

ILLINIAVUGUT NUNAMI: Learning from the Land

Envisioning an Inuit-centered Educational Future

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to all Land protectors and defenders, who have and continue to put their lives on the line for the collective well-being of the land and all life.

Acknowledgements

My heartfelt gratitude goes to Creator for sustaining my heart and spirit during this sometimes difficult learning journey.

I would like to offer special thanks to my daughter, family and friends for their support and care while on this learning path.

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Abstract

Diane Obed

Illiniavugut Nunami: Learning from the Land Envisioning and Inuit-centered Educational Future

We are at a critical juncture in history where decolonization and indigenization are poised to influence the changing nature of global and local forms of education. With the help of public campaigns like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, western education institutions are becoming increasingly aware that their forms of western epistemology and knowledge production continue to exercise forms of Eurocentric colonial power. This research study of Inuit land-based knowledge in Nunatsiavut is foregrounded by a critical analysis of Eurocentric education that is implicated in its centuries-long suppression. This community-led research study builds upon Inuit epistemological understandings that help promote Inuit modes of knowledge transmission that often take place on and with *nuna* – the land. Land-based learning and knowledge is a culturally responsive and competent approach enabling the development of Inuit people who are offered the freedom of choice to an education based in their philosophies and traditions, which contributes to flourishing Inuit societies.

August 2017

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Personal Statement

My desire to undertake this research begins with my lived experiences in my hometown of Hopedale, Nunatsiavut, a small remote community of about six hundred people. I was raised there until I was about ten years old. I cherish moments and memories of times spent with my late maternal atatsiak – grandfather, who was born and raised on the land in Okak, northern Labrador, which implanted strong cultural roots that have provided the foundation of my cultural identity. While in my family's intermittent care, he would often take the family out on the Labrador Sea to our traditional gathering areas for fishing and wildlife harvesting. Engrained into my tissue and blood memory, these affective cultural memories and intergenerational teachings have offered a strong basis for my ongoing embodied connection and commitment to honoring the land, both here in Mi'kma'ki and my home Nunatsiavut. In following Indigenous epistemologies and cultural protocols, I introduce and identify myself, my relations and my homelands in this way, illustrating my relationships to the people and places from which I derive (Young, 2016).

I began this research journey with the conviction that we, as Inuit, are inherently wise, intelligent, and wholly capable of leading our own self-determined healing path forward from colonialism. Generations of Nunatsiavut Inuit, a distinct group in northern Labrador, have lived with shame and guilt as a residual impact of Canada's colonial social engineering project meant to eliminate Indigeneity. In our particular northeastern region, having faced centuries of prolonged European settlement, language suppression,

racism and invisibility¹ this has caused many to cope in ways that have sometimes resulted in the loss of life. Suicide has touched nearly every Inuit person and family in Canada, especially those living in Inuit nunangat – Inuit homelands (Obed, 2016). Extensive research conducted on and with Indigenous peoples and Inuit has recently and often focused on the effects of colonialism (Smith, 2012; TRC, 2015). For example, we now know that only approximately 20% Inuktitut language speakers due to how Euro-centric schooling has contributed to Inuktitut’s near erasure in the region (Dorais, 2010). I cannot say that I belong to this small percentage of language speakers. The majority of my maternal family members, who were once fluent Inuktitut language speakers, were unable to pass the language on to me because I was removed from their care at a young age. As part of the autoethnographic element of this thesis, I share more about my personal history in Chapter two. Sadly, even if I had remained in my family’s care, it would have been unlikely that Inuktitut fluency would have been passed on to me, as Inuit were highly discouraged from speaking Inuktitut all across Nunatsiavut.² Some of my research findings in Chapter four demonstrate the severe impacts of language erasure on cultural identity and well-being. Inuit-specific research has and continues to be crucial for us to understand our current situation of cultural loss and in order to contribute

¹ Brice-Bennett (1977) developed a verifiable land occupancy document for a land-claims project put forth by Inuit to prove they had inhabited the region for thousands of years. Nunatsiavut President Johannes Lampe also spoke about the historical legacy of having to “prove our existence in the region” during a presentation on February 15, 2017.

² Articulating my relationship to the Inuktitut language and worldview is important because many Inuit scholars and Inuktitut speakers use a substantial amount of Inuktitut language in Inuit-specific research. While I would also like to follow this framework, the history of language erasure in our region makes reclaiming our language a continual learning process. It is important that readers understand the particular historical context of this research and also know that we are building upon language programming and recognize the need for its continual revival.

subsequently to Inuit forms of resurgence. Land-based learning has much potential in complementing language revitalization as the research often demonstrates (Julian, 2016; Palluq-Cloutier, 2014).

In fact, I believe that it is not until we unveil, acknowledge, and make space to have conversations about the trauma caused by residential schools and other aspects of colonialism that we will truly be able to make space for healing to emerge. Former students who attended residential schools in Newfoundland and Labrador were not included in the 2007 Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement. The federal government did not recognize Labrador's residential schools because they ran before the province officially became part of Canada, which, as a result, caused additional forms of invisibility and unresolved trauma (Molema, 2017). While some Nunatsiavummiut³ had the opportunity to share some of their stories at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in 2011, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Labrador has largely been excluded from the national federal apology and the broader national discourse of residential school histories and legacies. Residential school survivors from Labrador have recently filed a separate lawsuit, which was settled in 2016, resulting in the distribution of financial compensation to Nunatsiavut claimants in May to July 2017 (CBC, 2016).

While these historical legacies of colonialism formed the background for this research, my primary intentions were to engage in re-building narratives of Inuit community resilience and resourcefulness that have ensured our ongoing survival and futurity, both throughout the process and as an outcome of the research. For example, by maintaining strong navigation knowledge and skills, we have survived centuries of

³ Inuit from and living in Nunatsiavut.

extreme challenges and weather storms in our Arctic and sub-Arctic landscapes, both before and after colonization. This study, guided by Inuit knowledge and understandings of the land as pedagogy, meaning a process of relationship building that is specific to the principles of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ), supports us as Inuit to tell stories from our own worldviews while also honing and demonstrating our inherent competencies. Some of the central values of IQ include fostering the capacity for adaptation and flexibility to Arctic ecosystems; promoting and demonstrating environmental stewardship and knowledge; and advancing problem-solving skills (McGrath, 2012; McGregor, 2010). Bringing together IQ and land-based education is viewed by many Inuit as a vital step in addressing educational inequities and building capacity among Inuit youth (Lalonde, 2017; Nungak, 2004; Watt-Cloutier, 2015). Not only in order for them to continue to survive ongoing forms of colonial violence, including structured poverty and intergenerational trauma, but also to foster resilience and to lead successful and productive lives based in their own communities of knowledge.

Throughout this thesis, Indigenous methods such as storytelling and metaphorical conceptualization are drawn upon, allowing me to place participant experiences into their proper contexts. For example, some used the term “white out” to describe extreme weather conditions, especially in their discussions of the skills required to survive in northern regions such as Nunatsiavut (participant excerpts can be viewed in the data analysis in chapters three and four). I briefly extend the literal meaning of the term here. A “white-out” can be characterized not only as a force that erases Inuit traditional epistemologies, but also as a representation of the ongoing forms of colonial education defined as “education imposed by a colonial ruler, where the material learned and the ways of learning are decided by non-native power” (Currie, 2016, p.3). These stormy

“white-out” conditions, often oppressive and severe, are known by many of our hunters, elders, and community members, who had and continue to have the traditional land-based knowledge needed to enable survival in extreme weather. I present a poem I wrote as a way to visualize our battle against the “white-out” conditions of colonialism:

Traversing across the vast sea ice
Engulfed in a “white-out” snow storm
Husky dogs pull the komatik⁴ forward
Through blinding blowing snow
Threatening, testing life and survival
Disoriented, seemingly lost, seeking a familiar landmark
Staying on track, staying on course
As we begin to see a way forward
To our kin, our clan, our home
We draw upon ancestral knowledge
That supports our well-being
We continue to seek shelter and safety

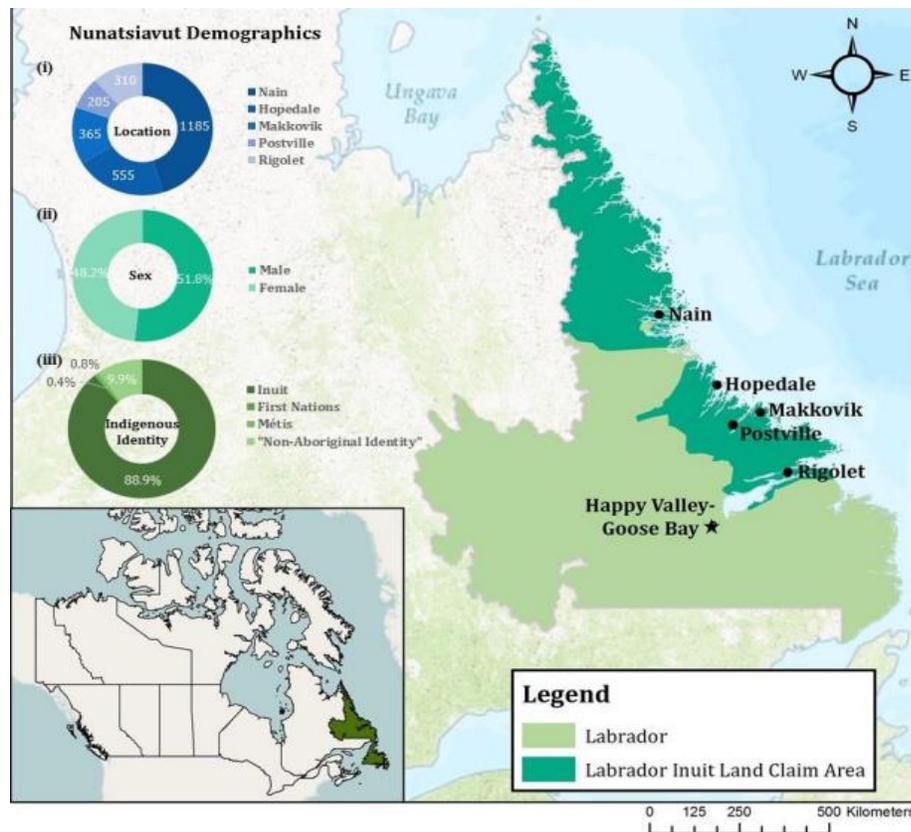
Having endured extreme “white-out” conditions before, Inuit have developed a cumulative base of generational knowledge vital to survival. Using our local sources of strengths and cultural competencies based in the principles of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* is known to help promote language revival, cultural practices, and positive self and cultural identities that will sustain our ongoing futurity. Indigenous land-based education is viewed as not only a source of resistance against a capitalist settler state (Coulthard, 2015) it is also important for environmental stewardship, climate change adaptation (Watt-Cloutier, 2015), and most importantly, promoting and maintaining Inuit autonomy and sovereignty (Petrasek MacDonald, 2014; Price, 2007; Wildcat et al., 2014). To

⁴ Inuktitut word for sled or toboggan.

provide a greater understanding of Labrador Inuit, I now offer a brief glimpse into our recent history.

1.2 Brief History of Labrador Inuit

Nunatsiavut, meaning “our beautiful land” in Inuktitut, is one of four Inuit settlement regions in Canada, and is the first Inuit region to obtain self-government (Cunsolo et al., 2017). There are five Inuit settlements in Nunatsiavut, and I conducted research in two of them for this study: Nain and Makkovik. Out of the five communities, Nain is the most northerly and most populated with a population of 1,185 (see Figure 1 below). Makkovik, which translates to the “place between two bays,” has a much smaller population base, at 365 residents. 89% of the population in Nunatsiavut identify as Inuit (Hirsch et al., 2016, p. 66). Since its inception as part of Labrador Inuit Land Settlement Agreement, Nunatsiavut has gained a greater degree of self-determination with mandates to govern in areas such as health, and social and economic development (Nunatsiavut Government, 2013).



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Figure 1. Map of Nunatsiavut communities (Saini, 2017, p. 92).

1.2.1 Pre-colonization period: Labrador Inuit traditional knowledge

Recent archaeological evidence shows that Inuit in present-day Labrador have inhabited the region for over 5,000 years (Natcher et al., 2012). While there has been quite a bit of research conducted on the ethno-historical and archaeological landscape of Labrador, much less research on Inuit traditional knowledge systems in the region exists. However, what is known is that northern Labrador Inuit were a hunter-gatherer society relying on values linked to egalitarianism and family cooperation connected to strong kinship networks to survive. They harvested regional wildlife such as seals, whales, char, geese,

and many other animals that were available for food (Brice-Bennett 1977; Natcher et al., 2012). Inuit respected animals and embodied a wisdom that served their daily survival. Inuit required a resourceful ingenuity and a set of qualities such as patience, a respect for all worldly things, and a strong spiritual foundation grounded in environmental stewardship of the land and other-than-human beings (McGregor, 2010; Vick-Westgate, 2002). Prior to the arrival of Europeans, Inuit forms of knowledge were marked by emphasizing experiential knowledge and gaining isuma:

consciousness, thought, reason, memory or will [...] the possession of isuma is a major criterion of maturity. Saying that a person has isuma is equivalent to saying that she or he exercises good judgment, reason and emotional control at all times, in addition to the skills appropriate to his or her age, gender and role. (McGregor, 2010, p. 41).

Inuit had their own complex understanding of the world as reflected through their language, Inuktitut, which acted as a sophisticated system to theorize and conceptualize Inuit relationships with their land – nuna. Freeman (1976) observed that not only did Inuit identify the land “like a familiar face” but that “the way men speak of their environments constitute a theory of their world” (p. 174). The language also allowed Inuit to transmit oral traditions such as legends, myths, tales, and beliefs such as shamanism to maintain social organization and order (Brice-Bennett, 1977; Freeman, 1976). To foster self-reliance, children were provided with ample autonomy and were taught through visual cues and observation by those with whom they shared close relationships (McGregor, 2010). In the next section, I provide a brief glimpse of Labrador Inuit post European contact history.

1.2.2 Contact period Moravian missionaries

The contact period between Inuit and German Moravian missionaries is well documented, as Europeans kept detailed records and journals of their expeditions and interactions with Inuit. The German presence within Labrador is also well known because of their historical influences on the region. The Moravians settled many of Nunatsiavut's communities and founded most of the schools. Numerous documents and archives in existence today such as "The Labrador Inuit through Moravian Eyes" website help to uncover the relationships that were formed and the transformations that occurred within this time period. German missionaries arrived in the early 1700s, and Nain was the first "settled" community in Labrador in 1771 (Moravian eyes, 2016).

The arrival of the Moravians marked the beginning of colonization, which significantly altered Inuit knowledge systems. Inuit began converting to Christianity, as many came to believe that their spirituality, rituals, and shamanism were savage and uncivilized, and thus, inferior to German beliefs. One cannot examine Indigenous knowledge systems without critically examining the legacy of colonial education that sought to eliminate Indigenous identities. Among the most pervasive and long-lasting forms of European colonization was the systematic effort to indoctrinate Inuit minds to not only believe they were deficient in all aspects of their being but that they were essentially inferior and non-human. Moravians built the first schools in the early 1900s in order to formalize these civilizing efforts. Labrador Inuit education was built on a foundation of Christian religious influence. A majority of Nunatsiavut's schools are named after the first missionaries to settle the communities, a stark reminder of the missionary zeal that influenced the region (Brice-Bennett, 1981; Moravian eyes, 2016). In

the next section, I review more of the Inuit relationship with the federal government after Newfoundland and Labrador joined confederation.

