consultation without changes will not likely change community perceptions or support, or much on the ground in the schools. Better communication between the school and the community was also wished for and could very well increase community support for the schools.

Most support for schooling comes currently from the schools’ role in preparing students

for wage employment. The schools miss out on support by largely failing to provide programs and operate in ways that would support and strengthen Inuit language and culture. While there are barriers to doing so, the main one must be colonial. An Inuit curriculum was created (NWT ECE, 1996), but its implementation has not been prioritized. Even some of the small steps toward ‘cultural inclusion’ from the last decade seem to have been rolled back, and ‘following the Department of Education guidelines’ and ‘lack of funding’ are cited as reasons.

The thread of colonialism appears in this section as schooling today is run in ways that are incongruent with Inuit wishes, in part because decision-making is not in Inuit hands. This is true in more local matters such as communication and discipline policy and in broader questions of the way the school system prioritizes academic subjects at the expense of Inuit culture. If funding is truly inadequate to reinvent schooling in Nunavut along the lines of Inuit wishes, to be supportive of Inuit culture while preparing students for employment, it is a colonial failing. Those responsible for imposing a dysfunctional foreign system (Binda, 1999) must surely bear some responsibility for its transformation. But even in the absence of these needed resources, failure to redistribute existing funds is still unjustified. For example, converting a Qallunaat teaching position into funds to hire elders and offer year-long opportunities to take part in Inuit cultural activities might mean that academic highschool courses needed a 4 year instead of a 3 year schedule. This should be open for discussion, and should be a decision made by Inuit.

Section 4.2 (incongruence between school and home) looked at incongruence that can cause misunderstanding when Qallunaat teachers do not know the motivation behind Inuit actions, and especially at incongruence between typical Qallunaat teaching routines and the ways many Inuit learn in the home and community spheres. Stereotyping Inuit students as learning in only one way would be dangerous and could lead to low expectations, but ignoring that many Inuit have real strength in learning by watching and doing is to miss the opportunity to create learning conditions under which Inuit students are more likely to thrive.

I did not observe classrooms and do not know if current teachers call on students’ natural strengths in learning, or perhaps use them to help students learn in ways that may be less familiar. Qallunaat teachers, though, are still recruited to Nunavut and most are given little help in learning

about Inuit learning preferences or ESL teaching strategies. This must make life more frustrating for all involved (Berger & Epp, 2005; O'Donoghue, 1998). It is colonial to provide Inuit students with Qallunaat teachers who have had no initial or ongoing support in understanding Inuit ways and best practices with Inuit students. It privileges EuroCanadian ways of doing things and ignores that Inuit ways might be different. As Stairs (1991) noted, children suffer this incongruence.

Section 4.3 (prejudice, colonialism and disempowerment) discussed some of the things I saw and heard that must form a barrier to Inuit students due to the persistent devaluing of Inuit culture. This devaluing occurs through some of the messages students receive at school and in the community. Some of the messages come from the presence of Qallunaat in positions of power, privilege and authority, some from actions, such as the anger freely expressed by some Qallunaat directed at Inuit, some perhaps subtly through negative stereotyping and attitudes that must be felt by Inuit students, and some through the Qallunaat structures that continue to govern and regulate Inuit lives. Community consultation without subsequent action may provide a particularly poignant example of this control, disempowering parents and students.

Community control of education would be empowering, would go against the colonial trend of decisions being made for Inuit, and would signal to students that Inuit are in charge, a revaluing of Inuit culture that would remove one barrier to learning caused by this assault on their identity (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988b). Concurrently, the racism that resides in all of us needs to be explored by Qallunaat teachers of Inuit children. Until we accept that unquestioned and invisible Eurocentric assumptions can appear in ways that are educationally disabling for our students (Cummins, 1988), we will continue, despite our best intentions, to do damage.

Section 4.4 (dysfunctional corollaries of colonialism) detailed struggles in the community that are predictable consequences of colonization and dispossession, and that impede some parents' abilities to support their children and some students' abilities to learn. They included issues of addiction, violence, and poverty. Appropriate school responses might include program modifications to help traumatized students feel safe and to make sure students are not hungry while trying to learn. Breakfast programs at both schools are good examples of this type of

response. A societal answer to our responsibility would include ensuring appropriate funding is available for community-driven culturally-appropriate healing programs, adequate public housing, culturally-congruent healthcare and daycare, and a serious discussion about other decolonizing measures seen as necessary by Inuit and other Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Section 4.5 (the connection between schooling and work) probed the likelihood that the promise of wage labour after graduation motivates students. It identified the lack of ‘role models’ who studied in southern Canada and returned to Nunavut and the difficulties involved in moving south, or even imagining moving south for schooling. Although highschool graduation is seen as increasing one’s chances at finding a job and was said to be motivating on those grounds, this may diminish in the near future if the pool of unemployed (and perhaps unprepared) graduates grows.

The colonial thread is seen here in the current demand that to prepare for work, to gain helpful or necessary credentials, one must submit to the school in its current, assimilationist form. Too much resistance to the school, whether enacted in truancy, lateness, aggressive behaviour or withdrawal, diminishes the chance of ‘success.’ Additionally, in not providing a program that leads to the possibility of pursuing a wide range of careers after graduation, the colonial thread appears again. It should not be acceptable that Inuit students are forced into an ‘applied’ or ‘general’ stream, limiting future choices.

There is no *one* reason why more students do not graduate from highschool in Tuktulik. There are many; and they have colonial connections. I did not observe classes or focus interviews on current students, so all of the ways that these obstacles play out are not clear. Certainly there was much concern amongst Qallunaat teachers about student behaviours, especially wandering in the halls, absenteeism and lateness. The habit of some students who reportedly arrive in the final minute before they would be sent home for lateness, arriving perhaps 14 ½ minutes late, seems to indicate resistance. Whether resistance is to the content or routines of school, interactions with teachers, foreign pedagogies, implicit or explicit subjugation and devaluing of things Inuit, lack of trust in the difference schooling might make, or is just a consequence of circumstances brought by colonialism, there is no shortage of reasons why a student in Tuktulik might struggle.

The failure of schools in Tuktulik to graduate more students at higher levels of academic accomplishment probably represents a combination of the effects of cultural difference (Corson, 1992b; Crago, 1992; Crago, Annahatak & Ningiuruvik, 1993; Erickson, 1975; Jacob & Jordan, 1993a; Leavitt, 1991; Lipka, 1990; Macias, 1987; Philips, 1993; Stairs, 1991; Trueba, 1982; Vogt, Jordan & Tharp, 1993), resistance to schooling and reduced motivation created by historical injustice in society, schools and the workplace (Gibson, 1993, 2005; Luciak, 2004; Ogbu, 1987, 1992, 1993), reaction to prejudice and educationally disabling interactions (Au & Mason, 1981; Cazden, 1990; Cummins, 1988; D'Amato, 1993; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988a; Spindler, 2000), and disempowerment related to lack of community control of schooling and other institutions affecting Inuit lives (Agbo, 2002b; Cummins, 1986; 1988; Harris, 1990; Harrison, 1993; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; Kirkness, 1998a; Lipka, 1989). That some students fight through to grade 8, grade 10, or grade 12 is a testament to their strength and perseverance: "What is surprising is not that children fail, but that some do succeed against all odds" (Suarez-Orozco, cited in Trueba, 1988, p. 270).

5. Eurocentric Barriers to Change

Although a thorough policy analysis is beyond the scope of this work, in this chapter I address the question of why change is so slow, given the wishes of many Inuit and given rhetoric and policy calling for change. Chapter Three presented findings and discussion related to Inuit wishes for schooling in Tuktulik, while Chapter Four presented findings and discussion related to obstacles to student learning, and the thesis that while no one factor can account for the schools' failure, colonialism is a common theme across all factors. Much of the last two chapters is my Qallunaat thoughts, reflections on Qallunaat culture and systems. This chapter is inspired by what I heard, saw, learned and read, but remains Qallunaat speculations about why schools are still so far from the visions many Inuit have for them. I begin by recapping what Inuit participants wanted and by looking at resonances between this and previous studies.

Inuit participants almost unanimously asked for more Inuit culture in the schools, overwhelmingly asked for more or stronger Inuktitut to be taught, and, of those who commented, almost unanimously wanted elder involvement in the schools. The desire for more culture and language echoes strongly with the recent *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq* (Aylward, 2004) and Education Act (NDOE, 2006) consultations, both released publicly during fieldwork for this study. This research confirms the desire for more Inuit culture and language across respondent age, gender, highest level of formal schooling, employment status, and participation in 'traditional' Inuit activities. There were no discernible differences between people in any of these groups in terms of the broad findings – as they were close to unanimous. The 'generational differences' (Lipka, 1989) and 'internal community conflict' (Lipka & McCarty, 1994) that might exist in small Inuit communities was not salient here. That is not to say that everyone would agree on exactly how and what to change, or that there would be no dissenting voices, but given the results of the broader studies (Aylward, NDOE) and the depth of the current one, it is clear that across Nunavut Inuit want schools that support Inuit culture and language.

