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**Photographic Memory:
Inuit Representation in the Work of Peter Pitseolak**

Jonathan Wise

**A Thesis
in
the Department
of
Art History**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts at
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ABSTRACT

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Jonathan Wise

This thesis examines the photographs of Inuit historian, camp leader and pioneer artist Peter Pitseolak (1902-1973) whose work in and around the community of Cape Dorset on the southwest coast of Baffin Island dates from the early 1940's until his death. Pitseolak's work coincided with a period of great turmoil and cultural upheaval for the Inuit. He spent much of his life documenting elements of traditional culture—through drawings, paintings, sound recordings, and a significant collection of photographs. This thesis examines Pitseolak's work within a number of critical frameworks, contextualizing it within the development of Western formations of representing the Inuit, from first impressions in painting and drawing, to early conventions established in Arctic photography. Through a contemporary theoretical lens, I discuss ways in which Pitseolak's images may be read through these earlier paradigms, as cultural codes implicating the Inuit as *Other*. In this way, Pitseolak's photographs become complex configurations of self-identity, confronting models of representation as they disrupt a relationship between observer and subject. During his lifetime, Peter Pitseolak recognized the predicament of Inuit culture against the encroachments of Western influence, yet he transcended *Eskimo* stereotypes and strove to retain the important events of his own life and of those around him.

To Tania, Lily and Jack with love.
And in memory of Albert Wise.

'Jeg er hos dig'

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*J.W.
Aylmer, Quebec*

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INTRODUCTION

The Reciprocity of Vision

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps, instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished historical fact we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.

Stuart Hall, Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities (1997)

There is a constant longing to understand the relationship between others and ourselves. This desire is recalled in the reciprocal nature of vision and observation—we may see and be seen. The *photograph*, on the other hand, is singularly an image of what we may, or may not, know to be true. It is a static object detached in both time and place. There can be no objective 'truth' with the photographic image for the photographer has necessarily selected a line of sight, a position from which to render a single perspective over innumerable others. Similarly, the relationship between an image and its reader cannot be easily aligned through such subjective matrices, therefore an appreciation of photography relies upon a viewer's experience and knowledge, rather than upon perception alone. The complexities of cultural identity similarly exceed and confound the structure of photographic representation. Although the photograph may appear to prove our existence at a given point in time, it simultaneously demonstrates the impossibility of framing our multiple and fragmented selves. This thesis examines such perspectives within the work of Peter Pitseolak (Fig. 1), the first native of Baffin Island to produce a significant collection of photographs, and further explores issues of cultural identification that emerge from a history of representing the Inuit of Canada's Eastern Arctic.

There are temptations to accept photography as a direct representation of objects, people, places and things. Failing this there is an even more speculative temptation to frame photography within an organized structure, providing both context and precedent with which to make sense of

the dynamics of the image itself. Similar attempts to construct a coherent argument around the ineffable qualities of cultural identity are equally ambitious, but subject to limitation. Nevertheless, this thesis addresses Pitseolak's photographs within a historical context of representing the Inuit and a variety of theoretical perspectives deployed in art history, visual anthropology and literary studies. I posit that Pitseolak's photographs signify an important dichotomy between 'Western' and Native perceptions of Inuit identity.¹ In this thesis I investigate ways in which *representation* itself has been exploited as a means of identifying and designating difference between the 'West' and the Arctic. I examine the inherent problems and contradictions posed by such strategies through their extension and subversion in Pitseolak's work. Moreover, the subtle and complex interventions suggested by his photographs are fundamentally implicated in dominant stereotypes because they too draw upon Southern conventions, depicting elements of traditional Inuit life within a paradigm of authenticity understood as exotic, foreign, and *Other* to the dominant centre of Canadian society. Essentially, this thesis examines the ways in which Pitseolak took up the subject position of a colonized *Other*, yet worked to undermine that situation through a particular artistic practice. I have structured my approach around three questions:

- 1) What are the dominant historical paradigms of representing the Inuit and Arctic?
- 2) How is Peter Pitseolak's work contextualized by these historical formations?
- 3) Did Pitseolak merely extend 'Western' conventions, or did he also subvert them?

Through these questions and an examination of the 'politics of representation', I explore concepts of Inuit cultural experience and emergent identities that are revealed through Pitseolak's life and work. Furthermore, I examine the extent to which Pitseolak's visual and

¹ The Arctic and Inuit have always been a part of Western culture. Nevertheless, a distinction must be made between perspectives based on early European traditions and those of indigenous people themselves. I have distinguished this implication throughout using 'Western'.

textual legacies unfold complex layers of meaning through which subtle appearances of cultural identity may be exposed that have historically remained hidden or obscured. I have attempted to answer these questions by drawing upon important debates in photographic theory, especially those that have reconfigured ‘the image’ within formulations of the *Other* and *différance*.²

In examining the critical work of Stuart Hall, James Clifford, and Homi K. Bhabha, my analysis of representing the Inuit reflects contemporary cultural criticism influenced by analyses of textuality, discourse, and power. In investigating Pitseolak’s work I have considered those practices by which representations of Inuit people have been historically produced, circulated, received, and interpreted by ‘Western’ publics. Through the influential critical formulations of writers such as Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes my argument acknowledges that all representations—especially those of indigenous or minority peoples—contain explicit political implications that relate to dominant racial hierarchies and lexical formations.

This thesis deals with sensitive issues around Inuit cultural ethnicity in relation to which my own motivations and intentions need to be addressed. I am *not* Inuit. For the most part my perception has been a Southern academic one regarding the North. I did not personally know Peter Pitseolak, although I have visited the community of Cape Dorset on Baffin Island where he lived and where many of his photographs were taken. In this paper I have been primarily interested in examining the complex and overlapping theoretical and cultural issues that emerge from Pitseolak’s photographs, and am, in this respect, compelled and inspired by Stuart Hall,

² In Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory, the *Other* generally represents everyone and everything the subject is not. Linked to linguistic acquisition, for Lacan the polysemic concept of the *Other* paralleled the ability to distinguish between ‘I’ and ‘you’, thus mirroring a crucial stage in the development of social identity. In Jacques Derrida’s philosophy, *différance* is an inexorably ambiguous term, but I have used it to designate the indeterminacy of a text to define its subject.

who has written: “The practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write—the positions of *enunciation*. What recent theories of enunciation suggest is that, though we speak, so to say ‘in our own name’, of ourselves and from our own experience, nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never exactly in the same place” (1989, 68).

Peter Pitseolak’s photographs have been widely recognized for their depiction of mid-century life at Cape Dorset, an Inuit community located off the south coast of the Foxe Peninsula on southwest Baffin Island. The hamlet was named after the Earl of Dorset, a patron of Danish explorer Luke Foxe who surveyed the area in 1631 while searching for the Northwest Passage. In 1913, anthropologist Diamond Jenness recognized the distinctive character of an early indigenous culture that had existed in the area between 800 BCE and 1200 AD, which he named after Cape Dorset where artifacts had been excavated. Present-day Inuit refer to Cape Dorset as *Kinngait* or *Kingnait*, meaning simply ‘mountains’.

Although the area around Cape Dorset was visited periodically by whalers between 1860 and 1915, the growth and settlement of the present-day community began in 1913 with the establishment of a Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) post for the promotion and trade of white fox fur.³ Inuit hunters in the area gradually became trappers, trading furs for *qallunaat* goods, such as: cloth, tools, cooking pots, matches, tea, tobacco, guns, ammunition, and boats.⁴ The area was officially surveyed in the early 1920’s, and the Roman Catholic Church opened a mission there in 1938. The Baffin Trading Company (BTC) operated an independent trading post to compete with

³ The Hudson’s Bay Company had earlier established trading posts at Cape Wolstenholme in Arctic Quebec (Nunavik) in 1909 and Lake Harbour (Kimmirut) on Baffin Island in 1911.

⁴ Inuit have typically referred to white people by a variety of names: *Qallunaat*, *kadluna* and *kabloona*.

the HBC from 1939 to 1948. On July 21st, 1947 the supply ship *Nascopie* (Fig. 2) ran aground and sank off Cape Dorset, bringing to an end over three decades of service, and marking what many saw as the end of an established way of life among the Inuit and *quallumaat* traders (Pitseolak and Eber, 133-135).

Within two years of the *Nascopie* sinking a school was built at Cape Dorset, at which time many Inuit moved to the community from outlying camps as the market for furs declined and the need for a formal education was officially encouraged. In 1953, local Inuit built an Anglican Church and in less than a decade most residents had converted to Anglicanism, eventually forcing the closure of the Catholic Church. Development continued rapidly between 1955 and 1965 as a nursing station, a government office and a detachment of the RCMP were built. In 1953, artist James Houston moved to Cape Dorset and spent the next ten years developing carving and printmaking skills among local Inuit. Houston, together with associate Terrence Ryan, established the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative that became renowned for the production of fine Inuit Art.⁵ By 1965, the Canadian federal government had decided to replace traditional Inuit snow-houses, igloos, tents and huts with permanent housing units throughout the Arctic, thus beginning the centralization and sedentarisation of many Inuit communities.⁶

Peter Pitseolak was a dynamic, charismatic, and sometimes-petulant resident of Cape Dorset. There are conflicting accounts of the date and place of his birth, but he was most likely born in 1902 near Markham Bay on Nottingham Island in the Hudson Strait. As a child he grew up in an

⁵ Terry Ryan became Director and General Manager of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative in 1961.

⁶ The 'camp system' refers to the traditional nomadic lifestyle that Inuit practiced before government intervention in the North. Camps were typically established on land and coincided with hunting seasons and temperature fluctuations. It has been said that before 1950, there were as many as twenty traditional

area around present-day Cape Dorset called Seekooseelak, an Inuit word meaning ‘where there is no ice’ (at springtime), at traditional camps named Etiliakjoke and Ikarasak. As a young man he became respected as a hunter (he shot his first polar bear at the age of fifteen), and as a capable assistant to the white traders. Through successful hunting and business negotiations Pitseolak became a relatively wealthy Inuk, owning guns, hunting boats, and two teams of dogs—all of which were potent status symbols among the Inuit at the time. He was also able to acquire cameras and began amateur experiments with photography. During the 1930’s, Pitseolak initially began taking photographs using cameras brought into the community by traders, missionaries and other visitors. In 1942, he was able to purchase his own camera from the BTC where he was employed, from this point he worked consistently for more than two decades assembling a huge collection of scenes from community life and portraits of the *Seekooseelakmiut*—the people around Cape Dorset.

In 1946, Pitseolak established a camp northeast of Cape Dorset at Keatuk (Fig. 3) and became leader, or ‘camp boss’, over ten families. He was considered part of a privileged Inuit élite—both his father Inukjuarjuk, and grandfather Etidluie, had been powerful and respected leaders—and Pitseolak was apt to think highly of himself in this regard. As one biographical report found: “There is no doubt about Pitseolak's originality, as he is very much his own man, proud and perhaps slightly arrogant.”⁷ In later years, Pitseolak became a prolific artist and historian, annotating drawings, painting, writing diaries, as well as recording songs and stories based on traditional Inuit legends in a tireless effort to chronicle his life and times. Respected as a leader, hunter, historian, artist, and photographer, Peter Pitseolak died on September 30th, 1973.

camps around Cape Dorset. The last traditional camp was abandoned in 1971, although in 1979 a few local families attempted a short-lived experiment to return to full camp life.

As spontaneous snapshots of family life as well as testimony of traditional practices and customs, Pitseolak's photographs were intended to be appreciated by later generations of Inuit, and "show how for the future" as his daughter Kooyoo has explained (Bellman, 19). Following his death and in accordance with wishes that his photograph collection be preserved, the Canadian department of the Secretary of State purchased his family album consisting of 1,623 negatives and a small number of original prints, placing them on permanent loan at the Notman Photographic Archives at the McCord Museum of Canadian History in Montréal. Indeed, Peter Pitseolak has been acknowledged as a pioneer who strove to record, in ways seldom documented among indigenous societies, aspects of a rapidly changing traditional life.

The first chapter of this thesis undertakes a critical reassessment of the ways in which the Inuit have been stereotyped by 'Western' artists through an assessment of selected paintings and drawings. I examine a program of colonial authority that was assisted through construction of the *Other* and biased presentations of cultural difference. Situated within such paradigms, historical portrayals of the Inuit become not merely ideological distortions, but part of a densely imbricated establishment that deliberately organized and reproduced perspectives of the Native as a subordinate sociopolitical reality to a 'Westernized' ideal.

In the second chapter, I extend ideas of *Other*-ness into the realm arctic photography and investigate ways in which the Inuit have, and have not, been represented through colonial exploration imagery, political and scientific expedition, and 'documentary' ethnography. Here, I have examined the development and impact of rendering a photographic image in the Arctic, the

⁷ Unpublished and undated report on file at Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Inuit Art Information Centre, Hull.

oblique implications of representing the Inuit through ‘Western’ eyes, and the implications of early attempts upon the later work of Peter Pitseolak.

In my third and final chapter, I explore aspects of a blended cultural identity in the work of Peter Pitseolak, and examine the discourses through which photography and its social projection have been constructed and implicated within relations of power. Here, I have attempted to engage those issues of representing cultural identity and the dichotomies of personal politics rather than suppressing or obscuring them. In order to resolve some of the complex issues raised by Pitseolak’s work I address questions of ethnic identification and personal intent, and moreover, the ways in which Pitseolak’s photographs appear to uncover or redefine Native self-identity within expanding realms of ‘Western’ influence and acculturation. Through his photographs, Peter Pitseolak was able to transcend traditional ‘Western’ perspectives of the Inuit. It may be acknowledged that the photographs form part of an ongoing exchange and, subject to dominant perceptions of Inuit identity, his work suggests a form of cultural repossession within a system of social production and ethnographic display. Thus, it has become necessary to position myself with an understanding of *identity* as a highly complex and evolving concept, endlessly exposed, interpenetrated, overlapped and interwoven with other cultural influences, and, as such, Pitseolak’s photograph’s may be seen as important sites of intersection that reflect and delineate two distinct cultures while remaining contingent upon them both.

CHAPTER 1

Subjecting an Inuit Image: Historical Precedents

It becomes necessary to conceive of ethnography not as the experience and interpretation of a circumscribed 'other' reality, but rather as a constructive negotiation involving at least two, and usually more, conscious, politically significant subjects. Paradigms of experience and interpretation are yielding to discursive paradigms of dialogue and polyphony.

James Clifford, The Predicament of Culture (1988)

The North, as both a place and an idea, is entrenched in the national consciousness of Canadians. Throughout Canada's history, the Arctic has been a prominent feature in the development and identity of the country. As such, the political and social evolution of the Eastern Arctic region is of particular significance at this time of the creation of the Nunavut Territory on April 1st, 1999 (Fig. 4). Nunavut, which translates as 'Our Land' in Inuktitut, marks a new era of political, economic, and social progress in the North. If the twentieth century characterized a period of unprecedented change among the Inuit, the twenty-first century promises further transformations in sectors such as government, market-driven economies, and high technology (Duffy 1988). The significance of Nunavut, like the territory itself, is vast, and most Inuit recognize its inauguration as a crucial step toward a reclamation of indigenous power and identity. The territory itself covers an area of over 135, 000 square miles and represents almost one-sixth of Canada's total landmass, with a population of approximately 20,000 people living in twenty-six small communities.

Nunavut symbolizes over twenty years of land-claim disputes and political negotiations that were finally resolved following a 1992 vote in the Northwest Territories that approved the creation of a self-governing homeland for the Inuit (Mitchell 1996). The Nunavut Act was passed the following year by the Government of Canada. The legislative powers of such a

Territory within Canada cover most government and social programs, but this step towards self-reliance and self-government brings many responsibilities and difficulties which Inuit people will have to adapt and accept the inevitability of change. Of course, *change* in itself is not a new concept in the Far North. Indeed, the Inuit have persisted through continued renewals of their culture since first contact with Europeans in the sixteenth century. However, during the twentieth century 'Western' acculturation among the Inuit has resulted in an accelerated transformation of a nomadic lifestyle to one primarily dependant upon centralized community living.

This chapter contextualizes Pitseolak's work, framing it against prior 'Western' models depicting the Inuit. I address those issues that have emerged from historical formations of representing the Inuit as both an objectified subject and a construct of the European imagination. Through an examination of the development of the Inuit and Arctic images in illustrations and paintings before the onset of photography, I investigate those perspectives with which the Inuit have been constructed as *Other*. Contrasting Pitseolak's photographs against prior conventions I explore a history of representation and examine the boundaries by which cultural identity has been formed and disseminated.