1.2.3 Federal and provincial assimilation and education

In 1949, when Newfoundland and Labrador joined the Canadian Confederation, the federal government gained much more control over the political economy and lives of Inuit. State-sanctioned assimilation policies began in the early 1950s when the RCMP were ordered to enforce systematic dog slaughters to prevent a nomadic lifestyle facilitated by transportation via dog teams. A survivor recalls:

Our life is being killed [...] our culture, the very existence of our culture was being killed by the way they were killing our dogs. After that the community turned – turned like a big cloud went over the community. ... it seems like as soon as the dogs were killed the abuses and alcohol and drinking started (as cited in Igloliorte, 2010, p. 23).

In 1956 and again in 1959, the federal government enforced policies of centralization through re-settlement away from the most northerly Inuit settlements such as Okak and Hebron. Residents of these two hamlets were forced to relocate to Nain, Hopedale, and Makkovik. Inuit were viewed as wards of the state and not given the right to participate in any decision making regarding their lives and well-being. The re-locations were supposedly meant to facilitate access to public services such as health care and education, but they ultimately served to dispossess Inuit of their land, which had a devastating impact on the people. Not only were families uprooted and separated, Inuit were displaced from their sense of belonging and knowledge of the northern land, which deeply affected their identity and sense of purpose. The community re-settlement process that began in the 1950s and continues today, contributed to overall societal upheaval, manifested in such issues as suicide, addictions, disease, and violence (Anala, 2015;

Brice-Bennett, 1977; Obed, 2016). Residential and day schools established around the same time in Labrador also forced children to travel further south to attend school, marking a rapid decline in Inuktitut language use, which increased the amount of shame that children experienced about their Inuit knowledge and identity (Igloliorte, 2010; Molema, 2017). Like most educational structures in the country, the current education system in Labrador today is regulated by the predominant institutional and structural foundations that reflect dominant modes of Western education. In the next section, I expand on the current purpose of this research project.

1.3 Current Project and Research Questions

This research project focuses on exploring core cultural competencies such as relationships between youth and their homelands, as well with parents, families, schools, local organizations and governments, needed to promote the renewal of land-based learning in Nunatsiavut, Labrador. Restoring Inuit-specific practices of learning is perceived as supporting positive cultural identity development and community well-being (Cunsolo et al., 2017; Wexler, 2014). Inuit cultural learning and identity development, often situated in communities and relationships, guides my inquiry, in that I explore what comprises cultural learning, particularly as it arises from, and with, the presence of the living *nuna* – land as *context* and *content* (Bombay, 2010; Simpson, 2014; Wexler, 2014).

Wexler (2014) further explains that while the notion of Indigenous cultures, and specifically, returning to or strengthening cultural practices is often invoked in solutions to help reduce social and health disparities, understanding the precise relationship between culture and well-being remains elusive:

Studies underscore the connection between Native people's well-being and their identification and involvement with their culture. Yet they fail to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding what culture means to people and how this occurs. How people utilize ideas of 'culture' to facilitate well-being or overcome challenges remains understudied (p.74).

It is with this in mind that I set out to help generate dialogue on traditional land-based learning within Inuit communities in Nunatsiavut. Working in partnership with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), a national organization representing 65,000 Inuit,⁵ since August 2016, we are aiming to contribute to the development of evidence-based policy recommendations that can help positively transform the learning experiences of Inuit students. As part of the broader ITK study that aims to increase student retention through exploring Inuit-specific approaches to learning, my thesis more specifically explores land-based learning's potential to inspire learners. I have had the privilege of learning from Nunatsiavut youth participants and leaders who took part in the ongoing land-based youth program: *Going Off, Growing Strong* that is currently operating in the Inuit territory of Nain, Nunatsiavut. I also conducted interviews with land-based facilitators and harvesters who currently lead programs situated in Makkovik, Nunatsiavut. Besides these experiences, I participated in the week-long Inuit Educators' Conference in Nain in February 2017, which provided me with opportunities to speak with a number of elders, parents, educators, and community members about land-based learning in Nunatsiavut. The research questions that framed my interactions with interview and focus group participants are the following:

⁵ Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, meaning "Inuit are united in Canada," is an organization comprised of the four Inuit settlement regions (Nunatsiavut, Nunavut, Nunavik, Inuvialuit) working to advance Inuit rights such as resource management in Inuit nunangat – Inuit homelands, and to educate the broader public about Inuit in Canada.

- 1) What is land-based learning in the Nunatsiavut Inuit context?
- 2) What are the benefits of land-based learning?
- 3) What are the barriers of land-based learning?

The following literature review begins by discussing literature on decolonization theories offered by Indigenist thinkers such as Marie Battiste, Glen Coulthard, Linda Smith, and Eve Tuck, among others. From there I provide a review on scholarly material on land-based learning, which helps to facilitate dialogue on Indigenous resurgence and further advances Indigenous educational control. Each theorist offers their own perspectives on colonization, and offer suggestions for renewing and re-invigorating Indigenous knowledge systems.

1.4 Literature Review

Indigenous peoples are among the most researched people in the world (Smith, 2012). Globally, Indigenous researchers are increasingly engaging in work that seeks to reclaim the rights to their knowledge, resources, and health (Battiste, 2013; Smith, 2012). Here I draw on decolonization theories as they relate to education. As a former Aboriginal youth worker in the public education system, I witnessed many barriers faced by Indigenous youth and this review places many of those barriers into context. The public school system fails to address Indigenous youth challenges, in part, due to the widespread lack of awareness of Indigenous realities, including the ways in which colonization is reproduced every day. The structural dismissal and willful ignorance of colonialism's injurious past

and contemporary existence continues to distort Indigenous realities, undermining Indigenous student retention and even survival. My ability to work with youth in the context of public education, while valuable and needed at the time, was and continues to be hindered by a structural disregard for Indigenous peoples. These experiences have led me to question and think about how we can enhance Indigenous student learning by examining what the ethical and responsible centering of Indigenous-specific pedagogical approaches to teaching, learning, and understanding would look like for my own home territory of Nunatsiavut. Engaging with theories of decolonization as developed by Indigenous scholars has been crucial to my own understanding of my scholarly work.

1.4.1 Theories of Decolonization

In this section, I survey the work of several Indigenous scholars who have been developing material aimed at decolonizing education. What brings these authors together is a deep commitment to the empowerment of Indigenous peoples through rethinking and reworking dominant approaches to education. While decolonial theories are often viewed as based in western paradigms, they continue to be used as effective tools to conduct the historical, structural, and political analyses required to not only understand present-day Indigenous realities, but to interrogate ongoing forms of settler colonialism (Kovach, 2009; Morgensen, 2011). Theories of educational decolonization offer a conceptual framework that shifts the terrain needed to create the epistemological space required for Indigenous thought and consciousness to flourish. Let me begin with the work of Marie Battiste, a Mi'kmaw scholar who has worked on Indigenous forms of education for the past two decades.

It also seems most appropriate to begin with the work of a Mi'kmaw scholar, as I sit here in Mi'kma'ki working on this research project. Battiste (2012) adds a valuable contribution to the Canadian literature on colonialism as her wisdom from decades of experience working as an educator has much to offer. She articulates the particular tension and conflict of fusing her Indigenous identity and Indigenous worldview by explaining her first experiences in academia: "From every disciplinary angle, Indigenous peoples' situations were problematic, and I could not escape the discursive Eurocentric lens that measures everything against itself, and therefore, Indigenous peoples were always found lacking and ultimately to be acted on by some government initiative" (p. 35). Battiste affirms Smith's (2012) assertion that colonialism shapes the Indigenous experience, including the Indigenous student's formative experience of western or colonized education (p.20). Euro-centric colonized learning spaces – often owned and controlled by colonizers – reproduce social disadvantages especially as it relates to race, gender, and class (Bright et al., 2013; Dudgeon, 2006).

Furthermore, epistemic spaces constitute asymmetrical intersections of power, where one mode of learning, what Battiste (2013) has called "cognitive imperialism," is perceived to be superior to other modes of knowledge production and understanding the world. George Sefa Dei (2011), who works on forms of decolonization in an African Indigenous context, supports Battiste's understanding, when he states that "western philosophy as an epistemology has been historically granted a certain academic identity that endows precedence onto philosophy as a particular classification of knowledge [that] locates the Indigene to the periphery of knowing" (p.2). That power has and continues to be used to reinforce a cognitive imperialism that reproduces dominant settler discourses espoused in colonialism (Battiste 2013; Smith, 2012). For Indigenist scholars, the politics

of knowledge production is viewed as a central issue in formal education, especially its authority to determine what constitutes legitimate knowledge (Battiste, 2013; Freire, 1970; Kovach, 2009; Sefa Dei, 2011). For example, Cree-Saulteaux physician Anderson Decoteau states:

To say that our healing methods have to be supported by western science or evidence is to say that western knowledge is superior to Indigenous knowledge and our knowledge can't be valid or valuable unless western science validates the knowledge as valid or credible. We should reject that base assumption that western science is superior to Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous forms of science and instead look at Indigenous knowledge [...] through its own lens. When our knowledge keepers, our elders, and healers have passed down knowledge through generations, we can believe it, and we don't need a scientific study to say that this knowledge is valid. (as cited by CBC, 2017)

She further explains how the TRC's Calls to Action continue to pave the way forward in advocating for the diversity of knowledge systems, including Indigenous knowledge. The legacy of schooling for Indigenous communities cannot be viewed in isolation from its history as a tool to advance Euro-centric assimilation policies that erased and outlawed languages and cultural beliefs/practices (Francis, 2012).

While it has become less identifiable, colonial education continues to be a fertile ground for the perpetuation of dominant pedagogies that promote white values and beliefs that so often lead to forms of internalized oppression for Indigenous people (Harvard, 2012). Non-white populations become and continue to be defined and confined by limiting narratives propagated by doctrines that "support ideological and racist justifications (that) subject Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing" (Kovach, 2009, p.77). Generations of non-Indigenous and Indigenous people are socialized to believe grand narratives through curricula. If content on Indigenous people exists, it largely consists of problematic material in elementary and secondary social studies

texts that promote the legal fiction of “terra nullius” and the “discovery” doctrine (Elabor-Idemudia, 2011; Sinclair, 2016). Harvard (2011) provides detailed accounts of how this affects Indigenous student identities and self-esteem as “Aboriginal student(s) must internalize mainstream, predominantly white middle class, cultural values in order to become educated” often resulting in self-aversive tendencies, student apathy and high drop-out rates; this climate and school culture is stated as the “very essence of the problem” (p.35).

It is also important to note that Indigenous knowledge is not to be oversimplified and commodified for Euro-centric educational palatability and appropriation. Indigenous knowledge has been constructed through a colonial gaze that relegates Indigenous knowledge as “cultural or personal/subjective knowledge” that is discounted for its critical thought and made acceptable by ongoing narratives of primitivism and the vanishing Indigene (Cannon, 2011). Many scholars also note the particular tension that arises when Indigenous thought is assessed from a Euro-centric worldview (Battiste, 2013; Graveline, 1998; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Tribal knowledges often have their explicit positions on the nature of knowing and have their own laws that guide understanding, for example, core concepts of relationality and holism (Graveline, 1998; Kovach, 2009). Tuck and McKenzie (2015) argue that “Indigenous philosophies of place represent significant epistemological and ontological departures from those that have emerged in Western frames” (p. 51), thus requiring Indigenous knowledge to stand outside of Euro-centric knowing. The ways in which Indigenous people relate with the land emerges through their language and guides much of their assumptions about the nature of knowledge that come from beliefs such as that the “land is our mother [...] and our teacher” (p.56). Tuck & McKenzie (2015) also share a quotation from Yup’ik elder

Oscar Kawagley that reinforces the notion that decolonization must always centralize the land: “The cold defines my place. Mamterilleq (now known as Bethel, Alaska) made me who I am. The cold made my language, my worldview, my culture, my technology... I grew up as an inseparable part of Nature” (p.56). The intertwining of land and language also facilitates relationships of reciprocity found within many areas of Indigenous lives meant to restore and maintain balance (Kovach, 2009).

Fusing my commitment to decolonization with my interest with education, the next section surveys literature related to land-based learning and education.

1.4.2 Land-Based Learning

To be Indigenous means “to be of the land,” where cultural identity and practices emerge from specific places and territories (Tuck and McKenzie, 2015, p.56). Each Indigenous polity have their own specific relationship to their surrounding environment, which should not be generalized or universalized to all other Indigenous people. The lands in which Indigenous people live and the knowledge and practices that arise from these lands are often what form their identities. For Indigenous peoples, land-based learning refers to not just the physical elements of being out on the land, but also the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual well-being of individual community members (p.57). McGregor (2010) in *Inuit Education and Schools in the Eastern Arctic*, provides an explanation to represent what Inuit believe are the differences between formal and informal learning:

Inuit clearly recognize the radical difference between formal education and traditional learning, labelling them, respectively, *ilisayuq* and *isumaqsayuq*. *Isumaqsayuq* is the way of passing along knowledge through observation and imitation embedded in daily family and community activities, with integration into the immediate, shared social structure and ecology as the principal goal.... *isumaqsayuq* may be understood as education leading to ecocentric identity. In

contrast, *ilisayuq* is teaching that involves a high level of abstract verbal mediation in a setting removed from daily life, with the skill base for a future specialized occupation as the principal goal. *Ilisayuq* may be understood as education leading to egocentric development, to success in an egocentric contractual culture. (Stairs as cited in McGregor, 2010, p.35).

This excerpt demonstrates that Inuit are keenly aware of how colonized forms of education are often marked by the absence of the foundational elements of Inuit traditional learning: ecological relationships that develop identities based on respect and reverence for the land. For Inuit, learning often takes place as it relates to the self and how they interact with the living local world. Land not only encompasses *nuna* (land), but also *tariuq* (sea, ice), *sila* (air), plants, animals and cosmological understandings of the natural world (Laugrand and Oosten, 2015; McGrath, 2012; Price, 2009).

Prominent Dené scholar Glen Coulthard (2015) states that, “if colonization involved a violent separation of Indigenous people from those social relations embodied by the land then any education aimed at decolonization must fundamentally correct that violence, by re-introducing and re-inserting Indigenous peoples on their land with those experts and knowledge holders of the land” (p.60). He further develops a concept called “grounded normativity” that centres “place-based knowledge” that provides an ethical framework for the relationship we share with the land (p.60). This ethical framework forms the foundation for Indigenous modes of resistance to colonialism and capitalism.

In a recent lecture, Kahnawake Mohawk intellectual Gerard Alfred (2015) corroborates Simpson and Coulthard’s understanding, by explaining that academics, teachers, and scholars often “have ideas but do not live them, teach ideas but do not embody them.” In other words, one’s connection to the land, due to its role in the process of decolonization must not become a metaphor (Tuck and McKenzie, 2015). Because

Indigenous sense of place and land-based knowledge supports a sense of sufficiency, equanimity, and sustainability, it's re-emergence is increasingly needed to arrest today's extreme climate change concerns.

Land-based learning, as one form of knowledge mobilization, is increasingly being adopted throughout many regions, including in Nunavut, North West Territories, and Nunatsiavut. Programs such as Labrador's *Inosivut 2222: things we use to exist* and those developed by the Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning in Yellowknife and are being taken up to inspire Indigenous learners to study traditional forms of knowledge such as Indigenous governance, sustainability and environmental responsibility (Dechinta, 2016; Dept. of Education, NL, 2015).

