

MAKING A LIVING:

Place and the Commoditisation of Country Foods in a Nunavik Community

by

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in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the commoditisation of country foods. My goal was to learn how Inuit in one community in Nunavik were experiencing this process. The vernacular economy of Inuit is predicated on the sharing of country foods. With the commoditisation of country foods, an economy based on sharing meets an economy based on money. Doing community-based research, and using experience of place as the basis for understanding something of what country foods generally represent to Inuit, I explore some of the impacts of the meeting between these two economies, each sustained by particular institutions and ideologies.

In Chapter One I outline the approach and methods that I used in undertaking this research, emphasizing my reliance on hermeneutic phenomenology. Chapter Two contains a review of the literature that I used in the research. In Chapter Three I use the notion of place to explore the various meanings that country foods have for Inuit. In Chapter Four I discuss some of the regulatory issues and political approaches taken by non-Inuit to the economic development in the Arctic, and explore what they have meant in the commoditisation of country foods in Canada. In Chapter Five I look at how all of these things have come together in the reactions some people have to the commoditisation of country foods. I conclude, in Chapter Six, that many of the Inuit with whom I discussed the commoditisation of country foods have made an epistemological distinction between the selling of country foods directly to Inuit—which they generally perceive as objectionable—and the selling of country foods to non-Inuit and to the institutions within the community that they associate with non-Inuit political, social, and economic structures.

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some of which is contained in these pages, but much of which I carry with me in my very being. I am grateful to all of you for the ways, both great and small, in which you enriched my work and my life.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

JBNQA	James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement
HBC	Hudson's Bay Company
HFTA	Hunting, Fishing, and Trapping Association
HSP	Hunter Support Programme
HTO	Hunters' and Trappers' Organization
ICC	Inuit Circumpolar Conference
KRG	Kativik Regional Government
RCAP	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

LIST OF PSEUDONYMS USED FOR PARTICIPANTS

Alurut	Inuk man in his 50s
Anneak	Inuk woman in her 40s
Arnarjuaq	Inuk woman in her 30s
Billy	Inuk man in his 20s
Benjamin	Inuk man in his 60s
Davidie	Inuk man in his 50s
Imalie	Inuk woman in her 50s
Jamisie	Inuk man in his 40s
Jinnie	Inuk woman in her 20s
Joseph	non-Inuk man in his 50s
Kublu	Inuk man in his 40s
Lily	Inuk woman in her 50s
Maggie	non-Inuk woman in her 40s
Malachi	Inuk man in his 50s
Markusie	Inuk man in his 20s
Miku	Inuk man in his 70s
Mosesie	Inuk man in his 40s
Philip	Inuk man in his 50s
Pierre	non-Inuk man in his 50s
Piita	Inuk man in his 40s
Rebecca	Inuk woman in her 30s
Salamonie	Inuk man in his 50s
Samuel	Inuk man in his 40s
Serge	non-Inuk man in his 50s
Simigak	Inuk man in his 40s
Suula	Inuk woman in her 40s
Susie	non-Inuk woman in her 50s
Taamusie	Inuk man in his 20s
Zachary	Inuk man in his 50s



~ You can never step in the same river twice. ~

Heraclitus

Being Inuit

by Simeonie Kunnuk

We are Inuit ... igloos of the past.
The wilderness—it was part of us.
The skies, the rocks, and the pointing
snow showed us where to go.

Our fathers, our mothers, and our
grandparents told us many stories.
Survival, hunger, and other hardships
were part of their daily challenges
Legends were passed on; songs made,
the drum danced; carvings ...
Children listened and watched ...
learning and pretending.

Time changes many things.

Our world is different now.
We are learning about letters
and money.
Snowmobiles, outboard motors,
and all-terrain vehicles
so much faster than
dog-teams and walking!
We even fly by air now!

We see many things happen
on television.

Yes ... our world has changed
but we are still Inuit!

Our fathers, our mothers
and our grandparents
they survived and lived healthily.
Today, we can do it too ...

Because the roaring sea of autumn
will always come back after
summer;
because the summer icebergs
will always try to climb up
onto the seashore
after spring break-up;
because the snow
can never be prevented from
melting after winter;
and
because the frozen ice's grip
is so strong
when it is holding the land
after the arctic autumn freezes.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: APPROACH, NARRATIVE, AND OUTLINE



I arrived in Puvirnituk at the beginning of October 2001. The world, or portions of it, still seemed to be reeling from the events of September 11 when the United States of America watched as hijacked planes plummeted from the sky and skewered its economic and military heart. This was a globalising world. And I was part of it. I arrived in Puvirnituk fresh off a plane from Montreal, fresh off a plane from Amsterdam, fresh off a plane from Stockholm, fresh off a plane from Moscow. I arrived in Puvirnituk under autumn skies ready to plunge into my fieldwork with the buzz of travel in my head. I arrived in Puvirnituk, to study how the foods that people got from the sea and the sky and the land fit into the lives of people of the community. More importantly, I wanted to understand how these foods fit into the systems of meaning that people participated in and carried around in their heads. I arrived in a town perched on the shores of Hudson Bay, with a suitcase full of Mediterranean almonds, Ontario honey, and Swedish cup-a-soups. I arrived in the

house that was to be my home for the next few months, a house with clear, white walls and windows overlooking the water and the treeless horizon. I arrived in this house and met the woman who was to be my hostess in the months to come.

I unpacked my bags and we sat sipping tea, trying to get a sense of one another. Though it was the end of the season and the leaves of the plants hugging the ground had turned brown, she asked whether I liked berry-picking. The last of the season could still be found. She had been out recently, and we were eating the fruit of her labour. "Oh yes", I assured her, I liked berry-picking. "Oh yes", I said, full of the hum of planes and cities and movement. "Oh yes", I said, while inside I wondered when I had last done this, when I had last been out in the elements to look for food, when I had last dressed warmly with the sky overhead and the wind at my back to find something to eat. "Oh yes". My hostess nodded and looked at me. I had arrived in Puvirnituk.



Introduction

This thesis really is the product of many years spent on and off in the North. When at first everything was new, I learnt a lot of things about the nature of life in communities in the Eastern Arctic. Originally, I focussed upon the environment, upon

how it worked and what it meant to Inuit.¹ Later, I learnt something about the political processes that have and do shape life in the North. Again, I tried to understand how Inuit were participating in and perceiving those processes. Over the years I started to realise that each of these spheres was very much tied up in issues related to the economy, that is, with the ways that people were managing to survive in the Arctic. The economy was operating at two levels: there was the local, or vernacular,² economic system that sprang from, and was a reflection of, Inuit beliefs and ways of operating; and there was the formal market economic system that came with the arrival of non-Inuit to the North. These economies, as far as I could see, were operating in tandem, sometimes in isolation, but increasingly they seem to be overlapping. My growing awareness of the influence of the overlapping of these economic systems spurred me on to want to know more about how this process was taking place, and what it meant to the people who were involved in it. What became clear, though, is that like most things in this world, nothing exists in isolation. When I began my research I wanted to understand the economy and what it meant to at least some people in the Canadian Arctic. But the more I found out, the more I realised that the economy was intimately linked to understandings of place, to

¹ The term “Inuit” refers to people who used commonly to be called “Eskimos”. It is in the plural. In the singular it is “Inuk”, and for two individuals it is “Inuuk”. I have generally used the words Inuit and Inuk with a capital ‘i’, to denote their ethnic and political identities. Similarly, I have done so for non-Inuit, whom I variously call *Qallunaat*, as they are known to Inuit, or ‘Whites’, or ‘Western’, or ‘Euro-Canadians’. I am aware that these are gross generalisations, but I have adopted these labels nonetheless, for they are useful. Getting rid of nuances is necessary at times. We all do it, as we identify people as members of one group or another. Behind these umbrella terms may be all sorts of distinctions, but generalisations can also reveal some truths, both about the people making them, and the people about whom they are being made.

² In this document I have generally used the word ‘vernacular’ to refer to what has commonly been called in the literature the ‘domestic’, ‘informal’ or ‘subsistence’ economy.

experiences of time and history, to basic questions of value, and to the nature of community.

I learnt much during casual conversations with many people in the North, but my interest in this topic was primarily piqued as a result of chance conversations with a friend involved in the northern business world. He was drawn to this world, because he saw it as a way to ensure that Inuit might be able to take some control over their destinies. If money makes the world go around, he at least wanted to make sure that Inuit might be able to influence its rotation. Over the years I have seen how Inuit *are* participating in and dependent upon a monetary economy. And I have seen also, how this participation provokes some confusion. As money has moved in to the North, people have had to learn about what kinds of trade-offs are involved in the getting of it.

On the one hand, Inuit have expressed a desire to hold on to their traditions of hunting, fishing, and trapping. This has been at the root of all the Inuit land claims negotiated in Canada (cf. Brice-Bennet 1977; Freeman 1976). Yet, on the other hand, Inuit are also aware that their economies cannot rely solely on the traditions of the past. Like the non-Inuit who have moved in and occupied their lands, Inuit live in houses that have central heating, they watch television, and use skidoos, motorboats, and rifles to hunt. None of these things springs from the local environment. Instead, they rely upon an inflow of external goods that can be got only through participation in the cash economy. They know that they need money even to continue to pursue the traditional elements of their economy. But how is this money to be come by?

By many southern Canadian standards, northern economies are simple, and the options for gaining access to cash are few. Since the period of contact with Europeans,

Inuit have variously earned cash through such things as the fur trade, whaling, the sale of arts and crafts, social transfer payments, and employment in an assortment of other public and private ventures. These forms of income have generally either proved unsustainable or of limited impact, open only to a few. Moreover what cash *does* come into northern communities does not stay there for long, and as a result, benefits only a few.³ Thus, while money, which is now necessary to maintain ways of living in the Canadian Arctic, does come into northern communities, very little of it actually contributes to producing a sustainable northern economy.

One method that some have promoted in the Arctic as a way to expand the sources of cash income available to Inuit, has been to sell the produce from people's hunting, fishing, and gathering commonly referred to as 'country foods'. This has meant a meeting of the two economic systems that I spoke of earlier—the vernacular and the market. In the past, these systems generally operated separately, and under quite different rules of thumb. The vernacular economy of Inuit is predicated on sharing. Through the process of commoditisation it has become incorporated in a formal market economy predicated on monetary exchange. The principles that inform each of these economic systems can be at odds. Following Marx, Goldsmith (1998) points out that when markets gain control of vernacular economies, land and labour—two key resources—become commodities. Thus, people sell their labour and sell (products from) the land in exchange for money. Yet, citing Karl Polanyi, he points out that there can be an essential disjunct in such a transformation, "Labour is only another name for human

³ Brascoupé (1993), for example, notes that no more than approximately ten per cent of the money that comes into aboriginal communities remains within them, and that it cycles within these communities for a very short time. Lyall (1993) makes similar observations with respect to Inuit communities.

activity that goes with life itself, which is not produced for sale, but for entirely different reasons, nor can that activity be detached from the rest of life, be stored or mobilised: land is only another name for nature” (Polanyi in Goldsmith 1998, p. 379). According to Narotzky (1997) such tensions between local and ‘global’⁴ economic systems point to a key question about how the capitalist logic of accumulation (i.e., the getting of money for money’s sake) has transformed local economic logics. How does a local economic system accommodate itself to a new global economic system when each is predicated on different concepts of value, different ideas of the role of the individual in relation to society, different concepts of access to and control over resources? It is these kinds of issues, then, that I have attempted, through the rubric of country foods, to understand. Ultimately this process reflects upon how Inuit have managed to accommodate the influx of new ideas and processes to existing ideas about how the world operates and about their place in it.⁵

For a number of reasons, the commoditisation of country foods provides an ideal forum in which to look at how local and global economic systems are meeting. At first sight it would seem a suitable way of making sure that Inuit are able to earn much-needed money while at the same time promoting some of the very activities for which they need that money. Thus, it appears to provide an appropriate meeting place between local and global economies. Moreover, not only would the sale of country foods seem to

⁴ Narotzky’s use of the term ‘global’ is, in fact, problematic. It implies that this economic system exists throughout the world and is part of the natural order of things, somehow not an expression of particular sets of human beings from a limited area and of a fixed historical period. Yet, as Gudeman (1986) and Polanyi (1957a) so ably point out, what is called ‘global’ reflects instead the domination across much of the world of a particular set of beliefs that are very much local in character and linked to Western, liberal ideologies. I shall discuss this in more detail in Chapter Two.

⁵ Swyngedouw (1997) has coined the term ‘glocalisation’ to describe the dynamic tension between the small and the large economic scales, that is, the interaction between local and global economic systems.

strengthen the local economic system, but it also looks like a reasonable way of ensuring that economic development takes advantage of the conditions specific to place. Such development might overcome the problems of money coming to and circulating within communities, thereby promoting more sustainable economies that are in the long run less prone to outside influence.

So it seemed to me that the selling of country foods had much to be said for it. I was not alone in this view. In the mid-1990s, I happened to be in an Inuit community on Ungava Bay doing research for a land claim. It so happened that at the same time the community was debating the merits of participating in an economic development scheme being proposed by Makivik Corporation⁶ to commercialise caribou from the area. My colleague from the community was deeply involved in this proposal. He wanted it to go ahead. The project was being challenged, though, by a group of people within the community who were concerned about the implications of selling caribou meat. I was not part of the discussions surrounding the issue, but my colleague seemed frustrated that the project might be rejected because 'old timers' questioned its wisdom. It seemed that there was a clash between the old and the new, although what precisely that clash entailed was not clear to me. I noted his concern and got on with the job at hand. Some time later I read with interest that the project had, in fact, ceased operations within the community (George 1999).

⁶ Makivik Corporation was founded by the Inuit of Nunavik (i.e., Northern Quebec) upon the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. It received money ceded to the Inuit following the signing of the Agreement. Its primary responsibilities are to represent the economic and political interests of the Inuit of Nunavik.

The more I came to learn about the selling of country foods, the less clear it became, and the more contradictions started to appear. Obviously, some people had reservations about the selling of country foods.



Some seemed to be concerned that it would affect the tradition of sharing that has been at the centre of the vernacular economy of Inuit since the beginning of time. Yet, it seemed above all that it was the selling of country foods, as opposed to other goods, that disturbed people. Thus, I tried to understand what country food meant to people, how it was linked to the tradition of sharing, and what it meant when money came into that equation. The more I delved into the subject, the more I realised that I was dealing with a fairly tangled web of issues. If country foods were a fundamental component of the Inuit vernacular economy, and sharing was the mechanism that regulated how it functioned, I

came to see that these processes were inextricably linked to how Inuit perceived and operated within the world around them, and, moreover, that how Inuit are reacting to the commoditisation of country foods reflects millennia of past experience. Time and place and economy and society were all bound together. Trying to understand how these things were linked became the goal of my research.

This research, then, was initially based upon a number of interlinking issues. First, I was aware that some Inuit, interested in developing new means of injecting money into the northern economy, were commoditising country foods in various ways.⁷ However, I also knew that this was a point of contention for many people in the Eastern Canadian Arctic. How was I to understand these two positions?

The contradictions involved in this question are most evident at the community level, for it is within communities that people must confront them. Joe needs money and sees the selling country foods as a way of getting it, yet Peter, his neighbour, may see this as an objectionable act that goes counter to the moral imperative to share food. And while this paradox is most obvious within communities, it is also more laden with emotion in some areas of the Arctic than in others, where people seem to have come to terms with it. Thus, in the Eastern Canadian Arctic many Inuit have been loath to accept the selling of country foods, while in other areas of the North, for example Greenland, the process is deeply entrenched (cf. Marquardt and Caulfield 1996). For these reasons, the principal objective of my research was to understand how people at the community level in the Eastern Canadian Arctic experienced the commoditisation of country foods.

⁷ In Chapters Four and Five I shall discuss the various forms that this commoditisation has taken at greater length.

As I shall discuss at greater length below, in doing community-based research my goal was not to do an extensive survey of Inuit views of commoditisation of country foods, but rather, to focus on trying to produce what Geertz (1973) has called “thick description”—description that provides layers beneath the surface. I wanted not only to try to understand people’s points of view, but also what underlies and has shaped those points of view. Where did they come from? People’s thoughts, reactions, perceptions about the world are informed by so many things, spoken and unspoken, recognised and unrecognised, particular to them and culturally general. I am seeking to understand these things, to understand what country foods represent to people, what economic systems mean to them, how social relations are bound up in these things, and how experiences of place are linked to all of this. This cannot be done in a meaningful way, in a way that reflects something of the significance that people themselves give to them, without trying to understand something of the deeper, thicker ways in which people give meaning to the world and to their experience of it.

When I arrived in the community where I was to do my fieldwork, I was spurred on by my particular objective: to understand how Inuit experience the commoditisation of country foods. But I was plagued by doubts about the utility of this work. I felt like an ineffectual navel-gazing academic, doing work that would only be of interest to those within a limited and isolated world. Faced with the intricacies of modern life in the North, I wondered how looking at the selling of country food might in any way do justice to this complexity, let alone be of service to the community that had agreed to have me in its midst. I said as much one day when I was presenting my research interests to the community council. One councillor, someone I had met before, said that they *wanted* me

to do this work. It might help to explain something of who Inuit are to the government people who were often ignorant about the people their decisions were affecting.

I was lucky enough to go on to spend a fair amount of time with this man and his family. He always encouraged me to think beyond my self-imposed limits. In various ways, he told me time and again that his interest in helping me to do my work was far greater than those to which I felt restricted by the academy. Essentially, he told me that he wanted me to provide a thicker reflection of Inuit experience. Repeatedly during the months that I spent in his community, he would point out the ways in which non-Inuit had imposed systems of operating—wildlife regulations, training standards, ideas of right and wrong, to name but a few—that were reflections of their own systems of belief, but did not sit well with the people to whom they were applied.

On a flat, grey day in November, we went out with his sons fishing and trapping. The sky and the land were cloaked in haze so that it was difficult to see where one ended and the other began. We had checked the fox traps—nothing so far—and set new ones, spreading the jaws open and placing them carefully in a bed of moss and snow, laying enticing smells and titbits in the centre and around to draw the animals in. My friend remarked that what furs they got would be used only by the family for the hoods of the parkas that his wife would soon be making; after all, since the rise of the animal rights movement the fur trade had collapsed, so there was no market for them. It had been a good day. I had enjoyed being outside; my spirits had expanded with the horizon and had been warmed by the freshly brewed tea and boiled Arctic Char. Thinking about the joys of this life, I turned to my friend and said that he should keep what he had a secret, otherwise lots of people would come and over-run this place. He, thinking of other

things, responded that, no, he *wanted* me to let outsiders know what was there—to help them to understand what their lives entailed—so that they would stay away and not interfere.

In various ways, many of the people whom I have met in the North have strained against the ignorance of outsiders whose influence they increasingly feel. This ignorance has sometimes caused them to be reluctant to talk to me—yet one more uninformed stranger—and at other times, as in the case above, it has been the reason for their *willingness* to talk to me. Aware of this double bind, my goal then in doing research in the North, and my goal in reporting what I have learnt, has been to reflect, to the best of my abilities, something of the larger realities of Inuit ways of perceiving and being in the world. This is, in part, the reason why this document appears the way it does, for I am trying to live up to the expectations of those people who have supported my work over the years, those people who hope that I will present a fuller, richer, thicker expression of the North that presents something of their own understandings and experience of life. Ultimately, then, this goal has shaped how I went about doing this work.

Telling the Story

Several years ago I was at an Inuit Studies conference held in Iqaluit. It was two firsts: the first time that I had given a paper at a conference; and the first time that this biennial conference had been held in an Inuit setting. I spent my time rushing from one session to the next, listening mostly to academics talking about various aspects of Inuit life. On the last evening of the conference, there was a large gathering, full of the usual

big speeches and small talk. At a certain point, the tone of the evening changed. A group of our Inuit hosts got up on the stage and started doing a skit involving a “researcher” and a “research subject”. The researcher was busy poking at his subject with a pen, looking inside her mouth, peering into her hair, asking her questions, like how many times she sneezed and whether this happened more when the wind was blowing from the east or from the west. And could she please touch her left ear with her right toe.⁸

⁸ Perhaps the most graphic description I have read of such experiences came from Rhoda Kaujak Katsak who talks about an experience in Igloodik in the early 1970s, soon after her family had moved there from living on the land,

The day after they came in, my family was told to go to this little building next to the nursing station. That is where they were working, this little building. We went over there, my mother, my brother Jakopie, my older sister Oopah, and myself. I think my mother had somebody [a baby] on her back, Ida, maybe, I don't know. I don't know if it was just my family that was tested. I don't think it was everybody in the community, just certain families. They had some sort of a list, and I think they were picking names from that list or something. I remember us walking over there.

We didn't know what was going on. First they had us climb up and down these three wooden steps, three steps up and three steps down. We climbed up and down. They wanted to see how much we could do without getting tired. They watched us while we did it for a long time, then when our hearts sped up they got us on this little bicycle, and they put respirators on us. I had never been on a bicycle before. I didn't really know what to do, but they put me on the cycle and told me to breathe into the respirator. They made us take turns on that for the rest of the afternoon. They did some tests too. I don't remember all of them. I remember they tested our blood pressure and took blood samples from us.

The big thing I remember, though, was that they took bits of skin off our forearms. First they made the whole skin area numb, then they took this very long, thin cylinder, like a stick, sharp on one end, and they kind of drilled it into my arm to cut the skin. They took the skin off, it was at the end of this little cylinder thing. It was all inside. They did that twice. Once they took the two pieces of skin off my arm, they put in skin from my sister Oopah and my brother Jake's arm. I got their skin, Jake got my skin and Oopah's, Oopah got Jake's and mine. I think my mom [a unilingual Inuktitut speaker] was there. Of course we were her children, so she had to be there, maybe to consent or something like that. But I don't think it was a matter of her consenting, I don't think she thought of it that way. ...

The researchers, most of the time they just did whatever they wanted when they were up here. A lot of the time they didn't bother to explain themselves very well. A lot of times we didn't really understand what was going on.