A comprehensive history of the social implications arising from early contact in the Canadian Arctic has yet to be written. Yet, an analysis of Pitseolak's work necessitates a close examination of these early encounters between Inuit and Western Europeans. Therefore, in the following section I begin with an overview of Arctic prehistory and consider the impact first contact with Europeans had upon the Inuit. I further examine problems posed by dominant representations of the Inuit. With respect to patterns of exploration and subsequent social development in the Arctic, I focus on the colonialist configurations and strategies that are signified through biased representations.

Through archaeological evidence it has been estimated that the distant ancestors of present-day Inuit traveled to the Arctic some 16,000 years ago, across a natural land bridge exposed at the Bering Strait between Asia and North America following the last Ice Age (Late Wisconsin Glaciation). Perhaps motivated by migrating animal herds, these early human groups evolved into two distinct cultures identified as Dorset and Thule (Crowe 1991, McGhee 1996). Before European contact, Historic Inuit culture was primarily characterized by nomadic traditions and a reliance upon the land and animal species for almost every aspect of survival, including food, clothing and shelter. Families appear to have eventually grouped together and formed small communities, moving together with seasonal migrations of caribou, or close to coastal areas where fish, seal and walrus could be obtained in abundance. With each generation, traditions essential for survival were passed on through social customs, hunting techniques, and styles of habitation and clothing.

Clearly, the need to adapt quickly and efficiently has been an element of survival for families that have needed to sustain themselves in the extreme conditions of the Arctic. Yet those changes that came upon the Inuit from contact with Europeans were experienced on an unprecedented scale, and increased as the extent of 'Western' influence spread across North America and the Arctic. During the twentieth century, almost every aspect of traditional life in the Eastern Arctic was to be affected in some way by Euro-Canadian intervention. Central to this acculturation process was the end of the camp system during the 1960's when many Inuit groups were persuaded to resettle in permanent communities through government incentives such as housing, work programs, family allowance, social welfare, residential schooling and health care facilities. In addition to government subsidies, Inuit were coerced on a more subversive level through nationalist promotion, relocation experimentation, and naming programs that brought the Inuit within a sphere of Canadian identification and control. Within a single generation, centuries of

tradition were forever altered and almost forgotten. In recent decades there has been a rejuvenation of traditional culture among the Inuit, who now acknowledge with pride their heritage and history before government intervention. However, the transformation of Inuit culture began much earlier than with the implementation of federal programs. In fact, the people of the Arctic region possess a long history of being classified and characterized through the non-Inuit attestations of explorers, adventurers, and anthropologists illustrating aspects of traditional Inuit life and attempting to represent perceived cultural difference.

Representation

The complex notions around representation are perhaps some of the oldest in Western thought and predate any coercive attempt to represent the indigenous peoples of the Arctic. In its simplest form representation is the attempt to show, or stand in, for something that is either not present, or unable to stand for itself. Representation has been associated with aesthetics, language, and more recently with political theory through the increasing politicization of 'the image'. Though it was initially treated with ambivalence, the invention and implications of photography did little to defuse such intellectual debates.⁸ From its beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century it was argued that photographic representation was always implied, always implicated in the technical and chemical processes that comprise and form the image. However, it is clear that such forms of representation are seldom accidental, objective, or innocent as the photograph is always contingent upon the photographer's perspective. Thus, photographic

⁸ In 1840, Edgar Allan Poe regarded the Daguerreotype "as the most important, and perhaps the most extraordinary triumph of modern science." Charles Baudelaire, on the other hand, in a review of the Salon of 1859, saw photography's invention reflecting the possessed and empty values of the general public: "An avenging God has heard the prayers of this multitude; Daguerre was his messiah. And then they said to themselves: 'Since photography provides us with every desirable guarantee of exactitude' (they believe that, poor madmen!) 'art is photography.' From that moment onwards, our loathsome society rushed, like Narcissus, to contemplate its trivial image on the metallic plate" (Trachtenberg, 1980).

representation, as a philosophical and theoretical concept, has necessarily become associated with criticisms relating to texts and power.

The 'politics of representation' and cultural identity are perhaps two of the most significant and complex issues of our time. Representation carries with it important connotations and identifications that affect a sense of self and belonging. By our very existence, we are governed by how we perceive of others and ourselves through lenses of recognition and filters of experience. Identity, on the other hand, has been a device through which we are able to distinguish a sense of self and segregate individual motives from others. Therefore, if self-identity may be acknowledged as a constantly negotiated reality, it suggests that the representation of cultural identification should be no different. Yet, the contingency of such ideas and the import of representation complemented early colonialist interventions, affecting perceptions of difference through early images depicting the Inuit as *Other*.

'Western' traditions of portraying the Inuit arose from initial attempts to explore the Arctic region. The conventional paradigms that emerged from early endeavors point to the ways in which the Inuit have been constructed as *Other* through connotations of primitive ritualism and exotic naiveté. Such non-Inuit narrative frameworks form a historical basis through which the Inuit have been subject to dominant perceptions and evaluations. In order to contextualize and frame Peter Pitseolak's work, I examine this history of restricting a definition of the Inuit *Other* as 'Eskimo' through specific political, economic, and social configurations.⁹

⁹ The term 'Eskimo' is now generally considered derogatory among Canadian Inuit primarily because non-Inuit, believing it derived from a Cree word meaning "eater of raw meat" administered it. Linguists now believe that 'Eskimo' comes from an Ojibwa word meaning "to net snowshoes". However, the indigenous people of Canada prefer the use of 'Inuit' meaning, 'the people'. I use the term 'Eskimo' here to recall a

‘Western’ stereotyping of aboriginal peoples has been neither a recent nor an uncommon practice. Indeed, since the sixteenth century, North American Inuit and First Nations groups have been repeatedly depicted and written up through cycles of Romanticism and conflict. In this way historic images of First Nations peoples have typically wavered between caricatures of the ‘child of nature’ or ‘noble savage’, and that of the gullible or unpredictable ‘Red Man’ or ‘redskin’ (Berkhofer 1979, Francis 1992). Similarly, the Inuit have been depicted as the adaptable and heroic innocent, or the dangerous and primeval ‘Eskimo’. Early cultural depictions stood in for the seemingly foreign identity that they represented. In this way, indigenous culture was studied and evaluated as an example of ‘primitive’ or ‘uncivilized’ people, often with complete disregard for how such societies had skillfully adapted to their own environments. Explorers were quick to judge native societies at first glance, through styles of clothing, architecture and social custom, and used such impressions to establish cultural hierarchies in favour of European public values. In turn, these hierarchies reinforced European nationalist ethnocentricity and racism toward other cultures while encouraging positions from which to claim and possess Native identification. Through such stereotypes, traditions of framing Native North Americans as an exotic *Other* have been established, evoking ambivalent attitudes among non-Inuit audiences. Popular perceptions of the Inuit have often alternated between apprehension and repulsion at a seemingly bleak and base way of life, or fascination and curiosity at ingenious adaptations to the land and unique social customs. Yet, in both cases the strategies of rendering an image of ‘the native’ as *Other* arose from, and supported, colonialist attitudes and programs intent on maintaining political surveillance and control over the Arctic region.

history of essentially racist assumptions that obscured indigenous cultural norms and adaptations, while

Early Arctic Exploration

For many years following first contact, European voyages to the Arctic were sporadic and dangerous undertakings. Over the centuries, there has been much myth-making around Arctic exploration and the achievements and travails of such explorers as Martin Frobisher, Henry Hudson, William Baffin, Luke Foxe, William Parry, John Ross, and John Franklin. Yet, thousands of years before Europeans journeyed to the Far North, the Inuit themselves were the first intrepid explorers of the frozen waters and tundra of the Arctic. While most of these travels remain undocumented, the Inuit and other aboriginal groups must be considered the first true explorers of the Arctic.

The Greeks were perhaps the first Europeans to document knowledge of the Arctic. Pytheas, living in the fourth century BCE, described the Arctic frontier, claiming to have sailed to an island in the far north. Early in the ninth century AD, Irish monks are known to have established a colony in Iceland. Vikings, or Norsemen, from Scandinavia reached there later in the century. In 982 the Norse explorer Eric the Red sighted and named Greenland. Through the discovery of thirteenth century artifacts and rune stones it is known that Norsemen explored parts of Baffin Bay, but it is unknown if any permanent settlement in the Canadian Arctic was made. Although three communities on Greenland and one at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland have been confirmed, it appears that by the late fifteenth century the last Norse settlement had died out and were eventually occupied by Thule Inuit moving into the region (Tanner, 1995). Despite these notable achievements many Europeans during the Renaissance still believed the North to be uninhabited and completely covered by ice, and it was not until the 1490's when John Cabot

reinforcing a belief in European cultural superiority.

(Giovanni Caboto) proposed that there must exist a direct way to the Far East via a 'Northwest Passage' that interest in the Arctic was peaked (Day, 1986).

European exploration and colonization during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was largely motivated by commercial interests, the discovery of raw materials, and the exploitation of untapped markets. Under Queen Elizabeth I, Great Britain became a major naval power influencing the development of European politics and international trade. British exploration of the Arctic was undertaken to examine Cabot's proposed sea route to the Far East, where lucrative trade in silk, spice, opium, slaves, gold, gems, minerals, and varieties of fruits and vegetables existed. The search for the Passage was an arduous one due to the harsh climate and physical geography of the Arctic archipelago and islands. In 1576 the search for the Northwest Passage began in earnest when the English explorer Sir Martin Frobisher reached the Canadian Arctic, and eleven years later when John Davis sailed through part of what became known as Davis Strait between Greenland and Baffin Island. In 1610 and 1616 respectively, Henry Hudson and William Baffin sighted the bays that were later named for them. Nevertheless, the search for the Northwest Passage was a frustrating and elusive quest as exploration of the Arctic made painstakingly slow progress.

The power and politics of representation may be witnessed through an examination of the techniques deployed in recasting the Inuit as 'Eskimo'. First contact between Europeans and Inuit grew out of the search for the Northwest Passage, and first impressions produced curious depictions. Early representations of the Arctic and Inuit were frequently based upon crude drawings hastily prepared in extreme conditions in pencil or watercolor. Often comprising little more than rough outlines to be transferred onto larger works, these sketches were the first impressions of a seemingly strange people and an unknown land. Some of the earliest European

depictions came out of incidents in which Inuit individuals and families had been kidnapped by sailors and brought to England, Denmark, and Germany on board ship and put on display before the European public. Many of these individuals died within a few months from exposure to disease and infection, but some actually survived and lived out their lives as intriguing residents of Europe (Oswalt 1979). A 1567 handbill from the town of Augsburg in southern Germany (Fig. 5), shows one of the first indisputable signs of contact between Europeans and Inuit having taken place (Sturtevant 1980). In this public announcement an Inuit woman and child (most likely taken from Labrador) are explicitly referred to as 'savages', and as such are clearly objectified as they are advertised as curious and amusing subjects to be placed on display. Another very early drawing depicting the Inuit, John White's, 'English Sailors in a Skirmish with Eskimo' from 1577 (Fig. 6), shows the seemingly unpredictable and aggressive behaviour of the Inuit taken from an encounter between Frobisher and a group of Inuit hunters. This scene illustrates the hostility with which first contact between Europeans and Inuit was met. As a result of such encounters, many Europeans developed an apprehension and distrust of the Inuit as Arctic exploration continued.

During the period of initial contact many portrayals of the Inuit played upon popular European stereotypes of the foreign, while Arctic exploration was viewed as a dangerous and exciting opportunity to encounter 'savage' natives. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such exploration images circulated frequently in newspapers, periodicals, and books that enticed sedentary European viewers with fantastical depictions that appealed more to the imagination than reason. These first renderings offered European viewers a vision of their own cultural superiority in comparison to the archaic plight of 'Eskimos'. Through them, 'Western' audiences were afforded the opportunity to glean complacent satisfaction from the seemingly altruistic mission of colonialism while being simultaneously entertained by 'bizarre' native behaviours,

exaggerated features and strange, primitive customs. Although it is clear that such portrayals were inventively produced they remain a legitimate indication of first impressions of the Arctic and become a primary source by which the later implications of representing difference may be understood.

Artists such as Abraham Hondius, Elisha Kirkall, Frederick W. Beechey, and Sir John Ross painted representative scenes of the Arctic landscape and Native culture. Through their work we are better able to understand the ways in which the Inuit have been prefigured and obscured in European traditions of painting and drawing. In keeping with the previously identified cycles of romanticism and conflict in representing the Inuit, these artists' scenes depict both the exultation of European exploration and the alienation of Native encounters. In Abraham Hondius's 'Arctic View' (c.1690), we see early Romantic imagery associated with the harsh dangers of Arctic exploration (Fig. 7). This painting captures a sense of the merciless conditions of the Arctic and the desperate plight of European sailors as the ship is effortlessly thrust up and torn apart between layers of thick ice. As such, Hondius's painting appears to be both a warning of the dangers associated with Arctic exploration as well as a vindication of the bravery endured by European sailors. In stark contrast to the prevailing melancholy evident in the previous painting, Elisha Kirkall's engraved 'Whaling Scene' (Fig. 8) is crammed with the enthusiastic frenzy of whalers as they compete with one another for the lucrative harvest of whales in the frigid waters. Although many European nations competed for the slow-moving Bowhead Whales for their oil and baleen, Kirkall has almost certainly used lavish artistic license in rendering such a densely embodied scene. The scene nevertheless evokes the zealousness with which whaling activity took place and the considerable risks assumed by whalers. In his 'Arctic View' (Fig. 9), Frederick Beechey recalls an earlier romanticism reminiscent of Hondius, but highlights the almost fragile human element at the centre of the painting. The scene evokes a sense of how

exploration of the Arctic was achieved largely through mortal endurance and sacrifice. Beechey shows the cold, hard reality of camp life and strategically places the Union Jack at the centre of the painting to add nationalistic weight and significance. Yet, in examining the scope and significance of representation there is also a need to explore what was *not* represented in early Arctic paintings and drawings. As we have seen, many eighteenth and nineteenth century works actually fail to indicate any Native presence whatsoever, instead these artists have used the northern landscape to highlight aspects of nationalistic interest and heroic glorification.

Sir John Ross stands out as one explorer who often took the time to sketch and paint Inuit that he encountered on his travels, although, as we shall see, his depictions were often less than flattering. In ‘Eskimo with Peg-Leg and Wives’ (Fig. 10), Ross caricatures the unusual and dissolute Inuit character. As an early indication of explorer’s perception of the Native, this painting is an interesting example of an emerging ethnographic subtext in portraying the Inuit. The full frontal and distanced position of all three figures establishes the scene as an objective view for study rather than a personalized portrait of individuals. Accentuating the impaired and polygamous nature of a Native culture, Ross emphasizes the Inuk’s peg-leg, harpoon and two wives. Such elements, combined with a barren background and clothing details like the sealskin *amautiks*, show how Ross illustrates specific aspects ‘outside’ of European social norms and moral standards. Ross’s, ‘Eskimo Village’ (c.1830), is another relatively rare example in which the Inuit have been shown in early illustration, yet they appear to emerge from, or fade into, the landscape itself, reinforcing a popular notion of the inherent relationship between Native and land (Fig. 11). Here the Inuit community appears to be formed around a cramped collection of snowy mounds—igloos—that are virtually indistinguishable from the hills surrounding them. It is possible to read this scene as one in which the Inuit situation has been deliberately set ‘within’ nature, whereas British interlopers appear ‘beyond’ the constraints of the land, having proven a

'superior' transcendence through the understood and implied context of exploration itself. European superiority is further established through the respective qualities of dress; the Inuit wear the skins of animals, remaining an integral part of their natural surroundings, whereas the British commanders are bedecked in uniform denoting class and rank. Ross again evokes a scene for its ethnographic content, using elements of difference to delineate cultural character and status. Designating Inuit culture in this way establishes the preconception of a native 'Other' on non-Inuit terms, and illustrate how such paintings may be implicated in subtexts of nationalism and prejudicial ethnography. Such a reading employs postcolonial perspectives and issues around Imperialism that are of utmost importance in understanding the inferences of cultural representation. We may view such historical portrayals as a direct agent of political dominance that characterize the ways through which nationalism has been composed around subaltern narratives.