CHAPTER TWO

Theory and Methods

2.1 Creating Space to dream in Indigenous consciousness

2.1.1. Multiple Simultaneity and the Middle Ground

While living and studying in eastern Canada, specifically, in Mi'kma'ki, I learn and write in a particular political climate that stems from being in the birthplace of Canadian colonization: "The Mi'kmaq people were the first native people in North America to encounter Europeans, and were aware of the political implications of contact" (Lawrence, 2002, p.32). As outlined in the previous chapter, the relationship to the knowledge we seek and create is directly tied to the lands and histories of the land in which it is engaged. Knowledge production – dependent on relationships to space and land – requires an epistemological framework that is responsive to those relationships (Hogan and Tokpok, 2015; Kovach, 2009). In *Rewriting Histories of the Land*, Bonita Lawrence (2002) points to the unique colonial histories of eastern Canada's that resulted in mass depopulation and severe degrees of cultural genocide.

These unique regional histories continue to leave a legacy of acute forms of marginalization and Indigenous invisibility in this particular region that have resulted in a lack of Indigenous-specific supports, services, and programs for other Indigenous students and I. We can attribute these particular regional disparities to greater degrees of institutional disregard, which undoubtedly lead to forms of social isolation for those of us taking up our knowledge systems in these spaces. Due to this climate of Indigenous invisibility and public disregard, I have developed a framework that reflects a need to create and reclaim safe spaces that allow me to dream in Indigenous consciousness. This section thus engages in socio-spatial exploration of two seemingly divergent worldviews

and paradigms, namely Indigenous and western paradigms. I recognize that I now carry teachings from both worlds and wish to combine them as an integrative and enhanced approach to creating space for Indigenous knowledge in multiple learning environments. I weave western methods throughout this work by conceptualizing and theorizing about a particular dimension of space: epistemological space and its ability to institute power. I explore space in relation to how Indigenous knowledge has been constructed through a colonial gaze and then work toward the recovery and revival of an epistemological space of Indigeneity. The theories used in this chapter are shared through storytelling. Figure 2 is a diagram developed by Kawagley and Barnhardt (2005) that illustrates some of the differences and commonalities of Indigenous and western knowledges. The author's ultimate goal is to suggest that using versions of both models enhances knowledge creation.

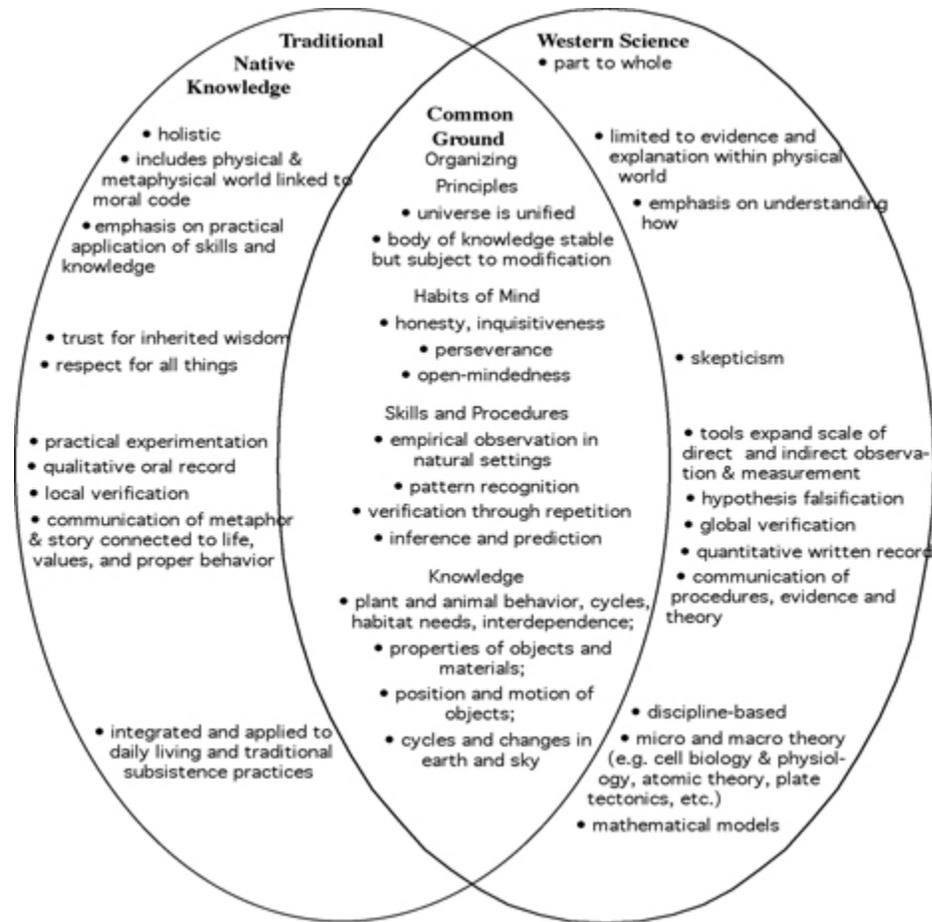


Figure 2. Qualities Associated with Both Traditional Knowledge and Western Science (Kawagley and Barnhardt, 2005, p. 16).

I conclude this section by connecting the overlapping sphere in the diagram to what Dudgeon and Fielder (2006) articulate as a middle and third space that invites “multiple simultaneity.” I see Tuck and McKenzie’s (2015) Indigenist approach to “critical place inquiry” as building on the third space, since in their model knowledges not only co-exist in respectful and responsible relationship to each other but they foster together a multiplicity of “truths” that are imperative to spatial justice.

2.1.2 Theorizing Dimensions of Space

I begin this section by providing a better understanding of the particular socio-spatial dimensions I will be exploring by drawing on Massey, Tuck, and Bright et al.'s work. The critical engagement and examination of knowledge production begins by unearthing assumptions about both material and immaterial learning spaces. Massey (1994) argues not only that space is inherently political, but that it is essential to clarify the often-overlooked dimension of space one chooses to discuss in their writing. In a broader sense, she describes space as something that is “constituted through social relations and material social practices” (p.145). Narrowing this down to learning places and spaces means recognizing that Eurocentric learning spaces are in an ever-changing relationship to their learners. Bright et al. (2013) explains the relationships between learning and space by stating that: “learning is always theorized as taking place somewhere, both in relation to history (time) and context (place/space) thereby foregrounding questions around the role of space and place in learning process and practice” (p.749).

I also assert that our learning spaces are so politically engulfed in their own proliferation that it enables the denial of their power to preserve and reproduce structural and spatialized advantages. Socially constructed knowledge is naturalized in the form of “common sense” as it pertains to the collection and production of knowledge but it is couched in a dominant discourse of patriarchal, imperialist colonialism. (Tuck and McKenzie, 2015). As one navigates the architecture of learning spaces, travels its hallways and rooms, “others” become overwhelmed by the unequal distribution of knowledge, denial of multiplicity, and the imaginative entrapment of whiteness (Massey, 2013).

For Indigenous peoples, Euro-centric learning spaces often represent an epistemically racist and violent place that has sought to not only deny them their identity, but has been used as sites to justify the racist dehumanization and elimination of their existence through the legacy of Indian Residential Schools (Bombay, 2014). The colonial remnants of the settler gaze leave Indigenous people needing to reinvent themselves in a pervasive climate of invisibility. With the historical educational project of Indigenous elimination, Euro-centric learning spaces must also grapple with the reality of their epistemic foundations and structures of colonialism and perceived superiority. While it may be true that current learning spaces are not overtly abusive and violent anymore, epistemic violence continues, albeit in a more covert form, seeking to exclude and delegitimize Indigenous knowledge. Massey's (1992, 1994, and 2013) notion of the hidden politics of space supports my inquiry into the multiplicity of dimensions that presents the existence of the "other".

Academia is a marginal place for Indigenous students. I realize that my own struggles in academia are a legacy of the residential school era's goal of making us into the image of the colonizer. These efforts were deemed progress and a temporal shift in development for the "underdeveloped" native. And I, as a subject of higher education, am unable to escape this past as its ubiquity permeates Indigenous life. We are constantly faced with and must contend with narratives and environments that take space away from us in the sense of land dispossession and displacement (Tuck, 2015). For Indigenous students in the context of contemporary colonized learning environments, we are tasked with trying to stay afloat in the submersion of Euro-centricity, to retain rather than sacrifice our identity to succeed. There are more and more Indigenous scholars, however, seeking to create space for Indigeneity:

Indigenous scholars, having recently arrived to the academy have brought their communities with them. That is, they have been trying to wedge a space for the voices of their ancestors and elders to be heard in the halls of universities [...] the academy, an architect of the colonial erasure of Indigenous worldviews, has been a precarious place for Indigeneity. (Marker, 2011, p. 197)

Revealing and identifying how learning spaces have been used to diminish Indigenous identities is a necessary decolonizing step toward making space for Indigenous knowledges. Indigenous knowing is still viewed as outside and marginal. Tamalik McGrath (2012) speaks to her own struggles as she describes her experience in academia as troubled by her constant effort to explain and legitimate Inuit knowledge, which often deemed “unscholarly” or, at best, creative (p. 181).

Indigenous knowledge and people are perceived as separate from and not belonging in dominant western learning spaces. In particular, Indigenous notions and theories are often guided by a deep knowledge of metaphysical space – a space that provides their sense of place-based knowledge and relationality that is guided by spirituality. When introduced in the western learning environment this is often measured against western rational knowledge and dismissed due to its incommensurability. Marker (2011) provides us with further clarity:

This biophobic tendency is associated with a kind of ‘urbanity of the mind’ that seem to be learned and internalized as a result of living a life largely disconnected from nature and propagated by the advent and development of cities. Because biophobia underlies aspects of the prevailing mindset of modernism, it influences the ‘hidden curriculum’ of modern Western education. Indeed, the evolution of biophobia as expressed in the attempt to control and subdue nature has its own unique historical progression in Western religious, philosophical, artistic, and academic traditions (p. 206).

However, Indigenous metaphysical understandings of the world provide an opportunity for spatial theorization as it concerns local understandings of land and place (Tuck and

McKenzie, 2015). In the next section, I will be drawing on the work of several Indigenous scholars to examine how the production of a third space can foster Indigenous knowledge engagement and renewal in western learning environments.

2.1.3 Transcending Dualities

In *Third Spaces within Tertiary Places: Indigenous Australian Studies*, Dudgeon and Fielder (2006) posit that conceptualizing third spaces can help to move away from a simplistic logic where the dominant group tends to justify its ascendancy and the minority group uses liberationist and utopian rhetoric to construct itself as pure, innocent, and incapable of ever operating in the same way as the dominant group. The construction of a third space does not make it devoid of struggle, nor does it mean that it is a safe and secure place. It can however represent a middle space imbued with “radical simultaneity” and “relational fluidity” that disrupts the “either-or” thinking that can immobilize us and present us with new ways of creating dialogue and of imagining social space. With a focus on the “in-between” we may challenge essentialist ideas about colonized vs. colonizer that can problematize growth (Dudgeon and Fielder, 2006). Therein lies an opportunity to build relationality between notions of us and them to increase chances of a harmonious shared future (McGrath, 2012; Price, 2013).

For Indigenous scholars in the Canadian context, place and space are intimately connected. Space implicates place, and Tuck and McKenzie (2015) suggest critical place inquiry as a pathway to re-prioritize and re-position relationships to the land. Critical place inquiry requires multiple understandings of place such as recognizing its mobility over time and space and as being shaped by its inhabitants. Place also takes into account settler colonization. Their account aligns well with Wilson's (2008) explanation of

localized knowledge coming from a particular place, that it is contextual. He highlights also that knowledge is seen to be based in a specific land.

In keeping with my auto-ethnographic approach, allow me to switch from the academic style of my thesis by telling a story.

A girl named Tuktuk – caribou, ventured to her favourite safe place of town, the woods. On the way to the forest she became tangled in her usual ambivalence of mediating the tight space of wanting to communicate and wanting to hide. She sought refuge in prayer and opened herself to guidance and affirmation. On this warm day, the sun's flowing rays flooded her heart in radiant sentience. She felt encouraged today, a day after meeting a writer who reminded her that communing with nature can gift her presence, if only she moved from yearning to receptivity, if only she became aware. He spoke in the language of the land and drew her in to listen deeper. He became a vessel for Creator's reminder, that she was on the right path and should also surround herself with nature. As she got closer to the forest, she remembered she was venturing to the woods where her father was found hanging from a tree many moons ago. The closer she got, she remembered that it was this very day that he was found by a hiker in the woods. The day of her daughter's birthday. She knew she was propelled there on this day for some reason beyond her comprehension. She also remembered her atatsiak – grandfather, also suicided when she was five. She wondered why her people and other Indigenous people on Turtle Island were dying, and why they had to endure violence and shame. She questioned what the purpose of all this was: why did Creator put them through that pain.

As she arrived in the woods, she became softened by her enclosed secluded space that overlooked the ocean. While perched on a rock, she was visited by little birds

reminding her that she is always nestled in the presence of ancestral love. She remembered that through the telling of her own stories was she able to align herself with simultaneous re-creation stories that were happening all over the world. She mapped a space for the loss and grief but did not become overwhelmed by it because her growing consciousness allowed her to be a witness to her emotional progress thus improving her well-being. She understood that just a generation before her, the land and people were struck by violent colonialism. She knew there was nothing wrong with her or her people rather they are as powerful as the wind, as powerful as the snow. She grew to understand that there was something wrong with the colonial culture that she survived and that she should remain responsible to her people and the land. There was a waking up to something larger. Remembering. Reviving. Forgiveness.

The character in the story navigates a world where multiple experiences and worldviews exist within and outside of her. She has been affected by the “modernization” of her community and land. She moves through the lived dynamic terrain of storied space that is found in her culture as well as the dominant intrusive space that negates that culture. The degradation of the people of the land, of their beliefs and of their connection to the land is parallel to the Earth’s ongoing degradation. Yet Indigenous people survive and continue to prepare the soil, plant seeds and sacrifice for future generations.

Creating space in a good way for Indigenous epistemologies in western educational spaces can be a difficult endeavor. For example, Simpson argues (2014) that education represents “systems that are primarily designed to produce communities of individuals willing to uphold settler colonialism” (p.1). This process is mired in the tension and paradox of attempting to decolonize within Eurocentric institutions with the

same tools that built the institutions. Making space for Indigeneity under the guise of dominant standards can seem contradictory, especially since those standards have been used to marginalize Indigenous people and knowledges. Reconciling this contradiction begins by critically questioning what purpose making space serves. Will it continue to serve the colonial settler gaze of Indigenous performance, placation or tokenism or is it seen as progress and development that is the driving force of the Euro-centric linear model? Reconciling the conceptual elimination of Indigenous people within Euro-centric spaces that distorts their self-image begins by inviting strong Indigenous people who continue to resist those images. Decolonizing space requires meaningful inclusion of individuals who have charted their own decolonizing path in their own hearts and minds. They would have come to their own journey of Indigeneity through the maintenance and continual maintenance of ties to their cultural identities and practices. These individuals have lived experience in Indigeneity, which is viewed as integral their epistemology (Alfred, 2005; Graveline, 1998).