...[T]he grafts didn't heal into my skin. Jake's and Oopah's skin fell off, and the holes healed over. ...I remember being happy when Jake and Oopah's skin fell off my arm. I was happy that I disproved their theory. I have had the scars ever since. They don't go away. (Wachowich 1999, pp. 174-176)

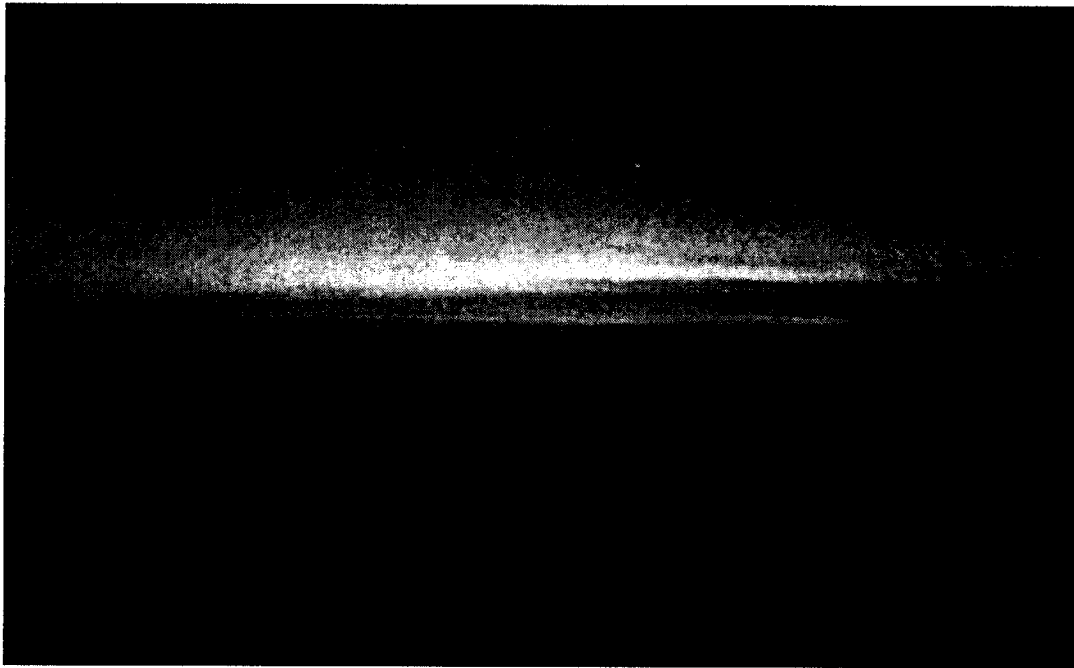
Who was poking at whom? There was a rustling in the room as we struggled to pull forth laughter and deny what had in some ways been patently obvious during the preceding days.

This was neither the first nor the last time I had come across Inuit dislike of my role as a researcher and their role as lab rats. But it served as a powerful reminder of the dynamic that can exist between the researcher and the researched. I have always had some awareness of this dynamic. It has affected much of my work in the Arctic, dictating the kinds of issues I have chosen to focus on and the ways I have gone about focussing on them.

The Why

Methodology provides the theoretical underpinnings for how to approach research. It informs the kinds of methods one then uses in doing one's research, suggesting why one goes about doing it in a particular way. Research that attempts to comprehend people's understandings of a given set of circumstances, no matter what their culture, is a complicated business. People are not automata; they are not static; and they are not uniform. As individuals, we each attach different meanings to the experiences we have, based on our individual abilities and backgrounds. Moreover, we can be fickle; the meanings we give things can change from one moment to the next or from one setting to the next. It is human experience that I am interested in trying to understand in all its inconstant complexity.

The positivist, scientific paradigm assumes that the world is made up of observable, measurable facts, and may be known through these facts. While this may be true in some cases, from the outset my interest has been to try to understand how in the context of place Inuit are *experiencing* the addition of monetary value to country food. Although quantitative issues may inform such an understanding, I believe that they can mask some of the complexities that are inherent in the human condition. These are more apparent when one looks at the quality of that experience. It may be learned from formal encounters with people, but I have found that understanding of this kind comes as much from chance comments, from fleeting, seemingly unrelated events, and is learned over time. Only through developing a sense of what people can experience in their lives may one come to understand the meanings they give to those experiences. Thus, although a list of country foods consumed by Inuit, their mass and monetary value, may all provide an understanding of what is involved in the commoditisation of country foods, they give only a partial understanding. There are missing layers to this story. What about history? What about the senses involved in getting and eating that food: the feeling of cold wind as you look for animals; the squirming of the fish in your hands; the smell of seal meat cooking in a tent as the rain falls; the flood of relief felt at the distant sound of a motorboat coming back in the night across stormy waters? What about the memories people carry around with them related to that food—that bay over there where as a child you took part in a beluga hunt? These things are intimately linked to the meanings that people give to their food. This is why I have chosen to adopt a qualitative research methodology: to fill out the picture somewhat; to add some other dimensions that might otherwise not be apparent in a list of numbers.



October 12, 2001

I went for a walk tonight and felt like something inside me broke—some resistance to being here, some clinging on to the world outside, broke. I can't make this place like the South. I can't keep on imposing order, washing the dishes and sweeping the floor and have it be like I want it to be—I have to be like it wants me to be.

I walked to the point and saw the garbage burning in the darkness—an eerie and comforting sight. On the way there I passed lots of people on four-wheelers who had been to the dump to garbage pick. The sealift [supply boat] just came in, so there's lots to be had. One man passed me with a chair in front and sheets of plywood behind—along with a kid.

As I walked I thought about how meaningless my work was—how I was imposing something—searching for an order, but what about the context? Why focus on hunting and money when there are so many other things that are going on in people's lives? How does this matter in a context where there's so much more hidden behind the smiles and the politeness? And here I am searching for something that seems to ignore these larger issues. ...

As I walked back to town I heard dogs barking in the darkness. Someone was coming to feed his dog-team. And I heard a motorboat heading back to town. Then, true to what I'd been told, the northern lights guided me in an arc, back to where I wanted to go. And I followed them. No one in town was tempting fate, whistling to call the lights to come down and knock off their heads. I waved at a guy who was standing outside his door smoking and watching me go by. And he waved at me. ...

There was no wind and it was the first clear sky since my arrival.

Several qualitative research methodologies have helped me try to understand Inuit experiences of the commoditisation of country foods. These include, hermeneutic phenomenology, social constructivism, and ethnography.⁹ As Schwandt (2000) points out, these approaches to research are intertwined. Each focuses on trying to understand lived human experience. Moreover, Schwandt cautions, it is unwise to establish rigid methodological typologies with fixed research templates. These methodological approaches are linked, and so, they can complement one another. Thus, while I have chosen to use a qualitative approach in doing this research, I have allowed myself the freedom to mix them so that combined they might provide me with an appropriate framework for doing, not only my fieldwork, but for writing the document which now lies in your hands.

Phenomenology is concerned with understanding the everyday, lived world of human experience. Hermeneutic analysis assumes that human action is inherently meaningful; that is, that our actions reflect the meanings that we have of the world, and that we interpret these meanings accordingly. Thus, as Schwandt (2000) points out, in the raising of an arm, we interpret whether a person is voting, hailing a taxi, or asking permission to speak. Putting the two together, then, hermeneutic phenomenological research focuses upon *lived experience* and the *interpretations*, or *meanings*, that people make of these experiences. Phenomenology assumes that the meanings that people attach to their experiences influence how they act in the world. Thus, phenomenological

⁹ For discussions on hermeneutic phenomenology see Eyles (1985 & 1988), Hultgren (1993), Pickles (1988), Relph (1985), Schwandt (2000), and van Manen (1997). For analyses of social constructivist methodologies see Blumer (1969), Fontana and Frey (2000), Glesne and Peshkin (1992), Janesick (2000), and Lincoln and Guba (2000). For analyses of ethnographic principles see Denzin (1997), Geertz (1983a & 1983b), Godall (2000), Jackson (1989), and Minor (1992).

research attempts to understand how people experience and know the world. It is based on the idea that one must attempt to understand the subjective experience of people according to their own means of expression, their specific conditions, and their own understandings. It is the lived experience of the people that provides the backbone for such analysis.

- Social constructivism assumes that humans do not find or discover knowledge, but that we *make* it (Schwandt 2000). Such analysis stresses that meanings are socially constructed, with the goal of the researcher being to understand not only the meanings, but also the role that social process plays in the construction of those meanings. So in doing research one pays attention to how social processes helped in constructing the perceptions of people with whom one interacts. Minor (1992) provides a helpful approach to thinking about these things, as her work focuses specifically upon Inuit, and discusses how the individual is linked to the larger social group.

Finally, van Manen defines ethnography as studying “the culturally shared, common sense perceptions of everyday experiences. Ethnography is the task of describing a particular culture...” (1997, p. 177). I recognise that there are difficulties in attempting to do research from the perspective of the ethnographic Other (cf. Marcus and Fischer 1999). Gone are the days when researchers could glibly study the Other. The crisis of representation with all of its accompanying challenges to the right and ability of outsiders to understand and adequately represent different cultures has cut to the very core of the ethnographic exercise. Ethnographers struggle in the face of the assertions that unequal power relations sully their research relations. However, I tend to believe that it would be fool-hardy, in the face of such uncomfortable questions, to fling up one’s

arms and simply give up the attempt to understand what Geertz calls not the Other, but the 'otherwise', for,

... it seems likely that whatever use ethnographic texts will have in the future, if in fact they actually have any, it will involve enabling conversation across societal lines—of ethnicity, religion, class, gender, language, race—that have grown progressively more nuanced, more immediate, and more irregular. The next necessary thing (or at least it seems to me) is neither the construction of a universal Esperanto-like culture, the culture of airports and motor hotels, nor the invention of some vast technology of human management. It is to enlarge the possibility of intelligible discourse between people quite different from one another in interest, outlook, wealth, and power, and yet contained in a world where, tumbled as they are into endless connection, it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other's way (1973, p. 147).

Accordingly, although I am aware of the difficulties of doing ethnographic research, I believe that it serves as a necessary means of reaching a certain level of understanding about different cultures that can go beyond stereotypes in order to gain a more nuanced appreciation of different ways of experiencing and behaving in the world.

In this thesis, I place an emphasis upon hermeneutic phenomenology because it strikes me as an appropriate approach for a study that is grounded in place. A place is not a place unless people *experience* it as such. Through their experiences, people turn abstract space into lived place.

Phenomenology is a philosophy of the unique and the subjective. It seeks to offer plausible insights into the world of lived experience. For this reason, researchers do not make predictions about social settings, but try to *understand* them. Such an understanding is often revealed best not so much by asking a fixed, limited set of questions. Rather, it comes from informal conversations. It is on the basis of these discussions that one attempts to find emerging themes *after* the material is gathered.

Such research does not place theory before practice, but instead, sees theory as enlightening practice. This means that in doing phenomenological research one does not impose theory *a priori*; one does not go into the field to test the validity of a particular theory in some objective setting. Rather, through exploring people's lived experience, theories may then be revealed. Denzin's (1997) support for "messy texts" is fitting for this kind of research. Such texts are many sited, open-ended, and refuse theoretical closure. Lived experience is not as ordered as researchers would like to believe. For this reason, hermeneutic phenomenology does not attempt to impose order where it is not appropriate. Contradictions are not glossed over in messy texts. There is no one truth, but rather, there are many. In this thesis, then, I attempt to report the multi-faceted, multi-vocal, and perhaps contradictory understandings that people have. Phenomenology assumes that there is not one unchanging and legitimate way that people experience the world. Rather, however people experience the world is how they experience it, and, moreover, as we know from our own lives, this experience may change. So the whole story can never be told. What is revealed is only partial, a snippet of an ever-changing reality. The role of phenomenological research is not to judge the appropriateness of that experience, nor to use those experiences to support a pre-conceived notion of how a system functions, but to let the ways in which people experience and operate in the world be revealed through their words and deeds.

Dec. 7, 2001
The more time I spend in the North, the less I realise I know, which makes doing research a daunting task as I start to understand that life here is far more than a quick set of interviews. As a result, I've been really loath to do them.

If word and deeds are significant, how might they best be communicated? One answer given by many phenomenologists is through narrative (cf. Hultgren 1993; Jackson 1989; Janesick 2000; Morrow 2001; Rodman 1992; and Tedlock 2000). “Narrative confirms and expands experiences” (Morrow 2001, p. 7). Narrative, too, is important in place construction. Berdoulay (1989, p. 135) contends that, “a place comes explicitly into being in the discourse of its inhabitants, and particularly in the rhetoric it promotes”. What is noteworthy about this idea, is that Berdoulay proposes that people actually *talk* place into being, that the act of talking makes that place all the more place-like. Morrow points out that through narrative, not only do people establish their identities, and link them to place, but, “[t]he question is how to identify the overlapping and conflicting senses of place that underlie local sentiments, and to see how they inform actions and interactions, relationships and policies. The direction is to listen to narratives, through which people express and construct their place-related identities” (2001, pp. 4-5). Such narratives are not uniform. People may have conflicting narratives, based on their experience, goals, or understandings. These conflicts can be revealing, and make a case all the more, for undertaking phenomenological research that attempts to reveal the experience of life in all its complexity, and that avoids the imposition of theory on life. Hultgren (1993) points out that a narrative text does not present findings, as would a scientific text. Nor does it presume that it is reporting an objective truth. Rather, through narrative we are able to endow experience with greater meaning and richness.

This leads to the question of validity and generalisability of research findings. Phenomenology is predicated precisely on the notion that there is not one objective, unchanging truth. Rather there are a multiplicity of ‘truths’ that reflect the lived

Nov. 29, 2001

No people is one thing. We are always moving— you can never step in the same river twice. All I can do is provide a snapshot of movement. ...

I've been suffering from the pressure to do science— to find the truth. But I realise that I all I can do is find a truth— one of many. And whose truth is more true? Imalie talked of how teachers here aren't allowed to teach evolution in the school. And I told her the story of how I'd argued with Serge [a physicist] about who's to say science's explanations of truth are any more true than magic's. She smiled and said it was time for a coffee break.

experience of each individual and reflect a particular time and place. As Eyles (1985, p. 57) points out, "There is no formal way of validating knowledge and much depends on the reason, consistency and honesty of the theorist". Lincoln and Guba (2000) add that valid research is research that is balanced so that all points of

view are apparent in the text. This is another argument for Denzin's multi-vocal, messy texts in which multiple perspectives are revealed. Janesick (2000) suggests that such an approach be viewed as a process of crystallisation. This allows for many facets, but what is seen depends on the angle from which one looks at a thing. There are no totalising truths, but a series of personal truths that depend on a given place and time.

Given that life is experienced not just intellectually, but physically and emotionally, a phenomenological approach encourages researchers to construct evocative, animating descriptions of their research findings. Such findings should attempt to reflect a person *situated* in her or his life. Therefore, phenomenological research is descriptive. It draws on, and reflects, the range of ways that people have found to express human experience, including poetry, literature, and the visual arts. Ultimately, these lead to a more comprehensive interpretation of lived experience. Given

this, the methods used in phenomenological research move beyond interviews, and involve, for example, the researcher spending time in a place, getting to know the rhythms of life there, not just as an observer, but as a participant. In this way, she may gain a more comprehensive understanding of what it means to experience life in that place, and in fact, much of the material that emerges from such interactions would *not* emerge in the more formal, and uncomfortable setting of an interview.¹⁰ This certainly has been *my* experience. Once, when living in a community on Baffin Island, I was having a conversation with a 20-year old man. He was a bit of a Casanova, and rumour had it that he was a some-time drug-dealer. I mentioned that I had been out walking, had followed some caribou I had seen, and was puzzled because the caribou seemed suddenly to have disappeared. “Oh yes,” the man had casually responded, “we have stories here about caribou that turn into lemmings”. The chances are good that I would not have had this response as a fly-by-night researcher during the course of a one-time interview if I had asked twenty people to tell me whether they knew of animal transfiguration. Such questions are abrupt and answers to them demand the kind of trust that comes from spending time in a place, by interacting with people in the casual, day-to-dayness of life. They come, not with questions, but from experience. They are not reflections of statistical analysis, but of the informal pace of lived experience.

Another feature of phenomenological methodology is that it is reflexive. Rather than being an invisible reporter of events, the researcher is revealed in the research. The researcher is not a passive, detached observer of the research setting (Hultgren 1993). To

¹⁰ This is particularly the case for older Inuit who tend to feel ill at ease in the question and answer format of an interview.

varying degrees, she or he takes part in the lives of the research participants. Together, the researcher and the research participants construct meaning. The researcher's presence affects the construction of meaning in any number of ways. While working on my Master's thesis, I went on a hunting and fishing trip with the family I was living with. On our way back to town we stopped for a snack. Someone had got a seal, so it was butchered and people helped themselves to the raw meat. At a certain point, one of the sons of the family who was in his twenties and knew more about the latest music and fashions than I did, looked me in the eye and said, "we're savages, you know".

Given the impact of the researcher on the researched, the researcher does not present herself or himself as an objective observer whose presence has no effect on the research setting. "Hermeneutics does not seek to translate one's own subjectivity out of the picture, but rather to take it up with a new sense of responsibility" (Hultgren 1993, p. 30). Jackson (1989) too emphasizes that researchers must recognise their own impacts upon those researched. Both he and Behar (1996) point out that we are continually changed by, and change the experience of others. Hultgren, Behar, and Jackson each argue that researchers must recognise and expose this process in their work. Again, the researcher's voice should be added to the messy text, as a reflection of one of the elements in the creation of knowledge and meaning.

The experience of life, its full import, must be the goal of any phenomenological research. Thus, the details of life, the large and the small, should appear in such research.

August 25, 2002

I love the smell of a certain kind of willow, I think it is, that grows in marshy areas. It has a pungent, medicinal odour that somehow seems so pure.

The sights and sounds and smells of a place, the rhythms of life, the comings and goings of people and things, the chance remarks, the sideways glances, the momentous and the inane, are all grist to the hermeneutic phenomenological mill.

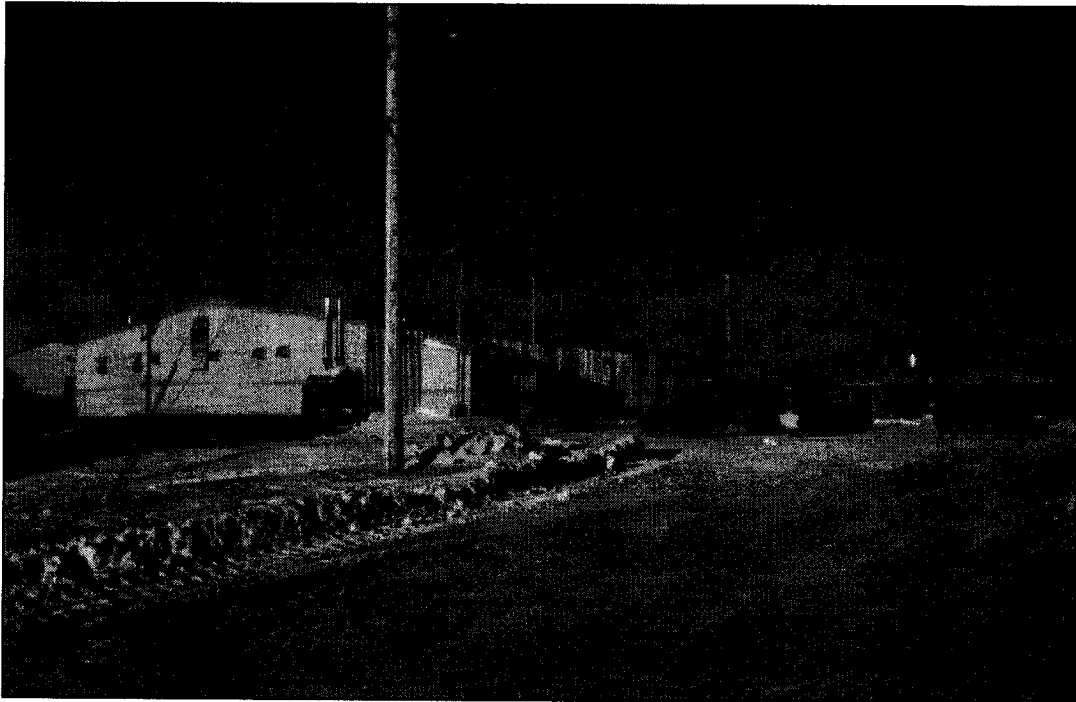
The How

If methodology is the “why” of research, methods are the “how”. In doing this research, I carried with me the approach provided by the methodologies I had chosen to use. My goal was to try to understand what country foods meant to people, to understand how they fit into the vernacular economy of Inuit in Puvirnituk, to learn how this was related to larger, formal economic systems in the region, to find out what people thought about a blending of these two economic systems, and to figure out how these understandings were affected by, and affected, experience of place. In each broad area, I both reviewed the relevant literature and had formal and informal conversations with people about these subjects. In addition, I spent approximately six months in Nunavik between 2000 and 2002¹¹. Prior to that, I have several years’ experience doing research and working in a number of different communities in the Eastern Canadian Arctic.¹² Combined, these experiences have helped me to understand some of the issues that I discuss in this thesis. They have helped to provide an understanding of the rhythm of life for many Inuit in northern Canada. But, more than that, they have helped me to

¹¹ I was in Nunavik for a few weeks in the summer of 2000. I then spent approximately three months in Puvirnituk in the fall and winter of 2001, and then again another three months in the community during the summer of 2002.

¹² I worked on the Hudson Bay Programme, which focused on the ecological knowledge of Inuit and Cree surrounding Hudson and James Bays. My Master’s research examined how that knowledge might be applied to the management of natural resources in Nunavut. I later worked as a researcher for an Inuit land claim in Nunavik.

appreciate that for many Inuit in Canada, some of the fundamental principles of behaviour and perception are quite different from those of the Euro-Canadians who surround them. At a very basic level, this meant that prior to doing this fieldwork, I knew something about what country foods Inuit eat, how they get these foods, and how they are consumed. It meant that I was used to the different schedules that many Inuit in the north keep from most Euro-Canadians. I knew that Inuit visit amongst each other throughout the day, and that, when they arrive, they walk in without knocking. It meant that I knew how to recognise the local shops (something that might not be obvious to many first-time visitors to the north).



But, at more subtle levels, my previous northern experience prepared me normatively for doing this research. Once, before going to a new community to work on my master's thesis, an Inuk friend advised me that I ought not to say that I *could* do a certain thing. I ought not to assume such a thing. It would be perceived as being pushy

and show-offy. Rather, a well-behaved person says they will *try* to do a certain thing.¹³ Thus, in many similar ways, great and small, I was prepared for doing the research for this thesis.

While in Puvirnituk, I lived with someone from the village. This helped me to overcome some of my shyness about meeting people. Living in an Inuit milieu also helped me to learn more about the role that country foods play in people's lives. I was able to see the movement of food amongst people: a freshly-killed caribou lying on the floor of the shack behind our house; a bag of berries left on the doorstep, the frozen whitefish visitors consumed while seated on the floor. All of these helped me to learn about some of the ways that people share country foods. Such an understanding might have escaped me, had I not lived with someone from the community.

Effective qualitative research relies upon having on-going, respectful, and honest contact with people. This allows for more open communication of thoughts and feelings. For this reason, during the six months I spent in Puvirnituk, I tried to participate in the life of the community, visiting people when I was able to overcome my bouts of timidity and insecurity, taking part in community events such as Christmas, and just generally hanging out. That way, not only did I hope to establish more trust with people before I started to talk to them more formally about my research, but I also was able to learn things that I would have been unable to via an interview.

In talking to people more formally, I followed Janesick's (2000) suggestion to approach discussions with people not as interviews, but as conversations that flow

¹³ See Chapter Five for a quotation from Otokiak (n.d.) that explains this at greater length.

following the situation and their particular interests and knowledge. Thus, when I did have formal conversations with people, recording them when I thought it appropriate and after asking permission, I did not stick to a rigid set of questions, but rather, responded to the situation before me. When I did record our conversations, and even in cases where I simply took notes during the conversation, I gave copies of my notes and the transcripts back to those people to whom I had spoken. Sometimes, I would meet with people afterwards to clarify questions I might have as a result of our conversation. This also allowed them to tell me whether there were certain things that they wished to remain private. Amongst the people I consulted formally were bureaucrats responsible for various government initiatives involved in the commoditisation of country foods, people working for public and private institutions involved in buying and selling those foods, people employed in hunting and fishing for sale, and government officials working for the social security system in Nunavik.