The broad consultations to determine Inuit wishes for schooling in Nunavut are quite recent and are supported by other studies that also indicated the importance of Inuit culture or language in Arctic schools (Aylward, 2006; Aylward, Kuliktana & Meyok, 1996; Corson, 2000;

Douglas, 1998; Martin, 2000a; NSDC, 2003; NWT LASCE, 1982; Pulpan, 2006; Tompkins, 2006; Tulloch, 2004). The research is clear. Government policy is also clear on the need for Inuit culture to be taught in Nunavut schools and to form the base of education in Nunavut (GN, 1999; 2004; NDOE, 2004, 2005, 2006; NDOE Curriculum & School Services, 2006). For example, in a newsletter to residents of Nunavut on the progress of the Education Act consultations (*Made-in-Nunavut education act: What we've heard from Nunavummiut so far*) education minister Ed Picco wrote: "The creation of a new Education Act will mark a fundamental shift in the delivery of education in Nunavut. We are committed to creating an Education Act based on Inuit Societal Values and the views and beliefs of Nunavummiut" (NDOE, 2006, p. 1). Most recently, the proposed *Inuit Language Protection Act* (GN, 2007a) and the proposed *Education Act* (GN, 2007c) were tabled; they would see schooling from K-12 using Inuktitut as the language of instruction, to be implemented by 2019.

While there is promising policy, caution is needed as the history of educational reform in Nunavut has a checkered past. Changes have stemmed from the recommendations of studies but with often halting progress. For example, the *Man in the north* (AINA, 1973) studies recommended Arctic-based teacher training for Inuit and for the creation of local education authorities to give communities a measure of control over schooling; both recommendations were soon implemented, but local control was not realized and over 25 years later there is still too little culturally relevant about the teacher education program (Aarluk Consulting, 2005). *Learning, tradition and change* (NWT LASCE, 1982) recommended 3 school boards in the eastern Arctic because, though all school policies and programs were under local education authority control, "total control" was still retained by Yellowknife (p. 53). The school boards were created but broad local control was still not realized and the boards were dissolved again (IDEA, 2005b). Also following the report, the creation of an Inuktitut language arts curriculum was initiated, but when an '*Inuit curriculum*' was instead produced, the resources and support needed to help teachers implement its philosophy were lacking and there was resistance from teachers (Aylward, 2006). While there has been what Cummins and Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) called a 'vener of change,' much of the damaging underlying structure of schooling has remained intact. Despite promising

policy, little about schooling has actually changed in the eight years since the creation of Nunavut (Pizzo-Lyall, 2006). Why has progress been slow and faltering, and will the strong rhetoric and new legislation lead to major changes in the coming years?

There are many answers to these questions at many different levels, but I believe that colonial or Eurocentric thinking is and probably has been the biggest barrier to fundamental school change. Based on a belief in European superiority, Eurocentrism serves to marginalize all knowledge that is not western. So pervasive that it directs us without our even being aware, it is “a consciousness in which all of us have been marinated” (Battiste, 2005, p. 124). Colonial mentality and structures still exist in all societies and nations (Battiste, 2002), Canada included. It is not that long since Whites very openly ruled almost every aspect of administrative life in the eastern Arctic, sometimes in enormously condescending ways (Brody, 1991; Paine, 1977d; Vallee, 1967) and with dire consequences for Inuit (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). While much of the blatant racism of those times may have disappeared, some remains (cf. Møller, 2005), and much remains in more subtle ways and built into systems.

This Eurocentrism manifests itself in many ways. For example, District Education Authorities (DEAs) were created to give a measure of local control over schooling to communities (IDEA, 2006), but have not always been effective in doing so. In the introduction (Section 1.14) I discussed some of the reasons why the existence of DEAs did not ensure local control of education. These include the colonially-induced power imbalance between Qallunaat and Inuit (Tompkins, 2002), the Inuit tendency to defer to authority (Annahatak, 1994; Briggs, 1970; Brody, 2000; Napartuk, 2002), the foreignness of the Qallunaat school structure (Douglas, 1994) and the lack of training for DEA members (IDEA, 2006), who are elected but often have no special expertise or knowledge about schools. All of these leave Qallunaat with undue influence.

The DEA lack of specialized knowledge of school functioning mirrors the situation in some band-controlled First Nations contexts where the education authorities felt unprepared to develop policy, leading to little change (Agbo, 2002b). While the DEA in Tuktuulik could, in principle, demand quite radical changes to things like the school schedule, to who is hired, and to the discipline policy, all of the aforementioned factors make it unlikely that policy unpalatable to

Qallunaat educators would be adopted. As a concrete example, at the second School Improvement meeting educators in Tuktuulik agreed in principle that there should be more Inuit culture in the schools, but there was resistance when the suggestion of how to get more Inuit culture in the schools threatened the status quo. This was not at all ill-intentioned, and is understandable from the frame of reference of EuroCanadian educators in a western school, thinking in ways that privilege EuroCanadian priorities and values. While the DEA might have had the authority to overrule the resistance, this did not happen.

Shortly after the creation of Nunavut the DEA role was weakened as the three school boards in Nunavut were abolished and their powers given to the Minister of Education (NDOE, 2005). The Iqaluit District Education Authority has advocated for DEA roles to be specified in the new Education Act and the Nunavut Department of Education (2006) has acknowledged the desire for the DEA role to be ‘enhanced.’ This might result in greater flexibility in local decision making, but within the present school framework it is unlikely to enable a broad transformation of schooling in Nunavut. As I heard during the School Improvement meetings, lack of funds prevent elders from being hired and ‘hands are tied’ due to academic credit requirements set centrally. Enhanced DEA functioning is necessary, but without central efforts to support increased Inuit culture in schooling and school transformation, DEA efforts will be seriously constrained. As one participant in the language of instruction consultations (Martin, 2000b) put it, when asking for tough policy regarding the use of Inuit languages: “This is not to be left to local control, since control is often in the hands of non-Inuit minority through numbers or influence” (p. 50, emphasis in original).

Eurocentrism that blocks or slows school change appears in Qallunaat teachers and administrators as well. Varying levels of Eurocentrism may partly explain variation in the strength of Inuit language and culture programs in schools across Nunavut. Qallunaat educators can make a difference, both for better and for worse. Nunavut’s Language Commissioner Eva Arreak (2001) noted that more than ‘lip service’ is needed to implement Inuktitut in the higher grades; there must be real conviction that it is important. I would add that without that conviction many very real obstacles can be found as to why it is impossible; moving away from Eurocentrism means

invoking creativity and taking risks to make it possible (Cummins, 1988). In the history of the world many things were thought to be impossible that individuals and people working together nevertheless made happen.

Teachers who arrive in Nunavut with no cross-cultural training or specific knowledge of Inuit culture need a supportive environment that challenges them to examine their Eurocentric beliefs and practices. Many Qallunaat teachers want to learn to be effective teachers of Inuit students (Berger, 2001; O'Donoghue, 1998) but formal support is still not available on a Nunavut-wide basis (Berger & Epp, in press). As a mentor, Tompkins (1998) found that educators could make great changes to their teaching, but the support she described is probably the exception and not the rule. Despite the support, Tompkins found some teachers whose *attitude* was deeply Eurocentric and highly resistant to change. Qallunaat educators' who do not accept the value of Inuit ways of knowing and doing create resistance for those trying to implement changes (Aylward, 2006). These teachers will not be able to support school transformation or their students' academic success (Cummins, 1988).

Teachers and principals need to escape their Eurocentrism to see that Inuit want school to support Inuit culture *and* prepare students for work or further studies. This will not be easy for teachers, who usually believe that school is primarily about western academic learning (Neill, 1964). Holding that attitude, in an environment of scarce resources the academic side of schooling will always be prioritized – as illustrated in the School Improvement meeting where reducing Qallunaat staff in order to hire elders seemed inconceivable to Qallunaat educators. Eurocentrism will always argue for the status quo, a solidly Eurocentric reality. This is damaging and must change. Almost 30 years ago Bunz (1979) surveyed community members and teachers in the Northwest Territories and found that “the goal of preserving cultural identity was one of the highest priorities of Inuit and Loucheux respondents and one of the lowest priorities of Euro-Canadians” (p. 172). That this is still the case must be recognized and changed.