Making space for Indigeneity is to create space for a multi-sensory, tactile, and complex experience of space that involves observing and communicating with a deep sense of intimate connection and interdependency with the land, similar to how a drum is used to provide teachings of the Mother Earth and Father Sky for example (Tuck and McKenzie, 2015). This kind of “radical simultaneity” allows for different truths to emerge as it pertains to how we theorize and come to know our environment.

As Indigenous students negotiate academia they must overcome and survive the domination of Euro-centrism that shapes their academic experiences. They are faced with creating their own strategies of perseverance by practicing alternative forms of knowledge based on a foundation of metaphysical spatial awareness and spirituality. To

make space for local ancient knowledge means to resist and transgress dominant hegemonic notions of knowledge production. It means to confront political, historical, and spatial injustices toward Indigenous people and their understandings of the world. Western views of the construction of social space, such as those I drew upon in the previous section, can complement Indigenous views of space. It is essential that the intellectual work of integrating Indigenous knowledge is not purely in the space of the academy, but that we be able to travel into the surrounding territories and learn from communities that contain local memories and meanings of the landscape to keep knowledge production accountable and transformative (Alfred, 2015).

On this note, Janet Tamalik McGrath, non-Inuit ally, and author of a PhD thesis titled, “Isumaksaqsiurutigijakka: Conversations with Aupilaarjuk Towards a Theory of Inuktitut Knowledge Renewal” (2012), developed in collaboration with an Inuk elder from Nunavut several land-based and experiential theories to regenerate Inuktitut – an intellectual system and “way of being” (p.100). I draw on Tamalik’s work often as she offers Inuktitut philosophical teachings by Aupilaaruk, a highly-respected Nunavut Inuk elder. Through the clarity of her writing, Tamalik states that she wanted to do this research to build capacity in Inuit scholars as they strive to re-build their community's resources. She also emphasizes that Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, Inuit traditional knowledge, facilitates access and agency to the Inuit epistemological concepts naturally inherent in Inuit. This dissertation explores questions such as: “Is there an Inuktitut framework to support Inuktitut knowledge renewal?” and “Is there an Inuktitut methodology used to answer the question?” (p. 102). In her conversation with Inuk elder, Aupilaarjuk, he also clearly states the need for Inuktitut preservation:

Qablunaalli piqqusia atuliraptigut ilanga qimajjaajungniiq&utigut aturniaqtaraluav ut kisiani inuunig anginiqsaunnginnarialik nunapti'ni inuunirijavut piujaluummair iungmat inuunig akiraqturiniqajuunani pirajaktuqajuunani taimannaittuulaural ua'mat. (We now use the qablunaat culture in some regards, and it is evident that we will not leave that behind, it is certain that we will use some aspects of it. However our inuunig (Inuk-ness) needs always to be bigger, in our homeland. Our inuunig is absolutely beautiful, inuunig means there is not to be any strife, no crime – this is the way it was from long before) (p. 114).

The theories discussed in her research reflect a local and context-specific epistemological innovation of the Arctic. One of the core theoretical principles developed by Tamalik McGrath and Aupilaarjuk is that of “*sannginiqarajarniq inuunivut aturnikkut*- which means vitality through engagement or practice. The notion of practice or engagement implies *access* and requires *agency* in relation to homeland, language, living histories and culture/ceremony (emphasis in original, p. 222)⁶. One of the Inuit metaphors that emerged in her dissertation, is that of a large iglu, called the Qaggiq, a celebration iglu, which was traditionally built as a gathering place for social events. It can be used as a framework for renewing dialogue to develop good relationships, affirming community, and as a source of strength to renew language, relationships to land, living histories, and ceremony (p. 239).

2.2 Methodology and Methods

2.2.1 Subjectivity and Indigenous Methodology

Conducting ethical research with Indigenous peoples often requires an appropriate cultural grounding or at least greater understandings of Indigenous philosophies, methods,

⁶ The Inuktitut terms derived from McGrath's (2012) dissertation use elder Aupilaarjuk's Nunavut dialect. While these terms are used throughout this thesis, future Nunatsiavut research would necessitate Nunatsiavut-specific translations.

and methodologies. As an Indigenous student engaged in traditional knowledge renewal, I was advised early on to prepare myself as a researcher by gaining experience directly from Indigenous educators and practitioners who have worked and continue to work within the field of Indigenous studies (Graveline, 1998; Kovach, 2009). Part of my own learning and understanding is also experiential. Finding myself in between two worlds forced me to think beyond those two worlds in order to survive, which is unfortunately an experience felt by other Indigenous students in western institutions as well (Price, 2013). Many feel the pressures of both academic standards and Indigenous community standards which are often contradictory (Castleden et al., 2015). Rowan (2017) cites Cindy Blackstock (2010) who describes the distinction between Indigenous and Euro-Western knowledge production in academia:

The highest professional accolades and funding sources in western academia are for those who produce new knowledge. By comparison, Indigenous peoples believe that the most important things about humanity are already known and thus the highest standard is the wisdom held by the Elders who have studied ancestral knowledge for a lifetime (Auger, 2001). What this means, in practical terms, is that western academics often get little reward for conducting translation-based research, research that is precisely so often needed by Indigenous peoples. (Blackstock as cited in Rowan, 2017, p.67)

As an Indigenous researcher doing research for and with Indigenous people rather than on Indigenous people, my principal aim has been the protection and strengthening of the well-being of our communities. In this sense, relationship-building and accountability are emphasized as core elements of an Indigenist research paradigm. This means not only relationships with others but also relationship to the knowledge, concepts, and ideas that are being developed. Adapting the research process to be more fluid, organic, and flexible

rather than linear and controlled allows for the study to evolve naturally and with more ease according to the needs of communities.

Scholars assert that having a grounding in cultural knowledges provides an appropriate foundation for gathering knowledge in a way that is also ceremonial (see Wilson, 2008). While not stated explicitly, scholars who shared their own journey of cultural resurgence modeled a process of returning to their teachings that pointed to living by example (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). These approaches to research facilitate spiritual growth, which in turn nourishes a stronger sense of self-identity and confidence in sharing my voice or what I have come to know as a colonized Inuk woman on a decolonizing journey. Graveline (1998) shares a quotation from author Longfish on the topic: “How do we rid ourselves of ideas and concepts that result in low self-esteem? How do we better ourselves? The learning process revolves around self-identification” (p. 40). As Kovach (2009) and Wilson (2008) discussed Indigenous knowledge, they foreground personal congruence and intention as being integral to an embodiment of our values that influence our ability to discern and make critical judgments intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. Indigenous scholars model relational accountability and ceremonial aspects of knowledge production by reflecting and acknowledging the self that has been previously denied academically (Graveline, 1998; Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009).

Some of the critical elements of Indigenous teachings are to learn through practice and cultivating knowledge from educators and knowledge holders who have worked within the field of Indigenous studies and reclaimed Indigenous specific models of learning. I have had the opportunity to work with an esteemed Indigenous scholar and teacher, and somebody that I consider an Elder, Fyre Jean Graveline. As a Metis

facilitator and mentor, she brings a lifetime of cultural, traditional, and academic knowledge meant to guide and allow Indigenous students to access their cultural teachings in order to develop specific skills that restore and demonstrate Indigenous values. As a student researcher under her mentorship and guidance, we have co-developed a relationship using Indigenous methodological tools that have fostered relational accountability and an ethical framework for conducting research with and for Indigenous communities. She provided guidance that allowed me to deepen my relationship with the land and my ancestors. I engaged in methods on the land such as meditation, deep reflection, and making offerings to the spirit world that produced learning on deep emotional and spiritual levels. As I deepened my relationship with the land, ocean, and all of creation, I felt new connections with the Earth that I had never experienced before, such as a new understanding and acceptance of my place in relation to all that is. These new insights and learning were accompanied by profound healing and love as I allowed myself to open my heart to the land's healing qualities. This deeply personal transformation has been an integral part of my research journey, as it also opened up a range of possibilities when I returned home to meet with research participants and other Inuit relations.

Tamalik's (2012) in-depth work on Inuit methodologies has also been instrumental in my learning. In particular, she highlights several Inuktitut methodologies such as *Naalangniq* – listening – *Ujjiqsuiniq* – observation – *Pittiarniq* – ethics of accuracy – and *Suliniq* – personal congruence. Engaging these values has allowed for a more organic flow of knowledge creation grounded in Indigenous relational ontologies and epistemologies. These are methods that are considered ancient cultural protocols

when relating to people, land, and knowledge, and they have been carefully engaged and applied within this research process (p. 303-306).

I have also had the privilege of learning from another Indigenous mentor, my thesis co-supervisor, professor Dr. Amy Bombay, a leading Anishinaabe researcher on Indian Residential Schools. I came to understand through her research that as a former child in care, my removal from my family's care was directly linked to my grandmother's time –12 years – spent in orphanages and a residential school. Combined with my grandfather's relocation in 1956 from Hebron and Okak in northern Labrador, my family's kinship network and well-being was ruptured by these compounding traumas and by the widespread silence about these traumatic events. In a 2015 presentation, Dr. Bombay states that her

research on residential schools, provides evidence that past collective trauma links with current disparities, collective traumas, and shows [the] individual, family and community effects of residential schools. The schools have resulted in cycles of childhood adversity over generations, which are typically accompanied by cycles of poor communication, mental illness, low socio-economic status, and substance abuse, while also showing how culture and cultural identity intertwine with all of these. (Bombay, 2015)

She further states that without proper preventative measures these cyclical patterns of trauma can continue across generations. It was with this knowledge that I set out to learn ways to support myself and others in reclaiming our cultural knowledge. My return home this past year, while involving emotional challenges related to triggers based in past memories, allowed me to heal much of this trauma, as I was able to enter into a process of developing and honouring my own relationship with my homeland. By sharing my story, I hope that I am able to support others. I share this personal story with the belief that as

others bear witness to the process of my own healing, it not only takes away one's pain, but it demonstrates that the process of healing is possible for others.

2.2.2 Methods

As illustrated by the storytelling, poetry, and experiential elements in this thesis, my methods reflect a commitment to operationalize Indigenous methodologies, epistemologies, and strategies of inquiry with a focus on relational accountability. Kovach (2010) contends that the method one relies on need not be the primary focal point, rather that the methods rely on a particular “paradigmatic approach based upon an Indigenous philosophical positioning or epistemology [...] and the interplay between the method and paradigm” (p. 40). Since working with Indigenous communities necessitates building meaningful relationships, it was of utmost importance that I consult with ITK and Nunatsiavut to maintain their involvement in much of my research design. From the conception of the research topic, to my methods, Nunatsiavut's leading educational partners have assisted in the co-creation of much of the project. They have helped inform and guide the strategies of inquiry and instrument design. The first phase of the project involved fieldwork in Nain and Makkovik, two communities that were identified as either hosting land-based education programs or teaching land-based curricula in their schools.

During my fieldwork, I was very conscious of the importance of building trust amongst community members. Even though I am a community member with a familiar local last name, I was still visiting as a researcher, who had been away for more than ten years. I wanted to ensure the community knew that I was not there just for research but also to re-build lasting relationships and to reconnect with my community. I attended local social events such as a community feast and gatherings. Inuk scholar, Jackie Price

(2009), explains that food sharing is an integral cultural practice that fosters and promotes kinship and Inuit community cohesion, so taking part in these gatherings was very fulfilling. I also had the good fortune of taking part in the Inuit Educators' Conference in Nain when I first arrived, which provided me with countless opportunities to learn from community members and build meaningful relationships. Being away for so long, many community members asked me about my family lineage, and happily recalled our relations. These experiences were heart-warming and welcoming. I also attended an Inuktitut language class, community health education events, and visited family and elders and reconnected with community members and friends from my youth. While at these events, I invited people to participate in either a focus group or an interview. I then conducted in-depth, open-ended narrative interviews and hosted two focus groups with fourteen people in Nain and ten people in Makkovik, with a total of twenty-four different participants. The table below provides more information on participants.

Table 1. Data collection

Age Group	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Interview
Youth: 9	3	4	2
Adults: 12			12
Elders: 3			3

All participants, with the exception of those who participated in the focus groups, were given the option of doing an interview in a location of their choice, and many opted for the comfort of their own home, while some chose a nearby Nunatsiavut Government building office. One focus group was held in a Nunatsiavut Government boardroom and at the other at a Parks Canada boardroom. All efforts were made to select a representative

sample of community members, especially those who participated in a land-based learning program, or those who led and organized land-based programs. Ideal participants were youth, knowledge holders, elders, hunters, harvesters, or parents. They were given notice of the interviews through posters, social media, community liaison workers and a hired youth leader, who helped recruit the majority of the youth through the snowball method. Participants were offered an incentive of a \$20 food gift card in exchange for their time reflecting the cultural and community ethic of reciprocity viewed as central to Indigenous cultures. Focus groups were also chosen as a method, as group gatherings help to reduce isolation, foster the development of social support and capital, and promote community cohesion (Graveline, 1998; Price, 2009). In keeping with the principles of relational accountability, most participants (with the exception of a few with limited internet access) reviewed their interview transcripts in order to confirm its accuracy. A few participants replied with minor revisions and clarifications.

2.2.3 Limitations

The limitations inherent in this study revolve mainly around the fact that I used an interview guide. While the questions were broad and open-ended, so as not to guide the responses of the participants too much, my reliance on a guide nonetheless impacted some of their responses. Other limitations of this study include the smaller sample size, which can influence the study's generalizability. There are also some cultural issues that need to be considered, for example, when asked about the current education and school systems, many respondents simply said they do not know or that I should ask others – these responses may be indicative of cultural protocols that value non-confrontation and

judgment (Arnaquq, 2015). These protocols can sometimes limit one's ability to communicate their concerns, if those concerns are viewed as too critical of systems or people.

2.2.4 Intended audience, dissemination, knowledge translation

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been one of many examples of Indigenous efforts that are championing the epistemological shift toward furthering a meaningful Indigenous presence within Canadian society (TRC, 2015). Indigenous-led research and scholarship is relatively new within mainstream education and offers the opportunity to add diverse and innovative contributions to the production of knowledge. The act of healing and decolonization ought to be led by Indigenous people. As an Indigenous community member, and as with many Indigenous people, we often work in the best interests of community. Nearly every Indigenous person carries ancestral knowledge and that knowledge is important. Not only is it important to believe that we have knowledge, it is crucial to believe and value what we know and understand what it means to know according to Indigenous principles. It is also important to share that knowledge.

The intended audience of this research are Nunatsiavut community members, educational policy makers, educators, secondary and post-secondary students, Indigenous community members, parents and guardians. Given past research experiences, participants have expressed concerns regarding the lack of communication after research projects conclude. Nunatsiavut research advisors have expressed their concerns about researchers collecting their information and not returning or disseminating their research to community members (Pufall et al., 2011). After I met with the education director and manager of the Nunatsiavut Government (NG) in summer 2015, they expressed interest in developing meaningful partnerships with researchers to help in the NG's transition to educational control. With their prior expressed interest in this work, this thesis will also be disseminated to the NG via reports, presentations, and papers. I presented some of my preliminary research at the bi-annual Inuit Studies Conference in St-John's in October

2016, and I also plan to attend several conferences in the future, such as the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education and future Inuit Studies conferences. I will also share my knowledge with Inuit who express interest in obtaining this information. I will seek to have this work published in various Indigenous education journals and Nunatsiavut's modes of communication such as their website and newsletters.