Conversational interviews are often not the best way of learning things. People can feel uncomfortable in formal question and answer settings, or they can feel self-conscious if the conversation is being recorded. In fact, I learnt a great deal simply by chance encounters, through spending time on the land, both with people and alone, and through the ebb and flow of life.

Doing ethnographic fieldwork, when one is immersed in the research setting from the moment one wakes up to the moment one falls asleep is extremely challenging. One is constantly watching, questioning, and trying to understand what is going on, not only with the people with whom one is living, but also with oneself.

Nov. 22, 2001

Doing this work, this research, I'm *living* it. It's not as though I leave it behind. It's not as though I stop. It feels like every act I make, what I listen to on the radio or watch on T.V., whom I talk to, whether I smile or I don't smile at people, it's a part of my research. It's building up who I am in the eyes of people and what I can do and know. And I feel totally without ground.

To help me keep track of my experiences I kept two journals. In one, I noted my observations and thoughts during the day. In writing in this journal, I attempted to make sense of what I had seen and experienced. In the other journal, I wrote personal thoughts and feelings about life. These various levels of scrutiny found an outlet in my journals. Sometimes the two journals overlapped and sometimes I needed to keep them separate. In addition, I kept copies of letters and e-mails I sent to people. These, along with excerpts from transcripts of conversations I had with people, tales of events, and photographs, have all found expression in the document you now hold.

The Voices

I have embedded various voices to this text. I have tried to distinguish between, and reveal, these voices by using boxes and different fonts. Thus,

excerpts like this are from journals, e-mails, and letters;



excerpts like this are stories or parables;



and excerpts from interviews I recorded are in single-spaced italics.

I have also interspersed photographs throughout the text. In an effort to communicate a sense of place, I have tended to leave them untitled. They are part of a greater whole, which I wished not to interrupt. Like the various forms of text scattered in the thesis, there is a reason for what I have placed where. So, I felt they needed no explanation. At times, the requirement to meet that logic combined with the shortcomings of my computer, and produced visual gaps in the text that I was unable to avoid. I hope that as a reader you will be able to forgive these limitations and see the larger reason behind the text.

So in this thesis, you will hear many voices, each reflecting a particular time and place. In fact, time and place contribute “voices” of their own, and I learnt a great deal from listening to them. Though often unrecognised, their whispers can have a powerful impact on what people experience. As I spent time in Puvirnituk I became increasingly aware of them, and so they appear in this text.

The voice you cannot help but hear the most is my own. Although I give it expression to ensure that you, the reader, be made aware of my presence, I do so with reservations, fearing I might step over the fine line between self-revelation and self-indulgence, and conscious that my words can also be distorted. As Moss points out, the writings of Euro-Canadians about the Arctic have burdened the place and the people with a set of preconceived, malformed notions that have, at times, been inappropriate. In writing about the Arctic, each person brought his or her own agendas,

Story is shaped by the desires of the narrator; what is it he wants, and why? It is shaped by the imperatives that led him to write; what do they want, those who

empowered him to be there and to write about it? What do the conventions of narrative demand? What do his readers expect? (1994, p. 33)

This is precisely the reason why qualitative research methods stress that the presence of the researcher be explicitly recognised, for hers is the lens through which this work was conceived and undertaken. It is the lens through which you, the reader, must look as you work your way through this text. Thus, I have tried to make that lens slightly less invisible by writing in the first person, and I have tried in this document to recognise my strengths and weaknesses and to show how I bring past experiences to this work. I am a white, middle-class Euro-Canadian raised all over the world. Although this has given me an awareness that the world may be seen in many different ways, I cannot escape the fact that I inevitably experience the northern, Inuit world as an outsider, restricted by my own perception and experience, not to mention my limited knowledge of Inuktitut. But, there are times when an outsider, in seeing things with different eyes, may notice things of which those involved in the situation might otherwise be unaware. Thus, I hope I bring to this work a vision, and so a voice that, while limited in some ways, informs in others.

I have also tried to come to this work with an open mind and an honest heart. As anyone who has done research involving people knows, one relies on their goodwill, and one ultimately has a primary burden of responsibility to those people who

Nov. 15, 2001

I feel so guilty about my role— about putting people who are so nice, so generous, under a microscope— like insects. I feel so sad and ashamed. They're so generous to me.

Nov. 19, 2001

Time is running down and I feel the pressure of all that I haven't done. And yet I feel so reluctant to intrude on people's lives.

have let you into their lives. My awareness of this, in some ways, makes me a poor academic. It has made me overly sensitive to the potential imposition that I am placing

Nov. 29, 2001

I was thinking about ... how I'm meeting the Inuit who are willing to meet me. And that's not Joe Blow, but those used to White people. And then I thought, "well I'm not Joe Blow White person either". We're the go-betweens, the ones trying to get some sort of dialogue going.

Aug. 25, 2002

I was thinking about how if the people I've met are go-betweens and I'm a go-between, then it makes sense that my thesis should be a go-between thesis, going one way and then other, in to the subject and out to the context, going in to reality and out to theory.

on people. It sometimes made me shy and insecure. So, there were times when I might have asked questions, but I did not, times when I might have pushed to establish relationships

with people, but I did not.

Instead, I realised that above all I met those people who were willing to meet me. They were of a particular ilk.

While mine is the latent presence shaping this work, I have attempted at the same time to allow people to speak for themselves. In doing this, I have tried to ensure that those who talked to me would remain anonymous. I do so above all to ensure, to the

extent I am able, that their words might not come back to haunt them. Researchers come and go, but the people whom we visit generally remain. They must continue to cross paths with one another, free from any possible repercussions that might be felt from speaking to researchers. My hope is that in talking to me they do not compromise their relations with others, and thus, in this thesis I have given people pseudonyms.

For all that I have tried to let people speak for themselves, and despite the fact that I am attempting to move beyond my own preconceived notions to try to understand the perspectives of others, in the final analysis, this document is my own. This means, not only that any mistakes it might contain are also my own, but also that what understanding I have reached and how I have represented that understanding has been very much shaped by the framework that I have chosen to adopt in doing this research.

Outline

So, I have tried here to set the stage for the rest of this thesis, explaining why and how it appears as it does. In what follows you will find that I move in and out of the various voices and in and out from theory to the practice of life. Chapter Two, thus, contains a review of the literature which helped me to understand the issues I was dealing with. Chapter Three tries to communicate something of the place of country foods and the place in country foods. In Chapter Four I discuss, in a general way, many of the regulatory issues and political approaches taken by non-Inuit to the economic development in the Arctic. In Chapter Five I explore how all of these things have come together in the reactions people have to the commoditisation of country foods. Finally, in

Chapter Six, I conclude with the thought that how Inuit live, like any other peoples, reflects, and is a reflection of, the experiences they have had and so, is a construction, sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious.

CHAPTER 2

SHAPING MY THOUGHTS

My research is based on the idea that place, and experience of place, are central to the ways that many Inuit perceive and give meaning to country foods. By extension, it is also central to the development of the vernacular economy that developed amongst Inuit as it relates to country foods. The foundation of this thesis rests, then, on the notion that food and economy cannot be understood without first understanding the nature of place. For this reason, this chapter is devoted, in part, to understanding something about the nature of place.

At the same time, as I did this research, I needed to learn something about the nature of the vernacular economy in which country foods are embedded. For it is only armed with such an understanding that I might learn something about what is possibly entailed in any processes that commoditise that food, which would, in turn, affect people's reactions to their commoditisation. Thus, I reviewed literature related to subsistence in general. This literature is grounded in ideas about the gift and reciprocity, analyses on the process of commoditisation, ideas about value and the nature of money, and notions of common property. Each of these notions has played an important role in helping me to understand the nature of the vernacular economy of Inuit and to learn something about why and how people might react to changes in that economy.

I have tried to comprehend how these ideas are bound together in place: how experience of place is tied to economic systems and how economic systems can be

places. What follows in this chapter is a synopsis of what I found in the literature. As with most things in life, ultimately, each of these areas overlaps, but each also, provides important frames of reference that have helped me to make sense of how some Inuit experience the commoditisation of country foods.

Inik: Place

I was once asked by a faculty member at Queen's University what I thought place was; my spur-of-the-moment response was that "place is space with feeling". My chance remark points to an important point: place and space are closely linked; space is the context for place. Interestingly, the word for 'place' in Inuktitut is *inik*, while the word for 'space' is *initsaq*, which literally translates as, 'has the potential to be a place'.¹ So it would seem semantically that for Inuit, place is of primary importance, while space is of interest only in so far as it might possibly contain this more meaningful content. Like Inuit, I favour place over space. In fact, I am inclined to believe that as humans, place is central to the experience of life. But what is the relationship between place and space? Human perception transforms abstract space into concrete place and *vice versa*.

"Through particular encounters and experiences perceptual space is richly differentiated into places, or centres of special personal significance" (Relph 1976, p. 11). Space lends itself to abstraction, it gives rise to such things as cardinal points, ideas of height and breadth and depth. It is the basis on which objectivity is built. Yet place is where most of us spend most of our time.

¹ Louis-Jacques Dorais has pointed out to me, however, that perhaps the word *nuna*—which translates as "(inhabited) land"—may, in fact, be a more semantically accurate reflection in Inuktitut of the meaning that place holds in this thesis.

Although place and space are inextricably interwoven, and should be each understood in the context of the other, contemporary geography has tended to focus more on attempting to understand the world in spatial terms. Perhaps in reaction to this, some human geographers have swung in the other direction and focussed on geographies of place. Yet these geographers have still chosen, to varying degrees, to link their discussions of place to space. Thus, for example, Entrikin (1991), Hall (1995), Harvey (1996), Johnston (1991), McDowell (1999), Massey (1995), and Rose (1995) have focussed on the role of place in a globalising world. Or Nast and Pile (1998a & 1998b) focus on the emplaced experience of bodies in space. In each of these instances place is explicitly understood from the objective viewpoint of space. As a result, the analysis is one level removed from what it *feels* like actually to *be* in place.

Other geographers have focussed more on what it means to experience being in place from the perspective of those experiencing it. In these analyses place is foregrounded. Such experiences of place tend to be humanistic, subjective, phenomenological (cf. Eyles 1985; Pocock 1995; Relph 1976 & 1985; Sack 1997; Tuan 1974, 1977 & 1984). As Tuan (1977, p. 136) points out “[i]t is possible ... to describe place without introducing explicitly spatial concepts”. While on the one hand, theoreticians of place, such as Tuan, Relph, and Sack, do not completely reject the perspective that space gives them; on the other hand, they use the concept as a springboard from which to delve more deeply into trying to understand what it feels like to experience place. My intellectual interests lie with this latter group of geographers. I am interested in how place is experienced by the people living in it. My research, then, takes this focus, attempting to understand place from the point of view of those experiencing it.

Sack provides an illuminating theoretical framework for understanding experience of place at its most basic level. He identifies three empirical forces that combine to determine place: nature, meaning, and social relations. Eyles (1985) too, uses a similar, if somewhat less developed, framework for his analysis. As Figure 1 illustrates, it is the intertwining of these forces that creates place.

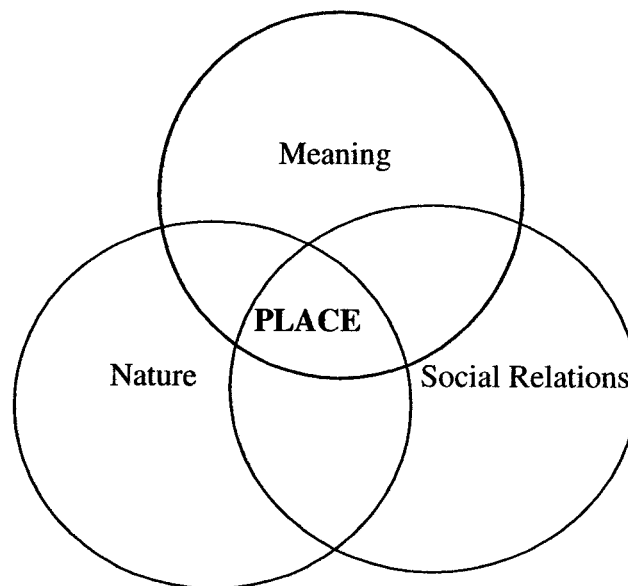


Figure 1. The Structure of Place
Source: adapted from Sack (1997, p. 84)

For Sack, nature may involve many things including: the essential quality and character of things; the inherent forces that direct things; and/or the material world (Sack 1997, p. 37). The place of humans within these natural systems either turns inward, viewing humans in terms of their internal physical, chemical, and biological processes, or outward, trying to understand the effect of the external environment on human behaviour.

However, as Sack points out,

... there is no doubt that nature affects, constrains, and enables us. But most of us would also say that we are as much influenced by forces that we ourselves produce... . These other forces are those of culture, which are composed of social relations and meaning (1997, pp. 39-40).

Social relations, for Sack, may entail any process that involves human interactions, from the work place, to the family, to strangers sitting together on a bus. Finally, Sack holds that “[t]he realm of meaning stresses our ability to think as a key factor separating us from the rest of creation and making us human. The mind is a locus of power that imparts meaning to the world” (Sack 1997, p. 44).²

Sack points out that the realms of nature, social relations, and meaning do not operate in isolation; each is linked to, and influences the other, at particular times and in particular settings. Through place, each of these forces is drawn together and overlaps with one another. In attempting to understand place, then, we must aim to understand how each of these forces operate and combine to shape the character and experience of a given place. I would also add that in order to understand the implications of Sack’s model to its fullest, one should keep in mind that each sphere develops, and is experienced, through time.

One important component of place is that it acts as a source of identity (cf. Bordo, Klein, and Silverman 1998; Buttimer 1980; Carter, Casey 1993; Donald and Squires 1993; Entrikin 1991; Hall 1995; Hiss 1991; Ingold 2000; Massey 1994; Morrow 2001; Osborne 2001 & 2002; Relph 1976; Rose 1995; and Sack 1997). Hiss writes (1991, p. xi), “... the places where we spend our time affect the people we are and can become”. If

² Many might take exception to Sack’s view that the ability to think separates humans from other living things, not only because in their more cynical moments they might question people’s ability to think, but also because they might also argue that other animals are also able to think.

this is the case for individuals, it is equally the case for groups. Harvey (1996) points out that Heidegger's use of the concept of *Heimat*, or homeland, is one product of the link between place and collective and cultural identity. Moreover, Hall (1995) also contends that place can serve as a way of defining cultural identity in contrast to the Other.³ For many peoples, the place in which they live is very much tied up in how they define who they are and how they understand themselves in relation to the world.

In addition to identity, a place can encompass senses, emotions, memories, and social relations (cf. Bordo, Klein, and Silverman 1998; Osborne 2001 & 2002). Nuttall uses the term 'memoryscape' to describe this sensation, at least partially. It "...is constructed with people's mental images of the environment, with particular emphasis on places as *remembered* places" (Nuttall 1999, p. 40). Such places help to define both the actions and thoughts of those who inhabit them.

Place, then, is a rich tapestry of human experiences and activities. Pickles (1988) writes that phenomenological geographers of place have been criticised for not actually producing geographies of place. From my review of the literature, it is clear that attempts have been made to address this lacuna. For example, McDowell (1999) and Peck (1996) have both done studies that look at the experience of workers in places. However, place-based research in geography has tended to be limited to Western, industrialised settings. Yet, peoples who are not from such settings have different conceptions of, and experiences in, place. They occupy and live in places in very different ways from their Western counterparts. Anthropologists such as Basso (1996), Ingold (1993; 2000), Jackson (1995), Morrow (2001), and Rosaldo (1988) have extended a place-based

³ As Massey (1994) and Rose (1995) indicate, place-based identity must be understood in light of the interaction between place and the larger spaces 'outside'.

approach to their research on non-Western societies. These studies provide powerful examples of how the experience of place affects how people live and function in their worlds.

In this document, the concept of place exists at two levels. At one level, it forms an important part of the structural backbone of the thesis. In writing as I do, I try not only to analyse experience of place, but also to *communicate* it. That means that I am limited by my technological know-how, and so, therefore, this is not a scratch-and-sniff thesis bound in fur with the sounds of seagulls, wind, and skidoos coming out of it. Rather, as you will see throughout this document, I have tried visually, and through writing in a more descriptive style, to communicate some of what the North is like as a place. In a sense, I am also trying to recreate a place within this document so that as a reader you may learn something about the thoughts and experiences that have contributed to my understanding of how some Inuit experience the commoditisation of country foods.

At another level, I have tried to use these ideas as a way of understanding how, in the getting, sharing, and eating of country foods, many Inuit are constantly constructing and reconstructing perceptions of, and experience in, place. Through country foods, nature, social relations, and meaning are all bound together. In part, people come to understand the world and their place in it, through what they do in a place. Thus, for example, Inuit, in hunting, fishing, and trapping, in moving over the land, sea, and ice, forge and reforge their collective and personal histories. Food, the getting and consuming of it, can serve as a means of forming and reforming identity. Country foods can be used to mark community, accentuate socio-cultural and political borders, and define one's identity as an Inuk. In fact, in Greenlandic, the word for country foods is

kalaalimineq, which is made up of *kalaaleq* (meaning, ‘Greenlander’) and *-mineq* (meaning, ‘a small piece of’) (Sejersen 1998).

I argue in this thesis that place is linked to country foods, and that it determines the economic system that has developed in relation to country foods, but how are we to make sense of that economic system?

Issues of Economics

Economics Defined

When I asked someone in Puvirnituk how Inuit translate the word ‘economy’ into Inuktitut, she looked a bit hesitant. After consulting others in the room and looking it up in a book of words provided by the local school board, she concluded that the term used to communicate the idea was *kiinaujatigut makittarasuarniq*, which literally translates as, “by money try to stand by itself”. This event, as much as the definition itself, is revealing. First, my informant’s confusion is quite typical of the experience of many Inuit with things economic. The whole way that the non-Inuit economic systems function can be a bit obscure to people.⁴ Many of the basic assumptions and workings of economics can be at best worked around, and at worst, a complete mystery for people. This is no different for many people, including non-Inuit; however, even the most elementary building blocks of Western formal economic systems can be difficult to

⁴ Iglauer ([1962] 2000) describes people’s very justifiable confusion with the concept of interest when they were first setting up the Co-operative in what was then known as George River (Kangiqualujuaq). In contrast, I, having been born and raised in a society where the concept seems always to have been present, just accept its existence and so, do not think about what an odd concept it is.

understand for some people. It is not only their rationales that are incomprehensible, but the very *concepts* (cf. Iglauer [1962] 2000). exist

The second reason that this definition is revealing is that it assumes that economics has, at its root, things to do with money. This is certainly what it has become. Money is generally synonymous, in Western systems, with all things economic, particularly in the context of formal economics as practised by banks, governments, and much in between. However, this is neither fundamentally nor necessarily the case. Polanyi (1957a & 1957b) has been most instrumental in distinguishing between different forms of economic processes. The formal economic systems associated with money overlie more essential processes that determine the form and functioning of economic systems. These processes are based on social and cultural systems and on the institutions that people develop that sustain those systems. As you shall discover, this substantivist or institutionalist school of thought, associated with the works of Polanyi, are at the root of much of this thesis.

If we forget for a moment, the assumption of Inuit that economics is based on money, and start first with their essential building blocks, any number of definitions exists for the term “economics”.⁵ At its most basic, economics is “... the social relations people establish to control the production, consumption, and circulation of food, clothing, and shelter” (Gregory and Altman 1989, p. 1). These are the bare essentials of survival, and each is tied to, and affected by, the other. As I shall discuss, in their production, consumption, and circulation (and reproduction), country foods are very much tied up in Inuit social systems. Such an understanding of economic systems is related to Polanyi’s

⁵ For a small sample of these definitions see Chipeta (1981); Gregory and Altman (1989); Gudeman (1986 & 2001); Murray (2000); Narotzky (1997); Polanyi (1957a & 1957b); and Wilk (1996).

(1957a & 1957b) idea that economic systems must be understood in terms of social relations and the institutions that people develop that reflect and promote the values held by a given society. Murray's definition of economics adds an element, then, that is missing in Gregory and Altman. For Murray, economics is "...a system in which we find a circulation of signs creating and sustaining a set of values" (2000, p. 9). The "signs" may take a range of forms, but the relevant issue here lies in the values that they embody. These are associated with far larger moral concerns related to appropriate forms of behaviour. Thus, as Wilk (1996) suggests, in order to understand economic systems we must learn something about why people want things, not just how they get them. The reasons for wanting things can exist at many levels, great and small, both conscious and unconscious. They can be based on individual interest, on group interest, on moral imperatives, on ideas of personhood, on explanations about the nature of existence, and so on. MacDonald (2000) mentions that all of these processes—the construction and maintenance of social relations, designation of value, formation of identity, assignment of morality, and so on—take place, not only in the context of production and consumption, but also in distribution and circulation. Therefore, in trying to understand economic systems each of these steps in the process must be considered, for, he argues, limiting one's analysis to only part of the equation can result in missing some of the nuances that take place within economic systems. Moreover, he points out, changes in social systems may not affect all parts of an economy equally.

To understand the vernacular economy associated with country foods one must consider them not only as part of an economic system that provides the necessities of life, but, as Murray suggests, also as a set of *values* that affect ways of understanding and

operating in the world that extend beyond humans to include larger physical and metaphysical issues.

I have chosen to use Goldsmith's (1998) term of a "vernacular" economy to identify the economy associated with the ideas, processes, social relations, values, and institutions that are linked by Inuit to country foods. Others have come up with somewhat different terms for economic systems, but they each denote essentially the same set of ideas. Chipeta's (1981) term of "indigenous" economies, Gudeman's (2001) idea of a "community" economy, Ross and Usher's (1986) idea of an "informal" economy, and Sahlins' (1974) "domestic mode of production" are all used to describe economies that are related to systems that are particular to a place and its people. Such economies are generally tangentially part of larger economic systems and have tended to fall under the umbrella of research that is associated with subsistence economics.

Subsistence

Ideas about subsistence economies have generally been the domain of anthropologists, although geographers have made some important contributions to the field.⁶ However, on the whole, much of the literature that discusses ideas about subsistence has been left to anthropologists. As a discipline, anthropology addresses basic questions both about the functioning of economic systems and about the world-views that inform these systems. It explores the building blocks of these systems, and does so from the perspective of economic systems that are not necessarily Western,

⁶ In fact, in Canada, geographers such as Wenzel and Usher have done research that focuses particularly upon Inuit economic systems associated with subsistence.

industrialised, monetarised economies. Its basic premise is that economic processes reflect varying cultural paradigms (cf. Gudeman 1986). It looks at cycles of production, distribution, and consumption within subsistence economies, all within the context of the ideologies that inform those cycles (cf. Bird-David 1990; Bodenhorn 2000; Burch Jr. 1988; Caulfield 1997; Hensel 1996; Hovelsrud-Broda 1997 & 2000; Ingold 1986, 1996a, 1996b, & 2000; Nuttall 1992; Sejersen 1998; Wenzel 1991). As such, it provides an invaluable tool for attempting to understand how, for example, hunter-gatherer economies have operated in the past and operate today. In the case of my own research, it is only armed with such an understanding that I might be able to understand what is involved in the commoditisation of country foods.