As British exploration and control of the Arctic continued during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, large parts of Africa and Asia were added to the Empire, especially under Queen Victoria. Due to the commercial and political demands generated by expanding British influence, power was consolidated and ties strengthened with Canada as relations with the United States waned following the War of Independence (1763-1766) and the War of 1812. In 1818, as part of a concerted effort to retain naval and mercantile superiority, the British government organized the first of several Arctic expeditions to renew the search for the Northwest Passage beginning with Sir William Edward Parry, who, in 1819, reached Melville Island. In 1845, Captain Sir John Franklin led a British expedition toward the Bering Strait from Lancaster Sound, an arm of Baffin Bay. He and his crew abandoned their two ships after becoming trapped by ice in 1846, and all perished the following year. The tragedy led to many extensively organized search parties that failed to locate the ships, but galvanized British

attempts to discover and use the Passage to British advantage. Development of the Canadian Arctic continued unabated as evidenced through the extensive documentation contained in *The Arctic Blue Books*, British Parliamentary Papers concerned with the administration of the Arctic during the nineteenth century.¹⁰

During the Victorian era, the Arctic became a perfect political and metaphorical backdrop for ongoing imperial expansion, providing spectacular scenes for British nationalist propaganda. The illustrative rhetoric of such depictions served imperialist aspirations through notions of civilized progress and orderly development that obscured the aggressive mercantile agendas involved. As such, the Arctic was frequently portrayed as an untamed and barren land, devoid of significant human culture and therefore perfectly situated for colonial investiture and territorial claims as an ‘ungoverned’ land for the Empire. As such, the Arctic was further adapted and employed to portray extensions of British civilization against an otherwise ‘empty’ landscape, and in turn, provided ample material for heroic narrative.

Many nineteenth-century paintings of the Arctic continued to be greatly romanticized, indicating little, if any, human activity. Rarely were Inuit people included in progressively generic scenes, where emphasis was reserved for the high drama of the frozen landscape and unique meteorological conditions, such as the northern lights, midnight sun and a vast, seemingly limitless, horizon. Examples may be seen in the work of Sir Edward Inglefield (1820-1894), William Bradford (1823-1892), and Thomas Mitchell (1833-1924), whereby the artists have concentrated on atmospheric conditions in the landscape and overlook any sign of human

¹⁰ By the mid-nineteenth century, the Arctic Council of London was formed and given a broad mandate to govern the Arctic region. This group consisted mostly of bureaucratic mandarins, adventurers, and opportunists, who had never even set eyes on the territory that they were administering.

existence. Such artists reiterated a sense of the humility of European self-sacrifice in achieving knowledge of the Arctic, a sacrifice that symbolized a triumph of the colonialist spirit through sublime evocations. At times overly dramatic and chaotic, or imbued with a sense of sedate and reflective solitude, such scenes symbolically rendered the proud zenith of British civilization that extended out unhindered across the globe.

Through cycles of romanticism and conflict the Inuit were assimilated and incorporated into the social body of 'Western' civilization, or omitted and rejected as foreign. Initial modes of representing the Inuit at all emphasized the strangeness of their culture, forming the basis of *Other-ness*. Early representations equated the Inuit with 'uncivilized' characterizations and primeval behaviour through superficial depictions of crude and unsophisticated customs, attire, and habitation. Although the Inuit were generally disregarded and obscured, the European Romanticist genre extended the frozen timelessness of Arctic space and locked its inhabitants into a prehistoric existence. Such attempts to misrepresent the diverse culture and social history of the Inuit through a single hegemonic 'identity' indicate strategies of deferral in Inuit identification. While British interests were promoted and used to reflect the omnipresence of Empirical surveillance in the Arctic, Inuit society and individuality were negated in order to legitimize a colonialist agenda.

Over time, depictions of the Arctic and Inuit people fostered ambivalent reactions among European publics because of the context in which such scenes were framed. Wavering between romanticism and conflict, the Arctic and its native inhabitants were subjected to the prevailing stereotypical attitudes of the colonial observer. In his essay 'The Other Question', postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha emphasizes that it is the force of ambivalence that provides much of the defining and restrictive stamina of the colonialized stereotype and, as such, political implications

and dependencies of cultural presentations and representations inscribe a form of colonialist control:

Racist stereotypical discourse, in its colonial moment, inscribes a form of governmentality that is informed by a productive splitting in its constitution of knowledge and exercise of power. Some of its practices recognize the difference of race, culture and history as elaborated by stereotypical knowledges, racial theories, administrative colonial experience, and on that basis institutionalize a range of political and cultural ideologies that are prejudicial, discriminatory, vestigial, archaic, 'mythical', and, crucially, are recognized as being so. By 'knowing' the native population in these terms, discriminatory and authoritarian forms of population control are considered appropriate. The colonized population is then deemed to be both the cause and effect of the system, imprisoned in the circle of interpretation. (Bhabha 1994, 83).

Locked within restrictive cycles of definition and interpretation the Inuit were later subject to the creative whims of museum curators. Here there is an inexorable link between the historical paradigms of representation as I have described and an attempt to contain, possess and display indigenous culture in 'Western' museums and ethnographic collections. By the middle nineteenth century, the museum had evolved into a significant pedagogical institution and, perhaps more importantly, a political and symbolic manifestation of European civilization (Bennett 1995, Crimp 1995). By this time, European and Canadian anthropological thought, described by Douglas Cole as "amateur, dilettante, and fabulous" (1973, 33), had begun to take increasing interest in the Native people of the Arctic. By the turn of the century close scrutiny of the 'Eskimo' subject had become more competent and serious analysis of material culture began through the building of significant collections of Native clothing, tools, weapons, sacred objects, and other artifacts. As an influential institution and repository for Native images and artifacts, the museum perpetuated this desire for collecting and displaying 'foreign' culture.

Through such displays, European publics further came to understand and delineate Inuit cultural norms through difference. Without information or testimony to the contrary such arrangements carried considerable power to reduce and simplify other cultures in 'Western' eyes.

As Pamela Stern has noted the allure of such displays, corresponding to the advent of photography, implicated a new positioning of cultural possession:

Images and objects of curiosity provided tangible evidence of unknown regions and, more importantly, linked the possessor to the exotic locale. Having something to hold, to look at repeatedly, gave the armchair traveller a sense of ownership of not just the object but also of the place from whence the object came. The development of photographic technology in the mid-nineteenth century and its improvements in the late nineteenth century permitted more and more people to hold, examine and possess a piece of the Arctic (King and Lidchi, 47).

Thus, this practice of collecting and display has been a crucial process in the formation of the *Other* as a primitive doppelgänger to 'Western' identity. However, the deliberate and selective process of recouping Native culture and identity within dominant demographics is not without consequence and, as will be examined in the next chapter, is a process particularly relevant to the photographic realm.

In this chapter, I have discussed how the Inuit were greatly disregarded in early paintings and drawings of the Arctic. Other representations of the 'Eskimo' wavered between degrading portrayals of primitive and naïve traditions, to imposing stereotypes of the adaptable and heroic hunter. The circulation of images that accompanied European exploration of the Arctic from the sixteenth century created a powerful historical agency that encompassed the public viewer within biased portrayals of cultural identity. As will be addressed in the next chapter, the implications of such a cultural image converged with photographic technology and the anthropological scrutiny of the Inuit from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. This accumulation of contexts interrupted ways in which the Inuit perceived themselves through 'Western' eyes, and created a dichotomy of self-image as later witnessed in the work of Peter Pitseolak.

CHAPTER 2

Early Arctic Photography and the Inuit

All photographs are there to remind us of what we forget. In this—as in other ways—they are the opposite of paintings. Paintings record what the painter remembers. Because each one of us forgets different things, a photo more than a painting may change its meaning according to who is looking at it.

John Berger, Keeping a Rendezvous (1992)

This chapter examines ways in which the uses of social documentary photography extended colonialist forms of representation and surveillance, protracting ‘Western’ archetypes of an ‘Inuit image’ through scientific and political manipulations.¹¹ In order to determine where Peter Pitseolak’s work (as discussed in chapter three) intersects with and disrupts prior pictorial configurations, I examine the ideological implications of late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century social documentary photographic and filmic conventions that framed the Inuit as a cultural *Other*.

Photography: Invention and Use

Many of the fundamental processes that make up our present understanding of ‘photography’ emerged during the mid-nineteenth century, the result of a cluster of technical inventions and innovations in electricity, optics and chemistry. Although there continues to be debate concerning first experiments in obtaining a photo-graphic image, the creation of the daguerreotype in 1839 remains one of the most important events in the development of photography.¹² The daguerreotype is attributed to Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, a famous

¹¹ ‘An Inuit image’ must be understood in terms of a range of depictions and not simply one stereotypical reading.

¹² In 1839 both William Henry Fox Talbot in England and Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre in France, announced their successful experiments in making and fixing a photo-graphic image. Yet, the abstracted idea of photo-graphy long precedes that date as witnessed through the use of such equipment as the *camera lucida* and the *camera obscura* (see Rosenblum 1997, Newhall 1982).

Diorama painter, who in 1829 had collaborated with inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce in order to pursue research in obtaining a permanent image using the *camera obscura*. Their combined research resulted in the daguerreotype in which a highly detailed image was composed upon a sheet of copper thinly plated with silver. Previous exposure of a highly polished plate to iodine in a closed container produced a light-sensitive surface coating of silver iodide that, when exposed to light, produced an image that could then be developed and made permanent using other chemicals (Baldwin 1991, 35). Although processes would continue to be refined and improved throughout the century, the development of the daguerreotype proved to be the major breakthrough that allowed for enhancements and more compact and cost-effective photographic techniques. As photography became more popular and efficient it was increasingly put to use by explorers, ethnographers, and other travellers in a variety of cultural contexts and situations.

The increasing ease with which photographic equipment could be used and transported in the latter half of the nineteenth century allowed for a vast scopic reconnaissance to spread out across the world on the impetus of European curiosity to explore and catalogue every facet of human culture and experience. John Pultz has noted that as early as 1869, the photographic record of naturalist Thomas Henry Huxley displayed racial prejudices in order to reproduce the “hierarchical structures of domination and subordination inherent to the institutions of colonialism” (1995, 25). Indeed, photography was well placed to satisfy such colonialist ambitions in the Arctic as it took up many of the representational tasks previously accorded to painting and drawing. Although, as Richard Condon has pointed out, photography did not completely replace prior artistic practices and was first put to use during a transition period when explorers made use of both techniques, with photographic work often being abandoned due its initially unwieldy and technically complicated nature (1989, 51). Early attempts at photography in the Arctic were used to document geographical expeditions as well as record social and

material aspects of ethnographic interest among the Inuit. Although many northern researchers and photographers possessed a sincere interest and respect for native culture, the Inuit were often completely unable to control their own image, and, as subjects, were disengaged from the powerful processes of representation. Here, as with previous conventions of representing Native cultural identity and the Arctic landscape, Inuit were apprehended and framed through the photographic lens, frequently portrayed as a naïve and primitive *Other* in order to further endorse 'Western' political and social agendas.

Arctic Photography

As contact with Inuit people became more frequent through the sporadic interventions of explorers, whalers and itinerant traders, adventurous 'frontier' attitudes gradually began to give way to a fascination and intimate knowledge of 'Eskimo' life, reflected in the steady accumulation of photographic records during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Nowhere were the technical and chemical processes that made up photography more strenuously put to the test than in the Arctic. Cumbersome and unreliable daguerreotype equipment was known to have accompanied Elisha Kent Kane's, 1853 Second Grinnell Expedition into the Arctic although no photographs were brought South when the ship was abandoned in 1854 (Ross 1990, 94). Although awkward and time-consuming, some of the earliest known photographs from the Arctic used the wet-collodion process whereby a glass plate was coated with a syrupy mixture of chemicals and sensitized to light from a solution of silver nitrate before being inserted into a camera and exposed while still 'wet'.¹³ Commander Francis Leopold M'Clintock of the Royal

¹³ Early photographic equipment is known to have accompanied previous expeditions to the Canadian Arctic such as Sir John Franklin's last expedition in 1845 (daguerreotype) and Dr Elisha Kent Kane's expedition in search of Franklin in 1850-51 (calotype). Unfortunately, no photographs are known to have survived these expeditions due to their loss or equipment failure (see Wamsley and Barr in King and Lidchi, 1998).

Navy used this process to document the last Franklin Search Expedition of 1857-1859, with the ship's physician and naturalist, Dr. David Walker, placed in charge of all photographic work for the duration of the expedition. Unfortunately only a few poor quality images survived, but they nonetheless proved the feasibility of using photography as an important tool of documentation in the North (Condon, 52). The first to photograph the Inuit extensively using the wet plate process was George Simpson McTavish, a Hudson's Bay trader stationed at Little Whale River, Quebec during the 1860's. Although photography was often a respite from the boredom and intense periods of inactivity experienced by isolated traders, McTavish was nevertheless the first amateur photographer to take an active interest in the Inuit and produced a number of different ethnographic shots displaying individuals and groups engaged in traditional activities as well as interacting with non-Inuit traders (Fig. 12). By the turn of the century, technical improvements to photographic equipment and consistent development processes greatly aided the freedom with which photography in the Arctic could be pursued, thus allowing the camera to be deemed an essential piece of equipment in the documentation of surveys and expeditions in the North (Houston 1976, 2).

By the end of the nineteenth century, Canadian attention had turned from establishing trading stations and the whaling industry to asserting and regulating national sovereignty in the North and accumulating ethnographic data on the Inuit (Burant in King and Lidchi, 77). When Great Britain officially transferred title of the Arctic region to Canada by Order of Council in 1880, it created an awkward political situation for the young Dominion. Increased territorial disputes with the United States, Norway and Denmark, as well as enthusiastic aspirations of national identity and patrimony led to the launching of two Canadian Arctic expeditions beginning with

the SS *Neptune* in 1884 and 1885, and the SS *Alert* in 1886 (Zaslow, 1971).¹⁴ The Arctic Expedition of 1903-04 aboard the *Neptune* was noteworthy for the photographic work of expedition leader Albert P. Low. Although officially designated as an expedition devoted to science, exploration, and policing duties, Low filled much of his time photographing the Inuit from the surrounding regions around Fullerton Harbour in the Eastern Arctic where his ship was wintering over. Also moored at Fullerton that winter was the American whaling ship *Era*, mastered by the Quebec-born George P. Comer with whom Low would develop a friendship largely based on their mutual interest in photography.

Comer and Low

A. P. Low and George Comer stand out in the history of Arctic photography through their willingness to show the North as it was, constantly evolving as a result of an acculturation process initiated by explorers, whalers and traders, but accelerated at the turn of the century by increasing interventions by researchers, scientists and government administrators. Comer and Low were professional mariners and amateur photographers who found themselves in the Eastern Arctic at a time when ethnographers such as Franz Boas and Knud Rasmussen were looking to the Arctic in an attempt to recover Inuit artifacts and testimony before ‘Western’ influences had inflicted irreparable change to a traditional way of life. But, as Nelson Graburn has pointed out: “Belief in the isolation and apparent timelessness of native culture is only supportable by eliminating those aspects of native life which show evidence of trade and change or by not looking at native life too closely. Such photography tries to sustain the powerful but trivialising appeal of the ‘unacculturated’ native, either by carefully eliminating evidence of the

¹⁴ Although Canadian Arctic photography began in earnest with these expeditions the federal government had previously established itself as “an important supporter of the concept of using photography to record

modern 'present' as did Boas in his own photography or by using captions which draw attention to the 'traditional' and away from the indexes of change" (Graburn in King and Lidchi, 161). Despite the encouragement and patronage of prominent researchers, and obvious prerogatives to display artifacts in museums and capture elements of Native life on film, Comer and Low were clearly less interested in selecting and reconstructing instances of 'authentic' culture, instead choosing to include ample evidence of 'Western' acculturation among the Inuit (Figs. 13-14). Rather than omit signs of cultural integration in their photographs, Comer and Low often included Westernized items that were in common use by the Inuit at the time such as metal cooking pots, coffee pots and alarm clocks. Commenting on the acculturation visible in Comer's work, W. Gillies Ross has written:

Comer resisted the temptation to select only those aspects and items that were typical of precontact society. He photographed what the people wore and used at the time, whether introduced or not, thus providing an unbiased documentary record of the turn of the century period. In this respect his approach differed from that of Franz Boas, who in his own fieldwork on Baffin Island in 1883-84 concentrated on the artifacts of traditional life, and whose text [published in 1888] failed to reveal much about the cultural impact of more than 40 years of Euro-American whaling (Ross 1990, 97).