Knowledge translation can potentially be complex as academic research does not easily translate with broader public audiences; however, measures will be taken to seek my research translation into Inuktitut to make it accessible to language speakers (Wilson, 2008).

CHAPTER THREE

Land-based learning in Nunatsiavut

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how participants defined, discussed and/or presented land-based learning and knowledge. As previously mentioned in the methods chapter, the themes identified below arise from the data I collected from seventeen semi-structured interviews and two focus groups in the two Nunatsiavut communities. This list is not meant to be exhaustive as understandings of Nunatsiavut Inuit land-based learning may not be limited to only these themes. It is important to specify the Inuit region and communities being examined because Inuit identities are regionally affixed and not homogenous as Molema (2017) explains: “ethnocultural identification in Labrador is very complex” and offers further explanation of the complexities of Labrador Inuit identity in her article (p.151). These stories and knowledge shared by Nunatsiavummiut also represent the specific geographical locations, relationships to their lands, and regional histories in which they have arisen and have been produced.

The first main theme relates to survival, with sub-categories that include navigation, subsistence activities, and awareness that are all needed for survival. The themes identified are not meant to be hierarchical nor are they meant to be in any particular order as they are all interconnected and interdependent. Allow me to begin with the most prominent theme in the interviews, many of them revolving around the nature of Inuit specific land-based perspectives as they relate to their practical application and engagement of knowledge (Lalonde, 2017; McGrath, 2012; Price, 2009; Rowan, 2016).

3.2 Land-based Learning ensures Inuit futurity/survival

3.2.1 Navigation

In discussing land-based learning, one theme stood out as central to almost all participants. When asked what land-based knowledge meant to them, many participants spoke about having knowledge that is crucial to physical survival and safety such as navigation skills, spatial awareness, and land-reading. The ability to read and “learn” the land includes forms of wayfinding such as recognizing which areas to avoid. These skills were spoken of quite highly, as Nain elder and retired tour guide Luke affirms: “After a while, I start learning how to hunt, and fish and learn the land from my father. Every year it gets better and better, every year, in the four seasons, spring, summer, winter and fall.” He also implies that acquiring this knowledge can take years, even a lifetime to develop, signifying “land learning” as a cumulative skill. This was also reiterated by Nain youth leader Mandy: “I don’t know about how to read the land, it takes a lot of time to do that.” Makkovik community member Hannah confirms that navigation and land-reading is needed: “To be safer, to be careful, to know when the ice is thin, my dad is always worried. He knows we don't know that much yet, as much as he does.” Retired principal and teacher Emily speaks about the necessity of land-based knowledge for safety and survival:

Learn[ing] how to read the land, landmarks came in handy just a couple weeks ago, my son was gone partridge hunting, and a sudden storm came up out of nowhere, he couldn’t see right in front of him, he remembered, he paid attention to land, he knew once he hit certain trees, he knew when he passed by those, he knew [he] had to turn right, and then he got back onto track, he was able to come home. We were really worried about him, it came on and you couldn’t see, white out.

The theme of physical survival, as in Emily's story, was a compelling one that also came up repeatedly in other land-based research specific to Inuit epistemology: "Knowledge relating to *nunamiinniq* (being on the land, or being in relation with the land) includes all aspects of land and connects to survival" (McGrath, 2012, p. 215). Community leader and hunter Ben, who runs a land-based program for youth, further supports the importance of learning navigational skills and technologies especially in today's rapidly changing natural environment:

One girl brought back their family from an outing when the snow came down, they couldn't see anything, so she got back home using GPS, they brought [that] back to us as a positive [for our youth program]. [They] would've been stranded out on the ice somewhere otherwise.

The value associated with land-based knowledge for this youth went far beyond survival; it also situated her as a capable and accomplished navigator and leader among her kin and community, building a strong sense of sense as Inuit. Nain Elder/retired tour guide Luke further corroborates the importance of navigational skills, this time on water:

There are ways you can use Inuit knowledge and when you're travelling up north, especially by boat, with no GPS or compass, we use a fishing line, jigging line, a hook with 2 hooks. We put that 50 feet out behind us, in the water. The boat is going and the fog covers land, we couldn't see, we want to go see that land toward that point. We threw our hook in water, 50 feet out and use as a guide, as a compass, that line we set up to work where you have to go, we want to go from Mumford Tickle straight to Saglek Point, you aim that point to where you want to go before it covers in fog. So, the fog came and we rely on that line as a guide, keep it straight, it goes right directly to the point where we came. The boat goes left and right, the line starts going funny that means we're turning off course. We steady it again, as a guide, maybe 4--6 hours we use that in fog.

In this statement, Luke shares a generations-old technology for safely navigating in the treacherous North Atlantic coves and eddies of the region. Note how participants shared a

mix of old and newer knowledge to support their claims around the importance of navigational skills. In the case of Emily's son, reading landmarks was crucial to his safe return. In the case of the young woman who completed Ben's program, GPS technology proved fateful. Finally, in the case of Luke, a fishing line and hooks were the technology of choice. In each case, well-trained and practiced Inuit demonstrated an ability to adapt to quickly-changing local conditions.

Finally, local community artist Tom provided perhaps the most succinct understanding of land-based learning, using the colloquial "going off" as a shorthand to refer to going out on the land:

It means knowing about the land, where the animals are, certain times of the year, knowing about the ice and water, when the ice is good certain times of the year. I hear a lot of people talking and I know that things are changing a lot these days because of climate change. Right now, it's only February, usually in the past, when I was a kid, this time of year would be really cold, February and March and now it's warmer now than it usually is, then [it] gets warmer a lot faster. In relation to your question, it means knowing about the animals, and the land, and where to go off, good places where to go off and at what times of the year.

Without a doubt, the importance of learning navigational skills in relation to weather patterns was front and centre in participant accounts as these skills continue to be essential. In these excerpts and comments, participants often describe their knowledge of the land as a direct source of guidance. Land and seasonal pattern recognition and risk management are vital elements of knowing that assure Inuit survival (Tuck et al., 2016). Especially in the context of rapidly changing climatic conditions and highly isolated and remote northern communities in Inuit nunangat – Inuit homelands – these skills are highly valued and valuable.

3.2.2 Economic and Subsistence Practices such as Hunting

I introduce the concept of economy here in the same terms as McGrath (2012) outlines in her discussions with Inuk elder Aupilaarjuk: “*niqiqainnarniq* relat[ing] to ‘always having meat’ which is the benchmark for survival in the Arctic traditional land-based economy. He explained that now it also required *kiinaujaliurniq* – the ability to make money” (p. 196). She further explains that most Inuit today participate in a dual or mixed economy in the post-settlement era whereas the pre-settlement era reflected livelihoods that depended solely on harvesting activities. Participants in my study spoke about the amount of time they spend maintaining and practicing land-based activities, indicating the amount of space and time dedicated to knowing animal migrations and activity (Oosten and Laugrand, 2015). Becoming a good hunter requires great preparation and knowledge of animal behaviors, cycles, and seasonal migrations. Many Nunatsiavummiut again expressed the high value placed on developing harvesting skills such as hunting, as illustrated by Nain hunter and tour guide Alex: “when Inuit talk about hunting, it’s everything, it’s not sport hunting. It includes survival, family tradition, culture plus learning how to hunt and feed your family. Hunting is life.”

As many continue to rely on hunting, fishing, and other related harvesting activities to sustain traditional country food diets, animal parts, such as fur, are also used for income. Parent and hunter/trapper Tim says that he continues to go out “two to three times a week, wooding, trapping, egging, hunting for lynx, fox, marten, partridge, arctic hare, spruce and white partridges. Seems like I’ve been into that ever since I was in school.” A younger community youth worker Marie says that “My dad always took me hunting, I actually killed a polar bear last year for the first time, at Cape Makkovik. I go partridge hunting and seal hunting with my dad, [who] goes hunting every fall. Seal

hunting throughout the year, summer and winter.” While many Inuit ethnographic studies focus on men and boys as hunters and land-based navigators, many of the participants I interviewed counter those narratives and demonstrate that women and girls are also taught and trained to engage in subsistence activities such as hunting (Parlee and Wray, 2016). Nain youth leader Mandy also says that, “I been going out on the land all my life, with my family to the cabin and fishing and hunting. Also as part of [youth land-based programs] youth from ages 12–18, go on the land, for boil-ups, camping, while we’re there we do GPS, and safety and camping.” Community member Justine corroborates: “All my life. Mostly went off with daddy and mommy ever since I was born. Fishing, hunting, berry picking, egging.”

3.3 Experiential/Doing/Practical

3.3.1 Experiential/Hands-on Learning

Many Indigenous scholars, along with Inuit knowledge holders and elders, affirm that land-based knowledge is often best acquired and retained through its tactile, sensory, and embodied practical engagement. (Coulthard, 2015, Kawagley, 2005; McCoy et al., 2016). Practical and experiential knowledge transmission, as one of the signifying features of Inuit cultural knowledge transfer and renewal is a core Inuktitut theoretical concept as previously outlined in Chapter two: “sanniniqarajarniq inuunivut aturnikkut meaning vitality through engagement or practice” (McGrath, 2012, p.222). This was also reiterated and found to be true by nearly all Nunatsiavut participants interviewed. This finding validates how Indigenous peoples and their epistemologies often favor teaching methods that focus on pedagogies that build tangible connections between the learner and their learning materials and environments, including most notably, the land (Barnhardt and

Kawagley 2005; McGrath, 2012; Tanaka, 2016). When I spoke with Makkovik community member Heather, she emphatically affirmed that, “We did a course with [instructor’s name], they were telling us about it, I was like: can we try it, actually go out and do it, okay enough telling us what to do, let us play around with it to put into practice our knowledge.”

Some of the defining features of land-based learning lie in its experiential aspects that engage the mind, body, and heart in a holistic and synergistic way, often leading to more anchored and internalized understandings of the skills being learned and increased feelings of self-efficacy and self-confidence (Petrasek MacDonald, 2015; Young, 2015). Leading researchers in Nunatsiavut also discussed their evaluation findings from a recent cultural youth program (IlikKuset Ilinganet – Culture Connect!) and specifically, its impacts on youth in the community of Rigolet (Cunsolo et al., 2016). Their research findings similarly revealed how participants emphasized the need for more “learning by doing,” particularly within dominant education systems, which can be achieved by integrating more hands-on activities (p. 294). On the topic of hands-on learning, community member Caroline says that,

I realized that over the last few months, I can go online and buy this pattern, somebody took the time and actually wrote this pattern out, and at the end of the day, it’s wrong. It looks good, the terminology is all there, but when you actually sit down and do the practical work, follow row by row what they’re telling you to do, then you have to go back it’s wrong, you have to go back and figure out what did they tell me that was wrong and how do I fix it. I’ve been using the word ‘tweak’ a lot lately, I’ve actually tweaked patterns that I bought from someone else. I can see this is what they’re telling me to do but it’s not actually how I’m supposed to be doing it to get the end result. [...] so when it comes down to practical things like that I would rather sit down and ask an elder here. They might not have all the terminology, they might not be able to explain to how your mind would normally work when you’re looking at written patterns, but if you sit down and a lot of times you don’t even have to get them to tell you, you just watch them.

3.3.2 Embodiment through Awareness and Presence

While similar to the practical element of enskillment, embodiment differs in that it focuses on the associated internal skills of attunement and awareness that help to develop *isuma*, a valued form of intelligence, that was previously defined in Chapter 2. Tamalik McGrath (2012) refers to this form of intelligence, as she describes her process of language learning as being best supported through its embodiment. She also cites Aupilaarjuk, in the following sentence, as supporting the notion of knowledge integration through embodiment: “It was easy for me to learn Inuktitut language in this environment because lessons were visceral. [...] Aupilaarjuk states, ‘*titiqqaunngittuq, naasautaunngittuq timipli atullaktaaqtanga...*’ [It isn’t a written word, it isn’t a number, but it was truly the body’s profound system for learning]” (p. 220–21). This signifies how Inuit pass on the value of perceptiveness, conscious awareness, and even mindfulness. As one of the distinguishing features of Inuit culture, this is but one of the many pathways toward promoting the remembrance of ancestral wisdom and knowledge that I believe is encoded into bodies and can be inferred as blood memory. The skill of attunement to one’s surroundings can facilitate connections to oneself but also to your environment, as shared by Nain youth Mandy when asked what land-based learning can offer for today’s Inuit children: “I feel like I need to be more connected to myself. [...] if [children] are taught or surrounded by the environment that they should be, they would grow up to be more aware.” When asked about attempting to integrate land-based learning into the formal education system, Nain community member and harvester Alex, says:

you can read so much about learning in a book in school, that’s only going to get you so far, like when you’re out there, when it gets cold, how you gonna get used to the cold, the elements, when you’re in a storm, your thinking changes, when you’re caught in a white-out or something. You can’t read that stuff in a book [...] I think the only way to teach land-based knowledge is to actually take the time to

bring kids out on the land, whether that would be a class, that would've been awesome if we could've had that in school, whether that would've been a whole class for half the day or something. [...] I sat for days in the classroom looking out the window.

Alex keenly observes how the land supports coming into and being present in the body and that this is not necessarily a skill that is offered in colonized education or curricula.

Embodiment and presence promotes the cultural value of silence and quiet contemplation in Inuit societies. For example, Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2015) highlights how the value of calm and quietness in Inuit culture was necessary when approaching animals and wildlife while hunting and sealing (p. 12). This is a continued tradition today in Nunatsiavut. When speaking with Nain community member, Tom, about the land-based knowledge he learned, he fondly recalled: “My dad taught me how to use a taluk, a white shield for when you see a seal out on the ice, he taught me how to creep up to a seal, to get close enough to shoot it.” This skill of attunement enables learners to become more proficient at detecting animal behaviors and then approaching them with stealth so as not to scare them away, which requires a great deal of composure and internal control.

Many other Indigenous cultures value conscious awareness, for example, Mi'kmaw education scholar, Marie Battiste (2015), refers to what she calls the “learning spirit [that] is within each one of us, all life reflects that spirit in us, it's an energy wave, experiential, it's listening, knowing the self, connecting, and the great connection to the inner self, and to me this is what the education system has deprived us of.”

3.4 Relationality

3.4.1 The land fosters interdependent relations

Another major cornerstone of Inuit land-based learning and knowledge, reiterated by nearly all participants, is the centrality of relationships. Being in relation with all living beings in the natural world, including wildlife, weather, and other non-human beings reflects the values of holism and interconnectedness. Inuit deeply understand that without the land, they could not exist (Price, 2009). Ethical stewardship naturally arises when societies depend on maintaining good relationships with the land and animals needed for food and subsistence. Land-based practices often reinforce honouring Inuit cultural values of reciprocity, which also contributes to maintaining good relations. This important ancient belief system was known as *maligait* – or Inuit laws that governed the land. This meant that Inuit adhered to traditions and practices that preserve ongoing relations to foster balance and continued economic subsistence (Price, 2009). As I spoke with Parent and Makkovik community member Caroline, she illustrates how Inuit continue to live by these traditional laws:

Being able to live off the land, protecting what you have for future generations, it's learning about the importance of everything around you. It's also not taking things for granted. Protecting what you have, I'm a big advocate of that, I don't like it when people go off fishing and have a lunch and leave garbage around, we bring a bag and take it back with us [...] A lot of people are good at doing that though, leave it as you found it. I think it's very important to let our kids know what knowledge we have, you can actually learn a lot by watching, instead of saying you're not paying attention and have to learn this stuff.