Analyses of subsistence economies have been subject to some debate. In the Arctic, they have been tangled up in various political wrangles, from land claims in Alaska (cf. Berger 1985 & 1999) to whaling in Greenland (cf. Caulfield 1997; Freeman 2001; Kalland 1994). Much of this debate revolves around ideas of what is considered “traditional” and given this, what kind of change is acceptable to the societies that have surrounded, and often try to control, subsistence producers via various regulations. From Brody’s (2000) historical and philosophical argument that farmers have consistently attempted to overwhelm hunter-gatherers to more in-depth analyses of the legal rights of subsistence producers to sell their food (cf. Bennett 1982), the basic assumptions involved in these debates revolve around a number of themes that are debated within the literature. In particular, these include four basic ideas about the characteristics of subsistence economies. First, subsistence literature examines how social and economic systems function based on often unrecognised notions of reciprocity and the gift.

Second, it analyses the effects of commoditisation and market economies on social, economic, political and cultural systems. Third, the literature looks at ideas about value and the impact that money has on processes of valuation. And finally, it examines the ways that common property systems underpin vernacular, or subsistence economies.

For all the analysing that academics might do about the nature of subsistence economies, I give aboriginal peoples the first word about the nature of subsistence; what do *they* understand 'subsistence' to mean? Two definitions from the literature are enlightening. The Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), a pan-Inuit organisation, defines subsistence as,

... a highly complex notion that includes vital economic, social, cultural and spiritual dimensions. The harvesting of renewable resources provides Inuit with food, nutrition, clothing, fuel, shelter, harvesting equipment, and income. Subsistence means much more than mere survival or minimum living standards. It is a way of life that requires special skills, knowledge, and resourcefulness. It enriches and sustains Inuit communities in a manner that promotes cohesiveness, pride and sharing. It also provides an essential link to, and communication with, the natural world of which Inuit are an integral part (Hovelsrud-Broda 1997, p. 21).

Yet this is only part of what aboriginal peoples are talking about when they are talking about subsistence. In Alaska, a group of aboriginal peoples attending a workshop defined the term more globally,

The definition was more than a word, more than an activity, more than a process. They [the participants at the workshop] offered phrases covering mind, body, and spirit. They addressed the relationship of all things and the need to respect and live in balance with creation. They portrayed love, survival, generosity, growth, and the cycles of life (Hild in Sejersen 1998, p. 196).

Thus, in looking at subsistence, one is looking not simply at the harvesting of country foods, nor only at the socio-economic processes associated with that harvest, but

at a range of processes, values, and understandings that are essentially cosmological. In Chapter Three I communicate something of this cosmology for Inuit as it relates to country foods. For the time being, let us turn to the ways in which academics have tried to make sense of subsistence economies and the ideas on which they are founded.

Gift And Reciprocity

Marcel Mauss developed the idea of the gift in the 1920s as a way of trying to understand exchanges within societies that took place outside of the market. The concept was later refined by people like Marshall Sahlins to include larger notions of reciprocity. Both terms are used, often interchangeably, to describe and account for the ways in which goods that are not in a market—with all that that entails in terms of social relations and perceptions of those goods and mechanisms for their production, circulation, and consumption—are exchanged between people. This is a negative definition, i.e., the exchange of goods that are *not* in a market. But what, actually, do gift and reciprocity connote? Although I discuss the impacts of markets later in this chapter, upon what exactly are they having an impact?

Sociality is central to the ideas of the gift and of reciprocity, so that such economies may only operate under close and direct social relations. Mauss ([1925] 1990) argues that when *a* gives *x* to *b*, that gift necessitates an obligation to give, receive, and reciprocate, so that *b* must give *y* to *a* at some later date. Within this set of relations are power relations, although who holds those reins is subject to debate. Mauss, and others such as Dalton (1967a) and Bourdieu (1985) have argued that gifts are a way of establishing the power of the giver over the receiver, while MacDonald (2000) turns the

tables and argues, citing the case of Australian aborigines, that the power is, in fact, in the hands of the receiver who has a pre-established right to demand the gift.⁷ What is essential in understanding this form of exchange is that social relations are key. They bind both people and goods. So that in the movement of things from one person to another, relationships are continually affirmed and reconstituted.

Sahlins' (1974) notions of reciprocity are also based on social relations, which vary depending on the kind of reciprocity that exists between individuals. Generalised reciprocity, whereby people give without any expectation of direct material return within a predetermined period, assumes close links between people, such as family or close communities. One level removed from this form of exchange is balanced reciprocity, according to which people exchange directly and without delay, for example, through barter. This form of exchange is less personal than generalised reciprocity. Finally he identifies negative reciprocity, which involves trying to get something for nothing, such as theft, haggling, or gambling. This is the most impersonal form of exchange.

These social relations are not necessarily discrete, nor are they of a fixed duration (Kopytoff 1986). Unlike an exchange in a market, having once given something in a gifting or reciprocal relationship, a person generally maintains that relationship with a particular individual. So gifting or reciprocal relationships created by this form of exchange are on-going. This is why, Gudeman (2001) contends, reciprocity both builds and is an expression of community, hence his term "community" economies. In giving and receiving, people are constantly establishing and maintaining links amongst

⁷ In addition to gifting, people also use the term "borrowing". The implication may be that what is borrowed will be returned, however, the return may not be in-kind, nor will it necessarily be within a fixed period of time. So Wachowich (1999) quotes a woman in the eastern Canadian Arctic who says that borrowing from people, particularly in-laws, makes people closer. In fact, she says, they would be upset if a person were not to ask for things. So "demand sharing" extends to "demand borrowing".

themselves that in turn form the basis for their economy. Gregory (1982) argues that such exchange reflects a society that is rooted and stresses the importance of kin, whereas societies involved in commoditised exchange are up-rooted and class-based.

Like Sahlins, MacDonald (2000) argues that Mauss' formulation of the gift is limited, and prefers to use the term "sharing". This, he maintains, includes a host of values and activities that spread beyond exchange, such as hospitality, land-people relations, and community self-awareness that encompass more than the mere exchange of goods and obligations. Moreover, he points out, in sharing, people are able to differentiate groupings within communities and to distinguish outsiders from insiders. Ingold (1986) takes the idea of sharing and further refines the concept. He argues that in sharing societies there is "sharing in", by which there is unrestricted access to goods and the means of subsistence are enjoyed by all in common, and "sharing out", whereby the goods held by an individual are divided up for use by many. He points out that sharing out only works in situations where it is underwritten by sharing in. In both cases, not only is sharing sustained by common expectations about correct social behaviour, but such notions cannot but operate with an environment that stresses the moral imperatives associated with this behaviour. The idea of sharing has generally been adopted by researchers who study Inuit economies (cf. Bodenhorn 2000; Wenzel 1991 & 2000).

Sharing, thus, binds both people and goods by sociality and entails various forms of moral responsibility. The idea that moral responsibility is central to the functioning of sharing economies is linked to Thompson's idea of a "moral economy" (1991), which entails customary views about social norms and obligations, about proper economic functions within a community. He argues that it focuses upon the common weal and puts

an emphasis on access to necessities, particularly food.

So food plays a central role in reciprocal, or sharing, relationships. “Food dealings are a delicate barometer, a ritual statement as it were, of social relations, and food is thus employed instrumentally as a starting, a sustaining, or a destroying mechanism of sociability...” (Sahlins 1974, p. 215). For this reason, the sale of food is forbidden amongst members of societies that operate based on principles of generalised reciprocity, “[f]ood has too much social value—ultimately it has too much use value—to have exchange value” (p. 218). Yet, Sahlins notes, intercommunity or “intertribal” food sales, that is, involving a scale beyond kin, *is* acceptable. In Chapter Five I explore whether, in fact, this is the case in Nunavik.

Ideas of giving and receiving, and the obligations that are associated with these relations are not clear, particularly in relation to food. Though thoughts about gift and reciprocity stress that sharing is an obligation, this may not necessarily be how everyone involved in these relations actually perceives them. For example, in Puvirnituk, one person told me that sharing food made her feel good. Giving was, for her, a pleasure in and of itself.

The requirement to share food is also underpinned by reciprocal relations that extend beyond the human realm. As I discuss in Chapter Three, many Inuit see their relationship with their environment in an essentially reciprocal light. Their success in hunting or fishing exists because the animals have chosen to give themselves to the hunter or fisher. Such generosity must then be extended to others, and so, food must be shared.

Ideas about sharing, particularly food, have generally been expressed in

ecological terms; that is, that people share in order to allay the hardships that people might meet in times of scarcity (cf. Forde and Douglas 1956; Sahlins 1974). MacDonald (2000) underscores that these views are only a partial explanation for ideas about sharing. In trying to understand why people share, he argues that people must also consider other social dimensions such as understandings of personhood and ideals about the social.

-As I discuss in Chapter Three, notions of sharing, particularly as they relate to country foods, are central to Inuit vernacular economies (cf. Bodenhorn 2000; Burch Jr. 1988; Dahl 2001; Nuttall 1992; Oakes and Riewe 1997; Wenzel 1991 & 2000). For Inuit, sharing exists in many forms both within communities and across the Arctic. It is linked to ideas about appropriate moral behaviour amongst people, and between humans and the environment. It also serves to establish individual and group identities, enabling Inuit, particularly today, to define themselves in relations to the Other, who has colonised their territories.

So, peoples with vernacular economies that operate on the principle of reciprocity function with a particular set of assumptions about the nature of social relations, the nature of exchanges within those relations, the nature of self, and requirements about individual and societal relations, all of which take place apart from a cash economy. As Gudeman (2001) puts it, “(r)eciprocity incorporates this tension between separation and unity, self-sufficiency and interdependence. There is always a delicate balance between distance and closeness, detachment and warm sentiments in the double act.” Further, he provides a succinct analysis of what happens if reciprocal relationships are destroyed, “(t)he unlinking of this tension converts reciprocity to separate communities, commercial trade, or to war” (p. 88). Furthermore, “... to sell communal valuables that are used in

reciprocal exchanges converts the realm of social value and well-being to that of commercial value and just living.” (p. 89). In other words, once the market is introduced into an economy that operates along principles of reciprocity, it makes commensurate, different realms of value, moving social value into the realm of monetary value. Thus, the commoditisation of goods, and the market system associated with this process, may be the cause of a number of changes to the way an economy functions, to the values it embodies and to the social systems that must function within it.

Commodity and Market

Much of the literature that focuses upon the effects of commoditisation and the market tends to emphasize their social and cultural components. As economies that function on reciprocity become ones that operate based on market principles, so their social relations may be changed and the cultural principles that inform those societies may be altered.

Before considering these transformations, let us understand the basic concepts with which we are dealing. What is a commodity? Both Appadurai (1986) and Peterson (1991a) emphasize that a commodity is any thing that is intended for exchange. According to Merchant (1989), Marx emphasizes that this exchange takes place within a market, so that a commodity is a good that is produced not for immediate use, but to be brought to market. Murray (2000) adds a social component to this definition, stating that a commodity is an alienable product that is exchanged between actors who are reciprocally independent. Putting these various elements together, a commodity is a thing that is exchanged, generally within a market, and is thus, removed from exchange

based on reciprocal social relations. Thus, the process of turning things into commodities and linking them to the market entails particular kinds of social relations and particular ways of perceiving those things. Following Marx's analysis, people have tended to place an emphasis on production in trying to understand the effects of commoditisation and market forces on economic processes. Moeran (1995) however, argues that in considering the effects of commoditisation, one should focus above all on processes of exchange, because these tend to be the social relations most affected by commoditisation.

Polanyi (1957a) identifies a number of changes in vernacular economies that accompany the introduction of markets: the motive of subsistence (i.e., production for use) is replaced by that of gain; all transactions become money transactions with money as the medium of exchange; all incomes are derived from the sale of something; prices are self-regulating, which means that markets must be allowed to function without interference; nature becomes interwoven with processes of commoditisation as its products become fodder for the market; and eventually social relations become embedded in the economy rather than the economy being embedded in social relations. Moreover, as Marx argues, within market economies the worker is alienated from the product of his or her labour (in Parry and Bloch 1989). In market exchange, each exchange is discrete and can be only a one-off exchange; in other words, unlike a reciprocal exchange, there is no expectation that a market exchange will entail an on-going social relationship.

Market exchange, in contrast to reciprocal exchange, does not entail any kind of moral responsibility.

[Market exchange] allows for the development of non-morally constituted social relations, including contracts and the rendering of the person as consumer or client. Although kin-based moral communities do exchange, exchange is at its most abstracted in a market economy in which individuation leads to a separation from the social, and the individual is only incorporated back into the social having been successfully institutionalised into its value system. The notion of wholeness is individual not social, and exchanges take place between people or groups constituted as separate from each other (MacDonald 2000, pp. 101-102).

As I discuss below, this bare-bones list describing the nature of market systems has been the subject of some debate, yet it serves as a useful yardstick against which to assess the effects of commoditisation on vernacular economies.

Dalton (1967a) notes the implications of internal versus external control of the forces that drive commoditisation. “It is not alienation from the means of production which is socially divisive, but rather the dependence on impersonal market forces unrelated to indigenous social control, the separating of economy from society by divorcing resource allocation, work arrangement, and product disposition from expressions of social obligation. And to be sure, the consequent loss of socially guaranteed subsistence, as well” (p. 78). This points to an issue raised by Peterson (1991a), which is the extent to which the forces driving commoditisation are the result of free choice as opposed to compulsion to sell in order to survive, for example, war, territorial dispossession, or taxation. Appadurai (1986) echoes this view, adding that power politics play an important role in shaping the formation and behaviour of commodities. For example, what may be commoditised and what may not, could be a reflection of competing interests in society with the powerful wanting to dictate the rules of commoditisation in ways that entrench their power in the face of weaker segments of society that want to challenge them. As I shall discuss in Chapter Five, this dynamic may

be at play in the commoditisation of country foods in Puvimituq.

Kopytoff (1986) argues that the literature tends to oversimplify the dynamic of the relations between a vernacular economy and a market economy. Processes of commoditisation do not produce all or nothing situations; that is, it is not necessarily the case that a thing is either a commodity or is not a commodity. Instead, it can move in and out of commodity status, or it may be viewed as a commodity by some and not by others. Depending on the situation, a thing may be a commodity produced for exchange on the market, or it may be something that stays within the vernacular economy outside of the market's realm. In fact, as Gudeman (2001) suggests, sometimes the market realm and the vernacular realm are able to coexist, and sometimes not; sometimes they complement one another, and sometimes they are at odds. Many argue that economies, particularly those that have been associated with subsistence production, are, in fact, a mixture of vernacular and market forces, and that to make a clear-cut distinction between the two is at best inappropriate, and at worst, unfair (cf. Caulfield 1997; Happynook n.d.; High North 1995a; MacDonald 2000; Moeran 1992; Sahlin 1974; Wenzel 1991).⁸ Seavoy (2000) goes one step further, asserting that there are, in "peasant villages", two kinds of markets, the first involving village markets that are not anonymous, but are rather, a form of monetarised barter and a way of distributing temporary surpluses. In these markets, profit is not the primary motivation. The second involves storekeeper markets. In these markets profit *is* of primary importance. In each of these cases, the relationship between vernacular and market economies is dialectic.

⁸ I write "at worst" because ideas of subsistence economies operating exclusively outside the market realm have been used to prevent aboriginal peoples from participating in those economies. For example, under various regulatory systems subsistence production by aboriginal peoples explicitly prohibits market sales of goods that come from the environment. As I shall discuss in Chapter Four, the sale of country foods in Nunavik is a point in kind.

Kopytoff (1986) suggests that commoditisation rather be viewed as a process of becoming than as an all-or-nothing state. The process of commoditisation operates at two levels: first, making a given commoditised thing exchangeable for more and more other things; and second, making more and more different things more widely exchangeable (Kopytoff 1986).⁹ Such transformations, Gudeman (1986) suggests, are a reflection of changes in cultural and cognitive processes. Yet, Kopytoff notes, culture puts brakes on the rush to commoditisation. It ensures that portions of a society's environment remain "sacred", thereby ensuring that it is not commoditised. Or else, as I suggested above, society allows goods to operate within both realms. However, if commoditisation clashes with individual cognition or cultural principles, it can result in "anomalies in cognition, inconsistencies in values, and uncertainties in action" (Kopytoff 1986, p. 82).

While commoditisation processes effect changes in the nature of social relations within an economy, simple issues of technology can, in part, also affect the extent to which a thing may be turned into a commodity (Kopytoff 1986). Thus, for example, money, transportation systems, the internet, and so on, have affected the limits to which a thing may become a commodity.

As far as the commoditisation of country foods is concerned, the oft-expressed view is that it will lead to social and environmental upheaval (cf. Myers 2000; Nietschman 1990). As Goldsmith puts it, "[o]nce the market rules our economic life, the natural world is seen to be no more than a source of resources to be commoditised and transformed into cash on the global market" (1998, p. 318). Yet others argue that

⁹ Thus, for example, Cronon ([1983] 1994) notes that when North America was first colonised by Europeans, they saw the environment as an expanding source of commodities for sale in the market, while the aboriginal peoples, whose assumed needs were more limited than the colonists, viewed the environment as finite.

commoditisation of country foods can be used responsibly to support local cycles of exchange in ways that do not cause the vernacular economy to crumble (cf. Moeran 1992; Caulfield 1997; Feit 1991).

Given this, to what extent is the sale of country food viewed by Inuit as destroying their economy, and to what extent do they see it as sustaining that economy? To what extent have market forces penetrated the social and cultural logic that operated within an economy that operates along essentially reciprocal lines? To what extent are those things that the vernacular economy holds dear involved in the market economy, and is their involvement in that economy exclusive to it, or are they able to operate within each economic realm, while retaining the logic particular to each?

Much of the debate on the difference between market economies and sharing economies comes down to discussions about differing systems of valuation, and issues about the effect of money on these systems and on the societies that adhere to them. For these reasons it is toward questions of value and money that I now turn.

Value And Money

Given, as I pointed out in Chapter One, that Inuit need money in order to sustain their livelihoods, the literature on subsistence is rife with debate about the role that cash plays in subsistence economies (cf. Hovelsrud-Broda 1997; Happynook n.d.; Kalland 1994; Nietschman 1990; Freeman 2001; Wenzel 1991 & 2000). Some argue that subsistence economies are being corrupted by, and assimilated into the larger Western cultural and economic systems by the introduction of cash (cf. Condon 1994; Klausner and Foulks 1982; Nietschman 1990), while others say they are simply adapting to its

introduction (cf. Caulfield 1997; Freeman 2001; Hovelsrud-Broda 1997; Wenzel 1991). The question, ultimately, is how have aboriginal subsistence economies adjusted to the penetration of cash within their vernacular economies. These debates are essential in attempting to understand how a subsistence economy is affected by the infiltration of an economic system predicated on money. Though money is the focus of these debates, at their root are questions about systems of valuation.

Systems of Valuation

From Aristotle to Smith to Marx, debates about value are often expressed in terms of a contrast between use value and exchange value, with the former involving value that is established based on a thing's worth as something that is used, and the latter being established as a result of processes of exchange.¹⁰ For example, the vernacular economy of Inuit that is associated with country foods has been based on use values, and their commoditisation represents a change in their values to exchange values. Where use value is based on the concrete and the particular, exchange value is abstract and general. Where use value represents nonalienated labour, exchange value entails labour that is separated from the end product. Where use value involves production as a means to an end being human use, exchange value implies production as an end in itself. In both cases, value can be a social or cultural construction; however, the simple fact that something is produced for direct use generally means that it is less prone to intangible constructions of value that are not grounded in fact. The danger in exchange value is that

¹⁰ See Dodd (1994), Merchant (1989), Murray (2000), Seavoy (2000), Spivak (1987), and Thorsby (2001) for a more detailed discussion of the history of ideas of value.

it can be grounded in nothing but an abstraction.¹¹ Money generally serves as the means by which use value may be transformed into exchange value.

Value is essentially a social creation. So, the extent to which a value is endorsed depends above all upon social consensus. If people agree that a thing has value, then it *does*. For this reason, people such as Appadurai (1986), Gudeman (2001), Miller (2000), Moeran (1995), and Throsby (2001) argue that commodities and the values attached to them are reflections of culture rather than of some absolute idea of value. So Simmel ([1900] 1978) argues, values are an indication of subjective rather than objective processes of valuation. This is also why, Throsby (2001) maintains, one cannot attempt to understand processes of valuation and the values themselves without also understanding the social and cultural contexts in which they occur. Miller (2000) asserts that in the move from vernacular to market economies, processes of valuation do not make a simple trajectory from purely socially and culturally embedded forms of value to purely disembodied forms of value. Rather, he argues, different forms of value can co-exist in different spheres. And, moreover, culture plays an important role in allowing for different forms of valuation and in the maintenance of different domains of value. Murray (2000) adds that in the meeting of cultures, the narrative has tended to oversimplify things, arguing that when exchange value meets use value, the former always prevails, with a resulting fall from innocence of the latter values grounded in place. He argues, however that “[w]e need to be aware of the full economies of value (which includes the discursive, religious, and cultural) on both sides as well as the new systems of values that may be emerging from the exchanges themselves, and to do so we

¹¹ The stock exchange is full of such instances, from the tulip craze in 17th Century Holland to the dot com craze of the 20th Century.

must interrogate even the most apparently straightforward exchange, in which the scheme of value seems self-evident” (p. 41). Murray goes on to say that people are inclined to force fixed points of value on situations as a way of understanding and critiquing them, but the fact is, values vary depending on time, context, perspective, and so on, and moreover, exchanges can have elements of many values—gift, commodity, exchange. Thus, researchers must try to understand the cultural rules in place and at a given time.

Parry and Bloch (1989), Harvey (1996), and Kopytoff (1986) all note the importance of scale both in determining different domains of value and in allowing these different domains to co-exist. Kopytoff (1986) argues that in large-scale societies, value is flattened out at the collective level and variegated at the individual level, thus resulting in anomalies and contradictions between the values of individuals and the collective. In contrast, small-scale societies, at least in the past, display a relative consonance of economic, cultural, and private valuations. Harvey (1996) and Spivak (1987) also add that a society’s definition of value is place and time specific.

This is precisely why the commoditisation of country foods is significant. With the addition of exchange value to what had been almost exclusively valued based on use, Inuit must come to terms with processes of valuation that have been developed at different scales and in different times. Although market exchange based on money recognises that value for many goods can be subject to change, it is also necessarily predicated on some abstract, seemingly stable goods—such as gold in the past and the American dollar at the moment—whose value cannot be fiddled with if it is to operate effectively. Monetised markets generally assume that money serves as a fair measure of value. These are markets based on space, markets in which goods tend to be

exchanged stripped of consequences, uprooted from personalised social relations and from natural processes, decontextualised from their source, and removed from place. Yet, within the vernacular economy of Inuit, the value of country foods has tended to be all about place, all about the links between natural processes and social relations. Thus, with the sale of country foods, an economy of place meets an economy of space. Thrown into this meeting are very different cultural assumptions about the creation and meaning of value.¹² As Appadurai (1986) and Gudeman (2001) point out, when different spheres of valuation overlap, the resulting conflict in the processes that shape those valuations can be complex. Kopytoff (1986) suggests, in the commoditisation of goods that result in an overlapping of different spheres of valuation, it is important to consider: how people break culturally defined rules by moving between spheres; how they convert what *was* unconvertible; how they mask this and with whose connivance; how spheres are recognised and what things move between them; and how the impact of trade at a global level is cushioned.