Qallunaat educators in the Arctic follow a long tradition of disruption. Hinds (1968), a Qallunaat teacher in the eastern Arctic in the first days of government schooling, was harshly critical of assimilative school policy, and Brody (1991) observed that: “Whites in the north have

always been intent on causing change; in realizing these changes, they have dominated the Inuit, and they continue to do so” (p. 41). The problems of ‘white denial’ and ‘colonialist thinking’ that marginalize Inuit language and culture have not disappeared, sometimes taking the form of demanding that everything meets standards set in southern Canada (Aylward, 2006, p. 171).

The call for sameness (assimilation) is positioned as humanitarian (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994, p. 116) but is used to disposses indigenous peoples (St. Denis & Hampton, 2002, p. 33). During fieldwork the call for sameness made national headlines when a Qallunaat teacher in Nunavik was reprimanded for teaching ‘evolution’ in a science class. He argued that “students should have the right to the same education as others” (April, in George, 2006, p. 9) while the Quebec Department of Education claimed that the Kativik School Board should teach what everyone else in Quebec teaches (George). I include this example on purpose as it is contentious. If Inuit ought to decide what is taught and how schooling is structured – a move away from Eurocentric thinking – Qallunaat educators must tread carefully when they disagree. The argument for sameness is always an argument that Inuit should be like Whites. Hampton (1995) put it somewhat more directly:

Cultural genocide is the open but unacknowledged policy of every white educator who says, ‘These people must learn what we have to teach’.... If educators realize that they are agents of cultural brainwashing rather than altruistic helpers, much that is otherwise incomprehensible becomes self-evident. (Hampton, 1995, p. 35)

Unfortunately, as noted earlier, there is little help for Qallunaat educators to understand their own Eurocentrism. They are embedded in a school system that is complicit in marginalizing Inuit students (Aylward, 2006, p. 77), based on a Qallunaat leadership model (DeMerchant & Tagalik, 2000), that does not seem serious about supporting school change (Aylward). This does not mean that Qallunaat teachers are not hard working and well-intentioned, or that they cannot learn cultural compatibility when they approach teaching with respect (Paradise, 1994), but in this environment it is unlikely that most Qallunaat teachers will be facilitators or real supporters of school transformation or change.

With the formation of Nunavut in 1999 it may seem that education and everything else would be under Inuit control and that the Government of Nunavut [GN] could change things to fit the wishes of Inuit. There are, however, some reasons why the GN and the Nunavut Department of Education cannot easily change schooling in Nunavut, despite moves to determine people's wishes. One problem is that the GN inherited its structure from the Northwest Territories, a structure that is foreign to Inuit culture and carries within it Qallunaat values (Inuit Qaujimagatuqanginnut Task Force, 2002; Wenzel, 2004). Although an 'Inuit' model of governing a territory has never existed, the need to use a modified Qallunaat model constrains. The bureaucracies of a colonial government may be less than nurturing of changes that would see the school system based on Inuit ways and values – an anti-colonial act (Aylward, 2006).

Paradoxically, the modifications to the Canadian provincial model may also cause constraint. Nunavut, like the Northwest Territories, has no political parties. People are elected to represent constituencies; this leads to a relatively weak leader and cabinet, and no majority that can push through legislation (Kulchyski, 2005). The previous attempt at creating a Nunavut Education Act ended in stalemate and with the Bill being withdrawn (NDOE, 2005); the current attempt is behind schedule and an early draft was criticized by the Iqaluit District Education Authority (2005b) for being vague about the place of Inuit culture in schools.

It seems strange that with clear policy (NDOE, 2004) and rhetoric (GN, 2004; NDOE, 2006) a draft of the new Education Act would be vague on Inuit culture. But the Qallunaat influence on organizational structures has not just disappeared (Briggs, 2001) and it is premature to say that major institutions function according to Inuit wishes (Searles, 2002). The government bureaucracy still lacks Inuit professionals and managers (Kenny, 2002), is hierarchical (Wenzel, 2004) and is dominated by Qallunaat (Searles). Brody (1991) warned that changes in Nunavut do not mean a disappearance of old injustices.

Changes in other Inuit lands have not led to true Inuit control. In Nunavik, where Inuit have had substantial powers since the James Bay Agreement was signed, people feel a lack of control (Gombay, 2005). It is evident in Greenland too, where the Home Rule Government is seen by some as alienating – too Danish and insensitive to local needs (Sejersen, 2004). Jonsson (1999)

noted that in Greenland self-determination is diminished when external professionals influence policy formation. Many positions are held by Danes and institutionalized racism hinders the training of Greenlanders for these positions. The high turnover of some imported Danish personnel means knowledge and skills do not develop locally and the reliance on imported people persists. Despite electing Greenlanders to the Home Rule Government, Danes maintain a strong influence on decision-making and may be perceived as the real rulers (Lynge, 2006).

Further barriers to Inuit control exist in Nunavut as well, like the focus on hiring Inuit which has occurred mostly at the lower levels of the bureaucracy. It may be as Graburn (2006) wrote, that most functionaries in Nunavut know about the push to run government on Inuit principles but do not know how to do it, but it may also be that privileged outsiders have an ethnocentric state of mind (Jonsson, 1999). Kulchyski's (2005) analysis of the bureaucracy in the Northwest Territories supports the latter view. He wrote that it responded grudgingly when the government changed direction, "waging trench warfare against initiatives it did not like and engaging as a braking mechanism on government in general" (p. 64). Aboriginal control of government, Kulchyski wrote, did not and does not ensure Aboriginal control of the State. Where the bureaucracy remains White, we should not expect it to rush in and dismantle Eurocentric hegemony (Graveline, 2002, p. 19). The bureaucracy in Nunavut remains 'massively Qallunaat' (Searles, 2002).

The educational bureaucracy in Nunavut also remains substantially Qallunaat. In the past, most positions of power in the Baffin Divisional Board of Education were held by Qallunaat (Tompkins, 1998), and at its inception as an 'Inuit' school board, members were taken to southern Canada to be taught how boards of education function (Isherwood, Sorensen & Colbourne, 1986). The Board's downsized successor, Qikiqtani School Operations, includes few Inuit, and Qallunaat voices are still heard disproportionately in the Nunavut Department of Education. For example, consultations were held about the implementation of the 'multiple graduation options' (Nunavut Department of Curriculum and School Services, 2005), a plan designed as a response to the *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq* consultations. Comments were reported from 4 meetings where two-thirds of those present were Qallunaat. I do not doubt the sincerity of individual Qallunaat

working in the schools or in the Department of Education; many of them, though, are poorly positioned to step outside of a Eurocentric way of thinking.

Even without bureaucratic resistance, to substantially change the way that things are done in government and in education will not be easy. Mental de-colonization may be necessary if a new elite just tries to be as good as the colonizers *at the same things*, as Lynge (2006, p. 5) wrote in Greenland. For true decolonization all structures need to be re-evaluated, not just repopulated with indigenous peoples (Laenui, 2000, p. 155). When the Kativik School Board was created in Nunavik, “we accepted the southern institutional programs as the standard because that is what schooling meant to us – it was what southern society did in their schools” (Watt-Cloutier, 2000, p. 116). The approach taken was to make adaptations to schooling, an approach Watt-Cloutier wrote has not worked for youth in Nunavik. Basing schools on Inuit values requires transformation, not adaptation (Aylward, 2006).

Despite structural and bureaucratic constraints, Government and Department rhetoric and policy seem to be committed to “a fundamental shift in the delivery of education in Nunavut” (NDOE, 2006, p. 1), and despite the barriers, the Government of Nunavut gives Inuit the potential to effect real change. An external factor, money, may limit the speed at which schooling in Nunavut can change. More resources are needed for things such as the creation of curriculum in Inuktitut, and to seriously contemplate land and culture programs (DeMerchant & Tagalik, 2000; IDEA, 2005a; Kenny, 2002; Martin, 2000a; Simon, 1989).

Nunavut is currently dependent on the Government of Canada for almost all of its funding, and if resources are not to be taken from housing, healthcare, or other important and underfunded areas, more funds are needed. This point was made very clearly by T. Berger (2006) in a letter to the then Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, Jim Prentice, as part of *The Nunavut Project*, a report co-commissioned by the Government of Canada. Twenty million dollars was recommended immediately to protect Inuktitut, plus longer-term funding for work on fundamental school system restructuring. These funds were said to be necessary in order for the Government of Canada to fulfil its obligations under the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*. More funds were *not* forthcoming and within a few weeks the Government of Canada also announced a \$100 million

cut in funding for the protection of heritage languages in Canada (Belmar, 2006).

The problem of underfunding is an ongoing problem in Inuit and First Nations schooling and self-government; lack of control of resources undermines self-determination and moves it more toward self-management (Goddard, 1997; Hookimaw-Witt, 1998; D. F. Jordan, 1988; McCarty, 1989). In Greenland there are concerns that the Home Rule Government's financial dependence on Denmark leads to continuity rather than change (Dahl, 2000, p. 255) and in Canada in order to obtain funding band-controlled First Nations schools must operate within the framework provided by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, limiting the real potential for change (Longboat, 1987). Even in the absence of federal constraints, lack of resources makes major systemic reform most unlikely (Agbo, 2002b).