The photographs of Comer and Low are important to the history of photography in the Eastern Arctic because they comprise one of the most extensive ethnographic accounts of traditional Inuit life at the turn of the century and portray the cultural diversity and sophisticated ingenuity of the Inuit subject. Yet, although Comer and Low broadened the definition of 'an Inuit image', it is important to recognize the ways in which they extended an ethnographic positioning of observer and subject through their photographs. Liz Wells points out the general ethnographic importance of the photograph as text, observed through the correlative of a "simultaneous 'it was there' (the pro-photographic event) and 'I was there' (the photographer) effect of the

the salient features of its geography, its human endeavors and its inhabitants" with the Canadian government expedition to western Canada in 1858, and the Geological Survey of Canada in 1860.

photographic record on people and circumstances that contributes to the authority of the photographic image” (1997, 24-25). Although they appear to have possessed a sincere regard and respect for their Inuit sitters, Comer and Low’s predisposed and implicitly authoritative position as photographer allowed them, and other ‘Western’ ethnographic interlopers, to perpetuate powerful constructions and popular conceptions of the Inuit through the lens.

While the camera allowed late nineteenth century arctic researchers, scientists, and government officers an unprecedented method of documenting territorial boundaries as well as Inuit racial characteristics and social customs the photographic image itself became a powerful tool that had the ability to shape attitudes of the Inuit as a generalized cultural subject. In many ways Arctic photography extended colonialist practices that depicted indigenous peoples as *Others*, and became another means by which non-Inuit ‘outsiders’ could frame and contain the Native subject. Here, the documentary photographer’s claim of ‘objective’ representation failed to preclude inherent subjective prejudices and was often recouped as a means with which to maintain and reinforce ‘Western’ stereotypes. As Ronald Weber has pointed out, although early ethnographic photographs from the Arctic may be used as important research documents, their dependency upon the interaction of subject and photographer exerts a control that can interfere with an accurate understanding of its content (1985, 67).

Many of the techniques with which ethnographic images of the Inuit were produced appear to reflect the essentially predatory nature that American critic Susan Sontag has found characterizes photographs of others (1977, 13-14). She finds that even the language around photography, such as ‘taking’ an image, or ‘loading’ and ‘shooting’ film, insinuates the capture or possession of a subject. Sontag suggests that as photographs are forced into accumulations of images and catalogues of acquired perceptions they are understood to stand in for memories and provide us

with an unearned sense of understanding things, past and present. Thus, we find that while the camera often has the ability to reflect aspects of personal significance and remembrance, such perspectives are frequently implicated in powerful projections of a cultural image.

Throughout the early twentieth century, the camera was used as a tool with which Euro-Canadian representatives could successfully bring the image of an Inuit *Other* into a sphere of national surveillance and control. Along with the popular acceptance of scientific reasoning built around ‘documentary’ images, attitudes concerning social development, race and national identity were becoming established throughout the Western world. Such attitudes provided photography with a powerful new platform and seemingly objective agency from which to depict indigenous culture. Yet, while many nineteenth century anthropological researchers had concentrated on retrieving cultural data and archaeological artifacts of the Inuit for the purposes of study, and museum displays in particular, many in the twentieth century, such as filmmaker Robert J. Flaherty, turned to the new potentials of motion picture and sought to ‘capture’ an authentic Inuit image on film.

Flaherty’s *Nanook* and an Inuit Image

Robert Flaherty first visited the North as a prospector in 1910 at the age of 26 when he was commissioned to investigate iron ore deposits on the Nastapoka Islands off the East Coast of Hudson Bay (Condon 1989, 76). He spent much of the next decade living among the Inuit and photographing various aspects of their lives. Recognizing the potential for a full-length motion picture he devoted himself to serious filmmaking. His first motion picture was taken in 1913-14 and comprised over seventeen hours of footage. Unfortunately, the entire film was destroyed by fire shortly after his return South, and Flaherty returned to the Arctic in order to fulfill his cinematic ambitions and obligations. The resulting film became Flaherty’s silent epic, *Nanook of*

the North (1922) and is generally regarded as one of the first feature-length works of ethnographic cinematography. Flaherty prided himself with the belief that *Nanook* accurately reflected an Inuit view of their lifestyle rather than a filmmaker's interpretation of a primitive culture (Calder-Marshall 1970, 82). Indeed, through the character of 'Nanook' himself (Fig. 15), Flaherty aimed to show the 'authentic' experiences of an Inuit and attempted to present a natural and intimate portrait of Native life. Yet, the film clearly followed established conventions of expeditionary photography, not to mention 'Hollywood' pretension as it reached back to previous genres of high adventure and heroic idealism that catered to the predominantly escapist demands of a non-Inuit audience with its images of faraway lands and exotic, primitive peoples.

Commenting on the significant success of *Nanook* among non-Inuit audiences, Alan Marcus has criticized the film and questioned the validity and consequences of such popular iconographic Inuit representations. In the film, Marcus finds the Inuit as:

A people fixed in a generic white Arctic space and frozen in time...Nanook was a stereotype of the stoical, resourceful, self-reliant Inuit hunter. Yet, the ubiquitous image of the Inuit as a primitive, child-like people has arguably served to obscure unwitting deeds carried out by the *quallumaat*, the white man, and by officialdom. The question then arises: can one hide behind a photograph, behind an image, a stereotype, or will in time more images emerge which better inform the viewer?" (King and Lidchi, 192).

In recognizing the implication of such an image as 'Nanook' among 'Western' audiences, Marcus acknowledges the manipulative power of the photographic over its cultural subject, and yet it is often difficult to gauge someone like Flaherty's original intent in representing the Inuit.

Although it is widely accepted that he possessed a sincere respect for Inuit culture, Flaherty's status as filmmaker and director of an important 'Inuit image' for mass audiences is replete in significance and consequence. In attempting to determine Flaherty's motivations, Robert Christopher recalls a fragment from an autobiographical narrative originally published as

installments in the *Sunday London Referee* in 1934, in which Flaherty's aims to make the Inuit subjects understand their own filmic image is revealed:

My task now was to make Nanook understand what I intended to do. My first difficulty was that he didn't even know how to read a picture. The first pictures I showed him meant no more to him than so many curious marks. It was only when I showed him some photographs of himself which I had made as tests—I had him look at himself in the mirror, and then at the photographs—that I got him to understand what a picture meant. (King and Lidchi, 187)

In taking the time to familiarize 'Nanook' with photographs, but acknowledging the limited knowledge with which the Inuk was able to make sense of his own image, Flaherty's intentions remain obscure. Although the commercial success of *Nanook* cannot be disputed, it remains to be determined with what degree Flaherty's portrayal of Inuit culture can be considered 'documentary'. Indeed, there are other examples of twentieth century photographers whose work appear outside the conventions of documentary photography, such as the work of the Anglican Bishop, Archibald Lang Fleming, who used photography primarily to complement missionary activity in the North, but such work is generally uncharacteristic of ethnographic representations of the Inuit between 1850 and 1950.

Social and Political Development in the Arctic following World War II

Although successive influence from explorers, whalers, and itinerant traders had contributed to the 'Western' acculturation of many Inuit communities prior to the mid-twentieth century, this situation changed dramatically during and after World War II when several air bases and meteorological stations were established in the Canadian Arctic. Following the War, the United States and Soviet Union lapsed into a Cold War, which provided the North with a new and unprecedented importance. Military stations were constructed across the North American Arctic in a massive effort to establish a network of radar installations known as the Distant Early Warning, or DEW, line to detect incoming ballistic missiles from the Soviet Union. Through this

renewed military situation it became evident that national claims of ownership and sovereignty involved a responsibility to all indigenous people of the Arctic. As criticism of periodic starvation and poor living conditions became more vocal, intervention by the Canadian federal government through the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), established residential expansion, economic growth, and autonomous development. Most significant in this respect were the pre-fabricated housing projects, influx of manufactured goods, social assistance programs, and consistent health care. At the same time the federal government began initiating a series of inclusionary policies to bring the Inuit under an umbrella of national politics and living standards; a census, naming policy (Project Surname), and relocation experiments simultaneously attempted to identify northern inhabitants, address social situations, and bring the Inuit within the parameters of a Canadian citizenry. Such changes were undoubtedly beneficial to the Canadian government as permanent, centralized communities allowed easier access and better administrative facilities. It has also been shown that these policies also allowed the efficient administration of federal authority and control through government, policing, and religious institutions (Alia, 1994). It can be argued that such institutions maintained important modes of surveillance among the Inuit while supporting standards of Canadian culture and structures of assimilation. Thus, like the British colonial authority that had preceded it, the Canadian government developed policies for the development of the Arctic in an attempt to integrate and control the Inuit and bring them from a predominantly nomadic, transient, and hunting lifestyle into sedentary communities in an attempt to retain cultural and territorial control of the Arctic.

Images produced by DIAND and the National Film Board during the 1950's, particularly those by Richard Harrington, were commissioned for government promotion and national interests showing, among other things, the success of integration, forms of social assistance, and

general perspectives of evolving Inuit life (Fig. 16). These photographs are replete with signs of acculturation, and reveal the extent to which an 'Inuit image' has developed from previous anthropological perspectives that attempted to capture the unadulterated and 'authentic' Native on film. These images also expose the government's priority in retaining an image of the Inuit to align with a Westernized lifestyle and standard of living. Primarily used as propagandist images, these photographs show the renewed attention and positive attitudes directed toward the North and attempt to convey the success of government programs in improving living conditions through economic development and consumer culture. Nowhere was the potential for successful commercial enterprise more visible than in the art programs that were established progressively across the North.

Inuit Art Programs: Production and Promotion

The West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative art program that began at Cape Dorset by James Houston and Terry Ryan served a dual purpose of providing economic means for Inuit residents as well as an experimental commercial venture for Northern communities. As a young artist from Toronto, James Houston had first journeyed North to gather inspiration from the isolated communities and desolate landscape. In 1948 he collected some small carvings from a camp near Inukjuak in Arctic Quebec (Nunavik) and exhibited them the following year at the Canadian Handicrafts Guild (Canadian Guild of Crafts) in Montreal. The show was a great success and many now consider it as the dawn of contemporary Inuit art. Houston visited Cape Dorset in 1951 and was impressed by the affinity the residents there had for carving. Sponsored in part by the Canadian Guild of Crafts, the Federal Government and the Hudson's Bay Company, Houston returned in 1956 as a Northern Service Officer and Civil Administrator of West Baffin Island in

the Northwest Eskimo Co-operative to guide the development of an art program.¹⁵ Later joined by friend and fellow artist Terry Ryan, Houston established the reputation of the Co-operative program at Cape Dorset, creating international demand for Inuit sculpture and prints.

Houston returned South in 1968 following the collapse of his marriage to Alma Bardon Houston (herself a renowned expert in Inuit art and mythology), and to this day maintains strong ties to the North and Cape Dorset. Terry Ryan remains active as Director of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative (the Co-op), alternating visits between the workshop at Cape Dorset and his retail operation, Dorset Fine Arts, in Toronto. Ryan has commented of initial attempts in which “the Canadian government unwittingly and naively introduced an audience to the inevitable talent that [the Inuit] possessed in working three-dimensional sculpture and to depict a passing society in a very direct and innocent way, which was very attractive to our confused society and coincided at a time when we, as Canadians, were being very nationalistic”(Ryan 1998).

In 1961, federal government policies formed the basis of the Canadian Eskimo Arts Council that was assigned the mandate to implement programs and ensure the viability and systematic production of Inuit art. These art programs achieved at least two objectives: they furthered a federal initiative to create and develop economic self-sufficiency among the Inuit, and they formalized the natural expression and artistic talent that many Inuit exhibited working with small-scale sculpture (Gustavison, 1994). At the same time, this attempt to nurture artistic expression masked attempts of the government to appropriate aspects of Inuit culture for national agendas.

¹⁵ As the success of the Cape Dorset program became known, other art programs were established at

In the years following the establishment of the Co-op and the Canadian Eskimo Arts Council, Inuit art evolved quickly into a sustainable business venture and its artists were introduced to the fluctuating demands and motivations of a market economy. Early art programs not only instructed and supervised art production in the North, but also implemented modes of production for the Inuit while creating a viable market in the South and around the world. Art objects became an integral part of a supply line, where the artists became producers and the art a valuable commodity. Although the demand for Inuit art catered primarily to those with whom Inuit culture had a touristic appeal, Inuit art inevitably entered an art historical arena whereby critical vocabularies and connoisseurial criteria evaluated each piece on an individual basis.

Inuit art forms have intermittently flourished with rejuvenations in drawing, printmaking and sculpture. Inuit prints and drawings have gained non-Inuit popularity as collectable works through their seemingly 'naïve' or unconventional depictions of non-linear perspective and transpositions of traditional life. With popular iconography in mind, the connotative value of 'an Inuit image' in the marketing strategies of art programs and productions of a national image are seen to have been recuperated as a form of cultural commodity. Yet, although the benefits of the art programs themselves cannot be underestimated, it may be argued that contemporary Inuit art has itself simply become a product having been brought into the commercial marketplace, distributed through a network of galleries and museums, and endlessly exposed to supply-and-demand economics. In a final analysis, there are no simple answers to resolving the repercussions of government involvement in the North.

Rankin Inlet, Baker Lake, Pangnirtung, and other northern communities.

Although it has provided an important source of revenue for individuals and communities, the mass production of stereotypical Inuit art has clearly affected non-Inuit perceptions of 'an Inuit image'. The use of repetitive motifs and misleading promotional programs intent on giving the buyer a false sense of uniqueness and 'authenticity' around the art object have subjected the Inuit to a limited representation in the 'Western' world. In this chapter I have examined how such limitations have repeatedly been manifest through photographic portrayals of the Inuit. Subject to the perspectives of administrators and researchers, the Inuit have often been subject to the biased perceptions of others rather than themselves. But such a distinction between observer and subject becomes complicated when these prescribed *Others* are involved in the act of depicting their own image to an otherwise 'outside' world. It is at this point that we must examine the photographs of Peter Pitseolak and investigate the ways in which cultural identity has been inscribed within his own work.

CHAPTER 3

Negotiating Identity: Inuit Representation in the Photographs of Peter Pitseolak

People my age can never remember what I never forget.

Peter Pitseolak, People from Our Side (1975)

Peter Pitseolak was Baffin Island's first native documentary photographer.¹⁶ As an enthusiastic historian of the Seekooseelak area, he dedicated himself to depicting aspects of traditional life as well as scenes of family and friends engaged in everyday activities. Through such photographs, Pitseolak indicated the specificity of a time in the Eastern Arctic when the Inuit first began to conceive of themselves as part of a blended culture and society. In this chapter, I examine the anthropological and political contexts in which Pitseolak first witnessed formations of an Inuit *Other* through the work of other photographers and filmmakers in the Arctic. I also define those stages whereby ethnographic representations of the Inuit translated and subverted ideas of the 'Eskimo' and *Other*. Against these circumstances, I pose questions that emerge from a critical reading of the photographs, and examine how Inuit photography, and Pitseolak himself, have been constructed by dominant formations and audiences.

Pitseolak was a witness to the immense changes transforming the Arctic during the mid-twentieth century with the advance of 'Western' interventions and development. His images are engaging, in part because he shifted the dominant provenance of Euro-Canadian authority and power, to one of Native perception and control. Terry Ryan, who knew Peter Pitseolak for many years, recognized the significance of his efforts and points out the distinct position from which Pitseolak chose to depict himself and his community: "It was an interesting time and [Pitseolak] was there to depict a moment...a chosen moment at that time. Another photographer at another

¹⁶ A term used by Dorothy Harley Eber in King and Lidchi, 53.

time would have depicted a much different North” (Ryan 1998). In addition to photographing scenes of traditional life, Pitseolak also revealed complex ‘indexes of change’ through which accumulations of ‘Western’ objects indicated the extent to which Inuit culture had become seamlessly interwoven with Southern influence. Here, Pitseolak’s depictions offer a different perspective from previously biased or sanctioned displays of Inuit life. Through contexts of government intervention, the development of an art program at Cape Dorset, and a gradual implementation of ‘Western’ living standards in the North, Pitseolak’s photographs mirror the complex affects of acculturation as observed from within, rather than outside, an Inuit perspective.