In Chapter Three, I discuss some of the processes that establish the value of country foods within the vernacular economy of Inuit. I use that as the basis for the remainder of this thesis to examine whether in commoditising country foods, Inuit have adopted their exchange value whole-heartedly, and in the process, got rid of the spheres of valuation that underscored the place of country foods in the vernacular economy. Ultimately the value of country foods within the vernacular economy of Inuit has been

¹² Feinup-Riordan provides a succinct analysis of this meeting of different processes of valuation:

I have ... heard people say that if one lives off the land, one need never hoard money or even food... because each year the animals will return... Money can never be trusted like that. Thus living off the land is the ultimate security at the same time that it makes possible ... generosity (quoted in Wenzel 1991, p. 140).

that they represent a very direct means of survival and have been the purveyor of social stability. Has the simulation of value—to borrow from Baudrillard (1983)—that is inherent in money been accepted by Inuit in the face of what would otherwise be of immediate use value? Are processes of valuation being contested by Inuit? Have they accepted that money is a fair measure of the value of country foods or has some form of hybrid of exchange and use values been developed? Such are the questions that I address in this thesis; however, doing so requires an understanding of the implications of money upon social and economic systems in general, so it is to this issue that I now turn.

Money

Simmel ([1900] 1978) wrote the great treatise upon which many have since developed their ideas about the nature and workings of money. As Simmel presents it, money is an abstraction of value, a standard of value, and a method of storing value. It serves all of these functions despite the fact that it is not valuable in and of itself. From this abstraction a host of attributes then follows. As money is applied to more and more objects it distances them from subjective relations while at the same time allowing subjects to acquire more and more objects. So oddly enough, while money allows people to have increasing numbers of objects, they are less and less close to the objects themselves.

Stated directly: just as money intervenes between person and person, so it intervenes between person and commodity. Since the emergence of a money economy we are no longer directly confronted with the objects of economic transactions. Our interest in them is disrupted through the medium of money, their own objective significance becomes dissociated from our consciousness because it is more or less excluded from its proper position in our constellation of interests by their money value. If we recall how often awareness of purpose is arrested at the level of money, then it becomes clear that money and the enlargement of its role places us at an increasingly greater mental distance from objects (Simmel [1900] 1978, p. 478).

Money, although it does not embody all forms of value, tends to be applied to more and more things as a measure of value, which, Simmel argues, serves to concentrate the range of values into fewer and fewer varieties¹³. This, in part, is because it allows for the exchange of goods without the necessity of having to establish the social relations that are necessary to acquire those goods in a non-monetised economy. Money also allows for increased differentiation in societies, not only between rich and poor, but also between different specialities, so that those with specialised talents may earn their livelihood from them.

Simmel's formulation of money would seem to be absolute, and applicable across the planet, but people have taken exception to this view, pointing out that just as values vary from culture to culture, so too do the uses to which money is put (cf. Bohannan 1967; Furnham and Argyle 1998; Godelier 1986; Gudeman 2001; Leyshon 2000; Parry and Bloch 1989; Peterson 1991a & 1991b). In order to understand the impacts of money, they argue, one must understand how a given society defines the situations in which it may be used and how it may be used. Parry and Bloch (1989) point out that the symbolic

¹³ Thus, for example, where once things like air and water were generally inalienable public goods, they are now products that can be bought and sold on the market. Similarly, human organs, or even children may be bought.

representations of money are linked to culturally constructed notions of production, consumption, circulation, and exchange.

Parry and Bloch (1989) also caution against seeing money and economic processes in terms of simplistic dichotomies—non-monetary:monetary; traditional:modern; pre-capitalist:capitalist; gift economies:commodity economies; production for use:production for exchange, and so on. There are degrees and subtleties in these processes that vary from place to place, from people to people, and from one time to another. “We must, therefore, shift our focus from a consideration of the meanings of money to a consideration of the meanings of the whole transactional systems and to the kind of transformative process we have identified [in their case study]” (Parry and Bloch 1989, p. 23). This suggests that such research must be place-specific and phenomenological, providing a snapshot of time and place that is, at once informed by a larger historical context.

Time, according to Parry and Bloch (1989), plays an important function in the workings of money. For this reason, researchers must consider how short-term cycles of exchange—which for them involves the domain of individual activity that often focuses on acquisition—is linked to long-term cycles of exchange. “The crucial ... point is that ... [there is] a ...pattern of two related but separate transactional orders: on the one hand transactions concerned with the reproduction of the long-term social and cosmic order; on the other, a ‘sphere’ of short-term transactions concerned with the area of individual competition” (pp. 23-24). Short-term individualistic transactions, they argue, are morally acceptable to the extent that they do not threaten the long-term cycles that focus on the collectivity. In fact, short-term cycles may be desirable if they yield goods that are

transferred to the long-term cycles and used to maintain them. Such a process resolves the sometimes contradictory interests of the individual and the collective, for it provides an ideological space in which individual interests may be justified in the name of the collective. Parry and Bloch posit that these activities, however, are ideologically conceived of by people as operating in a separate sphere subordinate to the sphere of activity that promotes long-term production. This is necessary for two reasons: first, because the short-term sphere often provides the material goods required to sustain the reproduction of the long-term sphere; and second, because it must necessarily be recognised that the long-term order can only be maintained by the contributions of individuals. So people make sense of the existence of individual self-interest. It is only if the short-term order of individual self-interest threatens the reproduction of the larger long-term cycle that it is condemned. Generally, Parry and Bloch note, money is associated with the short-term cycle. I would add that these two spheres must be understood also in terms of physical scale, i.e., it is acceptable to sell outside of the local scale to the impersonal scale beyond a community and its institutions.

People like Simmel and Polanyi, tend to see money as part of an economic system that is predicated on and promotes impersonal relationships that are transitory, amoral, and calculating. Yet, Moeran (1992), Parry and Bloch (1989), and Peterson (1991a & 1991b) argue this is not necessarily the case. There are instances where money can be embedded in economies that are themselves embedded in social systems, and are not devoid of the moral imperatives under which those systems function. Money simply becomes yet one more means by which socially sanctioned views of morally appropriate behaviour can be expressed. So, a particular worldview gives rise to a particular

understanding of money.

Many of these themes, issues of power and scale, of conflicting and co-existing spheres of exchange are apparent in the economy of the North. And, as you will find in Chapter Five, they emerge in a variety of forms in the commoditisation of country foods.

Common Property

The vernacular economy of Inuit, as it relates to country foods, depends on particular ways of relating, not only to one another, but also to the environment. Ideas about social practices spill over into ideas about how to respect the environment, which then reiterates notions of social practice. And so the process continues. A hunter is required to respect the animals that allow themselves to be killed and must also share that bounty with others. Neither the animals nor the land belong to anyone, so one must share them all. As I discuss in more detail in Chapter Three, ideas about common property are very much at the root of the vernacular economy of Inuit. Ultimately, they inform how people use the land, sea, and sky. They determine how resources are sought, shared, and eaten.

Common property generally involves resources that are communally owned. Access to these resources is generally held by members of a community and can allow for the exclusion of non-members, with the allocation of those resources made amongst the members of that community (Berkes and Farvar 1989). As Berkes and Farvar note, common property regimes regulate relations between society and resources and between the individual and society as a whole. Generally, the primary obligation is to the community. So, social systems and property regimes are closely bound together. In the

case of common property, reciprocity tends to play a pivotal role in ensuring that the commons function properly.

As with the reciprocal social systems associated with non-monetary economies, morality plays an important role in ensuring that common property systems operate as they should. Gudeman (2001) asserts that every such society has a set of cultural constructs that allows them to join themselves to the commons, for example, the human body and its parts, family figures, the house, and so on.

As I describe in Chapter Three, Inuit continue to function on the assumption that property is held in common, and social relations and responsibilities accrue from this. That it should be otherwise is nonsensical.

To Inuit sensibilities, Nunavut (“Our Land”) is the Land that belongs to everyone, something far greater than the powers or interests of humans alone, and therefore Nunavut in a sense existed long before Inuit themselves, even before the Canadian government decided to make it official. It was not owned by Inuit, but neither was it supposed to be subject to ownership by anyone else, for it is absurd in traditional Inuit thinking to mark off land or sea as personal property (Qitsualik n.d., n.p.).

Simmel ([1900] 1978) explains that societies that view the world in this way see themselves as transient and the land as something that is more permanent. In such a case, the individual recedes in importance. “Land appears as the rock upon which individual life, like the wave, rises and runs off.¹⁴ Therefore immovable property is disposed towards allowing the individual to move into the background, his relationship to the collectivity here being analogous to his relationship to objects” (p. 353). This is why,

¹⁴ As you will see in Chapter Three, one result of this view that humans are transient in the face of the world’s permanence, is that time is seen in particular ways—not as linear, but as cyclical. Similarly, the world is not a permanent place, but in constant flux (cf. Ingold 1986; Little Bear 1998).

Gudeman (2001) emphasises, common property underpins and is underpinned by community. Similarly, this is why for hunter-gatherers possession of the land is really a matter of looking after it, of tending the creative forces located within it. They are custodians of something that belongs to all, and thus, they have a responsibility to all.

One of the ways that this responsibility is maintained is by ensuring that resources are conserved. This means that people must take only what they need. Should they take more than that, they must confront social sanctions, for excessive individual gain from a communal resource threatens not only the resource, but the society that depends upon it. Berkes and Farvar (1989) suggest that this leads to tensions between communal-level development and “economic development”, which suggests that the commoditisation of country foods, as a form of economic development, might also lead to tensions.

Common property, Gudeman (2001) contends, is not only a physical thing, but also knowledge and a way of thinking about the world. Thus, if there are changes to the commons, this produces changes, not only to community, but also to ways of perceiving and behaving in the world. This is nowhere more apparent than in the meeting of societies that function on capitalist notions of private property with those that function with a common property regime.¹⁵ Generally, the former view their form of development as beneficial and more advanced than the latter (Ingold 1986; Rasmussen 2000). Thus, for example, Seavoy (2000) argues that the “indolence” of subsistence producers must be discouraged by government policies if economic development is to occur; and Levey (1999) maintains that since Inuit land in Nunavut is held communally, “the incentive for

¹⁵ Thompson’s (1991) and Polanyi’s (1957a) books provide graphic descriptions of the iterative changes in society, community, and property as the commons were eroded in England. Cronon (1994) provides a similar description in his analysis of the meeting of Europeans and Indians during the colonisation of New England.

individuals to use land productively” (n.p.) is reduced and so, there is a disincentive for economic development by mining companies, for example. As I shall describe in Chapter Four, a somewhat more benign form of this view has tended to predominate the push for economic development promoted for the Inuit by the Canadian government.

Scale also plays an important role in common property regimes. As Simmel ([1900] 1978) notes, common property systems can only exist where there are a limited number of participants. He argues that as the numbers grow, this leads to the development of private property, because its administration as common property becomes too complicated and conflict-laden. Money is tied into this process, as it allows for the mobility and distribution of the private property and for exchange in ways that were not possible under common property. “Money is really that form of property that most effectively liberates the individual from the unifying bonds that extend from other objects of possession [that are viewed as immovable and inalienable]” (Simmel [1900] 1978, p. 354). Thus, one might ask, when the land and its resources come to have monetary value—as in the commoditisation of country foods—are Simmel’s “unifying bonds” broken? Gudeman seems to think so. He sees this process as cyclical, “[t]aking away the commons destroys community, and destroying a complex of relationships demolishes a commons. Likewise, denying others access to the commons denies community with them, which is exactly what the assertion of private property rights does” (2001, p. 27). For this reason, he argues, common property regimes have an interest in ensuring that the commons are not despoiled, for in doing so, they are despoiling themselves.

So, I consider in this thesis, how ideas of common property and the processes that

underlie them are woven into what represents, to some extent, the privatisation of the commons. After all, if country foods are sold, how are these common resources allowed to continue as products involved in the communal cycle of production, distribution, and consumption that are at the root of common property systems? How do people perceive their environment and their place in it as the resources that come *from* the environment are pulled from communal to individual gain?

The Place of Economy and the Economy of Place

Through place, I draw all of the questions I have posed in this chapter together. Through place, nature, people and their social relations, and the various culturally determined meanings they ascribe to them, are bound together. One facet of the social institutions that people have created is economic. So here too, place plays a role in determining its shape.

The links between economics and place are dialectical. On the one hand, the particularities of place produce particular economic systems and, and on the other hand, particular economic systems produce particular experiences of place. Systems of production, circulation, consumption, and reproduction are based in, reflect, and construct the *values* inherent in place. Such an economic system is both created by, and creates, specific social relations; it is embedded in, and embeds, particular systems of meaning; and it is reflected in, and reflects, particular links with the natural world. An economics of place can thus not be divorced from the particular cultural, social, historical, and political systems in which it is embedded. From this, a number of things follow. First, Marxist political economy argues that the mode of production and

reproduction reflect, and are a reflection of, human ideas, their cultures, and their historical development, and that moreover, these phenomena are not uniform throughout the world; they vary from place to place (Blunt and Wills 2000). Second, this approach is typical of an institutionalist, or substantivist, approach to economics. Martin (1994) explains that institutions are forms of social organisation through which durable and routine patterns of behaviour are created as a result of custom or legal constraint. Institutional economists argue that institutions are important at all levels of an economy (cf. Amin 1999; Cornell and Gil-Swedberg 1995; Johnston 1991; Martin 2000, Polanyi 1957a & 1957b). These institutions represent not only formal systems, such as those developed by the state, but equally informal systems that function within society, "... economic activity is socially and institutionally situated: it cannot be explained by reference to atomistic individual motives alone, but has to be understood as enmeshed in wider structures of social economic, and political rules, procedures and conventions" (Martin 2000, p. 79). Thus, an institutionalist analysis of economic systems must focus on the roles—both formal and informal—of these systems of rules, procedures and conventions. As Amin (1999) points out, given that economic life is instituted and socially embedded, it is thus, context-specific, and, I would suggest, place-specific.

I have tried to use the experience of place as a means of understanding how country foods fit into the vernacular economy of Inuit, that is, how place is bound up in the economic processes that have developed in Puvirnituk, for it is clear to me that how people perceive their place, what meaning it holds for them, has formed the often unrecognised foundation of the economy in the North. The natural systems, the social relations that have developed, and the meanings that people have given to these things are

all intimately linked to the economic system that underlies the production, distribution, and consumption of country foods. The economic system associated with the hunt is formed in, and forms experience of place. Thus, not only is this thesis about the economy of place, but also about the place of economy.

CHAPTER 3

THE PLACE OF COUNTRY FOODS/COUNTRY FOODS IN PLACE



During the autumn and early winter of 2001, war, violence, and destruction set the backdrop for my time in Puvirnituq. One Sunday, early in October, I came in from a walk to visit a friend and his wife. We sat together on their sofa and watched on their big-screen TV as George W. Bush announced that he was planning to attack Afghanistan. Some days later, there was talk on the radio of possible attacks by terrorists on nuclear power plants.

I looked around me at our houses with their electrical lights and oil-filled furnaces. I looked at the daily flights from Montreal delivering lettuce and frozen pizza to the shelves of the Co-op. I watched the four-wheelers that zoomed around town or carried people across the tundra. I felt the cold setting in on the land. And I thought, "This life we are living all comes from somewhere else. What happens if everything falls apart, and our lifelines to the South are shattered in the chaos of nuclear radiation?"

The more I thought about it, the more I realised that if the southern world were crumbling, I was perhaps in one of the best places that I could possibly be. There were people here who knew how to run dog teams, how to build igloos, how to find animals and kill them, how to use animal fat to heat their homes, how to make clothes from their skins, how to store food for times of need. Then I thought, "but what can I contribute to all of this? I will be dead weight".

I said as much a few days later when visiting my friend Jamisie and his family. He laughed and replied, "don't worry, we'd look after you".



One of the most striking things about living in the North, for me, is that there is no way of separating the food that I eat from an awareness of the place that it comes from. Whether it is knowing that I saw the fish that I am eating being pulled from a net, or the fact that the peaches on my plate sit there, thousands of kilometres from any tree that could have borne them, I cannot help but be conscious of the juxtapositions of food in and out of place.

No matter where one is from, the getting of food is about many things. For a lot of us, food simply appears in unquestioned ways on the shelves of the local market. It is predictably there, and usually tastes as expected, which is to say, it has met standards and regulations. A rare few, however, have a far more profound understanding of where their

food comes from and what has been involved in its production. This is certainly the case for most Inuit for whom, whether consciously or not, the getting of food entails understandings about themselves and their place in the world that are quite different from most Euro-Canadians. As people hunt, fish, or gather food, the material and immaterial worlds blend together in complex ways with layer upon layer of meaning and understanding. The getting of country foods is about understanding the land in which one lives. It is about building up an awareness and knowledge of one's place in the natural world of living and non-living beings. It is about making sense of oneself in time and place. It is about 'real life', as people have told me. Ultimately, the getting of country foods is built upon and helps to maintain a whole set of moral principles about the world and one's place in it. In getting country foods, people contribute to the construction of place and reflect constructions of place.

Finn Lynge (1998), a Greenlander, has identified four values that are essential to the Inuit way of life.

nunamut ataqinnineq: a sense of pride in knowing the land "feeling it in our bones, knowing its whales and caribou, its endless plains and mountains, its light and dark ... its hardness and its beauty—pride and respect for the land!" (n.p.);

akisussaassuseq: a sense of responsibility to the land and to everything that lives there; so people harvest only what they need and act as stewards of the resources that surround them;

tukkussuseq: generosity and hospitality that stress the importance of ties to extended family;

Inuk nammineq: personal independence and individual strength, which leads to a distrust of distant rulers, and encourages the development of the ability to judge for oneself and to act accordingly.¹

All of this comes both in the getting and eating of country foods. In Marxist economic terms, one might speak of producing, distributing, and consuming country foods, and of reproducing these processes. Such terms, however, do not get at the deeper levels of understanding about the nature of being, the nature of understanding, the larger whole in which life is lived. This chapter tries to get at some of that larger whole. It tries to explain something of what country foods and the processes associated with them mean to many Inuit, both out on the land, and increasingly, in communities. It aims to give a context in which to understand what country foods mean to people, for it is only with such an understanding, that one may begin to grasp what the selling of these foods might mean to people.

Niqituinnaq

Generally, the term used in Inuktitut for country foods is *niqituinnaq*, which literally means ‘regular food’.² The importance of this food is expressed in many ways. It is reflected in the fact that while many people eat store-bought food, when it comes down to having cravings for food or when people feel they need something truly nutritious or satisfying for their bodies, it is generally country foods to which they turn. So, people who are in the South for any period of time, attending school, at hospital, for work, or any number of other reasons that draw Inuit southward, often travel with country

¹ Inuktitut has several dialects, so the Greenlandic in this quotation is not Inuktitut in Nunavik, which is not Iñupiaq in Alaska.

² For an in-depth discussion of the meaning of *niqituinnaq* see Usher *et al.* (1995), pp. 121-126.

foods, or have them sent to them by friends and relatives. I have been on many a flight where people come laden with boxes of meat. Often, on stop-overs along the way, they will be greeted at the airport, will hand over some food to the person awaiting the delivery, and keep on their way. Interestingly, people even mark a spatial distinction between country foods and southern foods. A friend once pointed out to me, “You guys say, ‘well, it puts food on the table’, but that’s wrong! It’s ‘well, it puts food on the floor’.” This seemingly innocuous phrase reveals something of the different universes inhabited by Inuit and Euro-Canadians, a difference that Inuit actually physically mark in the eating of the two foods. When they eat country foods, Inuit generally sit on the ground around the food, cutting it up, the men with their knives, and the women with their half-moon shaped *ulus*. If the meal consists solely of *Qallunaaq*³ food, or has another course that is essentially perceived to be food from the South, people will get up off the floor to eat it seated at a table.

But what are the country foods that people eat? These vary from community to community—depending on what is available in the region—from season to season, and from individual to individual. In Puvirnituq, people rely heavily on fish—Arctic Char⁴ and whitefish—, caribou, and Canada Geese. Chabot (2001) confirms that this is similar for Nunavik as a whole, although she observes that this has changed over time. Thus, for example, the consumption of caribou meat has increased in Nunavik as a result of a general increase in the caribou population. In other areas, however, where sea mammals are more abundant and readily available, these represent a large portion of the diet. Thus,

³ This is the word (in the singular) used by Inuit to identify White people. Its plural form is *Qallunaat*.

⁴ This is the reason, someone from Nunavut once told me, why women from Nunavik are plumper than in Nunavut: they eat so much fatty Arctic Char.

what people eat is subject to the conditions particular to their places. Balikci (1964) provides a sketchy list of the country foods consumed in Puvirnituk according to season and location. A far more detailed list is contained in Figure 2 below. Although it is from the Belcher Islands, which has its own ecological conditions, and thus, a diet that is somewhat different from Puvirnituk, it provides a good illustration of the range of foods that people consume depending on their seasonal availability.

Figure 2. Seasonal Foods of Belcher Islands Inuit
Source: McDonald, Arragutainaq and Novalinga (1997, p. 21)

As Figure 2 suggests, particular species are consumed at particular times. This points to an important reality that people confront in the getting of country foods; namely, that they are subject to the vagaries of nature, to the passage of the seasons, and to the constraints of weather.

Seasons, Weather, Time and Country Foods

Since the consumption of country food varies depending on the seasons, this dictates both how much people are able to get and affects the accessibility of the food (cf. Adult Education Centre 1989; McDonald, Arragutainaq and Novalinga 1997; Wenzel 1991).⁵ The seasons affect the quality and behaviour of the animals. So migratory animals come and go. In Puvirnituk people are able to get fish, above all in the summer. Imalie, a woman in her 40s, commented that in the winter of 2000, the caribou were hard to find, and since Arctic Char cannot be found close to town, people relied mainly on seals. Animals are hunted at particular times of their reproductive cycles or are easier to catch in particular seasons. Seals, for example, may be more easily hunted when they are covered in fat, and so do not sink when they are shot. Canada Geese are easiest to get when they are unable to fly during their summer

September 13, 2002

Here it has turned cold, with wet snow falling for the last couple of days. For some odd reason I've been indoors way too much recently, so I'm losing track of what the world outside is up to. I think the geese are starting to head south, and the fish are moving back up into the lakes for the winter. The caribou are getting ready to mate. I've noticed that all sorts of small birds are congregating in preparation for moving on. But I wish I could be out in that world more.

⁵ See McDonald, Arragutainaq and Novalinga (1997, pp. 75-78) for a comprehensive account of how seasons, animal behaviour, and hunting, fishing and gathering activities are tied together for Inuit and Cree.

moult. Similarly, depending on the seasons, animal furs are thicker and healthier, and are therefore more sought-after. The seasons also affect the movement of food. People must constantly monitor animal movements and react to them. This was, in part, the reason why in the past Inuit moved from area to area in pursuit of animals. Today, people continue to study the movement of animals and react accordingly. Thus, in the spring and summer when the anadromous fish, such as Arctic Char, move out of lakes into the salty waters of Hudson Bay, people move their nets further and further along the rivers until they reach the bay, and follow the fish back again into the lakes at the end of the summer and into the fall.