In her statement, she also refers to the observational method of learning that is often the preferred method of teaching in Inuit communities.

3.4.2 Intergenerational transmission by observation

Inuit social relationships are nurtured through practices that often take place with and on the land. Nothing can replace being in the presence of a wise Inuk elder or a teacher with years of experience and cultural knowledge. As they model and demonstrate the skills required, they also pass along the desired emotive and affective skills of emotional regulation such as patience and concentration, for example. Knowledge transmission from one generation to the next, often acquired through observation, reinforces values of interdependence. Being able to directly observe and learn from experienced practitioners places the learner in a position of agency as it assumes the learner is capable of trying and doing something on their own. When asked how she learned skills on the land, Nain community member Justine affirmed that she learned “by visual cues, they never really said anything, they just were there. I was waiting for body language and then afterwards I got to learn how by myself.” Observation as a pedagogical approach also teaches learners to lead by example, as elders organically model this, through their own example. Elders, as “repositories of knowledge,” are held in high esteem, and being able to observe and learn from them reinforces their respected position in Inuit societies. (McGregor, 2010, p. 39). Makkovik community health worker Marie validates this as she shares her experiences of learning from her elders and grandma:

I liked learning from the elders, my grandma has taught me a lot, whenever we go to the cabin she goes with us, she’s pro at making pitsiks⁷, she’s the best at making those, so she taught me this year how to make pitsiks. Took me years and years to learn how to make those.

⁷ This means dried fish in Inuktitut.

In the context of learning from family, community, and elders, these forms of indirect teaching can invoke a deeper sense of trust and care for the learners, enhancing the student's motivation and ability to retain what they learn. Community leader and harvester Ben speaks about the informal process of learning from his family:

A lot of what they learn from on the land is just by observation, when we were growing up, my dad didn't sit me down and say here's the way we lived, I followed what he was doing, same thing with his father, we learned. We also do a lot of hands-on lectures and stuff in our land-based youth program.

Nain harvester, Alex, recognizes how the intergenerational cultural knowledge transmission process is currently being diminished in the context of formal education, which could potentially account for a lack of motivation among Inuit learners in schooling:

The way my old man learned, compared to the way I learned, was everything he learned from his father and mother, you watched them, you don't read about it, you don't sit down in class and have to write notes about it, you're there watching your dad, and listening to him speak that's not the way things are taught in school, it's all verbal, and all mental.

Alex provides an important insight by implying that there is a loss of valuable knowledge when learning in a culturally sterile environment that sometimes stymies creativity and agency.

3.4.3. Cultural identity/values

As an epistemological foundation, the symbiotic relationship with the land forms Inuit culture, knowledge, and sense of collective identity. John Amagoalik, cited in McGregor (2010) affirms this relationship: "The land shaped our mind and language, our culture, our

legends, our philosophy and our view of in life” (p. 20). A retired school principal in Makkovik affirms this by sharing that, “it’s who we are, being Inuit in Labrador, the skills is a part of who we are, and in today’s world it’s something left to hold on to.” Being in reciprocal relation with the land creates an intimate connection that equalizes humans with all other beings in the natural world. Inuit understand that they are not superior to the land, but rather in balance with all creation. Inuit relations with the land produce a strong sense of cultural identity espoused in values that include caring for and knowing that the land is a crucial part of kinship-making (Sawatzky, 2016; Wilson, 2008). The relational ontology of land as kin is operationalized through responsible relationships on and with the land in sacred and real ways, which in turn ensures ongoing survival and well-being. Land relationships can be honoured by remembering the ancestors and ancestral knowledge, as shared by Nain youth leader Sam:

What I love about the land, is it’s where my ancestors were and lived, who inspires me are my grandparents. They’re still here today but I’m proud [of] what they taught me. They always used to go on the land, we always go out on the land, the land is important to me because that’s where I want to be forever. I’m in the beautiful country of Nain, Labrador with all these beautiful people and weather

As he passionately speaks of his own perspectives and relationships to the land, he clearly understands how those perspectives have been shaped and framed by the familial, ancestral, and relational elements of learning he was able to gain as a young Inuk male, growing up in Nunatsiavut. He further adds:

There are so many things you can learn about, our ancestors, where they lived. I always wanted to have moments with elders to talk about how hard it was to be moved from Hebron, talk about how it was to live off the land.

As a way to visualize the relational themes identified by participants themselves and how these themes intimately connect them with their homeland, I developed a cyclical diagram (Figure 3, below), that captures the synergy of interconnection that make up Inuit epistemologies based in a dependence on land for sustenance. The diagram also reflects inter-generational knowledge transfer by illustrating the teachings of inter-dependence. Tamalik McGrath (2012) also points out how relationships are key to renewing Inuktitut epistemologies that depend on practices that are based on “the interaction of people” (p. 221).

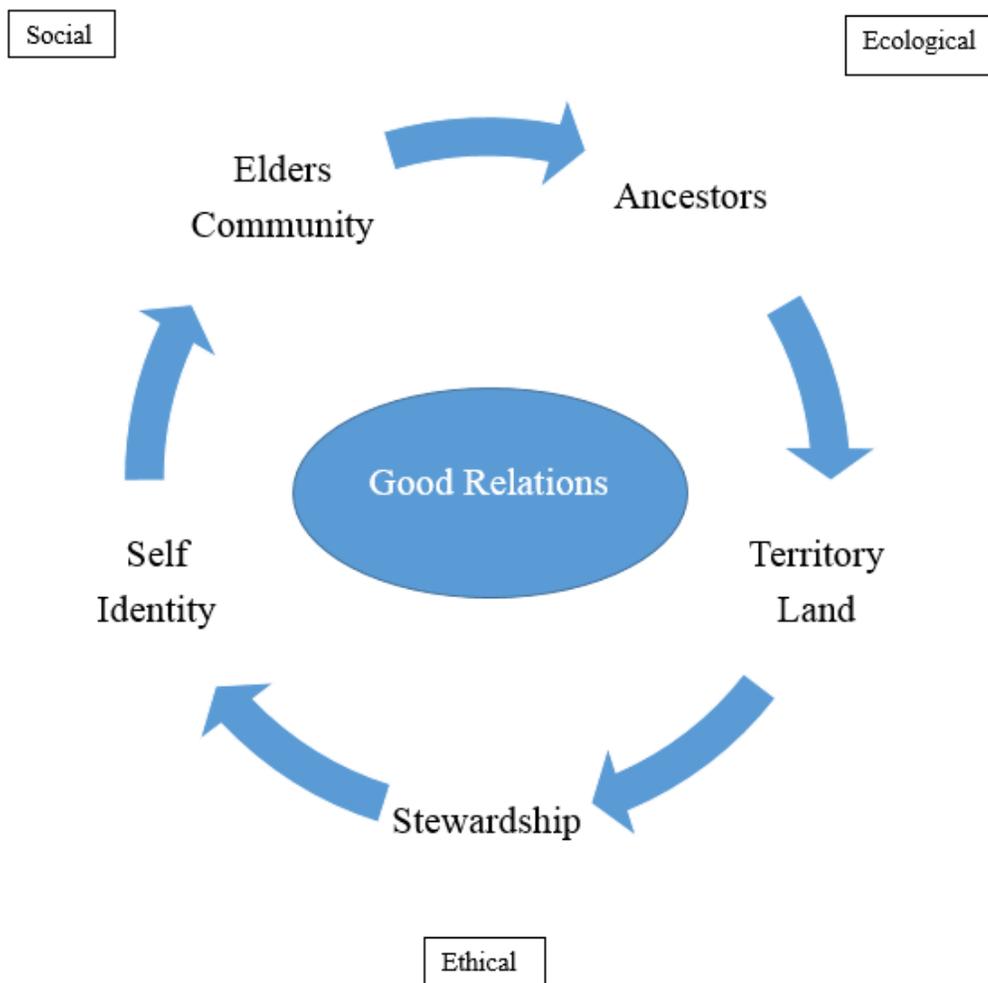


Figure 3. Maintaining “good” relations diagram

3.5 Adapting to Modernization

The final theme specific to understanding of land-based learning that emerged reflects a continually evolving culture that enables adaptation to a rapidly changing landscape and world. Having spent many decades now in close proximity to non-Inuit, many Inuit families speak about the usage of a combination of both traditional methods and modern technology such as GPS and written text books, to help navigate the land. Retired principal Emily demonstrates how using both modern and traditional methods advantages harvesters:

One thing my husband said is, whenever you're going off and going somewhere, always look back because when you're coming back that's when you're going to need to say, 'oh yes I can remember that tree, or a bump in the road there' one of the elders told them that, so that's another thing he pays attention to. Also, the book, *Our Footprints Are Everywhere*, my husband used that book, years and years ago trapping and trying to find trapping grounds, put the book in the grub box and took off and found the best trapping grounds, when I gave him the book, I was really excited because he said I took that all over the country, meaning in land in the country, now our son uses it all the time. He has photographic memory, I can't look at a map and say now I have to go around here because it's a good pond. Every time he goes to the cabin he takes the book with him, because it has stories and maps. Wonderful resource.

One of the benchmark features of Inuit culture is the ability to adapt and respond to changes as it continues to evolve and blend the strengths of the traditional and modern knowledge system together. This will enable Inuit to maintain independence and futurity. This is as long as forms of modern technology do not completely replace age-old systems of knowledge production. In order for Inuktitut language and knowledge systems to continually grow, they require on-going engagement and practice as previously stated (McGrath, 2012).

CHAPTER FOUR

The Benefits and Barriers to Land-based Learning in Nunatsiavut

4.1. Benefits to Land-Based Learning

Many benefits were implied in describing some of the specific characteristics of land-based learning in the previous chapter. This chapter expands further on land-based learning benefits for Inuit. As people of the land, Inuit identity, language, and cultural wisdom developed over generations as extensions of the land. As previously stated in Chapter 3, Nain harvester, Alex, illustrates how the land grounds his sense of identity, tradition, and sustenance: “Land-based knowledge is the foundation of my life, when Inuit talk about hunting, it includes everything, survival, family tradition, culture plus learning how to hunt and feed your family. Hunting is life.” Nurturing relationships with and on the land, re-situates Inuit within their element, which continues to foster Inuit leadership, tenacity, and resourcefulness. Land-based learning, as a foundation and basis for cultural knowledge production and renewal, actualizes agency and hones in and harnesses the natural wisdom and abilities of Inuit, while simultaneously shifting our frame of reference from deficit models to resiliency.

The land, often described as a protective factor by scholars, is a critical pathway for cultural knowledge resurgence that supports individuals and community (Cunsolo et al., 2013; Hirsch et al., 2016). These ideas were also reiterated by many of the participants I interviewed, supporting much of the current and emergent research on the benefits of land-based learning (Petrasek and MacDonald, 2014; Wexler, 2014). Focusing and drawing upon the pre-existing generational knowledge base, skillsets and strengths of Inuit, naturally engenders empowerment (Rowan, 2017; Tuck et al., 2016). As Inuit and

their epistemologies are re-positioned in direct relationship to their homelands, empowerment emerges on various levels, particularly as they relate to self and collective identity development, but also in caring for and honouring the land. Rowan's (2017) dissertation, "Thinking with Nunangat in Proposing Pedagogies for/with Inuit Early Childhood Education" cites Cummins (2014), who explains: "*Empowerment* can be defined as the *collaborative creation of power*. Instruction that fosters empowerment will typically connect with students' lives and validate their language, culture and intellectual resources" (p. 5, emphasis in original). All of the characteristics of land-based learning and skills described in the previous chapter (navigation, hunting, practice, embodiment, relationships) each require logic, reasoning, and intelligence that also provide pathways for well-being and the transferable skills continually needed to adapt in today's changing modern world (Watt-Cloutier, 2015).

Hirsch et al.'s (2016) research also demonstrates and supports this study's findings that Inuit youth and communities know what their needs are, and are increasingly asserting and articulating their desires to build on their cultural knowledge and social capital (p. 74–75). When I asked participants to describe their experiences in land-based youth programs, they became animated and elated to recall times spent building relationships and skills with community members on the land. Nain youth leader and participant, Sam, shared the following: "All the youth are much more interested in going off on the land, it takes a lot out of our mind, and keeping our tradition going, it's important to me because we all get together, we all discuss everything together." He echoes what many Inuit in Nunatsiavut who have spent their lives on and with their lands maintaining traditional harvesting activities, asserted: that the land fosters community cohesion. This offers further evidence that Inuit cultural knowledge, epistemologies, and

worldviews take form through relationships with the land. Whether it be strengthening familial and social relationships or providing the foundation for ethical stewardship, the land naturally promotes positive relations (Coulthard, 2015; Simpson, 2014). For instance, in Chapter 5, when Makkovik youth, Marie, spoke about gaining knowledge and skills from her grandmother, she describes her grandmother's skills with great admiration. She clearly hoped to emulate her, illustrating her respect and high regard for elders and knowledge holders. In addition, when asked about student progress in the land youth program he runs, community leader Ben, describes how youth are able to improve their self-concept by practicing cultural values of sharing and contributing to the collective:

For a lot of the youth, it's their only time to get out in [a] boat, their parents don't have boats and stuff and to see the seals that they skin. And get their hands dirty, I think they're proud of what they're doing. They take pride in what they're doing, when they bring back meat to seniors, sharing is part of the culture, we try to instill that into them, that it's a part of their culture.

The land organically reinforces positive relationships and provides an epistemological framework of relationality as explained by Moreton-Robinson (2017) in "Relationality: a key presupposition of an Indigenous social research paradigm:"

Relationality as a core epistemological dimension of Indigenous knowledge, gives rise to distinct forms of thought, often unconscious, informing the intellectual work that [...] offers a network of ideas for perception within which thought, communication and action occur. (p. 71).

She further explains that pedagogies of land, in supporting relationship-building, cultivate learning subjects, as opposed to the objective learners that are often privileged and encouraged by colonized education approaches that depend on disconnection from the

Earth. She reveals how notions of objectivity are based on the premise that learners ought to become separate and distinct from the land:

The detached subject, observing from a neutral position, does not just rely on a mind/body split to portend to its way of knowing it also requires being disconnected from the earth. This discursive separation from the living earth privileges the disconnected human-centred knowing subject within non-Indigenous research methodologies. (p. 71).

Moreton-Robinson's eloquent analysis summarizes how colonized forms of education and knowledge production are in distinct contradiction to Indigenous worldviews and epistemologies, which are informed by our relationships with each other and the land. Indigenous knowledge systems encourage a mind/body unification that is symbiotically connected to the web of life. By moving into our bodies and connecting with embodied forms of intelligence, we naturally tap into something larger than the mind, bigger than ourselves, connected and belonging to the earth and all of creation (Brach, 2017; Sawatzky, 2016). Tuck et al. (2016) also explain that the land as teacher offers heightened cosmological and metaphysical understandings that promote emotional, physical, and spiritual development (p. 8–9). All of these diverse worldviews offer a multiplicity of learning potential for students excluded from the formal education system, if learning spaces could only nourish and value more embodied and sensory learning. Centering Inuit worldviews and wisdom during the learning process also creates a culturally safe and congruent educational space, which is found to foster positive identity development linked to improved performance and academic achievement (Fryberg et al., 2013). When learners feel welcomed and a sense of belonging in learning spaces, this is shown to produce greater levels of trust, which in turn improves relationships and performance.