Peter Pitseolak had been born into a large and powerful family. His father, Inukjuarjuk, had been widely respected as a camp leader when Pitseolak, the youngest of eight children, was born and raised in the Cape Dorset area at a time when only Inuit lived there. In his youth, Pitseolak became an accomplished hunter and distinguished himself as a competent assistant to the traders. During this time, Pitseolak often vied for jobs and leadership with his brother Pootoogook in an intensely competitive rivalry that continued well into adulthood. In 1923, Pitseolak married Annie from Lake Harbour (Kimmirut), with whom he had three daughters and four sons, although only two daughters, Udluriak (Manning) and Kooyoo (Ottochie) survived. In 1939, Annie became ill from tuberculosis and eventually died.

As boss of his camp at Keatuk, Pitseolak was the influential head of an oligarchy and enjoyed the prestige of his position as leader. Traditional Inuit society had been largely based upon a strict hierarchy of community and family members in an attempt to ensure survival and maintain balances of power within camps. Pitseolak possessed the relative affluence and respect that came from such a position, and was often regarded by others in the community as an overbearing

maverick. But the sense of power and prestige with which Pitseolak held himself were embodied in the possessions and relative wealth that he managed to accumulate during his lifetime, such as a Peterhead fishing boat (Fig. 17), hunting rifles, and a wooden home made from salvaged lumber from the *Nascopie* (Fig. 18).

But power also manifested itself in Pitseolak's self-appointed position as community historian. From an early age, he had worked on detailing a history of the Seekooseelak area. Having been taught to read and write by church missionaries at Cape Dorset, Pitseolak had formed the habit of keeping a diary of notable occurrences. He used every means of expression available to render images of traditional and contemporary life, describing people and events in notebooks written in an old form of syllabics, and also busying himself with sewing, beadwork, prints, drawings, sculpture, but perhaps most importantly, photography.

In 1941, Pitseolak was reunited with childhood friend and recent widow, Aggeok, and they soon began living together. At this time, Pitseolak began to take an active interest in photography. The legacy he left in photographs may be considered in terms of his life and work at Cape Dorset and the Eastern Arctic as a whole. Producing photographs from a wide range of activities and people within the community, Pitseolak was increasingly motivated to learn how to use his cameras skillfully, and experiment with photographic techniques and processes. His introduction to photography came during the 1930's when an apprehensive *kadluna* (white man) asked him to take a picture of a nearby polar bear. He obliged, and was instantly fascinated with the process and technique of photography. According to Terry Ryan, Pitseolak's own photographic experiments first took place in 1942 or 1943 when Harry Ford, a teenaged translator from Labrador employed by the Baffin Trading Company, gave Pitseolak his first camera (Ryan 1998). Throughout his life, Pitseolak would own six cameras obtained variously

through family members, traders, and a Catholic missionary. Often with Aggeok acting as an assistant and active collaborator, Pitseolak constantly explored photographic techniques, improvising procedures in order to overcome the numerous difficulties of taking photographs in the Arctic. Like earlier photographers, Pitseolak encountered difficulties in obtaining consistent results due to the sensitivity of equipment and film to harsh Arctic light, freezing temperatures, and fluctuations of humidity during spring thaw. He quickly became adept at improvising equipment and adapting technical elements to overcome problems, such as making a lens filter from a pair of old sunglasses to reduce the bright reflection of sunlight on the snow. Together Pitseolak and Aggeok also learned to develop film on top of a sleeping platform inside their igloo or hut using a battery-powered flashlight covered with a piece of red cloth.

Like earlier European explorers and traders, Pitseolak took many photographs as a respite from the inactivity and boredom brought about by a history of health problems. In 1946, while recuperating from tuberculosis treatments in a Winnipeg hospital Pitseolak was told that Inuit language and culture would eventually disappear as the 'white man' increasingly moved northward. Already having witnessed much change, and anticipating radical alterations to a traditional way of life, Pitseolak sought to produce a permanent record of Inuit ways. During this convalescence period in 1946-47 Pitseolak embarked upon one of his most productive periods, at which time he photographed many members of his family and members of the surrounding community (Eber in Bellman, 19).

Pitseolak often depicted scenes of family life in his photographs and portraits of the residents and personalities of Keatuk and Cape Dorset.¹⁷ These portraits reveal a personal and intimate knowledge of the sitters, offering a perspective that differs from the generic and impersonal scenes rendered by various ‘outside’ visitors (Fig. 19). During his convalescence Pitseolak took many portraits of Seekooseelak ‘personalities’ (Fig. 20), employing a simple frontal position of the camera and facing the sitters. However, in stark contrast to the stiff and contrived pose in earlier photographic representations of Inuit, Pitseolak’s subjects smile gently and seem completely natural and relaxed before the lens. However, in assuming multiple personas as camp leader, hunter, historian, and photographer, Pitseolak was afforded considerable power and influence within the community and beyond. Indeed, the very act of owning a camera and exercising the freedom to take pictures allowed Pitseolak to invoke a significant position of authority over those at Cape Dorset. Why did Pitseolak take these photographs? How did he see himself when taking the photographs? Was Pitseolak aware of how he was interpreted by his fellow Inuit, or by *quallunaat* and other Southern Canadians? Although these questions are often difficult to answer, there is a need to begin to complicate such positions of power evident in Inuit life and examine the complexity of relationships, authority, and history, as they played out in the Eastern Arctic during mid-century.

Pitseolak’s Artistic Production

Pitseolak’s versatile personality is an inherent reason why his photographs have been recognized for their particular style and significance. Although his motivations remain obscure, I examine those factors that appear to have formed the basis for Pitseolak’s images of himself and those around him. In so doing, I suggest ways in which Pitseolak used photography to situate and

¹⁷ Pitseolak moved his family and settled in Cape Dorset in 1961 so that his granddaughter Annie could

distinguish Inuit identity. In using photography as personal remembrance and self-anthropology, Pitseolak traces a heritage from his own experiences, and those of his ancestors. He also uses the camera as a means to reflect a personal history although, clearly, his photographs were intended for more than merely family snapshots. He has said that they were taken in order that future generations could look upon the vanishing traditions of the past (Pitseolak and Eber, 15). Thus, intended for the future his photographs deliberately evoke history. Yet, it is often unclear through which identity Pitseolak chose to picture himself, or those around him. His photographs encompassed both personal remembrance, as well as anthropologic testimony for mnemonic use. As both they do not readily fit into definable categories of art or contemporary anthropological study. Rather, they occupy a tenuous and negotiated space *between* categories of selfhood and cultural identity. As Pitseolak shows through his photographs, the narrative expressions of self-identity are even more complex, and full of disruptive influences and ambiguous tales. I explore the extent of some of these complexities through the following case studies.

Peter Pitseolak was clearly in a unique position to depict the changing nature of Inuit society in the Eastern Arctic at mid-century. The following case studies examine ways in which Pitseolak borrowed prior ‘Western’ conventions of representing the Inuit as an objectified subject, as well as how he altered a reading of Inuit identity through aspects of blended culture. In many ways, Pitseolak’s photographs display the fragmented predicament of contemporary Inuit selfhood through his own, often-contradictory, image. Pitseolak was undoubtedly aware of his distinct position within the community and used it to his advantage in recording aspects of traditional life, as well as displaying a modern Inuit identity deriving from a combination of cultural influences. Similarly recognizing the endlessly complex and adaptable nature of ethnic

attend school.

identity, Stuart Hall has said “brings us face to face with the increasing social diversity and plurality, the technologies of the self which characterize the modern world in which we live” (Hall 1997, 46-47). In this respect, it was particularly through his self-portraits that Pitseolak was able to reveal the increasingly mutable character of Inuit identity following World War II.

Pitseolak’s, *Self-portrait Reading*

Through his self-portraits, Pitseolak was able to transform his own outward appearance in order to correspond to a given scene and evoke an understanding of his versatile personality. Often appearing as a self-confident, affected, and slightly proud individual, he frequently portrayed himself through various incarnations as a family man, hunter, and leader (Fig. 21). Here, his photographs appear to attest to the ways with which Pitseolak was a part of two, very different worlds. While he occasionally dressed in the traditional parka of the Inuit and exemplified an image of the noble ‘Eskimo’ hunter, Pitseolak also made considerable efforts to appear comfortable within a ‘Western’ lifestyle.

In his, ‘Self-portrait Reading’ (Fig. 22), Pitseolak appears to be at ease as he reclines and examines a book.¹⁸ This photograph reflects the blended identity and economy of Pitseolak’s particular position within the community as he seemingly enjoys the privileges of camp boss and assistant to the traders. Acutely aware of his respected position at Seekooseelak, Pitseolak would also have been conscious that presenting himself within a ‘Westernized’ domestic scene, not to mention showing an affinity for activities such as reading and photography, would have made a significant impression among other Inuit of the community. Thus appearing to negotiate

¹⁸ Graburn has noted the long history of ‘reverse exoticism’ in photographs and illustrations depicting the Inuit and other Native people participating in Westernized activities. But Pitseolak figures as the apex of

‘Western’ culture on his own terms, Pitseolak would have been able to retain a persuasive and resourceful position of authority as camp leader. As well as the specific ways he has chosen to depict himself, such inferences may be understood through an analysis of the photograph’s composition.

In a technical sense, a photograph is composed from a photographer’s manipulation of light and shadow onto the medium of film. As one interested with social documentary photography, Pitseolak would have concerned himself with narrative components of the image that could be realized and understood through such manipulations. The formal components of Pitseolak’s, ‘Self-portrait Reading’ may be recognized through a reading of certain visual elements, as well as through the theoretical implications that they raise. Unfortunately, due to a lack of precise records, Pitseolak’s technical decisions regarding exposure or development times remain unknown. Nevertheless, it remains clear that Pitseolak was more than capable and, like any serious photographer, would have composed each scene in a specific and deliberate way.

In his, ‘Self-portrait Reading,’ Pitseolak has chosen himself as the model, appearing poised on a chair, dressed in ‘Western’ clothes, and engaged in the act of reading. The scene is essentially divided into bands of light and dark through which different elements have been highlighted for the purpose of narrative content. The eye is naturally drawn to points of highest contrast, and in this scene the viewer is essentially directed toward three things: Pitseolak’s head, the clock placed behind him, and the book he is holding. It is possible to view each of these three objects as separate and highly evocative elements of ‘Western’ style and civilization. Pitseolak’s hair, for example, has been cut short and styled, and, as such, was highly unusual for Inuit men at this

that change in which such images ceased to be viewed as ironic novelty, and instead became implicated in

time. The head is further individualized and resolved through the use of nuanced shadows and highlights, while the lowered position and downcast eyes appear to convey a sense of self containment and convey Pitseolak's attention toward the book, rather than the camera itself. The clock is obviously a mechanism that is highly suggestive of 'Western' culture, and Pitseolak has deliberately included it in order to denote his immersion within a 'Western' lifestyle. Similarly, the book is an object taken from non-Inuit life and imparts Pitseolak's inquisitive and knowledgeable nature. Each of these three important elements indicates aspects of a dynamic and blended culture of which Pitseolak was a part in the North of mid-century.

In addition to including objects, Pitseolak's intentions are perceived through the physical positioning of his body. With his right arm set upon his upper right thigh, Pitseolak partially conceals his hand in a likely attempt to hide the automatic shutter release of the camera. This is a technique often employed by photographers when taking self-portraits, and is interesting to note with a photographer such as Pitseolak. In obscuring the use of a photographic device, Pitseolak's social documentary intentions may be witnessed through his attempts at maintaining an appearance of 'objective' realism. Through such elements, we see that Pitseolak was a man of opposing worlds, having the influence of two distinct cultures as they merged during at a critical moment in Arctic development. In assuming such roles with ease, Pitseolak chose to negotiate his own identity between these cultures, while he often took a slightly different perspective when taking pictures of others.

the cultural reformation of an Inuit identity.

Aggeok with Accordion

Pitseolak's portrait of his second wife, 'Aggeok with Accordion' (Fig. 23), is a photograph full of ambiguities that refer to Pitseolak's depiction of a blended culture in the North. Similarly built upon a composition of nuanced light and shadow, this photograph is a warm and sensitive portrait that reveals Pitseolak's ability to capture a sense of the natural spontaneity of a scene. Aggeok's relaxed pose and expression while being framed by 'Western' cultural objects captures the incongruity of life at Seekooseelak at the time. Roland Barthes has identified an intriguing aspect of photography that emerges from the juxtaposition of two incongruous elements, and in this photograph the dominance of the accordion, as well as other cultural objects around the room, such as the clock, jar, and tin box on the shelf, as well as the guitar hanging on the back wall, contrast sharply with Aggeok's facial features and traditional dress. Such elements clearly indicate the extent to which a domestic scene was composed entirely of articles from two distinct cultures that came together and, rather than appearing merely as tokens of interest, actually formed the basis of their lives.

Whereas previous colonial images of the Inuit essentially presented an obscured and fragmented subject, Pitseolak often highlighted the character of his sitters. In this portrait, Pitseolak reveals his wives individuality through a manipulation of the shadows that accentuate her hairline, cheekbones, and nose distinguishing the head and face. Differing from earlier anthropological conventions, Pitseolak reveals Aggeok's disposition and depth of character through having her fill the entire frame of the photograph.¹⁹ Furthermore, a portrait of someone with open eyes is often said to reveal the sitter's personality by allowing the viewer to 'gaze' into the soul. Historically, the Inuit have been photographed within an ethnographic model that

typically highlighted areas of cultural interest, emphasizing markings on the body and detailing clothing in order to denote a cultural otherness, such as that evident in A.P. Low's, 'Aivillik woman Niviatsinaq ("Shoofly Comer") in gala dress' (1904) (Fig. 24). In Low's photograph, there is a stark contrast between the richly detailed subject and concealed background. Although Niviatsinaq appears as an intriguing and even imposing figure, the photograph is clearly formed around ethnographic stylistic conventions, with the body displayed as an inert object of study rather than an individualized subject. Pitseolak's portrait of Aggeok, on the other hand, warmly reveals a depth of personality through her intimate expression and gesture, as well as sitting among personal objects and possessions. In Pitseolak's photograph we see an engaged individual through whom we are able to determine elements that make up her persona as well as her situation within a blended cultural context.

It is interesting to note how in his, 'Self-portrait Reading,' Pitseolak has chosen to depict himself as an Inuit in a predominantly 'Western' mode of style and dress, thus *within* a 'Western' cultural context. While in 'Aggeok with Accordion,' he has arranged elements of Western society and culture *within* an Inuit context. This picture of Aggeok again immerses the Inuit subject within a seemingly familiar and unproblematic context of acculturation. However, the ways with which Pitseolak was able to separate and distinguish an image of the self and other was not always so neutral.

Peter Pitseolak with Lake Harbour Police Officer

'Peter Pitseolak with Lake Harbour Police Officer' (1959) (Fig. 25) was a photograph taken during the period of Pitseolak's incarceration at Lake Harbour that arose from a dramatic clash

¹⁹ This being said, it should be acknowledged that the photograph's unusual dimensions appear to suggest a

over cultural propriety, Inuit custom, and Canadian law. This photograph shows Pitseolak standing next to an officer of the RCMP stationed at Lake Harbour, and although it is unattributed, it nevertheless illustrates a complex relationship between an image of self and other that Pitseolak has assumed. Taken in 1959, this photograph was taken following Pitseolak's trial and conviction for engaging in improper sexual relations with a minor (Eber 1997, 77-81). In his defense, Pitseolak claimed that he and the young woman were truly in love and according to Inuit social norms he was entitled to take another wife at any time. However, the young woman's parents objected to their relationship and complained to James Houston, Cape Dorset's government administrator at the time. As the government's sole representative, Houston rebuked Pitseolak for his actions and was obligated to proceed with an official enquiry and impose sentence upon a charge of statutory rape. Later, Houston was to explain that the decision to bring charges against Pitseolak was a difficult and painful one, full of consequence for relations between Inuit and *qallunaat* (1995, 262). For Pitseolak, the incarceration was a humiliating experience, and his reputation as a leader suffered greatly as a result. Following his period of probation at Lake Harbour, Pitseolak returned to Cape Dorset a chastened man. With the guilty verdict, he lost a degree of standing in the community as Houston had indisputably revealed that Southern laws precluded traditional Inuit practice. The Houston's ability to remove Pitseolak from the community impressed upon many of Cape Dorset's residents the shifting balances of power in the North.