People also note and comment upon nuances of taste, with certain animals tasting better at certain periods of the year. For example, many people generally avoid male caribou when they are in rut, because the meat tastes less good. In contrast, they prize male ringed seals when they are in rut, because their meat has greater warming properties (Usher *et al.* 1995). If a fish has been dead too long in the net, its flesh can taste watery. The same fish species can taste different depending on what lake it comes from, or whether it has been caught during the period when it has been in freshwater or in saltwater. If a caribou does not have enough fat on it, people will often wait until they see one that looks tastier.⁶ Processes of industrial food production have not standardized food. People continue to note the effects of environmental conditions on the quality of their food.

⁶ One man told me that the taste of food is affected even by its means of transportation. He said that food transported by dog-team tastes better than food transported by skidoo, because it has not picked up the fumes from the gas.

The changing seasons are also used to predict the availability of certain foods. For example, in the Belcher Islands, people know that the Canada Geese are moulting when the central stalk from a particular species of grass may be easily pulled out. In Puvirnituk the first summer rainfall after their arrival marks the beginning of the time when Canada Geese start to moult.

If the seasons affect the behaviour and availability of animals and the taste of country foods, they also, along with the weather, influence people's access to those foods. For example, at the end of the autumn and the beginning of the winter it can be difficult to get out of communities to *get* the food. This is because the ice is not yet stable enough, and there may not be enough snow to travel with ease. This is also a time when the weather can be unsettled. In October 2001, country foods were scarce in Puvirnituk because the weather was so bad it prevented people from going out in search of it. Generally, it is easier to get country foods in the summer than in the winter.

Winter was often very hard. Sometimes all we had to eat was a type of porridge made out of seal's blood which we would share with our neighbours. When we had nothing else, we were forced to eat seal skin strings, the bottom of old kamiks and we even resorted to the fur covered skins. We removed the fur before eating the skin (Adult Education Centre 1989, p. 27).

This vivid quotation reveals more than might at first be apparent. In extremely difficult conditions, people were sometimes obliged to eat some of the things that might actually have enabled them to continue to hunt, thereby jeopardising their continued survival. There are stories in the past of people being forced to eat their dogs, their clothes, even their tents in order to prevent starvation.



Given the difficulties that people knew they might face from one moment to the next, in times of plenty they would save food. The coastline around Puvirnituk is dotted with caches that were once used to store food. Like silent markers, they are testament to a way of living that lasted for thousands of years, living that reflected people's need to have food ready for times of want.⁷ In some ways, today people in the Canadian Arctic are generally not quite

so tied to the whims of nature. Like most Canadians, they have houses heated by oil imported from far away. They have access to foods from the South, and they may fill their freezers with meat when it becomes available. But people still dry meat such as Arctic Char or whitefish, beluga, seal, and caribou for the pleasure of eating it.



Visiting Jinnie's house one evening, we sat at the kitchen table talking about this and that, while two women added highlights to their hair. Children raced around

⁷ Balikci (1964) describes the seasonal patterns of food sharing in the area of Puvirnituk. During the winter the whole camp formed an economic unit within which people shared country foods. This was not the case in spring when these foods, especially seals, were easier to get. As a result, people divided food less. Instead they spent the summer preparing dried meat and blubber to cache for winter use. These were later shared with those in need. Yet sharing did not stop altogether in the summer. During this time seals and belugas were divided equally, and blubber was stored for communal use as dog food in the winter. In the late spring and autumn people fished with nets. During these seasons, people shared less, because the weather had less effect on people's abilities to obtain food.

in and out of the house, the television was playing in the background, and we sat chatting and tearing dried Arctic Char with our teeth from strips of its mottled skin. Its flesh tasted rich and full of oil. Jinnie's mother had prepared it earlier that week when she was out camping.



So the physical realities of the natural world—knowledge about its unpredictability—translate into deeper existential perceptions about the nature of reality in general, and time in particular. People in the Arctic must necessarily be aware that their environment is constantly changing, everything is in flux, and the future cannot be predicted. This means that people cannot make firm plans. The future is always contingent on uncontrollable forces, and so, people must learn to adapt to the unpredictability of life. This is part of what Qitsualik (2003a) sees as intrinsic to the Inuit mindset. In the face of a sometimes hostile and uncertain environment, where conditions can change at any moment, Inuit have, of necessity, learnt to be adaptable.

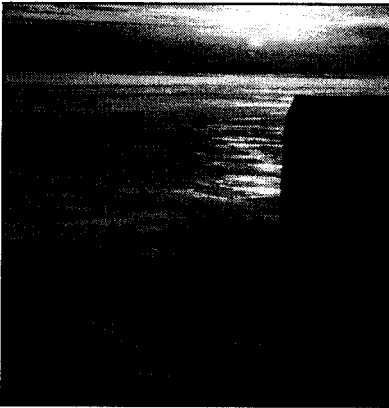
October 31, 2001

It's incredible how quickly the environment changes. Yesterday the river in front of the house was open and today it's frozen with patches of open water.



November 7, 2001

There's a storm outside. The house shakes in the force of the wind and light snow is being picked up and whipped around so that you can see nothing. ... As I sat and ate alone in silence ... I watched the birds—seagulls—fly in the storm. They seemed to be playing a game. They struggled to fly into the full force of that wind and then turned, let go, and went soaring forward.

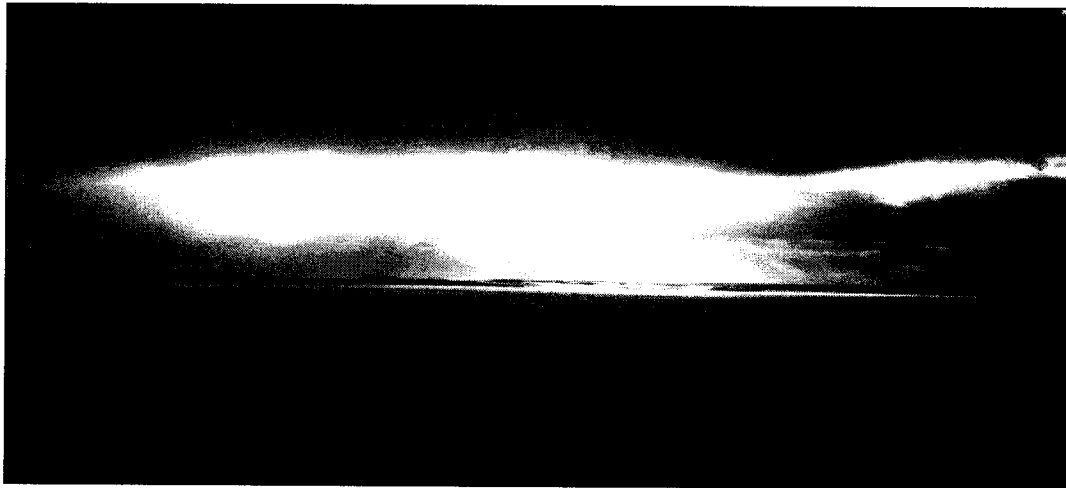


November 9, 2001

It's been amazing seeing the river freeze again. Yesterday I watched as the water, covered in broken pieces of ice, moved fantastically, like porridge—rolling up and down in heavy undulations. It was a wondrous sight. No longer the sounds of waves on the shore. The winter's definitely coming. This morning I stopped and looked at the river. The seagulls have gone.

November 11, 2001

I saw a seagull flying in the falling snow today—circling over the river. It made me happy. The water looks frozen in great sheets of ice, with snow on top and open pools of water adding light and texture. No more porridge.



Environmental conditions require an awareness that the future cannot be predicted. As a result, then, life must be lived very much in the present. People have often told me, “We live in the moment. Today is today, and tomorrow is tomorrow. Don’t bring today into tomorrow, and don’t bring tomorrow into today.” Such an approach to time affects what gets done and how it gets done.

This is the way my grandfather was raised. Out on the land and back in the past, everyone had to learn to get ready quickly. You were always supposed to be aware of what is going on, never let the others wait. There was always an urgency to get somewhere, whether you were going home, going to a new campsite. It is because we used to have to follow the land’s changes. It might not be good travel conditions later on. Things like climate, ice, and water conditions can change so quickly (Sandra Pikujak Katsak, born 1973, in Wachowich 1999, p. 219).⁸

People do not assume that they have authority over time; rather, they must adjust to the instability and impermanence that they see all around them (cf. Brody 2000; Little Bear 1998; Sioui 1992). This means that people let go of the past—do not bring yesterday’s problems into today’s living—and do not assume that the future is predictable, and therefore, controllable.⁹ As Sioui puts it, “Trying to understand life’s

⁸ This practice continues. As someone who was raised to live by the clock, it is always an adjustment to me when I am heading out with Inuit, an adjustment that I don’t always make easily. In the summer of 2002 while camping, we had been out in a boat looking for seals. We stopped for some time at our campsite to have tea and warm up. I was impatient, tired of simply waiting until some sign, incomprehensible to me, was made to indicate that it was time to leave again. So I wandered off for a moment. I returned in time to see the boat setting off. I rushed towards it, hoping to jump into it before it was too far from shore. Instead of a graceful leap, I made a messy slithering flop as I slid on the slimy rocks underneath the water. I retreated to the tent with ego bruised and limbs wet. The others returned later that night having shot a baby seal—a real delicacy—which people ate with gusto the next day.

⁹ I once had an interesting conversation with an Inuk friend about the concept in English of a ‘promise’ or a ‘contract’. He said that these terms did not exist in Inuktitut because people do not think about a future that is predictable and controlled.

Such uncertainty has other interesting linguistic corollaries. Inuit use the word “maybe” on a far more frequent basis than Euro-Canadians. Brody (2000) muses that this reflects uncertainty at many levels. At a material level, things may not be what they seem and the division between the material and the immaterial is not so marked as it might appear. Things can potentially transform from one thing to another in unforeseeable ways. At a temporal level, the future can never be known. And at a moral level, in order to avoid telling untruths, people reject the notion of absolutes.

teachings means following its movements; caring only for recording the ‘facts’ in order to remember them means choosing stagnation over movement, the profane over the sacred” (1992, p. 23). The world is a place full of hidden forces that must be accepted and to which one must adapt. The assumption that there are facts, controllable and permanent, has little place within the epistemology of many Inuit. Time and space are always in flux.

October 29-30, 2001

I was thinking about how wonderful it was yesterday to pull the boat up on the rocks, those smooth rocks, and have tea. There was such a feeling of freedom. And there was something so sensuous about seeing the others lying down and stretching on the rocks in the sunshine. I tried for a while, but the rocks were cold. ... Later, as we were out on the water, I felt it all again. I felt the sky drifting into the water and the clouds, up and down, merging. And in between, a band of land. As we went through bays where there was an invisible layer of ice, the whole effect pulsed.

The sunset above my head and beneath the boat made me glad to be alive. And as I told Jamisíe how beautiful it was, I wondered if his nod in agreement was just a nicety for the *qallunaaq*.

If time is unpredictable, and the seasons are constantly changing, then one of the few things that is predictable is the land. That is not to say that its behaviour is necessarily predictable, but its very existence can be relied upon.

The Land is the one thing that has always seemed “real” to Inuit in the rather chaotic existence that has engulfed them since the arrival of Europeans. Most of their language, ... hinges upon interaction with the features, flora, and fauna of the Land, and therefore it seemed like the one thing upon which Inuit can rely—the one thing that will not change, even though generations, technology, and traditions may. Even the word “Inuit”, although mistakenly translated as “humans” or “people” actually means “The Ones Who Are Here,” meaning the ones that dwell on the

land itself. They take it for granted that Inuit and the Land were made for each other—that the two are inextricably linked (Qitsualik n.d., n.p.).

Ingold (1986), Little Bear (1998), Stairs and Wenzel (1992), and Usher (1983) echo Qitsualik's view that the land, and the people who inhabit it, are bound together in complex ways. Given this, as Ingold (1986) notes, the very concept of owning the land and all that it contains becomes nonsensical. How can one own that within which one's being is contained? Such a view of humanity's transcendence of, and mastery over, nature, he maintains, is anathema to the views held by hunter-gatherers the world over. Underlying Inuit notions of the land and sea are a whole set of beliefs about the environment and about their rights to its use.

Common Property and Country Foods

I discussed some of the theoretical debates and concepts surrounding the idea of common property in Chapter Two. The issue here is how land, water, and the concept of common property are linked to country foods. At a very basic level, the idea that any one individual may own the land and the resources goes against all that most Inuit believe about the natural order of things. How can these things be owned?

In the past, I've never felt easy saying I'm from Nunavut, because it means 'our land.' I can say the same for the sea. I've always believed that what we get from the land and the sea are given to us from our Creator. And that we are simply babysitting the land and sea, which will be returned to Him. I've never felt easy saying that the land and the sea is for sale. I don't think it is ours to sell or buy.¹⁰

¹⁰ Puvirnitug has an interesting history that reflects this view. It was amongst the "dissident" communities of Nunavik that refused to sign the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in 1975. One of the reasons the residents opposed the agreement was that they held that the land belonged to everybody, so it was not for sale and could not *be* sold (Simard 1979).

...I know for a fact that we happily share our islands [the Belcher Islands] for walrus hunting. We also share our soapstone with the East Coast Nunavik Inuit (Eqilaq 2002, n.p.).

So, not only can the land and sea not be owned, but they must also to be shared with others. My first encounter with Inuit conceptions of common property reflects this view. Some years ago, I was working in an Inuit community on Hudson Bay. Camping alone one weekend I set my tent up in an area with lakes and hills and a ringside view of the birds passing through the area. As I arrived, two tundra swans flew low overhead, and passed out of view. They were soon followed by a gaggle of Canada Geese. It was only after I had put up my tent that I noticed rock blinds and gun shells all around me. The following Monday, I worried aloud to my Inuit colleagues at work that I might inadvertently have prevented any hunters who might have planned to go there from being able to occupy that site. They looked at me in confusion and said, “What are you talking about? You have just as much right to be there as anyone”. I had never before been made so aware of how ingrained and unconscious was my belief in private property. Naturally, someone had prescribed rights of access to the land and its resources, and of course I was trespassing on those rights. This was the first time that I understood at a deep level that there was a wholly different way of looking at and occupying the land.

In places where ideas about common property have prevailed, people live on the land and perceive its contents in ways that affect many aspects of life. Ideas about common property define how people occupy space; how they interact with the environment; and how they relate to one another.

Peoples who have embraced the concept of private property, generally assume that common property regimes mean that such areas are a kind of no-man’s land where

no one has responsibility for the resources, and as a result, there is a free-for-all use of them. As Ingold (1986) and Berkes and Farvar (1989) point out, however, nothing could be farther from the truth. Ingold (1986) makes a useful distinction between land tenure, which assumes ownership of that land, and territoriality, which implies something over which one has certain rights to use, but which is shared with others. Access to the common property resources of the land and water are, in fact, managed, but without any of the codified institutional structures required by private property systems. Common property systems rely, in part, on recognition of people's customary use and observation of an area. For example, in Puvirnituq certain areas are known to have been commonly occupied by certain families.¹¹ There are areas where certain families fished or hunted or trapped, areas where they have done so for generations. But those people do not feel that they *own* those areas, nor that they own the animals or plants that they find there. How could they own what is not theirs, but has rather been given to them? Thus, customary use does not preclude the use of those territories by others. Yet it can happen today that if people come and use resources without informing others of their presence, this can breed ill-will. Jamisie told me with irritation of some White men who had followed his skidoo tracks to a lake where he usually fished. They then marked his fishing holes on a map. This disturbed him.

Nicole: ...*you were saying the other day, you don't like it when people come from outside.*

¹¹ Nuttall (2000) and Sejersen (1998) give examples from Greenland of other forms of territoriality where people have loosely defined rights that limit access to the land, for instance, at summer camps or at fishing spots. Similar things are taking place in Nunavik, where people have hunting and fishing camps that are used seasonally by tourists. In larger settlements people have also built themselves cabins, which suggest *de facto* exclusive occupation of an area. Both the camps and the cabins, however, can be the subject of some debate within communities.

Jamisie: *Yeah, right. Intruders. That's different, because I have been taught that culture and traditions, that outside tradition where somebody can own, or say, "but that's mine! That's where I always did my harvest." I don't mind my next-door neighbour because I lived with him all my life, but someone comes along, he's a doctor or a teacher who comes only for the winter, or just to make a shift, a contract to fill a contract, then, when I see them using electronics and stuff to know where I fish, where I've traditionally been alone, it's my little secret hiding place, somebody follows my tracks and marked it on the map; then it's a Saturday, and I go there late, and a whole bunch of people I don't even know are there, naturally I get turned off.*

Nicole: *And Inuit wouldn't do that?*

Jamisie: *Inuit are traditionally, we all know the good spots. All the men have at one time or another went hunting together and were partners for a while, or their father's father were partners, or something like that, or they're somehow related by marriage... And they know all those spots. But when we do see somebody marking our fishing hole on a map with a computer, then naturally we get ticked off.*

As Ingold (1986) points out, common property is a mode of communication whereas private land tenure is a mode of appropriation. Given that access to the land and sea and their resources are open, collectively people have a responsibility to use the resources wisely and respectfully (Feit 1991; Stairs and Wenzel 1992).

Ideas about the land, lakes, and sea and the resources contained in them function at many levels. In order for common property regimes to operate properly, not only must appropriate relations between society and resources be respected, but appropriate social relations between individuals within society must be observed. These relations rely upon an understanding that the individual has responsibly to the collective, and must not act in his or her own best interests. In fact, the interests of the collectivity must generally be considered before those of the individual (cf. Berkes and Farvar 1989; Little Bear 1998; Qitsualik n.d.; Usher 1983). Should someone deny this obligation, he or she may be the

subject of censure at the least, or at the very most, he or she can be overcome by harmful forces that are beyond human control.¹²

If people start with the attitude that they are only “babysitting the land and sea”, to quote Eqilaq, just think what that means in terms of how they view the animals that occupy those places. It is only once one understands this view that one can come to appreciate what is involved in hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering.

Animal Relations and Country Foods

~ ... it may be that to eat and be eaten are the same thing in the end. ~

Travers ([1934], 1981, p. 172)

How often have you spent time in a hunting environment; I mean, a place where hunting is part of everyday life? Before staying in Inuit communities, I had certainly never been exposed to such a way of life.

As a southerner, my first visit to the Canadian Arctic was in 1990 as a plant ecologist. We flew into Resolute Bay and spent several days housed in a centre provided for researchers some distance from town. Interestingly, it was located across from the military base and the airport, and next door to what was then called “The Bay”.¹³ As scientists, the only sign we might have had that there were Inuit in the area were a few people who worked as support staff at the research centre. Being somewhat adventurous, a few of us made the long trek down the road and into the community of Resolute Bay.

¹² There is the famous story of Lumaq, a woman who did not provide properly for her blind son. Eventually, because of her ill treatment of her son, she was pulled into the sea and transformed into a fish-tailed being (Nungak and Arima 1988). She continues to be seen from time to time.

¹³ Since that time, northern branches of the Hudson’s Bay Company has been sold, and re-named The Northwest Company, or more colloquially, Northern. In fact, The Bay has closed in Resolute Bay.

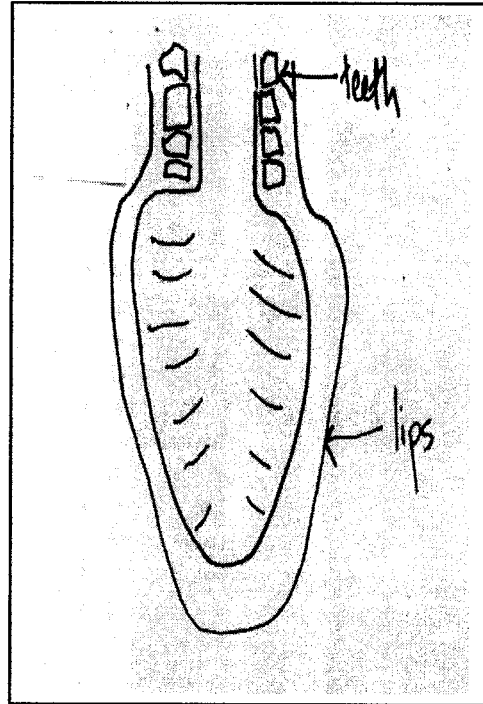
We saw houses with skidoos, four-wheel vehicles, and dogs outside them. Otherwise, the only overt indication I saw that hunting actually took place in the community was a polar bear skin stretched out on a frame to dry. It conformed to all of my romantic notions about the Arctic and the people who inhabited it—man against raging beast in the vast stretches of the tundra. I took a photograph and went back to the research centre.

In 1993, I returned to the North, this time to work for the Municipality of Sanikiluaq on a study of the ecological knowledge of Inuit and Cree. This was the point at which I started to understand something of what lay behind that polar bear skin. I started to learn that that skin was part of a world of ideas about what animals are, how they function, how humans think about them and behave around them. But it is a world that tends to be invisible to the person passing through. She may see people with guns or fishing rods and take photographs of them. She may even see people returning to town with bloodied bundles of meat wrapped in caribou skins or fish lying in a tub, but she will not generally be privy to the world of ideas that link those animals to the people who have caught them.

Most children in Inuit communities grow up in a world in which life and death are closely linked; they know that a thin line separates the two. The connection between them is not hidden, as it tends to be in southern communities. From the time that they are babies in the hood (*agu*) of their mothers' *amautiit*, children see seals shot, caribou butchered, berries picked, and eat fish, still warm from the hook.

Aug. 18, 2002

Maggie showed me where the design for the amautik came from. Her mother-in-law had told her, and her son stopped and showed me on the caribou they were cutting up. It's on the roof of the mouth... And there, sure enough, is the shape in the tail of the amautik. I feel so lucky.



Source: Manitoba Museum

As soon as they are able, they are encouraged to take part in these activities. Each point along the way in their development as a hunter is marked with pride. I have seen this several times. On the east coast of Hudson Bay, when children kill their first animals, they generally save them and bring them to the person who first put clothes on them after they were born, known as the *sanajik*.¹⁴ Inuit tend to compare this relationship to Euro-

¹⁴ In other regions of the Canadian Arctic this role is reserved for people who served somewhat different roles in a child's birth. In some areas a child's first kill is reserved for the person who acted as the mother's

Canadians' godparents. I once made the mistake of starting to pluck a Canada Goose that I had pulled from a pile of geese waiting to be plucked, only to have someone come and take it away from me, saying that that particular goose was being saved for a *sanajik*. Another time, I was visiting my neighbour Piita one evening. I found him kneeling on the floor plucking a Canada Goose. He told me his seven-year-old *angusiaq*, which he likened to a 'godson', had brought it to him. It was *his* first goose. The first time a person kills anything of a particular species, they bring it to their *sanajik*. So, throughout their lives, these people receive a child's first fish, first Canada Goose, first ringed seal, first polar bear, and so on. Berger (1985), Dorais (1997) and Nuttall (1992) note similar rites of passage from Alaska to Greenland.