The Government of Canada's unwillingness to provide the funds to meet its obligations under the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*, with multi-billion dollar recent and projected budget surpluses (CBC News, 2007b; CBC News Online, 2005), has left Nunavut with an assimilative school system that undermines Inuit languages and Inuit students. Not supporting children's learning in their mother tongue causes an assault on identity and slows the learning of content knowledge (Hernandez-Chavez, 1988), causing almost all students to fall behind southern 'standards.' This challenge is not accounted for in Nunavut, nor are comprehensive ESL programs in place to help students learn English (NDOE, 2004). Inuit students are set up to struggle.

When he responded to the call for increased funding, Jim Prentice did not say that it was acceptable that Inuit students struggle – he said that more money was already spent on education per capita in Nunavut than anywhere else in Canada. Prentice confused sameness with equality of opportunity. While more money is spent in Nunavut, it is enormously expensive to build, equip, and staff schools in a vast territory without road access, and much of the money goes to Qallunaat teacher salaries and ultimately leaves Nunavut. Money cannot be the real issue. As Battiste (2000) wrote, “in this era, discussion of limited funding is merely another way to avoid implementing constitutional rights and human rights” (p. 205). Refusing funding required for Inuit to reform a colonially imposed system is unjust; it leaves the federal government open to claims for reparations in the future – having created and now continuing a system with striking similarities to

the residential schools of the past²⁶ (Hookimaw-Witt, 1998).

Dorais and Sammons (2002) wrote that despite financial dependency the creation of Nunavut has given people in the Arctic substantial control over their future. At present this may be more ‘possibility’ than actual ‘control.’ The ‘possibility,’ for example, to create an *Inuit Language Act* (GN, 2007a) demanding schooling in Inuktitut by 2019, without the ‘control’ needed to make it happen. While the financial dependency may not be easy to address, underfunding is not inevitable. Its existence is an indicator of broader societal attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples. Southern Canadians have left Inuit, to borrow Jose Kusugak’s (2004) metaphor, at the floe edge after a successful hunt, cut off from returning by open water. Kusugak called on the federal government for policy to address “social and economic conditions that place Inuit at the extremes of Statistics Canada’s indicators: highest rates of unemployment, lowest income, highest cost of living, worst housing conditions, highest rates of communicable diseases, and shortest life expectancy” (p. 6). Qallunaat bear responsibility for these social challenges (Tompkins, 2006, p. 143).

The relationship between the Government of Canada and Aboriginal peoples is deeply troubling. The lack of funding signals that colonialism is still ‘alive and well’ – its disappearance an illusion (Hingangaroa Smith, 2000). The creation of Nunavut and the signing of various land claims agreements did not stop Canada from being one of only 4 countries to vote against the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs, 2007), nor do they compel Canada to remove structural barriers to true self-determination. Alfred (2005) called it “post-modern imperialism” (p. 26) rather than colonialism – the enforcement of the will of those who control the Settler state without the use of force.

One of these ways seems to be the existence of a hamstrung school system in Nunavut, a system with promising rhetoric but slow progress. By keeping Inuit ways and knowledge marginalized in schools, the dominant culture maintains control without needing to use force – in

26 I do not mean to compare the schools today with the more obvious abuse of the past, but in the goals and inevitable outcomes, too many things are similar. This must be acknowledged.

other words, through hegemony (Corson, 1995c; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988b; Skutnab-Kangas & Phillipson, 1991; Tosi, 1988). Initially this was done by a combination of pressure and persuasion, with family allowance payments withheld from those unwilling to send their children to Qallunaat schools (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994) and government representatives selling the benefits of schooling (Paine, 1977c). Persuasion has not abated. The connection between school and work is invoked to motivate students, even as the school does a poor job in preparing them for work or further studies. Those who resist too much are pushed out and marginalized. Massive resistance and pressure for change is avoided by slow progress, abundant rhetoric, and ‘consultation.’ As in the past, lack of funding is invoked to justify lack of inclusion of Inuit language and culture in Arctic schools. The schools continue their relentless pressure for assimilation.

It may be that global capitalism requires consumers and labourers (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994) and that agriculturalists (and now industrialists) need land (and now resources) that hunters and gatherers occupy (Brody, 2000; Kulchyski, 2005; Malaurie, 2007). Assimilation is a way to create a pool of wage labour and to break people’s ties to the land. It also removes the threat that the more egalitarian social relations in Inuit communities poses to the dominant order (Kulchyski). We remain “incurably colonialist in spirit” (Malaurie, p. xx) and Qallunaat schools and other Qallunaat institutions continue to pressure Inuit to be like Whites.

Inuit have refused. While Inuit have adapted new technology to suit their purposes (Evaloardjuk, Irniq, Puqiqnak, & Serkoak, 2004; Wenzel, 2001), and while Inuit culture has changed dramatically in the last 100 years, Inuit are not White and seem to have no plans of becoming White. This I heard and saw. For a half-century Inuit have been bombarded with Qallunaat culture in insidious and blatant ways in schools and they have not given up their insistence that Inuit language and culture should be a cornerstone of schooling. It is a vision that goes against a powerful northern bureaucracy, against a strong central government, and against a globalizing world where sameness seems to be a sort of religion. It continues a tradition of Inuit resistance to assimilation not often described (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994).

It is time for the rest of us to acknowledge the role that colonial schools have played in

assimilating indigenous peoples, often through the exclusion of their knowledge and denial of its worth (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). It is time to notice that the schools have not really changed in that exclusion and denial. It is time for Qallunaat to stop resisting the re-imagining of schooling, though this means that our unearned privilege will be threatened (Henderson, 2000), and that we must face the fact that what we did in the past was damaging (Spolsky, 1978). Qallunaat educators, for example, would no longer be needed in large numbers in Nunavut schools, and would no longer be able to cast themselves in the role of rescuers (Schick, 2000).

One more issue must be engaged before changing tack. It has been suggested that Inuit elites have used stereotypical images of Inuit culture in their quest for Inuit self-determination and political power (e.g., Graburn, 2006; Searles, 2006; Stern, 2006). While I read the work as cautionary, pleas for researchers not to stereotype Inuit and thereby marginalize those who do not take part in ‘traditional’ activities (Stevenson, 2006b), I find it unsettling. Of course not all Inuit hunt, fish, eat caribou, speak Inuktitut to their children, or even live in Arctic areas. Of course many children and youth are enamoured of video games and many Inuit hold full-time wage employment; Inuit culture is dynamic and will continue to change. But what I heard and saw in Tuktulik does not support the contention that the desire for land skills and the attached values are part of an outdated or artificially created desire to continue ‘traditional’ Inuit culture. Vast numbers of people in Tuktulik take part, in very many ways, in land-related and other traditional activities, and many more said that they wished they could but lacked the means. Regardless of their own involvement or lack of involvement, people overwhelmingly wanted an increase in Inuit culture in the schools. Although the image of Inuit as a hunting people does not fit each individual Inuk, it is clear that traditional activities are extremely important to many Inuit.

These findings resonate with Brody’s (1991[1977]) from 30 years ago. Inuit culture had already changed substantially, but the idea of being a *real* Inuk was still held as a standard. Most Inuit admired those who possessed deep knowledge of the land and of Inuit ways. Today the admiration is still apparent. While no one suggested that Inuit are defined *only* by traditional ways, the wish for continuity with the past in terms of knowledge, skills, and values must be respected.

I have tried to show here some of the barriers to change in Nunavut schooling. The

southern structure of the Nunavut government, Eurocentric attitudes of Qallunaat educators and the still largely Qallunaat Nunavut bureaucracy, capitalist interests and a Eurocentric Canadian public all conspire to slow change. Still, findings from this study show that all of that Eurocentrism has not stopped Inuit from continuing to strive for schools that reflect Inuit culture, and, although progress has been slow and barriers are many, there has been progress. Perhaps the most encouraging sign is that Inuit language and culture in the schools is named and discussed widely in consultations (Aylward, 2004; NDOE, 2006) and in discourse about schooling (Aylward, 2006). The momentum generated by the creation of Nunavut, the recent consultations, and the groundwork laid by Inuit and Qallunaat teachers and leaders (Tompkins, 2006) is unlikely to be thwarted.