Land-based learning as a cultural resource also holds much potential in facilitating recovery and healing from colonial trauma. Trauma, at its fundamental root, stems from disconnection and dissociation from ourselves, our bodies, and our spirits (Bombay, 2014; Graveline, 1998). For Indigenous peoples, this disconnection has arisen from the violence of colonialism and capitalism that are built upon rupturing Indigenous people from their lands, and thus, themselves/ourselves. Now, a rapidly changing environment from decades of climate change, driven by global capitalism also poses additional threats to Indigenous lives and futurities, since we are often the most vulnerable populations to adverse land and weather changes (Cunsolo et al., 2017; Hirsch et al., 2016; Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association, 2007). Land-based practices and activities, increasingly implemented in Inuit health and social programs offered by Nunatsiavut's Department of Health and Social Development, support reconnections to self and the body, improving mental health, well-being and "adaptive capacity" to constant environmental changes (Hirsch et al., 2016, p.64). The youth program, *Going Off, Growing Strong*, was implemented as a response to a community crisis that put youth lives and health at risk (Cunsolo et al., 2015; Hirsch et al., 2016). When I spoke with a youth land program leader in the same community, she shared that,

When they [youth] started the program, there was a crisis going on in town there was a lot of suicide, so it started mainly for the youth who are at risk. The program is about teaching the youth about the land and communicating with the Elders and the community for mainly getting together with Elders and learning about culture.

She also said that the youth land program helped reduce feelings of isolation, built connections and communication skills:

The biggest thing I see in them is they all know that they're not alone, so if we have youth come in they feel they're not alone with their problems or stuff that's going on in their life. It's always good to see them communicating, getting along.

As I spoke with a number of Nunatsiavut youth, they reflected the findings that being on the land supports one's mental health. Nain youth leader, Mandy added that,

I think it [the land] contributes to my mental health, like I could go on the land, like if I'm in a boat, I'll close my eyes and sit there and feel the wind in my hair, it's so calming, and I think the more you do it, and relax, it contributes to my overall mental health.

This statement, shared by a perceptive Inuk youth, clearly demonstrates how being on the land promotes the inhabitation of the body through awakening the senses. Research often demonstrates that connecting with ourselves through the body provides healing in many aspects. In Petrasek MacDonald's (2014) outstanding research, *From the Minds of Youth: Exploring Inuit Resilience in Nunatsiavut*, her findings provide further evidence that the land provides a vital pathway to overall well-being: "Hunting and spending time out on the land [increases] belief in self, self-reliance, mindfulness and awareness of the consequences of one's actions, self-confidence, and sense of purpose." (p. 23). She further developed this table to show additional examples of how land-based activities fosters wellbeing.

Table 6c: Causal pathways identified for protective factors around culture including practicing traditional activities and having a positive ethnic identity.

Protective Factor	Causal Pathway	First Author
Learning and practicing culture (e.g. Traditional practices and subsistence activities)	Strengthens self-esteem, ethnic identity, and self-regulation skills. Sharing cultural knowledge enhances in-group cohesiveness and support through experience of shared meaning-making.	
	Provides an opportunity to participate in the passing down of traditional knowledge and cultural values thus creating feeling of keeping culture alive. Enhances relationships between youth and the land and between youth and their families. Facilitates and creates context for important mentoring relationships and connection to older generations leading to youth feeling supported. Promotes healthy living, facilitates involvement and creates opportunities for sharing.	Bals (2010, 2011a)
	Gain new skills (e.g. hunting, camping, riding) and knowledge. Develops sense of ethnic pride. Provides a meaningful way for youth to contribute and give back to the community, earn respect for skills, and feel appreciation from community (e.g. through sharing kill).	Decou (2013)
	Subsistence skills demonstrate strength and survival and are associated with ability to respond and to be resilient in face of hardship. Being out on the land requires youth to act selflessly, be responsible and less petty, show respect, rely on others, and distinguish between what is essential vs. trivial. Meaningful engagement in traditional activities also contributes to sense of purpose, feeling more self efficacious, and staying busy. Traditional activities associated with fulfillment, sense of calm, and sense of being special. Shows cultural continuity with one's heritage and connects youth to sense of how life used to be. Provides time with parents to learn skills and how to be in the world.	Wexler (2013)
	Ability to practice culture is source of pride and well-being.	Kral (2011)

Figure 4. Protective factors (Petrasek MacDonald, 2014)

One last benefit to land-based learning explicitly discussed by participants were transferrable life skills. All of these positive skills and capacities naturally generate skills that influence many other areas of life, including school, family and work life. Tamalik McGrath (2012) in sharing elder Aupilaarjuk’s Inuktitut framework, as previously outlined in chapters two and three, includes the notion of productivity that can be applied in both traditional and contemporary economies:

niquainnarniq: livelihood, productivity. This means ‘always having meat’ ... Aupilaarjuk said that he was given a good foundation of knowledge, skills and attitudes to participate in the meat economy, but in today’s world he says that knowledge, skills and attitudes for participating in the money economy are also required ... They are similar, and skills in each system are required.... So *niquainnarniq* relates to all aspects of livelihood or productivity (p.201-2).

A few participants were clearly thinking in terms of the economic use of land-based learning. For example, community leader Ben explains how youth gain many valuable skills designed to facilitate the acquisition of their high school graduation credit hours and their transition into the workforce.

The [youth in the land program] get 30 credit hours with us, in their life skills to pass Grade 12, all [youth] involved with the program, have no problem getting 30 hours with us. These skills are good for firearms safety, GPS skills, map and compass skills, stoves and lanterns training. Community-based training with us, includes serving lunches to seniors, story-telling, wood cutting for seniors. On Valentine's day and special occasions, we make cards, patrol to seniors and take them out, all counting towards getting 30 hours, they have 2 years to get 30 hours.

Community harvester, Alex also discusses how the land develops positive character skills, such as discipline and endurance needed in an ever-changing society.

Going off gives, judging from my own example, it gives youth drive, focus, foundation. If you can't do anything else, I mean you can go hunting, it's healing, when you're out there, you're not thinking about much else, besides being out there. You don't think about problems, and I think those traditional ways of thinking and those traditional practices carry over into the other life, schooling, trying to get a job, gives you discipline, that kind of thing.

Inuit culture promoting adaptive survival, depended on developing complex technical skills that required strong personal awareness, attention to detail and self-regulation.

Being able to maintain all of these skills will continue to ensure that Inuit preserve their greatest strengths, while continuing to live in some of the greatest changes of our time.

4.2. Barriers to Land-Based Learning

In answering the final research question of this study: What are the barriers to land-based learning? I expand now on the barriers that Inuit in Nunatsiavut face when engaging in

land-based activities and learning. Many of the barriers that exist to getting out on the land and renewing land-based knowledge impacted participants emotional and physical well-being greatly. In many ways, this theme received much greater attention than the previous focus on its benefits, since the latter overlapped somewhat with the themes of the previous chapter.

4.2.1 Access to Land and Knowledge

Inuit face many barriers in maintaining their land-based teachings and practices especially as it pertains to the implementation of Inuit knowledge into colonized schooling systems. Scholars such as McGregor (2010) and Watt-Cloutier (2015), have discussed the incredible obstacles that hinder efforts at integrating Inuit knowledge, including land-based teachings, into classrooms. My primary focus here, however, is to convey the particular challenges raised by the participants themselves, which did not always necessarily focus specifically on schooling. Many participants discussed their challenges in continuing land-based practices in terms of access. For our purposes, one can understand accessibility to mean the qualities of being able to reach something, or “the right or opportunity to use or benefit from something” (Oxford, 2017). In this sense, the idea of accessibility is taken up here to include both material and immaterial land-based practices and learning. This also connects to elder Aupilaarjuk, and Tamalik McGrath’s (2012) Inuktitut framework that includes accessibility to land as central to learning Inuit epistemological concepts:

Sanniniqarajarniq inuunivut aturnikkut which means vitality through engagement or practice. The notion of practice or engagement implies *access* and requires *agency* in relation to homeland, language, living histories and culture/ceremony. If individuals have limited access to their homeland or to their elders and others to

support their knowledge [...] the vitality offered through time-tested ways of being is also diminished. Agency is required to improve access. (p.222, emphasis in original)

Conversely, access to the land is at the centre of any efforts at *Sanniniqarajarniq inuunivut aturnikkut*. Settler arrival in the region, as with many Indigenous lands and territories in what is now generally known as Canada, came with an accompanied sense of entitlement to the land and procurement of property, which was a foreign concept to Inuit (Mackey; 2016; Price, 2007). This perceived entitlement to land and resources resulted in the dispossession of Inuit from their homelands, undermining their ability to access land-based knowledge physically, intellectually, and spiritually (Tuck and McKenzie, 2016). This land theft compounded by cultural genocide has produced structured poverty and other social problems that continue to reverberate today (TRC, 2015). Many participants emphasized their inability to access land as directly related to the histories of displacement and dispossession in the territory, which have led to a lack of financial means, mobility and/or resources required to get to desirable harvesting locations.

4.2.2 Lack of Resources and Transportation Impacts Mobility

Nunatsiavut is a large, remote territory that faces harsh sub-arctic conditions. There are no roads to get to Nunatsiavut communities, which makes travel through the territory difficult. Added to the complexity of travel is the extreme cost of fuel and vehicles, all of which are made worse by the intergenerational forms of poverty that are a result of colonialism in the region (Hirsch et al., 2016). Elder and Grandmother Amelia illustrates current struggles to access the land: “I just want to go back [on the land], but I got no way

to go north, no speed boat or nothing to go back.” She then expresses her desire for her grandchildren to be able to access the land, but she remains frustrated at her inability to provide the means for her family, which causes further cumulative disruptions to intergenerational knowledge transmission:

I want them [grandchildren] to grow up out, but we don't have [a] speedboat or camping gear, or tents, we don't have anything. There are people who helps kids to go off hunting to learn language, but I don't know.

Elder Amelia understands and is aware of potential support and land-based programming available in the community, but implies that she does not know how to access them or who to ask about how her grandchildren can participate in programming, indicating feelings of social isolation or fear of asking for support. Mother and community member Kaleigh speaks about lack of mobility as a primary barrier that prevented her from accessing land-based activities while growing up:

No, [I] didn't get to go off much. Mostly went when I was younger, mostly went off with the [land-based program], it was the only time I had a chance, my mom was a single parent and she didn't have a ski-doo.

Community member Tom echoes this specific barrier around transportation: “I haven't been off on ski-doo for maybe 3 or 4 years now, but usually in summer we do a lot of fishing around close to here.” Clearly, Tom’s lack of mobility impacts his access to harvesting activities, particularly during the long winter months.

Besides not having direct access to the means of transportation, Tori speaks about how the limited number of locally trained guides and mentors available in each community also impacts access to land: “It was so hard to get guides, hard to get drivers for boats, retreat assistance, I couldn't travel to each community to do the retreat so had to

get retreat assistance it was really hard.” While there may be knowledgeable land guides available in communities, they may not have specific accreditation, or lack specific training needed, or may simply not be connected to the organizations that require guides. Besides poverty and a lack of guides, another emerging barrier to transportation in the region is climate change.

An increasing number of studies in the north are showing that climate change is rapidly transforming weather patterns creating unpredictable sea ice conditions making safety and travel increasingly dangerous and challenging to navigate (Cunsolo et al., 2014). Elder Luke recalls the days when it was easier to travel during warmer season:

In those days, it used to be warm, there was no bad weather, before climate change before it came. We were lucky to have smooth sea, no sea on, smooth all the way up early in the summer, maybe mid-July that’s when we start going up

Artist Tom observes how the climate is increasingly warming in the region:

I hear a lot of people talking and I know that things are changing a lot these days because of climate change. Right now, it’s only February, usually in the past, when I was a kid, this time of year would be really cold, February and March and now it’s warmer now than it usually is, then gets warmer a lot faster.

Overall, limited mobility through a lack of transportation (and at times, a lack of drivers and guides), brought about by systematic poverty and at times, climate change, is a significant barrier to land-based learning among participants.

4.2.3. Schooling and Institutional Funding/Insurance concerns

Having worked within the public school system, I understand many of the systemic challenges that exist within the public educational system, particularly as they relate to

outdoor field trips. There are many policy, safety and procedural concerns that need to be considered when taking children outside of schools. From my experience, the school's primary concern is for the safety of children, and not being able to guarantee their safety tends to be an insurance issue, which was mentioned by several participants. Retired

Principal Eileen:

The issue of insurance is when you're taking kids out on a school trip, we have to make sure nobody gets hurt, if someone gets hurt that's going to be a liability, it's definitely a drawback or hindrance.

In Makkovik, land-based program co-ordinator Tori, also faced similar issues when planning her outings:

before they left they had to sign consent forms, insurance issues, but you have to have really good instructors who are very knowledgeable of land, even for machines, ski-doo's if something should happen, should be able to fix them. In Hopedale, for the women's retreat one of the motors busted and they had to tow boat back and get a new boat and go again, so even knowing what to do in an event.

She also explained that there was a boat mechanical issue on one of her trips and required additional assistance from local community members who were knowledgeable in boat maintenance.

One participant also referred to how Inuit land-based knowledge may not be a good 'fit' into the existing schooling system due to colonized education's incommensurability with Inuit epistemologies, pedagogies and ontologies. Tamalik McGrath also mentions that when drawing upon Inuit epistemologies and pedagogies, in any setting, this requires a highly ethical approach, which would preferably come from Inuit themselves, as they bring a lifetime of cultural teachings and protocols. Having Inuit

teachers is not always possible in the school system, as Inuit teachers are limited in Nunatsiavut. Community hunter, Alex talks about the tensions with institutionalizing land based knowledge

That's funny, see like maybe land-based knowledge doesn't fit into school curriculum blue print, so maybe we should be asking how do we fit school curriculum into Land based Knowledge? It's kind of funny, you can read so much about learning in a book in school, but that's only going to get you so far, like when you're out there, when it gets cold, how you gonna get used to the cold, the elements, when you're in a storm, your thinking changes, when you're caught in a white-out or something. You can't read that stuff in a book, that's tricky one eh, I think the only way to teach land-based knowledge is to actually take the time to bring kids out on the land, whether that would be a class, that would've been awesome if we could've had that in school, whether that would've been a whole class for half the day or something. I know I sat for days in the classroom looking out the window. It used to be good to go out with my old man used to be taking me out of school to go hunting.

He is referring to a core Inuktitut theoretical principle: “sannginiqarajarniq inuunivut aturnikkut,” which is to renew knowledge through practice and engagement. Alex highlights how land-based knowledge is best learned through experience on the land, rather than in classrooms and through books (see also, McGrath, 2012, p.221).

4.2.4. Generational Knowledge Gaps

Moravian missionary's two hundred and fifty plus year settlement in Nunatsiavut coupled with the nation state's colonial project of cultural repression in the region, caused a dramatic decline in Inuktitut language usage and land-based practices. This long and extensive European presence continues to impact cultural recovery efforts today as told by Grandmother and elder Amelia:

I tried to learn my grandchildren, no good, I tries teach them talk Inuktitut, they come home speaking English, it can't come out, too much English, something

stuck in there. They have Inuktitut [class] but no words out of their mouth. It hurts me eh.

As this was shared with me, she expressed deep hurt and sadness, as she seemed to feel helpless against the dominant English language used in Nunatsiavut classrooms.