October 29, 2001

When we were out I had a hard time at first coming to terms with the killing. I watched the eiders flap their wings when they were downed on the water, and I watched them dive to get away, and I suffered for them. Some seals were wily. They managed to evade us, despite shot after shot, and our hovering above watching for them. When Pierre's son killed his first seal ever I was glad for him. But I had a hard time watching that seal fight in its death as it lay in the plastic tub beside me, one eye popping out.

When we got back, he put some meat aside for his *sanajik*.

Since people are present at the moment of death, and in fact, celebrate a child's achievement in each successful hunt, Inuit cannot feel the weight of death in the same way as Euro-Canadians, who are removed from these processes. On the evening I met Piita plucking the Canada Goose, I had recently been out with someone who killed a caribou. It was the first time that I had seen such a large animal killed. Though I had

midwife or for the person who caught the child as it was being born or for the person who cut the umbilical chord. This varies from region to region.

become accustomed to witnessing the death of smaller animals, I felt deeply the struggle between life and death put up by that caribou, and was embarrassed by my emotions, so I tried to hide them. Curious about whether I was alone in these reactions, I asked Piita if he remembered how he felt when he first killed something. He paused in his plucking and said, “proud”.

If reality is that, in order to live, people must kill, how do people make sense of this? Although Piita told me that he felt proud to kill his first animal, that pride is not something that comes from having a sense of power or control over the animal he killed. Such beliefs are in fact, anathema to the view of animals that is encouraged by Inuit. The foundation of relations between Inuit and other animals is respect. In a world in which survival is based on a dependence on the land, people are very aware that theirs is a vulnerable position. The relationship between humans and other animals reflects an awareness of this dependence. The hunter and the hunted are interconnected. Animals choose to give themselves to the hunter, but equally, the hunter relies on the willingness of the animal to do so. As Brody (1987) points out, such a relationship means that people must recognise a certain equality between themselves and the animals they hunt. Thus, respect for animals is paramount in Inuit belief:

But if you have respect for them, they will work. And even if they know what you're doing wrong and you do the opposite in any way, then you're going to face the consequences at the end of your life. It's true. ... What you do to the wildlife during your life, there's going to be signs in your life, towards the end, at your death. The things that you do to the wildlife, it's going to have the same effect. ... Anything you do to wildlife cruel, you're going to face it at the end of your life. ... As long as you're not cruel it's all right. But the thing is the term: “ah, I don't like that! Ah, I can't stand that!” That's not the attitude because people say any creature that walks on the earth is for the earth. They do something on the earth as a worker. There's a use for it. Nothing is useless. As long as you can see

something, it's not useless. It may be a little bug—may be good for a big bug. So anything that was put, that was created, you've got something useful for. Respect, eh, respect. ... Those kind of things are still being talked about these days. What you do to the wildlife you're going to face the consequences at the end of your life. Honestly (Adamie in Gombay 1995, pp. 57-58).

There are supernatural ties between humans and animals, and so animals must be respected. The environment is literally alive. The various elements of the environment are vital and infused with purpose. As Sioui puts it, "Life is merely a great chain of relationships among beings" (1992, p. 12). Since animals choose to give themselves to the hunter, they must be honoured in return. Such beliefs form the foundation of morality, are translated into practical knowledge, and are embodied in rules about how to hunt properly. The details of these rules are many, and vary from place to place. While they are fundamentally based on respect, there are other general principles that govern how people must treat animals. People should kill only what they need. Any inappropriate treatment can have drastic consequences. Salamonie and Taamusie told me how greed had had disastrous results around Puvirnituk:

Salamonie: In the past our grandfathers were hunting. There were lots of caribous everywhere. There were not many people hunting, but there were lots of caribous. They knew they had lots of meat to catch, and they knew... what they catch, they only take the best part: the back and the best skin in the back. The fur. And when they did that the caribou disappeared for forty years. They didn't come back for forty years. They were killing more than what they need. [Taamusie: They were not respecting—] That's how it happened. More than what they need.

People should never let an animal suffer needlessly. In fact, many Inuit cannot understand the animal rights movement, and are particularly resentful of what it has done to their lives, killing the fur trade, a component of their economy that allowed them to spend time on the land while earning money from the by-products of their time spent

there. They have asked me how we southerners can come north with this superior attitude that we know what is best for the animals. Jamisie once commented that in the South, animals are raised in cans, already prepared to be eaten. From their perspective, such treatment is the antithesis of how animals should be cared for. They see the way animals are raised on southern farms and see nothing but suffering and a denial of the respect that they see is central to their relationship with animals. At least in the North, people argue, the animals live good, free lives until they give themselves to the hunter.

Tied to the notion of respect is the idea that people must never feel that they have power over an animal nor brag about killing an animal (cf. Brody 1975 & 1987; Hensel 1996; Turner 1990). Jamisie complained to me about White hunters who come north and just shoot into a herd of caribou, injuring not one, but many, and taking only the best parts of the meat, while leaving the rest behind. “We don’t do things like that,” he said. He complained that these hunters have a sense of power over the animals when they kill them. “We don’t see it like that.” Others in Puvirnituk echoed these views. Davidie, a man in his 60s, spoke about how in the 1980s during one Christmas celebration in the community they had had competitions to see who could catch the first fish, or the biggest fish, or the first caribou.

It was allowed at first, but our fathers went and told us not to do this because these animals were our only—“because of these animals we are alive. Only because of these animals. So please don’t play with them. Respect them.”

Since the exchange between the hunter and the hunted is based on respect, and the idea that the animal has chosen to give itself to the hunter, many people say that you must look an animal in the eye before killing it. In Puvirnituk Kublu, a man in his 40s, told me that this was particularly important for polar bears, which are very powerful animals.

Adamie explained the reason for this. As a hunter, he said, he has a relationship with the animals he is hunting; there is a connection between them that makes them part of a larger whole. He said that you cannot really understand this feeling until you have experienced it yourself, and added with regret that these days, some Inuit do not know this feeling. Ingold puts it somewhat differently. “At the crucial moment of eye-to-eye contact, the hunter *felt* the overwhelming presence of the animal; he felt as if his own being were somehow bound up or intermingled with that of the animal—a feeling tantamount to love ...”(2000, p. 25).

August 25, 2002

Sitting out here under the sky, looking out to the horizon, the sea gulls overhead and the river at my feet, I'm reminded of what Adamie said about not getting the feeling. It's more than the wind and the sound of the water and the birds. It goes so deep that it's hard to say.

August 27, 2002

Last night, watching the throat singers, for the first time I got the *feeling* of the singing. I could listen to the sounds and hear how they were the sounds of the world out there.... I watched people moving to the singing and it seemed to me that they were feeling it — understating those sounds in a way that I suddenly realised made them *feel* this place, *know* it, what it's like: the wind and animals and movement. This place, when you're out in it, has a very powerful feeling, very powerful. People have talked to me about it, and I've lived it. But when you're in communities you don't know that feeling. It can be lost in the noise of four-wheelers and TVs and the hum of life. But as soon as you go out of town, the power of what surrounds you is phenomenal if you just take the time to be still. Last night I realised that throat singing is one way that people have here of expressing that power. I could *hear* what's out there once the noise of the community is silenced. And I watched people listening to it, I watched some of the listeners move to the sound — the old people, the mothers jiggling their babies — I sensed they were feeling another place and another life. It was something.

As Ellen (1996) notes, this goes counter to Western ideas about nature as something that is ‘out there’. Rather, for many hunting and gathering peoples, nature is something that is within. They are part and parcel of it. Adamie went on to say that for many people, though, the power of nature, the power of their relations with animals can be too great to talk about, so often they do not like to talk about it. It cannot be expressed or made sense of, so people simply choose not to discuss it.

The idea that the natural world is inseparable from the people who inhabit it appears at various levels in the language. An Inuk friend once mused that Inuktitut—its sounds and form—must have come from the environment, from the land and the animals. At a conceptual level, certain words actually reflect this view. The word *sila* in Inuktitut means ‘weather’, ‘the atmosphere’, or the ‘outdoors’. A related word, *silatujuq* signifies ‘a wise person’. Kublu explained that such a person held all the things from the sky, from the vast world, in his or her head.

If wisdom entails having an understanding of all that is outside, one component of such knowledge is an awareness that everything is interconnected. Generally, many Inuit know that nothing in the world happens without affecting other things in foreseen and unforeseen ways. Ingold calls this “relational thinking”. According to this way of understanding the world “... every organism is not so much a discrete entity as a node in a field of relationships...” (2000, p. 4). For many, there is a constant dialogue that goes on between humans and their surroundings (cf. Brody 1983, 1987, 2000; Feit 1991; Happynook n.d.; Hensel 1996; Nielsen 1999; Sioui 1992; Turner 1990). Things do not happen in discrete parcels. They are not bounded. Rather, actions can have numerous, often unforeseen, consequences. Given this point of view, people must constantly watch

their environments to make sure that they can understand how to react appropriately to the various manifestations of its interconnections.¹⁵

If [a person] doesn't know what's going on in the surroundings, he's just going to concentrate on one thing. But [what] the hunter or trapper does is even though he may only be looking at one thing, he's also trying to observe his surroundings. He might do something, but a couple of months ago he saw something over there too. He might do something and constantly check it again without anybody really noticing. ... It's like that. Because as soon as he makes a move, or does something, he knows right away that something else will happen. That's how you deal with nature. If I did this, if the ice conditions are like this, I know that it's going to be like that on the way. And if I do this, then it might be OK. But when I get to that area, then I'll go on this route. Like leads and things like that, when you're travelling, then there's always one person that's leading. Because you're observing the things going on in surrounding areas (Adamie in Gombay 1995, p. 67).

All of these principles—respect, interconnection, lack of pride, lack of control, and interdependence—are central to the relations between Inuit and animals, and they are translated into particular rules relating to particular animals. These rules can vary from place to place, and are not necessarily unfailingly observed by all individuals; however, at their core, they are an expression of the ideal requirement to recognise these moral principles. For example, in southern Baffin Island, people are required to leave the unused portions of the caribou that they kill, such as their offal or their skulls, on the land, rather than on the ice. They are land mammals, and so, must not pollute the water. Again in southern Baffin Island, when people kill a seal, they give it a drink of water. In the Belcher Islands, people must plant the tail feathers of a ptarmigan upright in the ground, and they must place the head of a bearded seal on the land. In a number of places in the southern Canadian Arctic people told me that they avoid killing walrus on

¹⁵ See, for example, McDonald, Arragutainaq, Novalinga (1997, pp 79-82) for an extensive list of environmental indicators that people use to forecast weather and animal behaviour.

the island where they live or spend time. If they do not do this, the walrus will not return to that area. Similar rules abound across the Arctic.

The various principles that dictate appropriate treatment of animals by humans are well summed up by Apphia Agalakti Awa (born 1931):

I want to talk about a different subject now. Animals, birds, -wildlife, you were not supposed to treat them badly. Even little snow buntings, if you injured a little snow bunting on the wing by throwing a rock at it or something like that, and you broke the wing, if it was still alive but not able to fly, you were not supposed to remove the feathers. You would be abusing it if it was still alive. ...

When it comes to wildlife, we were told that we should never be proud. We should never think we are more powerful than polar bears and walruses. We should never act like we are not scared of them. We should never think that we are big powerful people, that we are so fast that an animal cannot get us. We are not supposed to be proud or act proud when it comes to wildlife. That is what we were taught.

There were different kinds of polar bears. An *angutjuak* was a big male polar bear. The younger ones, the young big polar bears, were called *nukauq*. The second older from the youngest were called *tiqituar*. The young ones are really fast. I knew a man who went out hunting, he was a very proud man, he thought he was really fast. A young polar bear showed up for that man. The polar bear was heading towards him. Because the man was proud, he thought he could beat off the polar bear and harpoon him, so he started walking towards the polar bear. The polar bear and the man met and when the polar bear rushed, the man got out of the way without the polar bear getting at him. He was a fast man. He went to remove his clothes to make himself lighter and while he was taking off his parka, the polar bear hit him and killed him. The man was too proud. That is why you are not supposed to think you can beat animals. You should never think that you are stronger than animals. The animals know that. They can hear you...

People who talk like that, people who say that they aren't scared of polar bears, they can't catch them. It is the same with walruses, with their big tusks, they can stab a person. They can even put a hole in the boat and make people drown. That happened once when a *Qallunaaq* came up here. A walrus put a hole in the boat and the *Qallunaaq* drowned. The Inuk who he was with lived. It is because human beings are not supposed to feel more powerful than wildlife. Walruses, when they are not scared, they give themselves up. They go to you. They die easily.

The way we should act is that we should say things like, "I can't catch any animals. I don't know where the polar bears are. Even if I did see one, I could not catch it." We should be humble. If we respect them,

then the animals will come to us. That is all I want to say about that (in Wachowich 1999, pp. 125-126).

The ways in which animals must be treated, the ways they are perceived, find expression in the ways that people incorporate country foods into the social sphere. If the world is not under control, and cannot and should not be controlled, community and the sharing of food becomes one way that people have of mitigating the inconstancy of life. The sharing of country foods is thus both a symbolic and very real expression of underlying ontological and teleological explanations about the world. Not only do people use an image of social exchange in linking animals and their spirits with themselves, but they also use social exchange of the product of their hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering to ensure that these things continue to be bestowed upon them. So when the animal presents itself to a hunter, he or she must take it as an expression of gratitude for the gift. To ensure that these gifts continue to be offered, they must also be shared with others. So animal relations and social relations are deeply interwoven.

Social Relations, Identity, Community and Country Foods

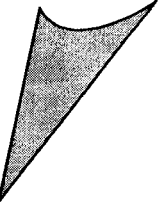
Anyone who has spent time in Inuit communities cannot help but notice how food is continually circulating from one household to another, from one person to another. People causally drop by for a meal without prior notice, they call others to come and get meat when they have a successful expedition to get country foods, they go on the local radio or call relatives when they need food, or they simply drop food off at people's doorsteps. As one woman pointed out, even though money may not always be easy to come by, it is unthinkable to see a skinny person, particularly today, because food is constantly being shared. "It's the thing I like most about being Inuk—sharing food," she

said. People share food with relatives, friends, elders, those who ask for it and those who do not. Close relatives may take food without asking, while others can have access to it just in the asking. Thus food and society are bound together.



October 18, 2001

Tonight the beluga hunters came back to town after about a week away. Six boats arrived to cheers and whistles from the shore. It seemed to me that the whole community was there to greet them. There was something magical about seeing the lights coming across the water. One boat was waving a flag. People must have heard they were coming 'cause all afternoon town was buzzing. Puvirnituq is on a river that flows into Hudson Bay. I guess people on four-wheelers must have been at the point watching for the boats' arrival, and many short-wave radios must have been on as people listened to what was going on, 'cause the crowd gathered on the beach long before the boats pulled in. When they arrived people let off fire crackers and there were "Three Cheers" for the hunters, and of course everyone was there with their bags to get a piece. Old and young, everyone had gathered. They started the divvying out of the whales. I watched from a hill above the beach, with kids for company, while the adults gathered in a light-filled circle to get their share of the haul. Bits of *mattak* [beluga skin] were passed over people's heads to those behind. The excitement and joy in the air was palpable.



When I was in Puvirnituq, I remembered how, when my parents tried to teach me manners as a child, I would sometimes ask them *why* I should do a certain thing. Mentioning this, I asked some people in Puvirnituq what they had been told by their parents about the necessity to share. Each time I asked this question, the person would look at me in confusion, almost as though such a question were unthinkable, or perhaps simply dim-witted. Their response was generally that sharing was required because the precarious and unpredictable nature of life in a northern environment required that it be done. Such a view is echoed by both Happynook (n.d.) and Stairs and Wenzel (1992) who note that the sharing of food reflects a recognition that social structures and ecological ones are bound together. Today, when people are not quite so reliant on the whims of nature for their survival, the moral imperative to share food, in good times and in bad, persists. The imperative to share food runs deep within Inuit society.

People share many things, not only food. In the past, they would also share such things as animal fat to light their *qulliq*—a lamp used for light, heat, and cooking—and food for dogs (Adult Education Centre 1989). The reasons for such sharing are many and their results profound. Although people would tell me that in the past, environmental hardships required that food be shared, this requirement was strengthened by a whole set of beliefs about proper relations between humans and other animals, concepts of common property, and ideas about identity, family and community, all which ultimately culminate in notions of appropriate social order.

Across the Arctic, from Alaska (Bodenhorn 1990; Turner 1990) to Greenland (Caulfield 1997; Nuttall 1991b & 2000) many Inuit believe that sharing ensures success

in hunting.¹⁶ People are successful when they share country foods, and share those foods in order to ensure success. Animals know how humans behave and choose to bestow themselves upon people accordingly. The animal does this because that hunter and his or her family act appropriately by sharing the animal, and those who do not share will not be successful. In Puvirnituk, as in other Inuit communities in which I have spent time, people have told me, “The more you give, the more you get”. At one level, this may be a reflection of the fact that when a person shares with others, others share with them in return, but at another level, one that goes unspoken, people are also acknowledging the links between humans and the animals they eat. As Feit (1991, p. 236) puts it in the sharing of meat from the animal that has offered itself to the hunter “...[people] assure the continuity of the gifts they receive by the gifts they give”. The sharing of food is also linked to ideas about common property. By sharing the food that they receive from the land, sea, and sky, people affirm the view that everyone has access rights to the world and its resources.

The sharing of country foods is also at the centre of a complex set of relationships that define and determine the nature of individual, societal, and community identities. In order to understand how this works, one needs to understand what helps to determine these identities.

Identity is neither simple nor fixed. People tend to perceive themselves in different ways at different times in their lives and in different settings. One’s identity is also formed in relation to a larger society, so that we understand who we are, in part, based on how we think we fit into society as a whole. When it comes to forming their

¹⁶ The same is also true for the Cree. See Feit (1991) for further information.

identities, many aboriginal peoples carry the added burden of 'Tradition' that forces people to try to balance some idealised version of aboriginality that may be an oversimplified historical remnant, with the reality of lives lived in the twenty-first century (cf. Odden 1995). Such a balancing act has its good and bad points; it can both provide some stability and place unnecessary pressures on people. Whatever the case, this illustrates how complex is the process of identity formation.

Since the eighteenth century, with the rise of liberal ideology in Europe, Western notions of identity have changed. Increasingly, people have tended to establish their identity, particularly public identity, based on the idea of an atomistic individual, with society then existing as a series of contracts between individuals (Polanyi 1957a). It is the individual who is king within such a system, with individual rights and freedoms holding sway. Numerous researchers have shown that the opposite is the case in Inuit societies: individual identity is secondary to, and established based on, larger social systems (cf. Brody 2000; Dorais 1997; Dybbroe 1996; Hensel 1996; Minor 1992; Rasing 1999).

... the dichotomy between public and private domains has no meaning for the individual in a hunter and gatherer society. Far from standing opposed to others, he incorporates them into the very substance of his being. The people around him, the places he knows, the things he makes and uses, all are part and parcel of his own subjective identity. He pursues his interests, but these are not the sectional interests of a divided world, rather they are interests which both originate with, and seek fulfilment through, the collectivity. ... whereas for us [Westerners] every individual is an individual element of the aggregate collectivity, for them [hunter-gatherers] the collectivity is present and active in the life of every individual (Ingold 1986, pp. 139-140).

Some fundamental distinctions can then be made between societies in which ideas about identity and morality emphasise the collective over the individual. Writing about Aborigines in Australia MacDonald observes that,

... the primary implication of living within a system of moral codes and social relatedness which privilege the social good is that the self is formed within a constellation of acceptance and recognition. This is what it means 'to be' in the world of collective entities, as opposed to the epistemological imperatives of western forms of education and socialisation which centralise 'knowing' rather than 'being' in order to achieve at the level of the person. Aboriginal moral codes and kinship frameworks are more concerned with how to be uniquely oneself in the context of obligations and concerns which involve deep relatedness to significant others. This is the primary reason why and how Aboriginal socialities have survived throughout the progressive changes wrought by their colonisation... (2000, p. 102).

So it is one's state of being that is stressed. This state depends very much on an individual's conduct within a set of relations both with others in human society and with other animals in the world beyond human society. This also implies that issues of morality play an important part in determining how people are defined, for, as Austin-Broos (1996) points out, morality is a part of the practice that defines personhood. In the case of Inuit, the set of moral codes around country foods define how people should relate to one another and, as I have described above, how they should relate to animals. In both cases, these moral systems help to shape individual and collective identities. The supremacy of the collective over the individual is linked generally to ideas about common property that I have already discussed, and specifically to ideas of sharing food.

... the chain of property can neither begin with individuals nor end in the resources they procure; rather it must end where it began, in the community of nurture from which spring the producers and in which the food is consumed. To the extent that people are mutually involved in the production of each other's existence, the products of their respective labours are due to all. Thus, what a man appropriates through his labour, he appropriates *on behalf* of the collectivity through which—and only

through which—he finds his being. It may be exclusively his to dispose of, but it is not his alone to consume. As [J.H.] Dowling points out, “the rights and prerogatives entailed in ownership are primarily those of performing the distribution, not of deciding whether or not the animal will be distributed” (Ingold 1986, p. 227).

Thus, for hunter-gatherer societies, at a very fundamental level, the necessity to share food is bound up in the construction of an individual’s identity in relation to the collective. Inuit have ways, particular to them, that express this set of relations.

One of the ways that Inuit establish individual identity with respect to the larger whole is through names, and central to the system of naming are ideas of the *atiq* and the *sauniq*. According to Inuit, people possess three ‘souls’: an individual soul (*tarniq*), a name soul (*atiq*), and a breath soul (*anirniq*) (Dorais 1997). The personal soul is specific to a given individual, lasts only during that person’s lifetime, and leaves the body upon death. The breath soul is linked to larger creative forces attributed to God. It is a piece of those forces given to a person when she or he is born and generally given up upon death. However, unlike the personal soul, it can sometimes linger on after death. The *atiq* is the soul that an individual possesses as a result of having a particular name.¹⁷

When a person receives a name, along with that name she or he receives a list of qualities and relationships that are specific to that name. Crudely put, the *atiq* implies a form of reincarnation. It is one of the primary ways in which a person’s identity is established. Linked to the idea of the *atiq* is the concept of a *sauniq*, which literally translates as “bone”. A *sauniq* is a person who shares the same name as someone, but only if that name was given to signify the same person. Neither the *atiq* nor the *sauniq* is sex specific, although they can be gender specific. So, while certain qualities are passed on

¹⁷ See Dorais (1997) and Nuttall (1992) for a more in-depth discussion of Inuit ideas of souls and naming.

with a name, these are not necessarily linked to a person's sex. A female may receive a name that previously belonged to a male, and *vice versa*.¹⁸ Bound up in all of this is the tendency by Inuit to stress relational names and to associate obligations with those relations. People often refer to one another not by their names, but by their kinship terms. Thus, they generally choose to call people "son", "older brother", "wife", "grandfather", "cousin", and so on, rather than by their names.¹⁹ So, as people establish their individual identities, their social relations, and ideas of community, they draw upon concepts of the *atiq*, the *sauniq*, and the larger family relations. Let me explain.