The importance of this act and the complex arrangement of the two figures in 'Peter Pitseolak with Lake Harbour Police Officer,' may be clarified through an examination using French philosopher, Jacques Derrida's notions of *différance*. Typically, *différance* propels a signifier

manipulation of the actual print itself.

into an arena where meaning is allowed to shift and slide through endless postponements of meaning, and reach a point where it ultimately becomes an unknown quantity. In this photograph, Pitseolak's Inuit identification may be perceived through the distorted and slightly obtuse lens of Derrida's *différance*, and like the word itself, come to occupy a slightly ambiguous space *between* two definitive and blended associations. Through *différance*, we see the complex interweavings of self and other through relationships that are established through the photograph. In 'Peter Pitseolak with Lake Harbour Police Officer,' the two men appear to be culturally very different, yet physically they share a similarly imposing stance and expression. The resemblance of their caps even suggests a position of authority from which they have power over respective domains; the RCMP officer represents the establishment of Canadian law in the North, whereas Pitseolak is the camp boss at Keatuk.

Yet, although the two men appear to share powerful similarities, they are undeniably diverse. An axis of difference separates them within the picture plane as it unites them. Here we may see the division of self and other through a mirroring of form. Pitseolak stands beside an officer of the law, a man representing the new power of the North. Culturally the two men are separated by superficial differences, such as the colour of their skin, or their style of clothing. But on another level, they are divided by the implications of their difference; their history, culture and lifestyle. Although the casual pose and relaxed expressions of the two men appears to contradict this understanding, we are reminded that their relationship to one another is that of guard and convict. The officer's hat angled and set high upon his head, the composed formality of his hands placed behind his back appears to indicate this uneasy relationship. Clearly, this is not a common image of incarceration or imprisonment. However, this photograph illustrates the extent to which Pitseolak held himself as an equal, and speaks to the ways in which he saw himself as part of a distinct but unified culture in the North.

Pitseolak's photographic production possessed a wide range of possibilities as he sought to combine an interest in photography with a reputation as an Inuit historian. These two elements of his persona were irretrievably linked; as an amateur social documentary photographer, Pitseolak complemented a desire to record a history of Seekooseelak with his respected position of historian. Through them both, Pitseolak created an active agency that allowed him to assume a position from which to compose powerful images. Similar to the ways in which he constructed, and became, the subject in those photographs examined above, Pitseolak produced other work in which his understanding of ethnographic conventions and the social uses of photography are abundantly clear. Through such images, Pitseolak presented a view of Inuit history and identity as he further established his own influential position as an artist and leader.

Staged Photographs

Peter Pitseolak frequently maintained precise direction over those he photographed. He often told sitters what to wear and how to pose in front of the camera.²⁰ 'Mary Ezekiel Fishing Through Ice' (Fig. 26), is an example of Pitseolak's attempt at reconstructing traditional scenes for the camera. Mary was the wife of Aggeok's son Ashevak, and Peter Pitseolak asked her to sit for this scene, arranging her pose to correspond to traditional methods of ice fishing. The parka's amaut (pouch or hood) is seen draped to one side in order to shade the ice-hole from the reflection of direct sunlight, and she moves the lure in one hand as she prepares the spear in the other. The scene evokes one of the most important Inuit customs and is understood to be a mnemonic representation of traditional Inuit practice. Although Mary and other sitters were not

²⁰ It is perhaps fitting that Pitseolak's archive is presently housed in the Notman Archives of the McCord Museum, for its namesake, the Victorian society photographer, William Notman, was also renowned for 'staged' reconstructions using painted studio backgrounds and architectural props. Like Notman, Pitseolak produced a vast inventory of photographs through the careful orchestration of his sitter's pose, costume, and activity in representative scenes of everyday life.

always enthusiastic about sitting for the temperamental Pitseolak, they nevertheless understood and respected his attempt to convey such scenes of traditional life.

'Retelling' Myth

James Houston often encouraged Pitseolak to reproduce stories unique to the Inuit. Under Houston's guidance, Pitseolak produced a series of photographs that recounted the famous Inuit myth of *Taktillitak*, a hunter who became stranded on a small island and prepared to die before eventually finding his way back home to his family (Fig. 27). While this exercise demonstrated the considerable depth with which Pitseolak was able to manipulate the medium of photography to display scenes from Inuit legend, it also showed the extent to which Pitseolak was able to exploit traditional elements for a non-Inuit audience. In this sense, we are unsure whether Pitseolak's photographs emerged from a spontaneous desire to record Inuit tradition, or whether they were intended to appeal to a more touristic perception of Native life. The ambiguity of such a position, combined with the significant influence of Houston and the Co-op creates a space of uncertainty around Pitseolak's artistic production, an uncertainty that is further implicated and problematized through his occasional use of photographs as templates for graphic work.

Photographic Templates

Pitseolak's use of photographic templates extended his use of photography as a guide for graphic and sculptural work. As the success of the Co-op became realized and demand for artistic works steadily increased, Pitseolak began to use photographs as stencils with which to duplicate evocative scenes onto paper and ivory (Fig. 28). Although they appear to diminish the integrity of his artistic production, these templates further demonstrate the flexibility with which Pitseolak was able to use his photographs. Further suggestive of his mutable resourcefulness and blended cultural references, these templates show the degree to which Pitseolak was willing to

adapt his work to the context at hand. Indeed, Eber has found that his use of photographic images in this way “helped Peter Pitseolak accomplish what was most important to him. They helped him to make Inuit life ‘real’—that was his expression—to render true-to-life representations of the Inuit world” (Eber in King and Lidchi, 57).

Pitseolak was encouraged by the success of the Co-op art program at Cape Dorset and became a prolific experimenter with other forms and media, as witnessed through the increasing diversity of his artistic production, including drawings, watercolours, prints, lithographs, and sculpture.²¹ As an artist and historian Pitseolak was selective in representing certain aspects of Inuit life he believed worth preserving. Using common motifs from hunting, clothing, and tradition, Pitseolak was able to perpetuate certain connotative images of his own life as well as the social interactions of Seekooseelak residents. However, by reviewing those strategies established by earlier cultural interlopers, we may see that Pitseolak’s choice of what *not* to illustrate is as revealing as those things he did. For instance, he chose not to photograph scenes of widespread privation, or the effects of rising crime and alcoholism among Inuit communities during his life. Instead, it often appears that Pitseolak reveled in the relative comfort and affluence of his position at Keatuk and Cape Dorset, and photography was one way he could maintain and exercise such privilege. Through his artistic production, Pitseolak’s representation of Inuit life emerged as much from self-perception as from documentary, for he wrote his existence through

²¹ Peter Pitseolak was also supervising artist of the great club *Anaotalok*, the Mace of the Northwest Territories, designed by James Houston in 1955 to represent the power and authority of the Government of the Northwest Territories and was made from whalebone, copper, gold, musk ox, and oak from an old exploration ship. Pitseolak and Aggeok also provided the music for a National Film Board short film entitled *Animation from Cape Dorset* (1973). Although the majority of his oeuvre were photographs, recent research has found 574 drawings produced while printmaking was being taught at the Co-op, and a total of 7 drawings, 33 watercolours, 1 painting, 9 stonecut and stencil prints, 9 lithograph prints, 4 engraved prints, and 4 large sculptures presently in the collections of the Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC). Although the CMC possesses the largest collection of Pitseolak’s work, other paintings, drawings, and sculpture may be found in collections around the world.

a present of memories, dreams, and daily life. Stuart Hall has written: “What is more is that identity is always in part a narrative, always in part a kind of representation. It is always within representation. Identity is not something which is formed outside and then we tell stories about it. It is that which is narrated in one’s own self” (Hall 1997, 49). Through such accounts, Pitseolak built a reputation that was firmly established following his death with the publication of People from Our Side.

‘People from Our Side’

Much of our knowledge surrounding events in Peter Pitseolak’s life and work stems directly from the writings of Montreal-based writer and researcher, Dorothy Harley Eber who collaborated with him on a number of occasions. In numerous articles and publications, Eber has consistently drawn much-needed attention and recognition to Pitseolak’s work and enriched our understanding of its significance. Eber first met Peter Pitseolak in 1971 as a result of research she was conducting on a kinship chart of Inuit artists at Cape Dorset. Over a two-week period in the spring of 1973, she embarked upon an intensive interview session with him that totaled over 150 hours. Consisting of a translated syllabic manuscript written by Pitseolak, and narrative drawn from interviews, the resulting information provided the text of People from Our Side, published in 1975, two years after Pitseolak’s death. People from Our Side established Pitseolak’s reputation as a photographer and an Inuit historian in the South and around the world. The book documents Pitseolak’s memories of his childhood and growing up in Seekooseelak. Through nostalgic reminiscence, the story chronicles relationships, community events, social structure and relations, using recurring themes connected to hunting, family, and community migrations. Perhaps most importantly the story recounts the gradual progression of non-Inuit influence and intervention in the Eastern Arctic through trade, religion, and a changing social infrastructure.

Through People from Our Side, we may analyze Pitseolak's attempt to frame certain aspects of his past and that of 'his' people. Indeed, the title appears to suggest an important distinction: People from *Our Side*. Here, boundaries are in place and clearly identify those within and without. Implicitly establishing a specific relationship between 'us' and 'them,' the title creates a spatial dichotomy and rhetorical position of identity. In such an arrangement of inclusion and exclusion, Pitseolak defines a reserved cultural space, and a difference through which he identifies, and includes, himself. This inclusionary distinction is important, for Pitseolak clearly identifies himself, not merely as an Inuk, but also as a *Seekooseelakmiut*.

Although Clifford clearly discusses the implications of someone from 'outside' coming into an isolated community, there are distinct parallels between Pitseolak's work and previous ethnographer's, as I have pointed out, he attempted historical and social extensions through his photography. Similarly, through the text of People from Our Side, Pitseolak moves beyond the prescribed role of the 'Eskimo' and *Other*, into a tenuous position of authority as a local historian, possessing a representational authority capable of accurately depicting an Inuit community (Fig. 29). As Clifford has pointed out the role of the ethnographer, as cultural interloper, signifies a profoundly powerful position: "...all photographs assert presence—that of the scene before the lens; it also suggests another presence—that of the ethnographer actively composing [a cultural] reality." Clifford goes on to examine the power of the image in reinforcing the relationship of observer and subject and translating it through the evidence of so many fieldwork photographs into a concise and metaphysical equation: "'You are there...because I was there'" (Clifford 1988, 22).

'Peter Pitseolak: Inuit Historian of Seekooseelak'

Although People from Our Side first presented Pitseolak's life and work to the world, his reputation was further established through a series of small exhibitions in the 1970's, and a major retrospective of his photographs and drawings at the McCord Museum (now the McCord Museum of Canadian History) in Montreal between January 9th and March 9th in 1980. The exhibition, 'Peter Pitseolak: Inuit Historian of Seekooseelak,' was organized in cooperation with the National Museums of Canada and The Canada Council, with additional works loaned from the National Museum of Man and the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative. Stanley Triggs, curator of the exhibition, provided a dubious comment that Pitseolak's photographs were "extremely valuable because they document the life of a community at a certain point in time and were taken by a member of the community itself—extremely rare in any society" (Eber 1977, 70). The exhibition was subsequently shown at the Canadian Museum of Man (now the Canadian Museum of Civilization), and then in a two-year travelling exhibition that toured thirty-one settlement schools in the Canadian Arctic.

There was an enthusiastic reception to the publication and display of Pitseolak's work. As curator David Bellman wrote, the exhibition was of "unparalleled historical significance". Indeed, an analysis of People from Our Side and 'Peter Pitseolak: Inuit Historian of Seekooseelak' forms the basis of my examination of the ways in which Pitseolak's work has been exposed and circulated among Southern audiences. Combined, the book and exhibition may be seen as an attempt to bring Pitseolak into a larger canon of Native artists and eulogize his work, highlighting it against a recuperation of Inuit cultural life that had previously been overlooked and obscured. In many ways, one may appreciate such attempts to legitimate Inuit artists and bring them into the sphere of a dominant art economy, due to the art's immediate affect upon Inuit people's economic welfare. In this respect, it may also be assumed that there

was a similar attempt to present Pitseolak's photographs themselves as privileged artistic and historical objects, but the methods of such a reassessment are now questionable.

Cultural institutions such as museums shape the way in which knowledge is gathered and disseminated and through which our experience of the past is constructed. As a museum devoted to collecting, preserving, and exhibiting aspects of Canadian history, the McCord Museum possesses a powerful role in determining and subsequently framing a conception of Canadian history.²² The appeal in Pitseolak's case emerged from the fact that these photographs are visually striking images of an Inuit community, taken at a specific moment of social change, in addition to the fact that an Inuk chose to take the pictures and display them as historical documents. Of course, to a certain extent Pitseolak has recorded the features of this history with a wonderful vibrancy and richness which remains enthralling, but the presentation of this material and the lack of other perspectives or contrary opinions provided a misleading account of Inuit life at the time. It may be seen that Pitseolak himself, as Inuit, became implicated in cultural appeal rather than upon the significance of the photographs themselves. Thus, in displaying Pitseolak's work in such a way that obscured the painful and complex processes of acculturation transforming Inuit life, the exhibition failed to provide a sufficient context to Pitseolak's images.

Although Pitseolak himself deliberately staged many of his images in order to correspond to a conventional understanding of the Inuit subject, he also often went beyond the dominant

²² The collections of the McCord Museum of Canadian History encompass a broad range of fields in Canadian History: Ethnology and archaeology; costume and textiles; paintings, prints, decorative arts, and the Notman Photographic Archives that house Peter Pitseolak's photographs. The Notman Archives contains over 750,000 historical photographs and represents one of the most extensive photographic collections in Canada.

stereotypes and implicit exoticism of earlier representational precedents in an attempt to reveal more complex identifications of the self and other. As such, the individuality that he reflected often emerged in direct opposition to the ways in which of earlier 'Western' perspectives and representations had been established upon the anonymity of the Native subject. Pitseolak's perspective remains complex as he appears to occupy a tentative position, both as cultural 'insider', and 'outside' observer. But, as an amateur photographer and historian, Pitseolak relinquished a dependency upon figurative conventions and suggested new ways of perceiving and understanding the nuances of Inuit selfhood. In this respect, Hall has probed questions of cultural identity and writes that the old logic that formed the basis of identity has gone, giving way to more intricate and interweaving positions upon which character is based. Hall recalls at least two distinct amendments for a definition of *representation* in his essay 'New Ethnicities' (1989). "Representation," he writes, "can be used, on the one hand, simply as another way of talking about how one images a reality that exists 'outside' the means by which things are represented: a conception grounded in a *mimetic* theory of representation. On the other hand the term can also stand for a very radical displacement of that unproblematic notion of the concept of representation." I have shown how Peter Pitseolak's photographs are inherently implicated in the latter definition.

Pitseolak's sense of himself must be understood to have been formed, in part, by the continual impressions of difference he must have experienced as one placed at a particular point of divergence between two cultures. His photographs are complicated, rich, and engrossing as they extend and transform a perception of Inuit culture in the late twentieth century, and present a culture adapting to the relentless forces of change. Clearly, Pitseolak extended the use of the camera and conventions of documentary photography to depict Inuit culture in a specific way, and in turn contributed to the ways in which Inuit people could be perceived. Through a subtle

inversion of the medium and a positioning of the subject, Pitseolak enacted a profound reversal of the authoritative stance between subject and observer. As such, the power of cultural representation was seized back from that succession of dominant interlopers—explorers, itinerant traders, whalers, anthropologists, and bureaucrats—and placed into the hands of the ‘subject’ itself. In this respect, we may best understand Pitseolak’s self-identification, not as a unilateral process, but rather a negotiated and mediated perception.

CONCLUSION

The Reciprocity of Re-vision

But the photograph tells me to invert this idea; it reminds me that it's my present that is foreign, and that the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time.

Salman Rushdie, Imaginary Homelands (1991)

In this thesis, I have discussed the implications of representing a cultural image through a comparison of the work and techniques of Peter Pitseolak to prior dominant formations of representing the Inuit as a Native *Other*, and subsequent ethnographic strategies that evolved from photography's introduction and development in the Eastern Arctic. In my initial analysis, I examined how representations of the Inuit emerged as a historically contingent subject that generally served colonialist interventions used to undermine and control foreign culture.

I then regarded the extent to which photography was introduced into the Arctic and extended earlier paradigms, representing the Inuit as an anthropological subject that similarly suggested connotations of cultural *Otherness*. As a result of early exploration, organized expeditions, scientific surveys, ethnographic investigation and nationalistic promotion, images of the Inuit and Arctic have been manifest in distinct ways that constructed the Inuit *Other* through non-Inuit impressions of exoticism, curiosity, or disregard. These various aspects of representing the Inuit provide a valuable context through which to better understand and appreciate Peter Pitseolak's own work and perspectives.