As change occurs – as the schools come to resemble Inuit visions of what schools in Nunavut should look like – a change in student success in those schools can also be expected. Schools that reflect Inuit wishes will signal a shift in power, to Inuit from Qallunaat; a shift away from Eurocentrism. The shift away from coercive power structures holds the best hope for changing school failure (Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988; Cummins, 2001, 2002). It will impact all of the areas found in this study to form barriers to student learning. Parental support will strengthen community support for the schools. Inuit learning preferences will be taken seriously and pedagogy will take Inuit epistemology into account. Qallunaat prejudice will be challenged. As *de facto* Inuit control increases, substance abuse and other dysfunctional colonial corollaries will decrease (Marmot & Wilkinson, 2001; Walsko, Lardon, Mohatt & Orr, 2007). While the connection between school and work will not automatically be strengthened, Inuit students will be motivated by seeing more role models (Gibson, 2005) and will be motivated by the other purpose of schooling, the preservation of cultural vitality through the learning of Inuit language and culture.

The centring of Inuit wishes will be part of the process of decolonization (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Will promising policy this time bring results? Despite an onslaught of southern colonial policies, agencies, and personnel, Inuit have not acquiesced to the Canadian plan to make them White. There is no reason to believe that will suddenly change.

6. Ending Eurocentrism

To change schooling in Nunavut to reflect Inuit wishes requires moving away from Eurocentrism at multiple levels. I conclude this work by looking at some avenues for this change. These are again Qallunaat thoughts (though I draw on the work of many indigenous authors) and I focus on Qallunaat and Qallunaat institutions. Inuit will ultimately decide on issues of Inuit schooling and appropriate solutions for Inuit schools will come from Inuit (Aitchison, 2001); in making suggestions I am cognizant of my outsider position. I start with Qallunaat teachers, then move to schools, the school system, and Canada.

6.1 Qallunaat teachers moving away from Eurocentrism

Assimilation in the Arctic has been advanced by individual Qallunaat whose ‘help,’ though often well-intentioned, has interfered with Inuit ways (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994, p. 10). Now, as schooling in Nunavut is reinvented, Qallunaat teachers can work for assimilation or against it; as teachers they cannot be neutral (Berger, 2007; Tompkins, 2006). Qallunaat teachers who support rather than resist Inuit ideas for schooling are needed. This support would signal a shift away from Eurocentrism and continued colonialism. It would indicate a reduction in the power imbalance between Qallunaat and Inuit, an imbalance incompatible with widespread Inuit school success (Battiste, 2000; Cazden, 1990; Cummins, 1988; Skutnab-Kangas & Phillipson, 1991).

In order to support Inuit culture and language Qallunaat teachers must be comfortable with the different perspectives on reality that centering Inuit culture and language will bring forth (Cummins, 2001). Prioritizing knowledge and subjects outside of the western paradigm necessitates taking risks (Dei, 2000) and teachers may need to act against standard practices (Cummins, 2002; Harrison, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1995). A strong commitment to reinforcing students’ cultural identity is needed (Cummins, 1988) and Qallunaat teachers must hold high expectations of their Inuit students (Watt-Cloutier, 2000). As Tompkins (2006) and her Inuit colleagues argue, Qallunaat teachers must understand where they are and who they are teaching.

In a system that at present includes promising rhetoric and policy but no system-wide

orientation²⁷ or comprehensive inservicing that could help Qallunaat teachers to learn about teaching Inuit students or challenge them to confront their own ethnocentric biases, what can concerned Qallunaat teachers do? Acknowledging that we have all been marinated in Eurocentric thought (Battiste, 2005), a good place to start will be in decolonizing ourselves (Shahjahan, 2005). Qallunaat need to be aware of our unearned and unjustified privilege (Norquay, 1999; Tompkins, 2006) and to explore prejudices inherited from our pasts (Nordhoff & Kleinfeld, 1993). We need to understand our own culture so that we can see it as one of many, rather than as the natural order (Shore, 2003). We need to educate ourselves (Narayan, 1988) and take responsibility for our emotions (Selby, 2004). These are no small demands. They speak much more to attitude and fundamental ways of being than to technical teaching competence.

Relinquishing Eurocentric thought may be needed for school change and for Inuit students to succeed in school in greater numbers. As Qallunaat educators learn to privilege Inuit knowledge and ways of doing things a major barrier to school change will be removed. As the schools move to reflect Inuit wishes the unequal power relations that have sent damaging messages to Inuit students will diminish. I saw evidence of prejudice and disempowering interactions, based on Eurocentrism, in Tuktuulik. As Qallunaat teachers move away from Eurocentrism, away from “over-confidence, certainty, and arrogance” (Tompkins, 2006, p. 86), an increase in community involvement and in student achievement can be expected.

Those of us connected to universities also have a role to play. More teacher education should focus on addressing oppression (Kharem & Villaverde, 2002). Intercultural skills should be stressed during teacher preparation (Agbo, 2003) and issues of diversity should be infused throughout the teacher education curriculum (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). New teachers often arrive in cross-cultural settings feeling unprepared (Berger & Epp, 2005; Harper, 2000). Helping teacher-candidates learn how to learn about culture through reflection, and giving them opportunities to explore their own prejudices, would increase the likelihood that they will become effective teachers of students from other cultures (Nordhoff & Kleinfeld, 1993).

²⁷ Section 96 of the proposed *Education Act* calls for an orientation and mentoring program for teachers' first 2 years (GN, 2007c).

The demands placed on teachers in Nunavut led Aylward (2006) to recommend prioritizing the hiring of ‘third-space practitioners,’ a term used by English (2005) to describe people who work for social justice while acknowledging the fluid nature of identity, who have patience and learn by reflecting critically on their practice. Teachers must be sensitive to Inuit culture without assuming that all Inuit are the same or that what works with one group will work with another (Russell, 2006). Some of the Qallunaat teachers in Nunavut – those who are not content with their own shortcomings and are troubled by the continuing existence of ‘Qallunaat’ schools for Inuit students – will be able to take part in reinventing schooling. Others may not be able to contribute and as they leave Nunavut their replacements should be screened for ‘personable suitability’ (Kenny, 2002). Qallunaat in Nunavut must be actively addressing their own Eurocentrism.

6.2 Moving schools away from Eurocentrism

Nunavut schools must move away from the Eurocentrism on which they were founded and remain. The current purpose of schooling, teaching Inuit students Qallunaat skills, attitudes and values, leads to widespread failure (Gilmore, Goldman, McDermott & Smith, 1993). Inuit goals like self-sufficiency and the ability to contribute (Arnakak, 2000) might be prioritized along with Inuit-defined indicators of success such as how well schools reinforce Inuit cultural identity (Simon, 1989) and how well they prepare people “to handle the problems and opportunities of life in their own time and place” (Watt-Cloutier, 2000, p. 114).

This work complements the *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq* (Aylward, 2006) and Education Act (NDOE, 2006) consultations in pointing to areas that need change. How to make the changes needs negotiation, but Eurocentric goals must be relinquished. Battiste (2000) noted that educators would receive a sizable ‘cognitive shock’ if Aboriginal consciousness and language were really brought into schools; some things about schooling might change dramatically. I present two examples to illustrate how fundamental some of the changes might be if Eurocentric thought was not prioritized, then propose some considerations for the new schools.

The first example has to do with movement. A constant concern of Qallunaat teachers is

the tendency for some students to leave class and wander in the halls. Much discussion occurred in the highschool staffroom about this ‘problem’ (both when I taught, and during fieldwork). Qallunaat schooling relies, to some degree, on bodies remaining stationary for long periods of time – perhaps a preparation for many ‘Qallunaat’ jobs where the same is expected. As schooling is redesigned by Inuit perhaps the expectation that people must sit still will be challenged, or, in situations where it is deemed necessary, the freedom to leave will be taken for granted. An alternative school on the Summerhill model (Neill, 1964) might fit very well with the Inuit valuing of autonomy. At Summerhill students are not compelled to attend classes. It is assumed that children want to learn and, when they are ready to, they will do so – a philosophy that resonates with Inuit beliefs (Aylward, 2006; Brody, 2000), and a radical departure from mainstream Qallunaat schools which are based on often arbitrary rules and authority (Briggs, 2001). A Eurocentric perspective sees the desire to wander as in need of correction by punishment or reward, while another perspective sees the expectation of stillness and confinement as abrasive and itself in need of correction.

A second example is the Qallunaat expectation that schooling is onerous, a preparation for the future that must be endured (Kohn, 1993). The present study found that the structural rationale for staying in school exists but is not strong. Graduating from grade 12, it was thought, would lead to a better chance of finding work but gives no guarantee. Furthermore, parents expressed support for schooling but there may be less pressure exerted on some students to do well than is brought to bear by some parents in the south. If the structural rationale for accepting school was strong, or if parents pushed their children, students might put up with much that was distasteful (D’Amato, 1993). As things stand, situational factors – what it is like to actually be in school – are probably very important. It would be fruitful to stop thinking Eurocentrically about reasons for putting up with school as it is and to explore ways to make being in school intrinsically enjoyable. This is not a call to water-down academics and make school ‘easy,’ a tactic that would certainly backfire (Watt-Cloutier, 2000).