Parent, Kaleigh also alludes to the enduring remnants of colonial abuse and oppression felt by her family that has resulted in shame, confusion and a lack of motivation to try and speak the language, and continue to pass down traditional language and knowledge:

My uncle Hector moved away he used to drink all the time, he was crying one day. He started saying things in Inuk, he said you didn't understand eh. I said no, he said when I was growing up, my dad used to beat me up because I never used to speak Inuk enough, and then when I was going to school I used to get slapped on hands because I was speaking Inuk too much, so I was confused, I didn't know if I should speak Inuk or English. I never used to speak at all. He showed me scars of when he used to get beat up of when he was speaking Inuk and trying to speak English. If you speak Inuk then you get slapped on the hands.

Tom also grew up in the generation where traditional knowledge and language were looked down upon as he shared this story of language suppression:

I used to be ashamed to speak Inuktitut when I was a kid, so I mainly spoke English. It wasn't until I went to university when I took French, and when we were in the classroom, my French professor asked me to say something in my language, I said a few words, what I knew. He said 'hey he's trilingual', I said 'I'm not trilingual I hardly speak my language, I know a few words' and it was then I wanted to learn to speak my language. I realized how important it was for me to learn to speak my language. When I came home during break I tried to learn more and more and I consider myself 90% fluent.

There is still much residual shame and internalized oppression felt by Inuit, stemming from the long European presence in Nunatsiavut. With a renewed sense of Inuktitut knowledge renewal and practice however, I believe these challenges can be overcome with more time and space committed to increasing language use that can also be engaged

while learning on and with the land. In a conversation with Tamalik, she states that “our voices will find what our bodies know” (personal communication, 2017).

CONCLUSION

This exploratory research study set out to examine notions of culture and cultural knowledge in relation to the land, specifically from the perspectives of Nunatsiavut Inuit. It did so in order to reclaim and restore traditional knowledge, worldviews, and practices suppressed by colonialism. The driving force of this study has been a commitment to focus on community-level perceptions of cultural learning to promote agency and self-determination. Focusing on community level perceptions privileges the voices of Inuit, who have a right to an education espoused in their values and knowledge, which would improve community well-being. This research has shared the voices of Nunatsiavut Inuit who were once silenced, and made visible histories that have been erased. This helps to shift current frames of reference from deficit models to more empowering narratives based in Inuit futurity.

Historical physical removal from the land, coupled with the cultural repression of languages and values that arise from the land, have undermined social well-being and disrupted balance and harmony, though Inuit have always strived to persevere. The current education system, operated by school boards often administered in the south, have resulted in a lack of local Inuit control and a cultural incongruence that does not reflect Inuit culture and values, while also continuing to displace Inuit from the land and the forms of knowledge generated from their lands. All of these barriers continue to place Indigenous peoples at risk for the perpetuation of generational trauma as a result of disconnections from their lands and themselves, thus ensuring the reproduction of colonialism through state dependence. Social, health, and educational inequities in Inuit nunangat cannot be improved without seeking meaningful dialogue on what education means from Inuit communities who are receiving those services.

Theoretically, I have drawn upon Inuktitut theorists, elder Aupilaaruk, Tamalik McGrath and Jackie Price, who have built the foundation for my own analysis. In accordance with these theorists, I contend that increased epistemological space is required in order for Inuktitut knowledge to grow and thrive in eastern Canada and more specifically in Nunatsiavut, in a culturally safe and good way. This space is crucial for Inuit to continue to rebuild, restore, and renew land-based learning and knowledge. For decades, Inuit have been asserting their desires for increased cultural models of education that include land-based knowledge and practices. I have heard from many Nunatsiavummiut who say that cultural learning means being able to experience and “learn the land” through intergenerational transmission facilitated by observation, hands-on practice, and experience. This study supports ongoing research and anecdotal evidence that the land provides a foundation for well-being, healing, and community cohesion. Indigenous cultures hold values of holism, interconnectedness, and relationships that were taught on the land reinforcing these values (Kovach, 2009; Sawatzky, 2016).

Finally, I would like to conclude with my own personal storytelling voice by ending with the metaphor of the “white-out” storm used in the beginning. One of the participants, elder Luke, shared a story of how he had once survived a storm by building a shelter iglu. He shared how he passes on cultural teachings to his son:

We teach our kids today with respect, with patience, we don't shout. You tell them calmly...with kind attitude, friendliness, teach kids how to make iglu with respect.... When I'm gone, he will make them himself, he learned from me, which I learned from my father. It gave me more life in my heart to say I will do it again.

The irony of this learning process was that I have had to use Eurocentric methods, such as reading and writing in the English language to help convey participant stories of their

land-based knowledge and learning. Submitting this written work (a small portion of the learning and understanding associated with my degree) in this manner can only convey so much knowledge using the English language (McGrath, 2012). Nunatsiavummiut have emphasized the importance of cultural learning by doing, practice, and hands-on experience, which was also affirmed as one of the core Inuktitut theoretical frameworks. I also hope to build more of my own practice in land-based and language learning in the near future. I have, however, been privileged to hear these stories that have been entrusted with me to share with larger audiences. Participants have shared these stories with the sincere hope that the current education system may be better informed of what the Inuit community perceives as important cultural learning to help produce capable Inuit people. This would potentially improve future educational experiences for Inuit learners, as they come to remember who they are from those that have learned age-old skills from Inuit leaders, knowledge holders, elders, and others that came before them.

This study represents one element of this work, and is just the very tip of a large portion of an iceberg. However, if I must attempt to explain in words how the other elements of my learning impacted me, I would say that this work has been a process of waking up to the power of the land, and its ability to heal even the deepest forms of trauma, through re-connecting back to the self and all of creation. Along with many Inuit in our communities, I too, have personally lived through and survived colonial trauma, that includes language loss, family kinship severance, suicide, high degrees of cultural identity loss, violence, and substance abuse. The land has taught me that it is a pathway to our deepest true nature within. Its wholeness, vitality, ability to regenerate, and heal have facilitated transformational change. The land-as-teacher has guided the process of healing many of those losses. Listening and opening my heart to the earth's collective

consciousness and wholeness has awakened me to an expanded perspective in life, and has the potential to provide the same to anyone willing to embark on this path.

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Appendix A Poem

This subversive poem was inspired by Abraham Ulrikab's story⁸, a Labrador Inuk who was taken to Europe to be placed in zoos with his family in the late 1800s for European entertainment. This was also written as my response to the pervasive southern and academic colonial gaze of Inuit. As a form of "talking back to the academy" this creative writing allowed me to recognize how internalized colonialism trapped me, which then enabled me to move beyond concerns of writing and researching for the academy.

⁸ Watch Abraham Ulrikab's story: "Trapped in a Human Zoo" on CBC's The Nature of Things. <http://www.cbc.ca/natureofthings/episodes/trapped-in-a-human-zoo>

Unbecoming⁹: de-colonizing the settler gaze

Not your typical eskimo
Not your idealistic, fur wearing, raw meat eating, sculpture making, snow building
exotic version of a sexy savage.
I am not your token eskimo or inuk
I do not exist to satisfy your perpetual curiosities
nor your insatiable settler consumption
nor for your viewing pleasure
Can you feel the chill of ice and snow flowing through my veins
invading your space this time
Continual contention with the performative display of my existence
for your learning
for your entertainment
objectification of my cultural practices, losses, despair
and subsequent uprising does not perform for your eyes
nor your understanding
I exist outside of your perception of me
taking my power back
mysterious personalities cannot be contained
within your compartmentalized boxed projections
my ethnographic refusal bound by generations
of living histories, living stories,
whisper secrets only I can hear
we protect the sacred, we preserve, we persist for and among ourselves
I will share what I want to share with you
These walls or degrees do not define or validate me

⁹ Title derived from Tuck (2014).

Appendix B
Participant Invitation Letter

Illiniavugut Nunami- Inuit student learning journeys
SMU REB #
Investigators: Diane Obed & Darryl Leroux
Department of Atlantic Canada Studies
Saint Mary's University, 923 Robie St. Halifax, NS B3H 3C3

Research Purpose:

As part of Ms. Obed's research at Saint Mary's University, she is gathering cultural understandings and knowledge of the land, language and cultural strengths that may have been part of your learning both in and outside of school. This research is also a part of the Nunatsiavut Government and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami's goals to develop educational materials and/or reports that may potentially help local schools better incorporate Inuit cultural and land based learning. The location sites for the research will take place in Nain and Makkovik, Nunatsiavut and Arviat, Nunavut.

The eligibility criteria are local youth (13-18), adults, elders, hunters, tour guides, land stewards, and /or people who have participated in land-based learning programs or cultural programs. The proposed time commitment is during one week in February for Nain and March 2017 for Makkovik for approximately one to one and a half hours. This is a one-time event and there will be no more sessions beyond the initial interview and focus groups. Participants can choose either a) an individual interview b) and/or focus group session. Option A, B or both. Compensation will be provided in the form of a \$20 foodland or gas gift certificate.

For more information on how to participate in this project please contact:

Diane Obed
Email: dianeobed@hotmail.com

Appendix C
Participant Consent form

Iliniavugut Nunami: Inuit student learning journeys
Interview consent form
Investigator: Diane Obed
Saint Mary's University, 923 Robie Street, Halifax, NS B3H 3C3

Background Information

My name is Diane Obed I am a graduate student at Saint Mary's University. As part of my master's thesis I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Darryl Leroux, an Associate Professor of Atlantic Canada Studies. This research project aims to gather information about the land, our relationship to the land as well as land-based educational initiatives. More specifically, this study seeks to explore how land-based learning and cultural knowledge may benefit students in Nunatsiavut and Nunavut schools and possibly in other northern communities. This research is funded by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Nunatsiavut Government, both of whom have provided support with recruitment and outreach.

We are inviting you to participate in this study due to your involvement in land-based education. Your participation is completely voluntary and in no way required. The choice not to participate in this research project will have no negative consequences for you.

All interviews will take place in English, unless otherwise indicated. You must also be above the age of 16 to consent to participate in this research project. To participate, you must meet these requirements. Interviews will take place at a location, in Nain, Makkovik, or Arviat. As part of this study, participants will be asked a variety of questions in an interview, with the potential of an optional sharing circle. These questions will explore your experiences with land-based education. The interview will not take more than an hour-and-a-half.

The potential benefits of this research are their potential for school learning changes, particularly as it relates to educational policy to reflect more Inuit-centred approaches. We will offer you a \$20 gift card for your participation. There are small risks associated with the research. The potential risks include emotional risks from talking about spiritual matters. If a question or topic comes up in discussion that you would rather not speak about you can skip that topic or decide not to comment on it. The researcher will never share names or identifying information. The research produced will speak more of a generalized experience and less of individual stories. There is always risk of a participant being recognized through seemingly anonymous data once the research is published. All transcribed information will be anonymized and connected with aliases. The researchers will take care to avoid a break in anonymity and will ensure that every participant understands fully the importance of confidentiality.

Should you choose to participate in the study, you will be kept updated at every step of the research process. You are free to quit the research study at any time without penalty. If you choose to quit the research and cancel your informed consent you can contact Diane Obed at the contact information above. The removal of oneself from the study also removes data collected from that individual from the study. This data will also be destroyed. You are allowed to quit at any time during the research for any reason, without any consequence.

The interview transcripts will only be accessible to the two researchers. The Research Ethics Board at Saint Mary's University may have access to the research for ethical reasons so that you are protected. No other person outside of those listed will have access to what you have said. The interviews will be recorded on a digital recorder. Data collected will then be stored on a USB stick and locked in Dr. Leroux's office when not in use. The data will not be used for future research without your renewed consent. Any data or quotations included in the final research will be fully anonymized.

Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this study, we plan on sharing the information with our Inuit community partners in the form of a research report. The research is set to be finished April 2018. The final report will be sent to you, should you become a participant, so that you have access to the study results. You can receive the report through email, mail, or you can opt out of receiving it altogether. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions or concerns about ethical matters, you may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at ethics@smu.ca or at 902-420-5728.

If you choose to participate in this study, please contact Diane Obed to discuss your understanding of the research project and any inquiries you may have before signing your informed consent. The primary researcher will contact all participants individually at the end of the research to provide information on how to access the project's findings.

Informed Consent

I understand what this study is about, I understand the risks and benefits, and understand that by consenting I agree to take part in this research study and do not waive any rights to take up legal activity in the event of research-related harm.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can end my participation at any time without penalty.

I have had enough time to think about the research study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I consent to having any photos I share included in reports and/or presentations.

I consent to being audio recorded under the conditions read and explained to me.

I consent to any direct quotations from my interview being used in the final research paper without revealing my identity.

I consent to notes being taken during and after my interview under the conditions read and explained to me.

I agree that signing below gives informed consent to be a research participant in the research study, "Illiniavugut Nunami: Inuit student learning journeys."

Participant Signature : _____

Name (Printed): _____

Date : _____
(Day/Month/Year)

Researcher Signature : _____

Name (Printed): _____

*Please keep one copy of this form for your own records

Appendix D Interview Guide

1. Please tell me about yourself and what you feel comfortable sharing.
2. Do you get to go off much? How often?
3. Have you participated in or taken part in any “formal” land-based programs? (*Note - By formal I mean any land-based programs that were offered through some kind of organization such as a school, an after-school program, or at a community centre.*)
 - a- *If yes*, can you tell me about it and your experience? What are some cultural or community specific land-based teachings you have come to understand and how have they influenced you? Do they continued to have importance in your life?
 - b- *If no*, were you ever presented with the opportunity to participate in a land-based program? If you had the opportunity, what prevented you from taking part?
4. Have you participated in or taken part in any “informal” land-based learning activities and/or learning? (*Note – By informal I mean any land-based learning, teaching, and/or education that happens in spaces outside of programming offered through organizations – such as from elders, knowledge holders, trappers, guides, family, friends, etc.*)
 - a- *If yes*, can you tell me about it and your experience? What are some cultural or community specific land-based teachings you have come to understand and how have they influenced you? Do they continued to have importance in your life?
 - b- *If no*, were you ever presented with the opportunity to participate in a land-based program? If you had the opportunity, what prevented you from taking part?
5. What types of activities do you do? Hunting, Fishing, berry picking, medicinal knowledge, trapping, cabin?
6. Who helps or helped you learn to do these activities?
7. How did they teach you this knowledge? How is knowledge passed down?
 - a. *If yes to 3 or 4*, have you been taught about understanding the landscape - whether it be the weather, snow, ice, ocean, rocks, animals, if so, how? Do you relate to and connect with the land? Do you feel that it offers lessons and teachings for you in your life?
If yes to 3 and 4, were there any differences in the experiences you had in land-based learning through informal versus through formal programming? What are the benefits of each? What are the drawbacks?
8. Are you an Inuktitut language speaker? How does speaking Inuktitut relate to land-based programming?
9. Are there currently any land-based learning tools, images or stories being offered in schools and/or through any other type of “formal” land-based learning opportunities in your community?

a- If yes, what are some cultural or community specific land-based teachings youth learn and how do they influence youth? Do you think they are relevant in children's and student's lives today? Do you think it is useful to offer this type of programming?

10. Are there currently any “non-formal” opportunities for youth to learn teachings about the land from hunters, family, friends, elders, land stewards/guides? If yes, what are some cultural or community specific land-based teachings youth learn and how do they influence youth? Are they relevant in children's and student's lives? Do you think it is useful for children and youth to have these informal opportunities for learning land-based teachings?