In my final analysis, I examined the ways in which Pitseolak simultaneously drew upon such prior paradigms of Inuit representation, yet also managed to subvert them through a display of Inuit individuality and an inversion of the self and other that allowed for a negotiated and

sophisticated Inuit identity. Pitseolak's images remain a powerful testament to the adaptability, development, and survival of contemporary Inuit life. Suspended somewhere between past and present, and in anticipation of the future, Pitseolak's photographs are important evocations of memory, through which he has defined the limits of cultural awareness. Whether he realized it or not, Pitseolak initiated an act of tremendous empowerment, inverting the traditional means by which the Inuit had been defined as a cultural *Other* through history. This was a cultural empowerment as his photographs provide an important image to the Inuit of today who struggle to define themselves within the expanding contexts of Nunavut and Canada.

The emergence of the Territory of Nunavut proves to be a landmark in political relations between the Canadian government and Native peoples. Indeed, Nunavut is an important step toward reunion and re-identification for it brings to the Inuit the ability to control their own destinies, forge their own histories, and transform their own lives. It brings with it a promise of remembering the past while focusing on contemporary realities and the demands of a competitive social economy. Peter Pitseolak's photographs will doubtless be an integral part to that process already begun of reclaiming cultural territory along with the initiatives of self-government and emerging concepts of self-identity. Yet, there are many social problems still to be overcome: suicide, teenage pregnancy, depression, drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment, and poor health continue to plague many communities in the Eastern Arctic region. The Inuit embark upon a unique but difficult venture to reintegrate their communities with a strong sense of pride and embrace the demands of self-government.

Through a rich history, many contemporary Inuit artists choose to draw inspiration, revisiting their pasts in order to dismantle narratives that have prescribed them. In this way, artists are able to construct new identities that reflect the lives of their ancestors, as well as their own. Like Peter

Pitseolak, today's generation of Inuit photographers and filmmakers, such as Zacharias Kunuk, Simeonie Keenainak, and Pitseolak's own grandson, Jimmy Manning, address contemporary issues as they continue to negotiate and integrate new formations of identity and question the assumptions of others (Fig. 30). Manning has commented on the value of Pitseolak's photographic record, as well as the emerging importance of historical photographs to Inuit communities: "People are feeling today that [Peter Pitseolak] wasn't just doing it for himself. He not only documented these people. Now today we can go back and see what he had done. No one else was doing it. Some families want to research what their relatives looked like" (Manning 1998).²³

Peter Pitseolak's photographs may ultimately be understood through an appreciation of the past and an acknowledgment of the irreparable changes inflicted upon the Inuit through history. Through this process and evoking the power of memory that we may begin to heal the wounds of the past and replace a sense of loss. Thus, placed at the intersection of change, Pitseolak's photographs become a important conduit of identity, and thus preserving the past they may now shape the future, permitting the Inuit to repossess aspects of personal history and cultural identity.

²³ Jimmy Manning is the Assistant Manager and Photographer of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-op in Cape Dorset.

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Figure 1. Aggeok Pitseolak, *Peter Pitseolak with '122' Camera*, c.1946
(Courtesy Canadian Museum of Civilization/McCord)

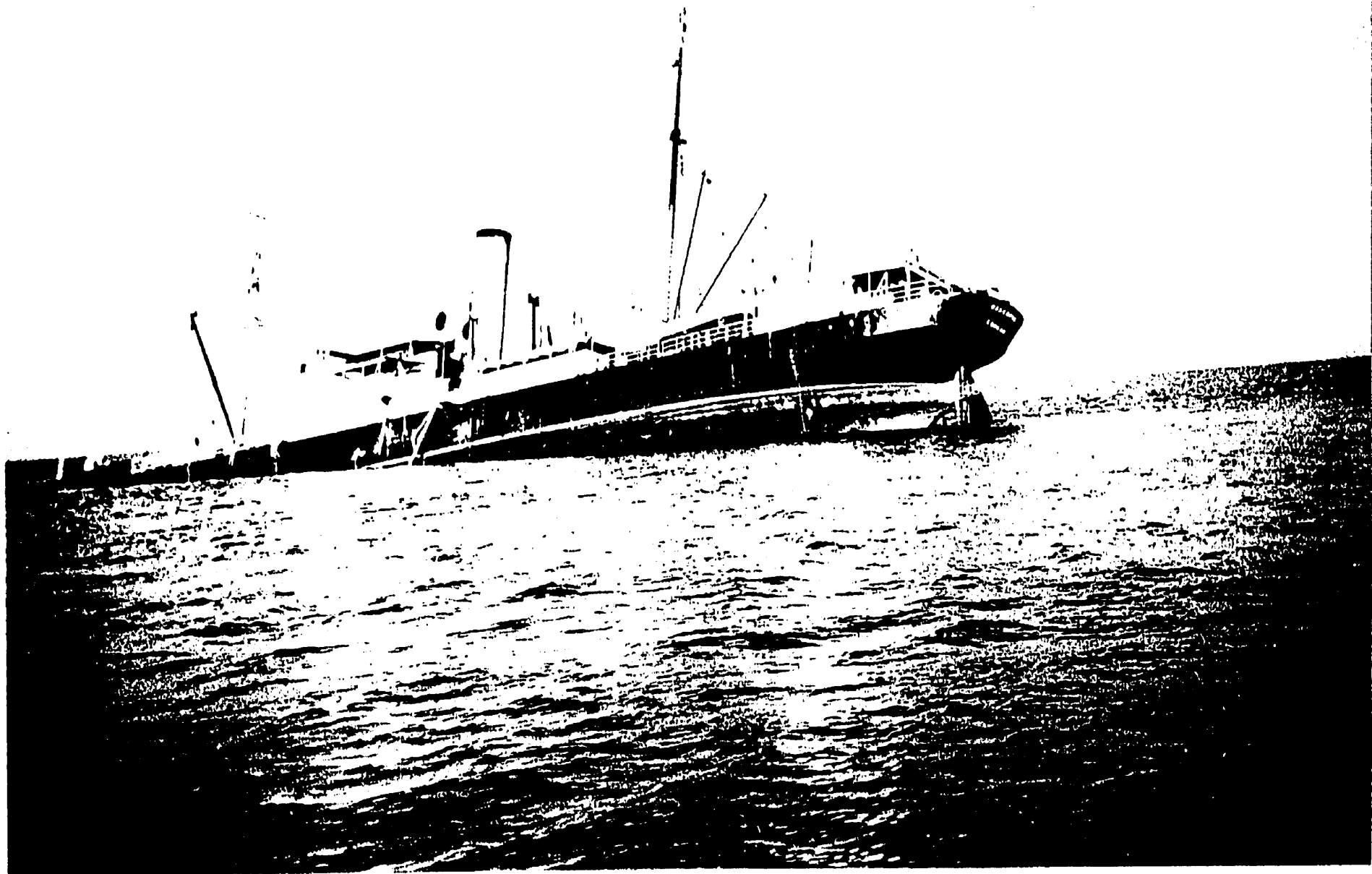


Figure 2. Peter Pisolak, *Nascopie Sinking*, 1947
(Courtesy CMC/McCord)

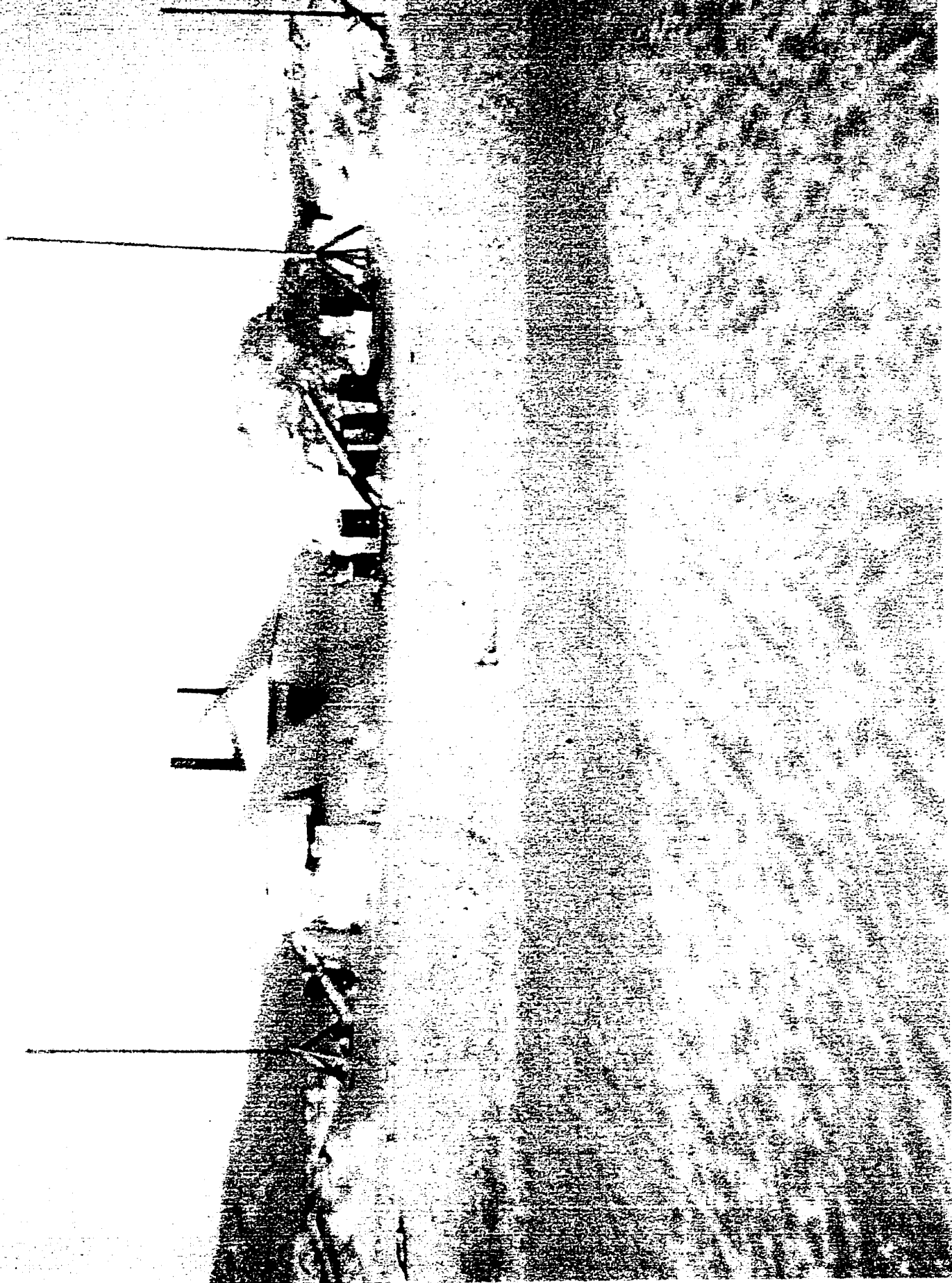


Figure 3. Peter Pitseolak, *Kentuk House (Winter)*, c.1947 (Courtesy CMC/McCord)

Warhafftige Contrafey einer wilden Frauen mit ire Tochterlein / gefunden in der Landtschafft Noua terra genaht / vnd gehn Antioff gebracht / vnd von meniglich also offentlich gesehen worden / vnd noch zusehen ist.

In diesem M.D. LXVI. Jar / ist zu Antioff an dem Meer in Schiffe auß Teulande ein wilde Frau / ein kleine Person / (Sumpre fremde Scherlein) vnd ist gefundt vnd beyde gewest / wie diese Figur anzeigt / vnd sind gefundt worden in Terra noua / welches ein neue Landtschafft ist / In etlichen vergangenen Jahren / von den Französischen vnd Portugalesen erst erfunden / vnd ist diese Frau mit irem Mann vñ Kindlein von den Französischen die auß dieser Landtschafft in Schiffe auß gehet / vnd zu Land kommen sind / vnd fremde abentheur gesucht / angetroffen / vnd ist der Mann mit einem Pfeil durch seinen Leib geschossen worden / danoch wolt er sich nicht gefangen geben / sonder hat sich wäntlich zur gegend / vnd ward in diesem schwarzdal / von einem andern Französischen mit einem schlaßschwert in der seiten hart verwundet / da man er sein eygen blut auß der seiten in sein hand / vnd lechete das auß seiner hand / vnd stellet sich noch grimziger zur gegend / dann zuvor. Endlich ward er in sein blut der

massen gehawen vnd verandt / das er zu der Erden fiel / vnd starb auch an dieser wanden. Dieser Mann war zwölff schuch lang / vñ hett in zwölff tagen zwölff personen vmb besche mit seiner eygen hand / Franzosen vnd Portugalesen / dieselbigen zu essen / dann sie kein lieber stoff essen dann Menschen stoff. Vnd als sie die Frauen vberkommen herten / stellet sie sich als ob sie gar raunde / vnd vnfinnig were gewest / vmb ihr Kind / da sie verlassen solt / diemal die Schiffknechte sie hinweg vnd zu schiff fürten wolten / dann sie das Kind so lieb hat / das sie lieber ir Leben wolt verlieren / dann das Kind verlassen. Als sie sich nun so vnfinnig stellet / lieffen sie ir ein wenig nach / da gieng sie an den ort / da sie ir Kind verstedt hat / da man sie besser zu selben dann vordien / da namen sie die Frauen mit irem Kind / vnd fürten sie hinweg / vnd niemandt von den Franzosen künde ein einigs wort von ir verstehen / oder auch mit ir durch wort reden. Item hat ir ein s. Motten so vil geliebt / das sie bekandt hat / das sie von vilen Menschen gefressen. Ir kleider sind von Scherlein gemacht / auß die weiß wie diese figur anzeigt. Die ma. zeichen die sie im Angesicht hat / sind ganz blau / wie Himmelblau / vnd die machen die Mann irn Weibern / darbey sie sie erkennen / dann soust lauffen sie vnder einander wie das Dipe / vnd man mag die zeichen mit einem ley warent wider abehän. Diese zeichen machen sie mit safft von einerley frucht / das da im Lande wechset. Ir Leib ist gelb / braun / als die halben Motten / Die Frau ist 20. Jar alt gewesen / wie



Ir gefangen worden / in 66. Jar im August / da Kind 7. Jar. Legt uns Gott die Allerdarigen danken für irne wachheit / da er uns in diesem War. erlöset hat / das wir nicht so gar wilde Leute vñ Menschen freier sind / als in dieser Landtschafft sein / da die Weib gefangen / vnd hett auß gehet / vnd ist gar wider von dem rechten Gott wissen / sondern schier dreyer dann das Dipe leben / Gott wolle sie auch zu selben ort beschutz beuren / Amen.

Gedruckt zu Juggergangh / bey dem Wittenbergischen Buchdruckerey.

Figure 5. Anonymous, Augsburg Handbill, 1567. (Zentralbibliothek, Zürich)



Figure 6. John White, *English Sailors in a Skirmish with Eskimo*, 1577.



**Figure 7. Abraham Hondius, *Arctic View*, c.1690.
(Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)**



Figure 8. Elisha Kirkall, *Whaling Scene*, c.1710.