I have written at some length about what Inuit in this study want from schools. What those schools will look like is rightfully for Inuit to decide. Pulpan (2006) credited Inuit staff and their

ability to move away from a southern model for one Nunavut school's ability to create some distinctive programs that support Inuit culture. Watt-Cloutier (2000) wrote that other models of schooling should be considered for Inuit. I noted some resonances with a Summerhillian model, where student autonomy is respected. The Nunavik Educational Task Force (1992) wrote that human relations should be central, with high quality, respectful interactions. Perhaps the idea of schools based on caring, as suggested by Noddings (1992), has something to contribute. In an area where schools have often been sites of trauma, an education that is "therapeutic and nurturing" (Battiste, 2004) is probably needed. Maybe, as Hampton (2000) suggested for First Nations education, Inuit education will be "a thing of its own kind" (p. 209).

Some models have been mentioned in the literature that would change schooling to address Inuit culture in a serious way. In 1974 it was suggested that extended camp experience should provide an alternative to regular school curriculum (NSDC, 2003). Stairs (1994a) cited an Inuk who suggested 'making school smaller' to leave room for learning Inuit culture. Rasmussen (2000) proposed 3 months of school each year with the rest an extended land camp experience. These are much more radical ideas than including some sewing and Qammutik building in an otherwise Qallunaat school. They might not today be the school model chosen, but could serve as starting points in thought experiments leaving Eurocentric ideas behind to explore alternative and hybrid structures for schooling in Nunavut. Tompkins (2006, p. 139) noted that if Nunavut is to avoid a neo-colonial future, sweeping changes are needed.

Many paths are possible and some elements of Qallunaat schooling might be included, although the danger exists that Qallunaat elements carry strong cultural messages based on their structures and are 'disembedded' from society in a way that Inuit learning never was (Rasmussen, 2000). In Aotearoa/New Zealand, Bishop (2003) noted that solutions to marginalization will not come from the marginalizers. Still, 'Qallunaat' educational forms chosen by Inuit and used for their purposes may prove useful. Distance education, when adapted to incorporate Inuit culture and language, has been successful (Davis, 2000) and is considered useful by the Nunavut Department of Education (2004). The *Bilingual Education Strategy* calls for the development of "pre-schools, day cares and Head Start programs founded on Inuit language and culture" (NDOE,

p. 11), initiatives that would require new funding. Whatever paths are chosen, Annahatak's (1985) call will need to be heeded – to rebuild the school system so that Inuit students and teachers “succeed without losing their Inuit identity” (p. 9).

6.3 School system moves away from Eurocentrism

Whatever changes are made, parents need to see their wishes reflected in schooling, either through local representation and control or through territory-wide structures²⁸; to be without control is disempowering (Harrison, 1993). By definition, schools following Inuit wishes would be a break from Eurocentrism. I suggest some things that could be initiated at the school system level to help move in this direction, but first present some highlights of the recently tabled *Bill 21*, the proposed *Nunavut Education Act* (GN, 2007c).

The proposed legislation, as promised (NDOE, 2006), aims to base schooling in Nunavut on *Inuit Qajimajatugangit*, usually translated as ‘traditional Inuit ways and values.’ I have provided an excerpt in Appendix D that includes the eight principles the government sees to represent these values. *Bill 21* states that these principles shall form the foundation of the school curriculum, program and its delivery, and that Inuit cultural identity must be respected (GN, 2007c). Opportunities for parental and community participation in decision making are demanded and there is an explicit passage in section 8 regarding Inuit culture: “The curriculum shall promote fluency in the Inuit Language and an understanding of Nunavut, including knowledge of Inuit culture and of the society, economy and environmental characteristics of Nunavut” (GN, p. 9). The legislation would create competency targets in Inuktitut/Innuinaqtun and English/French and insist on curriculum and assessment that are culturally relevant. It would also enable District Education Authorities to create local programs for use with or instead of approved curriculum. Elders are to be involved in implementing new discipline policies, which themselves are to be created collaboratively, and elders are to be employed as cultural experts at the discretion of the

²⁸ Kulchyski (2005) noted that with an Inuit-controlled territorial government there is less need for local control of broad program areas.

District Education Authorities, who will certify their abilities (GN). Pay for elders will be appropriate “for the first time” (GN, 2007b). The proposed *Act* also includes measures to enhance DEA functioning (GN, 2007c).

In my view, though policy does not guarantee action and though wording about culture remains too vague, this proposed legislation makes progress in some areas that were of concern to participants in the current study. It is a step toward pushing for change and enabling educators to think and act for change.

One important step in *Bill 21* is the call in section 96 for a two year orientation and mentoring for teachers starting in Nunavut (GN, 2007c). I hope this is structured to help Qallunaat educators in their own decolonization, and in learning about congruent modes of teaching Inuit students. Many Qallunaat educators have expressed the desire for professional improvement focussed on effective teaching of Inuit students (Berger & Epp, 2005; O’Donoghue, 1998) and the Iqaluit District Education Authority (2005b) called for teacher training for cultural understanding and pedagogical competence. Greenland, currently in the process of school reform incorporating Inuit ideology and culturally congruent pedagogy, is using a model of two week-long professional development sessions followed in the next year by two days of classroom observation and coaching. Groups of teachers (Greenlandic and Danish) must apply to take part and the training rotates amongst communities. The training is popular and demand currently outstrips capacity (personal communication, Jens Jakobsen, Director of Inerisaavik, the Greenlandic Teacher Training School).

Although they are connected, pedagogy may be easier to address than Eurocentrism. Teachers may be able to adopt new methods because they seem to work, while still holding unexamined beliefs about the superiority of Qallunaat ways. Spindler and Spindler (2000) found that it took much effort to help a well-intentioned Anglo teacher see his “cultural patterns” and his inequitable treatment of students who were not like himself (p. 92). For those Qallunaat who are not highly motivated from the beginning, it will be better to save resources for the education of more Inuit teachers and principles.

The preparation of Inuit teachers and principals should be prioritized and the process should respect Inuit knowledge and ways of being. The Nunavut Teacher Education Program has been very successful in graduating Inuit teachers, but more are needed, and the program needs more culturally relevant content (Aarluk Consulting, 2005; Aylward, 2006; Kenny, 2002; Russell, 2006). More Inuit teachers and administrators are needed to make the schools true Inuit schools (Tompkins, 1998, p. 94); there will be added benefits as culturally congruent interactions and role modelling will be more likely. Success in school will follow when well-supported bilingual teachers share the values and aspirations of their students and form the core of Nunavut teachers (McCarty, 2003). Bilingual teachers are needed to teach in Inuktitut right through highschool.

As long as Eurocentric thinking reigns it is unclear how to prepare the needed Inuit teachers. Even at full-capacity the Nunavut Teacher Education Program cannot graduate Inuit in sufficient numbers. Alternatives must be considered. They might include apprenticing new teachers into their jobs as suggested by one teacher in this study who told her classroom assistant to watch and listen and learn. They may also include a program similar to the recent Akitsiraq Law Program delivered in Iqaluit (Driscoll, 2006), through which it is easy to imagine preparing Inuit to teach at any grade level. The program would be expensive, and, like the law program, would be a break from the Eurocentric thinking that 'efficiency' is the key consideration. Care would be needed to guard against the tendency to create a program that would pressure the teacher-candidates to teach as Qallunaat teachers. Hiring experts without paper qualifications should also be considered (NSDC, 1998).

The school system needs more Inuit teachers but it also needs to support them much more than it does at present. One Inuit teacher told me that teaching involves doing two jobs, due to the heavy demands of translating curriculum and resources into Inuktitut. In contrast, in a Hawaiian program designed to promote culturally compatible teaching, teachers taught only half-time to give them enough time for planning and preparation (Jordan & Jacob, 1993). Inuit teachers need better curriculum and resources in Inuktitut and more planning time. Failure to provide these may indicate systemic resistance to change. The Government of Nunavut recently announced a \$14 million a year injection of funds to "revitalize education in Nunavut" (GN, 2007b), in part

earmarked to improving resources in Inuktitut.

With little inservicing and vast distances between communities, Nunavut teachers are relatively isolated. Inuit teachers working to centre Inuit culture in schooling would benefit from an Inuit Educators' Association like the *Ciulistet* in Alaska (Lipka & Ilutsik, 1998; Lipka & McCarty, 1994; Martin, 2000b; Tompkins, 2006). Inuit collaboration led to the creation of *Inuuqatigit: The curriculum from the Inuit perspective* (Aylward, 2006), a document and process that could serve as guides for school change in Nunavut (Aylward). Inuit working together, and working together across difference with Qallunaat allies, have created powerful policy and examples of successful Inuit ways to lead and teach (Tompkins, 2006). The power of Inuit working together may be threatening for Qallunaat in Nunavut who are used to having power and privilege. It holds great promise for moving the schools from their Eurocentric structures. Resources for Inuit educators to meet and work together, and to meet with other Inuit educators in the circumpolar north, are essential. Concerted effort will be needed to make Inuit ways and values the foundation of education in Nunavut as called for by the proposed *Education Act* (GN, 2007c). Inuit educators are naturally positioned for this work but they must be supported in doing it.

Funding, on the whole, will need to be prioritized by the Government of Nunavut, and there are many competing interests. The situation is similar to that in Greenland where funding of a major school reform has been prioritized (personal communication, Jens Jakobsen, October 22nd, 2007). A salient difference, however, is in finances. Although Greenland receives transfers from the Danish government it has a much more robust economy than Nunavut, and therefore a stronger tax base. Comparatively, with a much smaller tax base Nunavut is much more reliant on funding from the Government of Canada. The Government of Canada – the people of Canada – thus must become supportive of school transformation in Nunavut.

6.4 Canadians moving away from Eurocentrism

In times of radical injustice, such as the present, it is impossible to live the good life. Those who retire to their comforts, leaving the world in its distress, perhaps guarding themselves with an armour of cynicism to make their choice, if not palatable, at least fashionable, can barely be distinguished from the most self-involved hedonists. (Kulchyski, 2005, pp. 114, 115)

It is clear from the current study and the recent consultations in Nunavut (Aylward, 2004; NDOE, 2006) that Inuit culture and language need to be taken seriously in Nunavut schools. The real and detrimental impacts that the current school system has on Inuit students and their communities has also been documented here and in other literature. That people desire changes and that there are real consequences of not listening should compel politicians to act (Corson, 1995b). Moreover, they should concern Canadians who are, through the governments they elect, responsible for continuing inequity in the Arctic. As Heschel said about cruelties committed in the name of a ‘free’ society, “some are guilty, but all are responsible” (cited in Rabbis for Human Rights, n.d).

What is it that the Qallunaat majority are responsible for with respect to schooling in Nunavut? We need to acknowledge that schooling in the eastern Arctic was introduced as part of a colonial policy meant to strengthen Canada’s claim to sovereignty in the area (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994), that it disrupted Inuit ways of being and of educating (Douglas, 1994, 1998), that local communities had no control over it and many other affairs governed from the south (Paine, 1977c), that it has failed Inuit students in preparing them for life in the time and place in which they live (Watt-Cloutier, 2000), and that it still does not meet the needs or the wishes of many Inuit. Schooling has, from its inception, formed an integral part of an assault by EuroCanadians and their culture on Inuit culture. Non-Inuit Canadians must take responsibility for ending that assault.

Losing the values that have given competence, adaptability and identity threatens a culture (Jacobs, 2004). Social problems in Nunavut and other colonized places are symptoms of the pressure on the indigenous culture to give up its values and assimilate. There is much evidence in this study that suggests that despite many changes in Inuit culture in Nunavut, and despite social

problems, many underlying values have been retained. Qallunaat must reverse our insistence that schooling be done the same as ‘everywhere else’ and must support the Inuit right to be educated in an Inuit language. Inuit do not need to give up who they are to participate in global society (Kawagely, 1999). Our agriculturalist/industrialist drive to erase the language and culture of Inuit must be reversed (Brody, 2000). The symbol of this reversal must be the provision of adequate funds by the Government of Canada to strengthen Inuktitut and restructure schooling in Nunavut to reflect the wishes of Inuit. Anything less is inadequate.

In his report to the Government of Canada on the implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, T. Berger (2006) was clear on the need to restructure schooling and on the need for funding with which to do it. He put the responsibility for funding on the federal government as part of its obligations under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, noting that it should be seen as an obligation, not an indulgence. Minor changes are not enough to address the huge failure of Arctic schooling (Watt-Cloutier, 2000); schools need to be redesigned, and in ways that avoid the mistakes of the past (Mohatt in Mohatt & Parker, 1998).

Money is needed for a number of reasons. Curriculum in both languages is needed (NDOE, 2004) along with resources to support it (DeMerchant & Tagalik, 2000). Early childhood education needs resources (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Funding is needed to develop ESL programs (IDEA, 2005b). Land and culture programs must be created or expanded (Watt-Cloutier, 2000). Intensive work will be needed on the integration of Inuit ways into schooling. As Arnakak (2000) pointed out, Inuit ways and values cannot become the base of the ways things are done in government workplaces by spending a day on the land picking berries once a year. To base schooling on Inuit ways and values will be a major undertaking. For the type of change needed, funding must be adequate, long-term, and stable (McCarty, 1994).

The shortage of Inuit teachers must be addressed and may involve significant expenditure. Currently almost all certified Inuit teachers teach at the primary and junior levels. Plans to expand the use of Inuktitut as the language of instruction through to grade 12 will require more Inuit teachers – and teachers who feel comfortable teaching academic subject matter in the higher

grades²⁹. The Nunavut Teacher Education Program, run by Nunavut Arctic College, does not have the capacity to prepare enough Inuit teachers or to prepare them to teach at the higher grades. More funding is needed to increase capacity, create the ability to prepare highschool teachers, and increase cultural content (Aarluk Consulting, 2005). Alternative programs must also be considered and may be considerably more expensive. The Akitsiraq Law Program recently graduated 11 Inuit at a cost of over \$450,000 per graduate (Driscoll, 2006). There is no question that a similar program for highschool teachers, delivered in Nunavut, would be successful. An apprenticeship model might also be appropriate, with funds needed to support the apprenticeship process. The Canadian people, through the government, must accept responsibility for the current shortage of Inuit teachers and must act to rectify the situation by supporting new initiatives, designed and controlled by Inuit.

Funding to restructure schooling and strengthen Inuit languages would signal a shift in the relationship between non-Inuit and Inuit Canadians. It has been postulated that ‘self-government’ has been ‘given’ to Aboriginal people because it does not threaten the existing power structure (Alfred, 2005). Self-government truly supported in creating something different would signal a fundamental shift in the relationship – perhaps an end, in one small area, to what Kulchyski (2005) called the continuing quest to conquer the ‘Americas.’ Article 4 of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* articulates the right of indigenous people to the means needed to support their self-government (UN, 2007).

On its own, a school restructuring based on Inuit priorities will help, but more is needed. Canadians must also demand that their government begin to deal fairly and equitably with Inuit by providing adequate funds to tackle the colonial legacies of violence and addiction, and signs of inequity including poor health (Farmer, 2005) and overcrowded housing. These funds should be seen as restitution³⁰. With them, communities can be expected to best solve their own problems

29 In keeping with what I heard, I am assuming that a transformed system would teach students the academic subjects needed to pursue postsecondary studies. I am not sure, though, that constructs like ‘grades’ would survive a reinvention of schooling in line with Inuit ways and values.

30 Brody (2000) wrote: “If the world can acknowledge who hunter-gatherers are, how they know and own their lands, what the encounter with farmers and colonialists has meant, then some restitution can be made” (p. 314).

(Tuhiwai Smith, 1999); ‘solutions’ imposed from outside will likely be of little value and may cause more harm than good (Witt, 1998). Removing the inequitable treatment – the racism – may also be expected to go far in alleviating social problems (Sellars, cited in St. Denis & Hampton, 2002), which will help students.

Despite the limitations noted in the previous chapter and the seeming enormity of changing the historic relationship between the Canadian State and Inuit, there are signs that school change is possible and that every change helps. For example, the *Nunavut Sivuniksavut* postsecondary preparation program, delivered in Ottawa, has existed for 21 years helping Inuit students learn about their history and increasing pride in their culture (Hanson, 2003). Almost all of its graduates are employed, and in the past 10 years 80-85% of its students have completed the program (T. Berger, 2006). It provides evidence of the power of relevant curriculum. In a related example, a Qallunaat teacher told me that a student who was unmotivated in one of his classes was very engaged in another – a new highschool social studies course on the history and politics of Nunavut. Pragmatism joins fairness as grounds for changes to bring Inuit culture and language solidly into all facets of schooling in Nunavut. Canadians should be unflinching in their support for doing this.

In Greenland, the Home Rule government has prioritized education and supports Illisimatusarfik – Greenland’s University – perhaps the smallest university in the world (Underbjerg, 2001). It allows Greenlandic Inuit to study many subjects without leaving Greenland, often in Greenlandic. The Greenlandic economy is much more robust than the economy in Nunavut, meaning that an Inuit University in Nunavut would need most of its funding from the federal government. An Inuit university was called for by several people in this study. It would help the current teaching and nursing programs to become more culturally relevant. It would put postsecondary education on the minds and within the reach of many Inuit in Nunavut and Nunavik. It would be another sign that the relationship between non-Inuit and Inuit Canadians had changed – that Inuit knowledge, instead of being ignored, was being put in the centre.