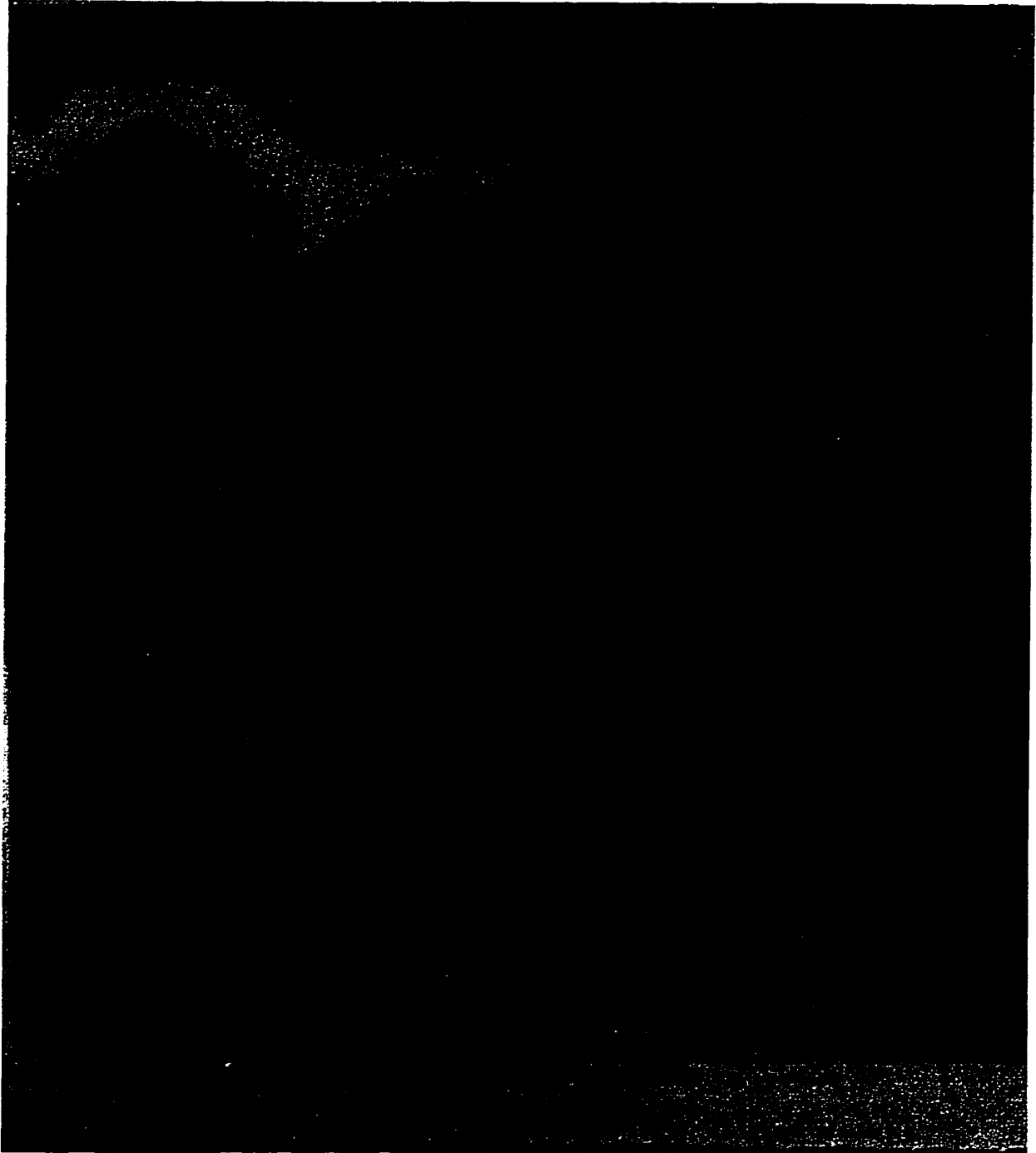


Figure 10. Sir John Ross, *Eskimo with Peg-Leg and Wives*, c.1830.

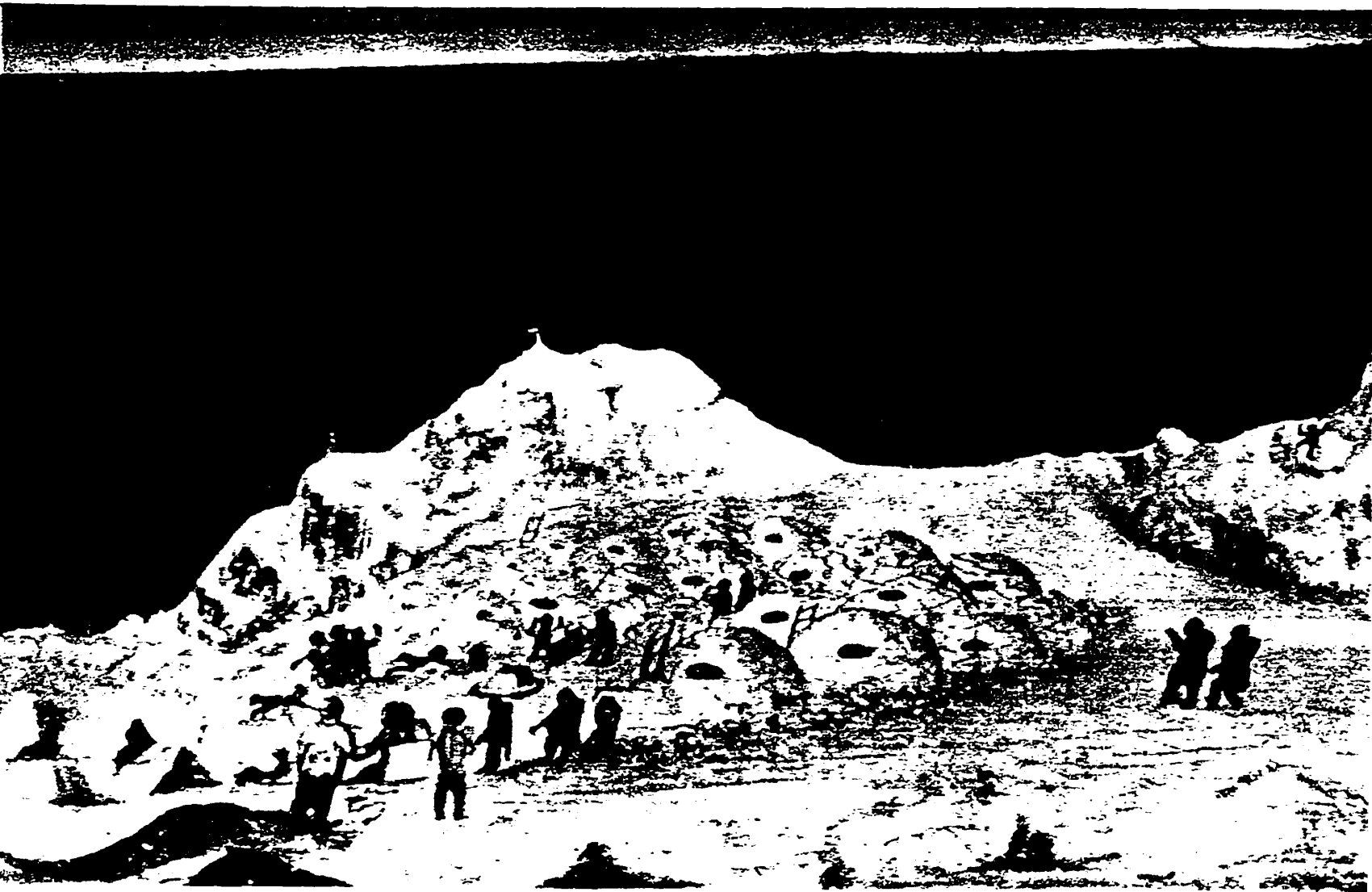


Figure 11. Sir John Ross, *Eskimo Village*, c.1830.
(Scott Polar Institute)



**Figure 12. George Simpson McTavish, *Inuit in front of snowhouses*, c.1865.
(National Archives of Canada)**



Figure 13. George Comer, *Group of Aivillik Inuit inside snowhouse*, c.1905
(New Bedford Whaling Museum)

Figure 14. A.P. Low, *Interior of a Snowhouse—Fullerton Harbour, 1903-04*
(Canadian Museum of Civilization)

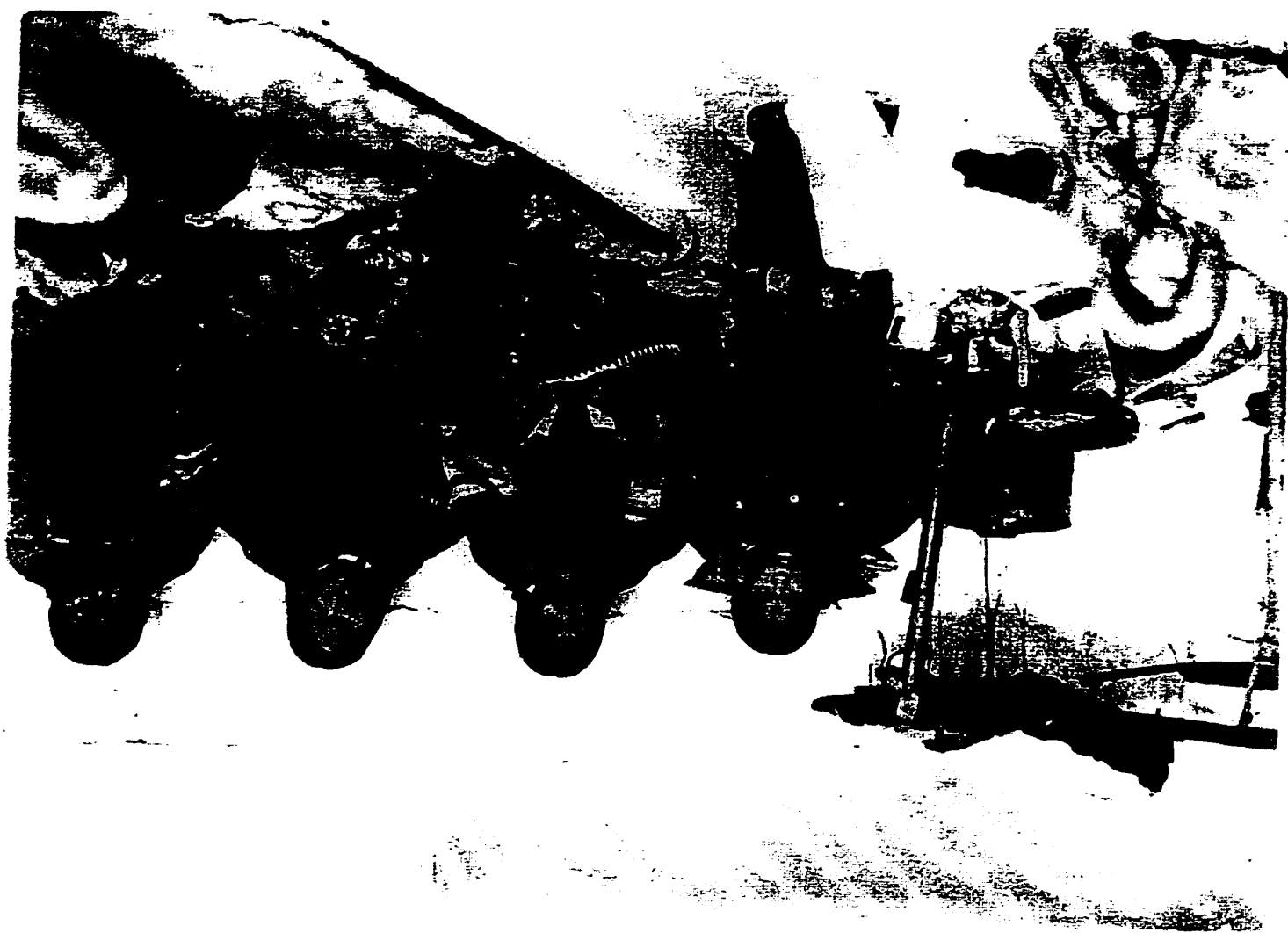




Figure 15. Robert J. Flaherty, *Nanook the Harpooner*, 1920-21.



Figure 16. Richard Harrington, *Inuit Woman Signing for Family Allowance*, 1949-50.
(National Archives of Canada)



**Figure 17. Aggeok Pitseolak, *Putting Peter Pitseolak's Boat into the Water*, n.d.
(Courtesy CMC/McCord)**



Figure 18. Peter Pitseolak, *Keatuk House (Summer)*, c.1940-45
(Courtesy CMC/McCord)



Figure 19. Peter Pitseolak, *Kooyoo Breast-feeding Mary*, c.1950
(Courtesy CMC/McCord)



Figure 20. Peter Pitseolak, *Seekooseelak Personalities*, c.1950
(Courtesy CMC/McCord)



**Figure 21. Peter Pitseolak, *Self-portrait wearing the badge of the BTC*, c.1950
(Courtesy CMC/McCord)**



Figure 22. Peter Pitseolak, *Self-portrait Reading*, n.d.
(Courtesy CMC/McCord)



Figure 23. Peter Pitscolak, *Aggeok with Accordion*, c.1950
(Courtesy CMIC/McCord)

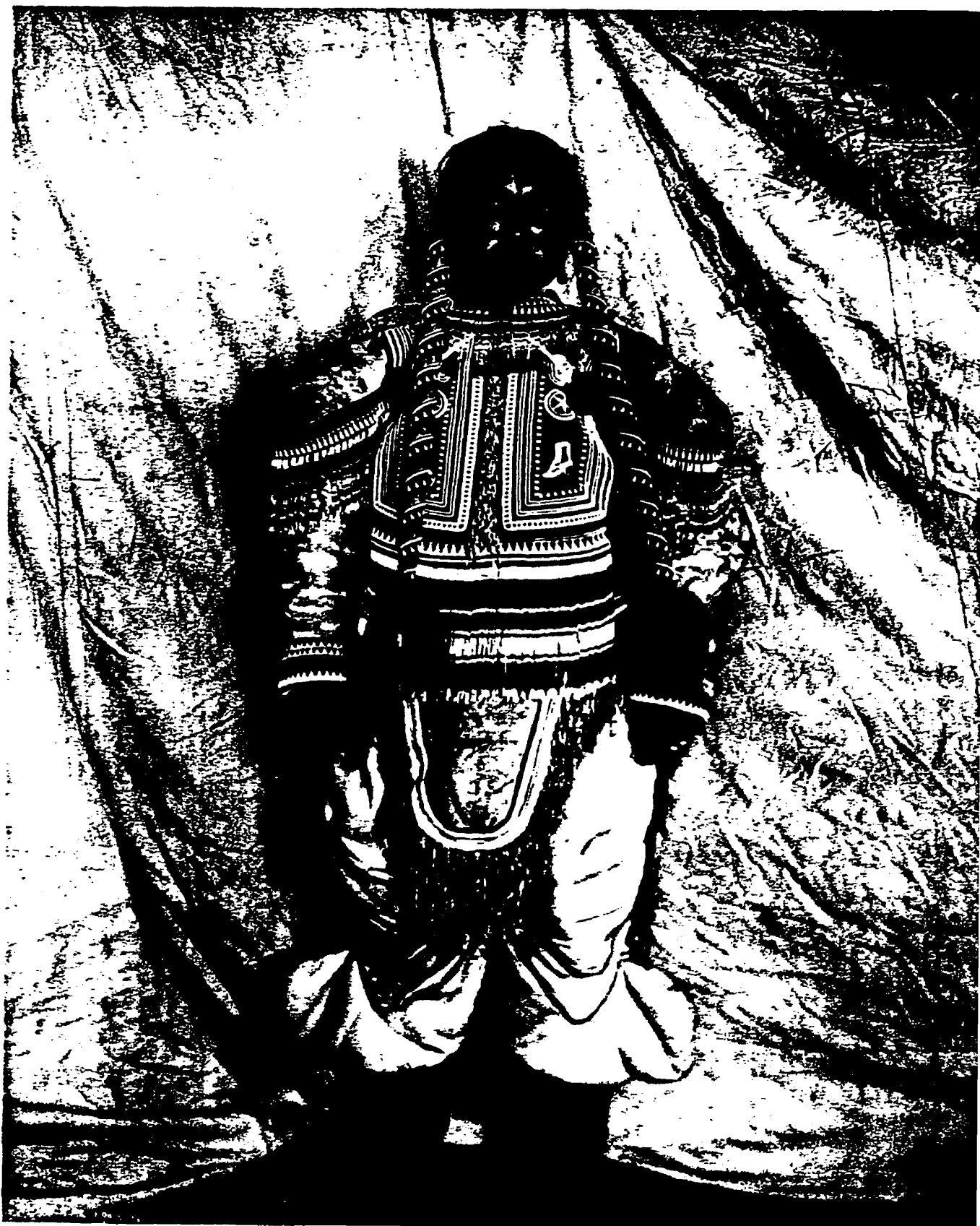


Figure 24. A.P. Low, *Aivillik woman Niviatsinaq (Shoofly Comer) in gala dress, 1904*
(National Archives of Canada)



Figure 25. Unattributed, *Peter Pitseolak and Lake Harbour Police Officer*, 1959
(Courtesy CMC/McCord)



Figure 26. Peter Pitseolak, *Mary Ezekiel Fishing Through Ice*, n.d.
(Courtesy CMC/McCord)



**Figure 27. Peter Pitseolak, *Taktillitak*, n.d.
(Courtesy CMC/McCord)**



Figure 28. *Peter Pitseolak's Use of the Photographic Template*



Figure 29. Aggeok Pitseolak, *Hunters Posing for Peter Pitseolak*, n.d.
(Courtesy CMC/McCord)



Figure 30. Zacharias Kunuk, *Still from 'Qaggiq' (Gathering Place)*, 1989
(Igloodik Isuma Productions, Inc.)