Canadians can put pressure on their government to fundamentally change the relationship between non-Inuit and Inuit Canadians. By relenting the pressure for assimilation and dealing with

past and present inequity, the federal government would finally take responsibility for the colonial past and present. We might then start to live up to the myth that Canada is a country that values diversity.

7. Epilogue

Consider these observations from one of the first government schoolteachers in the eastern Arctic and from an Arctic anthropologist:

There are no special books for [Inuit] children to learn English or number work. We use exactly the same books as most other Canadian schools. Progress is so good that it seems unnecessary to have special reading and number books for [Inuit], though supplementary books and exercises are desirable. (Hinds, 1958, p. 102)

Among other adult [Qallunaat] norms which the school children appear to accept with enthusiasm, at least in the context of formal schooling, is a zest for attendance and punctuality. Unless they are quite ill, the youngsters always attend school. On many occasions the teachers felt impelled to return to their homes those children who would have been safer in bed than in school. When a child arrives late, he [sic] is careful to explain the reason; there is a good chance that such a child will arrive next day about thirty minutes before classes begin. (Vallee, 1967, p. 162)

“You were asking me about problems of discipline – we don’t have them. Except for the language difficulty, teaching [Inuit] children is the easiest thing in the world. It’s because they’re crazy to learn.” (Qallunaat teacher in Baker Lake, cited in Vallee, 1967, p. 162)

The “intense desire to learn” described by Hinds (1958, p. 162) has not been sustained over the years and up through the grades. Hinds, though, was committed to teaching students English while protecting Inuit language and culture, often travelling to nearby camps to instruct. She was harshly critical of school policy:

It would appear that an excellent opportunity for educational advance was lost by those who decided that [Inuit] education was to be an exact replica of existing educational practices. Instead of educationists developing a model of educating the [Inuit] in a way that would cause the least disruption to their way of life, the methods used for people living in entirely different circumstances have been adopted. (Hinds, 1968, p. 136)

What would Nunavut’s schools have looked like today if a different model of

education had been adopted? What if Inuit had been heard and the schools had developed in ways that supported Inuit aspirations? Inuit have worked, and will continue to work, to reinvent schooling in Nunavut. All Canadians must support this pursuit.

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Appendix A Consent Form

Title of the research project: Educational Strength in One Nunavut Community, and Inuit Visions for the Future of Schooling

Description of the project: This research will identify current educational practices in one community in Nunavut that lead to the success and well-being of Inuit students, and that are valued by Inuit parents. It will also explore ideas expressed by community members about the purposes of schooling, and their hopes for schooling in the future.

Purpose of the project: Documenting successful schooling practices that are valued by community members, and Inuit hopes for the future of schooling in one Nunavut community, will provide local and territorial policymakers with information that helps to improve Nunavut schools in ways that are congruent with Inuit wishes.

Interviews: Face-to-face interviews of about one hour will be conducted. If the participant agrees, the interview will be tape recorded; otherwise, the researcher will take written notes. Participants and the researcher may agree to a follow-up interview.

Interview Topics: The interview will explore the following areas:

- participant age, gender, amount of schooling, & occupation
- participant memories of schooling
- school practices in Tuktulik that lead to the success and well-being of Inuit students
- ideas about the purposes of schooling in Tuktulik
- ideas about schooling in Tuktulik in the future

Risk of Participating: No known risk is associated with participation in the research project.

Withdrawal from the Research: Participation is voluntary. A participant may withdraw from the project at any time, without having to give a reason, and without any penalty.

Honourarium: Each participant in the research will receive a \$20 honourarium for participating in the research. This honourarium will be paid even if the participant decides to withdraw from the research.

Confidentiality & Data Storage: Participants are assured confidentiality. Measures taken to protect confidentiality include:

- the names of participants will not appear on any report or publication, nor will participants' names be used in any discussions or presentations of the findings
- the name of the community will not be used in any report, publication, or discussion

Appendix B Initial Interview Guide

(Not all questions were asked, or asked in the same order)

Please tell me about how old you are (early 20s, late 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s...)

Tell me something about your family, parents - did you grow up in Tuktuulik? Did your parents grow up in town or on the land?

What grade of schooling did you go to? What kind of job have you done, do you do now, or would you like to do in the future?

Tell me something about yourself - what sorts of things do you like to do [how did you learn to do that]? Do you have kids?

Tell me how it was for you to go to school (Tell me something that you remember about being in school.)

Did you have a favourite teacher? Do you remember what it was that made him or her a good teacher?

Kids (yours, or nieces & nephews)

Do your kids talk to you about things when they come home from school?

What do your kids like best about school?

Do you ever speak to your kids' teachers?

Do they ever have homework?

Is there anything you do that helps them to learn in school?

Do you feel welcome to go to the school to give your opinion about something?

What do you think that it's most important for your kids to get out of school?

What do you hope that they know, that they can do, and that they believe when they graduate?

What are the best things about the schools the way they are now? (The things that are best for Inuit students.)

What would you like to see different about the schools? (How would you change the schools if you could?)

-culture/language : English/academic?

-Inuktitut/English transition?

Are there things that your son/nephew would benefit particularly from learning in school, or that your daughter/niece would benefit particularly from learning in school?

What is most important for students to learn first?

Do you ever speak with your parents about your experiences, or their experiences at school?

Appendix C Revised Interview Guide

Age

Tell me something about yourself - what sorts of things do you like to do [how did you learn to do that]?

Work? (Now or past; hope for future). Would you prefer full-time, part-time, or no wage-labour?

Grade of schooling? Reason for stopping? Arctic College? Further training?

What was it like for you when you went to school?

-something good? Something bad? Favourite teacher? Do you remember what it was that made him or her a good teacher? Was Arctic College different? What was the most important thing you learned at school?

Kids (yours, or nieces & nephews, grandchildren)

Do your kids talk to you about things when they come home from school?

What do your kids like best about school? Do you ever speak to your kids' teachers?

Do they ever have homework? *Is there anything you do that helps them to learn in school?*

What time do your kids usually go to bed? How many usually live in your house?

What do you think that it's most important for kids to get out of school?

Is it important for you that your son/daughter graduates from grade 12?

Do you hope that he/she will go to college or university?

What kind of work do you hope your son/daughter will do in the future?

If your son/daughter needed to move south to find work, how would you feel about that?

What are the best things about the schools the way they are now? (The things that are best for Inuit students.)

What changes would you like to see at the schools in future? (How would you change the schools if you could?)

- *more Inuit culture vs teach academic subjects* (traditional skills in the community?)

- *elders* (why?)

- *change from Inuktitut to English in grade 5, or learn in Inuktitut from K to 12?*

Why do you think that many young people leave high school these days without finishing?

Do you think the *high school or the teachers* could do anything that would help students stay in school? *Parents? Changes in the community? Students?* What helps a child to be a good learner?

Some people have said that **drugs and alcohol or violence** in the community make it more difficult for some parents to support their kids, and for students to do well in school. What do you think?

What is the purpose of schools here? Why should people go to school?

Is there a difference between Inuit and Qallunaat? Should a student learn how to be an Inuk in school? Were you able to keep your culture though you went to school in a Qallunaat school system? How does someone become wise? Do you think grade 12 graduates can easily find a job?

It seems like **Inuit usually learn things** by watching and listening and taking part, but in school students are often taught by being told, and by reading and paperwork. Do you think students would learn better in school if they were taught more in an Inuit way?

English/Inuktitut Do you speak English with your child?

Would it be easier for you to learn something if the teacher could explain it in Inuktitut too?

What is **most important in Inuit culture** that the next generation should learn?

Last thoughts about things to keep or change?

Extra Questions for Students

Do you have any role models - people you would like to be like?

Do you ever speak with your parents about your experiences at school?

Do you ever speak to your parents about what it was like for them at school?

What's the hardest thing about being a student?

Do you hope to graduate from grade 12? What would you like to do after? What kind of job do you think you'd like to have? Would you be willing to move south to get a job?

What are the things that keep you most interested in going to school?

Can you type in Inuktitut? (If not, do you wish that you had learned?)

Appendix D Excerpt from Bill 21: Proposed Nunavut Education Act

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Inuit societal values and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

1. (1) The public education system in Nunavut shall be based on Inuit societal values and the principles and concepts of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit; guiding principles and concepts

(2) The following guiding principles and concepts of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit apply under this Act:

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

Duty of all

(3) It is the responsibility of the Minister, the district education authorities and the education staff to ensure that Inuit societal values and the principles and concepts of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit are incorporated throughout, and fostered by, the public education system.

(GN, 2007c, p. 2.)