When a child receives a name she can also receive a set of qualities, abilities, relationships, and obligations that go along with a name. This can be from the most minute to the most grandiose of things. For example, I once asked a nine-year-old girl why she had grey hair; she responded that this was because her *sauniq* had had lots of grey hair. When I was working in the Belcher Islands one of my colleagues adopted a child whom he named after his father. My colleague then called that child "father", who in turn, called his adoptive father "son". Such relations radiate outwards. Thus, my colleague's wife might call her adopted son "father-in-law", although, in fact, he was biologically her nephew, and he might call her "daughter-in-law". If that child's namesake had been married to a woman whose name had been given to another child (whether male or female), that child would call his wife's *sauniq* "wife". Such relationships repeat themselves throughout the generations, and also spread outwards. As Nuttall (2000) describes in Greenland, people are constantly finding ways to establish

¹⁸ Saladin d'Anglure (1986) discusses instances where, partly as a result of this, girls are raised as boys or *vice versa*.

¹⁹ For a more detailed description of specific naming practices amongst the Inuit, see Guemple (1971).

links with one another, and creating such links where they might not so obviously exist at first. For example, a woman in Puvirnituk spoke of a man as her nephew because he was the son of her sister's *sauniq*. Thus, identity in Inuit communities is neither fixed nor stable. However, what is important to note is that the getting, giving, and receiving of country foods can be closely linked with each of these forms of social relations and identity-setting processes. A man who was known in his lifetime to be a good walrus-hunter may pass that ability on to his *sauniq* through the shared name. If someone has a *sauniq* relationship with someone, either as a direct namesake, or through the extended relations that get established through the name, that person may then have privileged relations in terms of sharing country foods. So one person told Oakes and Riewe,

When I shot my first polar bear I went on the radio to share the meat. Soon it was all gone. I boiled it then and invited everyone to come for food. *I was named after someone, so I gave him boiled polar bear* (1997, pp. 85-86; italics added).

Names can also help to create a sense of memory and continuity in the getting and sharing of country foods, and can be central to processes of meaning-making associated with those foods.

Identity and country foods are linked in other ways. Although it was practised more in the past than it

November 25, 2002

Yesterday, out fishing with Jamisie and his sons, was a wonderful day. We were laying nets in the lake that Jamisie was careful to tell me was used in the past by his father after whom his son Markusie was named. The grandson becomes his grandfather: history repeating itself. As I watched the boys set the nets under the lake ice, their bodies moving against the grey-brown horizon ... , the dusky air full of falling snowflakes, I thought how beautiful it was, those small pricks of movement and colour against a vast sky, and how incredible that past and present become one and the same thing.

is today, and its details vary from region to region, a common practice across the Arctic

involves people receiving particular portions of animals based on their age and sex.²⁰

Gender identities are also fixed in the distribution of country foods. One day, after having lunch with Maggie and Jamisie, I sat drinking tea on the sofa while Maggie was dividing up a caribou on the living-room floor. Jamisie looked over at me and said, “as wife it would be *your* duty to do this”. In fact Bodenhorn (1990) contends that for the Iñupiat, a husband’s success as a hunter is reliant upon the behaviour of his wife. Again, animals are aware of her behaviour, whether she shares meat, or not, and present themselves to her husband accordingly.

People can create relationships, and so identities, based on the sharing of country foods. For example, in the past, in parts of the Arctic people gave one another names that designated that they had an obligation to share specific portions of an animal with a particular person.²¹ Such sharing partnerships continue to exist in somewhat less formal ways today. People still have hunting partners with whom they share the product of the hunt, both when they go hunting together and if they go hunting apart.

Identity can be linked to country foods in very intimate ways. Freeman quotes Peter Okpik of King William Island:

This is the way I think. A person is born with animals. He has to eat animals. That is why the animals and a person are just like one (1996a, p. 66).

²⁰ See Balikci (1964), Bodenhorn (2000), Buijs (1993), Caulfield (1997), and Graburn (1969) for detailed discussions of what portions of a given animal was given to what person, based on their age, sex, and role in the hunt.

²¹ Balikci (1964) describes how people would call one another by the cut of the seal meat that they received. So hunters ‘A’ and ‘B’ might address one another as *ukpatiga*, which literally means, “my buttocks”. Each hunter was obliged to give this portion of a seal to the other when they had a successful hunt. These partnerships were established by their mothers when boys were small. If, in a given camp, such relations were scarce, people would set up new sharing partnerships that might last only for the duration of the time that people were in the same camp.

Being “like one” with the animals can also be extended to people’s names. In Puvirnituk, in the days before there was a permanent community, when the members of a family with the name “crow” were on the land and met members of the family carrying the name “rough-legged hawk”, they would greet one another by calling in their respective bird calls.

November 14, 2001

I heard its incredible call, and sure enough, there was a crow outside doing acrobatics in the wind.

Country foods may be used by Inuit, not only to determine individual identity, but also group identity; that is, they are increasingly used to distinguish an Inuk from a non-Inuk (Hensel 1996; Rasing 1999; Sejersen 1998). This can be used in two ways, internal to and external to Inuit society. Sejersen (1998) remarks that in Greenland, people use the eating of country foods politically, as a marker of true “inuitness” *within* their society. People are accused of not being real Inuit if they do not eat country foods. He and Caulfield (1997) note that it is also used by people as a way of understanding who they are in relation to larger non-Inuit society. In both cases, the food is used as a way of determining continuity and identity in the face of societal change:

If this is true [that ‘you are what you eat’], then those who eat Inuit foods must be Inuit. Our foods do more than nourish our bodies. It feeds our souls. When I eat Inuit food, I know who I am. I feel the connection to our ocean and to our land, to our people, to our way of life. When I travel outside our homeland, my metabolism often goes wrong. Coming home and turning to Inuit foods I am alright again, within hours. While many other things in our lives are changing, our foods remain the same, and it makes us feel the same as it has for generations. Maybe that is even more true today, since we see so many influences from outside, and we think more often about what it means to be an Inuk (Egede 1999, p. 2; cited in Sejersen 1998).

The importance of sharing food is also reflected in language. Briggs (1998), Burch (1988), Collings, Wenzel and Condon (1998), Stairs and Wenzel (1992), and

Oct. 10, 2001
Today, when I went to get bread from the freezer there was a caribou carcass cut up and just sitting on the floor of the shed. It was fresh — with bits of blood and moss and grasses stuck to it. I guess one of Suula's brothers left it there.

Wenzel (1981, 1991, 2000b) describe the various Inuktitut words for sharing. The words vary from region to region, and amongst dialects, but the sheer variety in the sharing vocabulary reveals something of the complexity

involved in ideas of sharing. These include words denoting sharing between a man and his father or oldest brother (*ningiq*), community-wide sharing in the form of a communal meal (*niqijaqtuqtuq*), unrestricted sharing of meat from large animals (*ningiqtuq*), inviting a special guest to share food (*akpallugiit*), giving meat to non-kin who used in the past to be widows and women with an absent spouse (*niqisutaijuq/quaktuaktuq/pajuktuq*), opening food caches for anyone's use (*minnatuq*), transfers of food between two unrelated hunters (*niqitatainnaq*), transfers of food (and other things) from the head of the extended family to a subordinate (*tigutuinnaq*), transfers of food from a subordinate hunter to superior kin (*tigugaujuq*), and sending a gift of food from one house to another within a camp or community (*pajuktuq*) (Wenzel 2000b, p. 79).²² These words each suggests that northern communities consist of complex, sometimes overlapping, networks of sharing.²³

²² Wenzel (1991) and Collings, Wenzel, and Condon (1998) point out that some of the notions attached to these terms have changed as a result of settlement life, and that new forms of food exchange have developed, such as exchanging food for services or cash, as well as plain theft. I shall discuss these

All of these words reveal something of the links that are forged in the sharing of country foods. As food passes from person to person, so it helps to create bonds within families, amongst families, within communities, and between communities. When food can be spared, or when people need food, they call one another up. Such sharing includes not only country foods but store-bought food as well. As Suula told me, “Giving away food makes you feel good”. So siblings give food to one another, children give food to parents, namesakes give food to namesakes, travelling friends and relatives may arrive with food from their home

communities. Ideally, no one is excluded from sharing networks; food must be available to all

December 5, 2001

When we were out setting nets Jamisie told me this was where some Germans landed in a floatplane during World War II. People knew something was wrong with them — they arrived armed and wearing machine gun bullets. “But we welcomed them anyway, and fed them.”

whenever it can possibly be spared.²⁴ After a day out hunting with Jamisie where I did nothing more than point at the heads of seals as they bobbed up in the water, he gave me seal meat to take home. On another such day, I returned home with a piece of caribou. When my landlady was away from town for any length of time, her extended family would periodically check to make sure that I had enough meat.

changes, along with others, in more detail in Chapters Four and Five. However, the fact remains that a great deal of sharing continues to persist, despite these changes.

²³ Interestingly, these networks of sharing can have a spatial component. Balikci (1964) remarks that when people first moved to Puvirnituk they settled along the same networks of sharing; so, people who traditionally shared with one another settled first in tents, and then in houses that were in close proximity to one another.

²⁴ As Bodenhorn (2000) and Mitchell (1996) point out, generosity in food is an ideal that is not always achieved. In the past, people were supposed to share food unreservedly, except in times of extreme famine. Lack of generosity was viewed as a shortcoming (Chabot 2001). However, Buijs (1993) and Mitchell (1996) contend that with settlement, there has been increased individualisation, and as a result, sharing has decreased. Today, people sometimes resent sharing food, particularly when they feel that those who ask for food are contributing to their own lack of it, for example, through excessive use of drugs or alcohol. Thus, people who are disapproved of can be left out of sharing networks (Lévesque and de Juriew 2000).

The constant circulation of food from person to person, from household to household, from community to community creates bonds that have important implications. The sharing of food creates links not only within and amongst families, but also amongst places. Thus, for example, relatives from Kangirsuk, known for its good fish, sent Arctic Char to family in Puvirnituk, and visiting friends from Salluit arrived laden with mussels and mattak, because the former cannot be found in Puvirnituk and the latter is rare in the area.

The sharing of food is also a way of maintaining peace within communities and amongst people. One woman observed that sometimes the people who are the most generous in their sharing of food could also be the people who are disruptive to society in other parts of their lives. She mused aloud that perhaps this was a way of ensuring that they continued to be accepted within their families and within their communities. As Bodenhorn (2000) points out, sharing is based on, and relies upon, enduring relationships. Thus, through the sharing of food, community is forged and extends to those who might, in other circumstances, be subject to social sanctions or considered outsiders.

The creation of community is central to the getting, sharing, and eating of country



foods. Although hunters often go out alone or in small groups to get food, they also go out with family and friends. I have been out ice fishing in the spring with large groups of people.

We were many families together, young and old alike. In summer, again, I have travelled by boat to go camping in a group, spending our time travelling from place to place to get fish, eider down, birds' eggs, geese, seal, caribou. Once again, young and old, male and female, are part of the mix.²⁵ This is a time when people live as they like, and according to the rhythms of the environment. Unlike life in communities where houses

are separated into different rooms and the scale is so great that people do not always know where others might be, living in tents people are again, many generations in one space,



and so, are able to reaffirm time-honoured ways of interacting, each generation learning from, and looking after, the other (Meshner 1995).

In the circulation of food, the community also benefits. While those who participated in the hunt get portions of the meat, once they return to the community, people divide the food even further, so that generally, as in the case of the return of the beluga hunt I described above, most people in the community benefit from the food that only a few people have got. Moreover, today, Inuit communities in Canada have Hunters', Fishers' and Trappers' Associations (HFTAs), and the Hunter Support

²⁵ Today, with the expense of camping, and given that people may have jobs that keep them bound to the community, people have less time or freedom to do these things. Such trips, then, may be restricted to week-ends or to limited generations. One man complained that since his older children had jobs, they were unable to come to their camp during the summer, except for short periods. So only young children and those with enough seniority and cash to have longer holidays managed to spend an extended period of time at the family camp. Some communities are limited, even in their week-end activities, because as Christians they ought not to work — including hunting or sewing — on Sundays.

Programme (HSP), which sponsor some form of hunting that benefits the whole community.²⁶ In Puvirnituk, for example, the HSP organizes an annual hunt for walrus and beluga. Some of the meat is distributed immediately upon return to the community, while some of it is held back for community feasts.

Community also gets affirmed in the eating of country foods. At various times during the year, there are big feasts. Such gatherings may encompass the whole community, when one and all are welcome. For example, over Christmas and New Year's, or during special occasions when there is a gathering that brings people from out of town—in Puvirnituk these have included such things as a meeting of elders, special political meetings, or the Snow Festival—or they may include a smaller group of people, such as when a hunter has been particularly successful.

Saturday-night feasts were really, really special when I was growing up. I loved the feasts. People would come to my grandparents' house. There would be so many people you couldn't walk, or sometimes you would have to crawl through the legs, there would be so many people. People would be talking and laughing. There would be this fresh animal smell, it smelled good. I would listen to my grandparents talk about us, praise us in front of all these people, so it was a lot of fun.

For feasts to happen people would go on the radio and announce that they had fresh meat and invite people over. There would always be tea afterwards. It was fun listening to the radio and finding out who caught seals or caribou and where the feasts were. Elders usually had the feasts. Young people, like my parents' age, they never had feasts, older people would have them. My parents now, they might have a few friends over when my father catches something, but our house is too small to go on the radio and invite everyone. If we said on the radio that my dad caught some seal, our house wouldn't hold everyone who would come. They don't have room. Sometimes if my dad gets lots and lots of food, lots of fish or whatever, he might go on the radio and tell people that they can come over with bags and take some meat, but he wouldn't invite them over for a feast because there would be too many people here.

Community feasts at the community hall are really great too, but they only come once in a long, long while. The community hall smells a

²⁶ I shall discuss this in more detail in Chapters Four and Five.

lot during those feasts because of all those foods. People just flock to them, they can't wait to get in. If the community hall people say that it will open at six and then announce again that they will postpone it until seven because they are not prepared yet, people get pretty angry or whatever. They can't wait. People are just crazy for seal. Baby seals are a pretty rare treat. One time there was this contest between my father's father and his good friend, his old hunting companion. Those two competed one night to see who could catch a seal first. My grandfather won the contest. He caught the seal first. They had a feast at the community hall. They both caught seals, but the next part of the contest was seeing whose wife could cut up the seal the fastest. My grandmother won. ... After they cut up the seal, everyone went running for it. The ladies were screaming, "Move away! Move away!" It was pretty amazing watching how fast people can run when they are headed for a seal (Sandra Pikujak Katsak in Wachowich 1999, p. 248).

This sharing of food with many people is part of what creates a sense of community amongst Inuit. As Jamisie put it,

Our tradition, traditional way of life, it's communal, like, we lived in communes. Our society, Inuit society originally was, can I say "communist"? [Nicole: I think so. In the true sense of the word.] In the true sense of the word. But, communism to many people, it's wrong and bad. But in some other cultures it's a necessity.

Mitchell (1996) argues against the view that the mode of production in indigenous societies was "primitive communism". She maintains that the idea that food was shared selflessly and equally is a myth. Food-sharing practices, she contends, vary across the North and cannot be codified. Sharing was the result of co-operative labour forced upon Inuit by their "rudimentary" weapons and hunting techniques. Thus, sharing was a form of insurance against times of future want. This, I would argue, is a question of perception. Mitchell may see sharing in this light, and her reasoning may suggest that this view makes sense, but the fact remains that on the whole, Inuit have seen food sharing as an unquestionable component of life in society. There may be times when sharing is unfeasible, but the ideal remains. Despite the fact that people are no longer so

dependent on sharing food for their survival, food exchange continues. “Gift exchange in food thus flourishes, and reproduces the predominant value of bush over purchased foods, an evaluation which cannot be explained simply by reference to biological need or by individual consumer preference. Rather food exchanges continue to express the primary commitment to sociality, and to recreating an active practice of mutual aid and responsibility in daily lives in which generosity is expected” (Feit 1991, p 261).

The creation of community through the sharing of country foods was, in part, a necessity, built on an awareness of impermanence—of the environment, of the material world, of weather. People were, and *are*, patently aware that nature is something over which they can have no control. The creation of strong societal bonds, then, is a way of mitigating that lack of control. Yet, even today, at a time when that lack of control no longer seems quite so overwhelming, when jobs, money, the welfare state have moved in to ensure that people are no longer prone to the whims of fate, Inuit continue to share food. As Balikci put it, when discussing the persistence of sharing amongst Inuit, despite the influx of cash and individualised work, “They [the principles that food must be shared] seem a means for adjusting man not only to the environment but to society” (1964, p. 39).

For all the possible reasons that social systems are connected to the sharing of country foods, whether it is ideas about proper relations between humans and other animals, or ideas about identity construction, or the deterministic view that the environment requires that food be shared, the fact remains that for most Inuit the sharing of food is deeply embedded in their understandings of how to behave. For many people, that things should be otherwise is at once shocking and unthinkable. In getting country

foods, in sharing them with others, and in eating them, most Inuit, whether consciously or unconsciously, affirm a set of ideals about how they should function in the world as individuals, as communities, and as a people. To be Inuk is to share food, and to share food is to be Inuk. The reasons for this view are immaterial, it just *is*.

“This is where we killed the Geese”: Memory, Home, and Country Foods

~ We all need memories to remind us who we are. ~

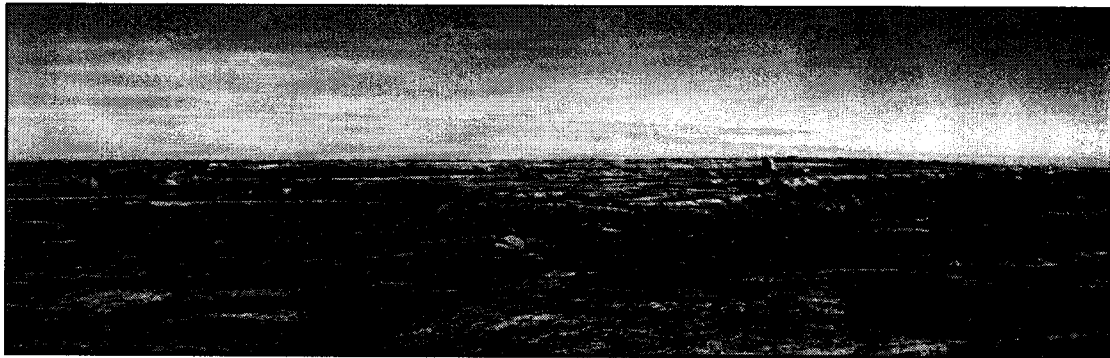
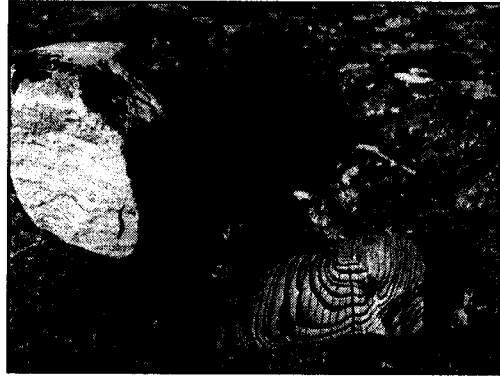
Todd, Todd, and Nolan (2001)

We all have our own memories that come with the experience of life. They can be revived by a chance remark, a smell, a glimpse of something long-forgotten, a piece of music, a place. For most of us, these things are simply part of our everyday lives, but they help us to make sense of who we are, and they ground us in the places that we inhabit. They help us to feel at home.

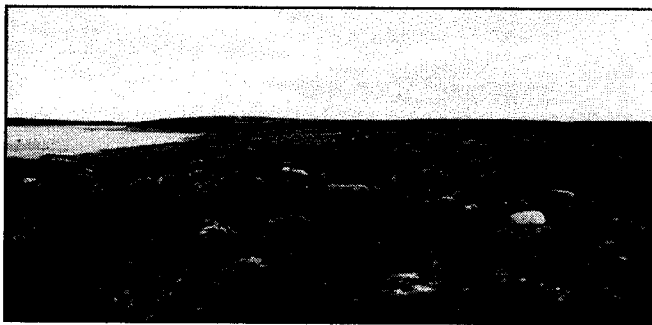
Memory in place exists at many levels. In our individual lives there can be places that are meaningful only to us and help us to make sense of ourselves. They are the places that mark our personal moments of triumph or defeat, the places where we suddenly realised something, or where some remarkable event occurred. But there are also places that hold collective memories; they help us to make sense of ourselves as a group, not only in the here and now, but through time (cf. Osborne 2001 & 2002). By spending time on the land, in travelling to look for food, Inuit pass landmarks that serve to remind themselves of who they are, both as individuals, but also as a collective.

July 21, 2002

As I go walking here, I follow some path I pull from my head, some destination—a rock—I pick from the horizon. I'm not looking for food. Yesterday I went further from camp than I had before, and that sense of uneasiness took hold of me, that familiar feeling that this place was so much bigger than I could handle. And then I would find something to put my mind at ease: a footprint, a piece of burnt wood, an old tent ring, an upturned rock, a stone sitting on top of a larger rock, a path trodden by caribou. Each signal made me feel, "OK, someone or something has made sense of this place", and it helps to settle me into it. I am not alone.



Jamisié said the markers—just small rocks, often white, or placed upright in such a way that they call attention to themselves—were put there to show a path, to show where a lake is, to show the easiest way up a hill, to locate a cache. I wonder whether



people here ever feel alone and scared in this landscape. Jamisié and Maggie said, "there are spirits here, can you feel them?"

This may not always be a conscious thing; people may not pass caches or tent rings on their paths or go to the same fishing area again and again and remark to themselves, "ah, I know who I am!" After all, such things are second nature. However, these things *do*

help to place people in their lives, and are also part and parcel of understandings about a way of life that is particularly theirs.

In July 2002, I camped for a couple of weeks at Qapirquktuuq, a site several hours' boat ride from Puvirnituuq. I had never been to such a place. Above our white tents clustered by the shore, were the stone foundations of buildings that had held many people, with massive stone benches. There were caches and graves and tent rings and directional markers. The place was *full* of the signs of the past. Although most of people at the camp were Inuit who lived in Puvirnituuq, amongst the visitors was a man from Montreal who was making a film. This was his second visit to the Arctic. The day he was to leave, I mentioned to him how amazed I had been at all the vestiges from the past. He looked at me with a blank face. He had seen none of it, despite the fact that his tent was only metres from the stone houses. His response reminded me of a comment that Kublu had made to me the previous year: "We have *lots* of history, only it's not written down". Even for me, a visitor to this place, I could see the signs of its occupation by Inuit, but I could not understand them or relate to them as a person from that place. I did not grow up going there, I did not grow up knowing that here was where my parents and my grandparents and my great-grandparents went hunting and fishing and gathering. I did not grow up with the stories about this place, stories that overlapped with my own life and way of living. I did not know that over that hill was a lake where the Arctic Char are very tasty, or in that bay a whole camp of people once died due to illness, or by the river my great uncle and aunt would camp every spring. All of these things serve to make the land a place of home and identity for many Inuit in a way that it could never be for me.

Nungak and Arima (1988) provide ample examples of how the landscape around Puvirnituk is littered with history. At Kuuvik, 180 kilometres north of Puvirnituk, are many *inuksuit*²⁷ that stand in a place where two brothers killed a number of people. At another place called Inikjuaq ('the big place'), across the river from Puvirnituk, is a site where there was a battle between two *Tuniit*, a people who preceded the Inuit. The marks of their skirmish are still visible on the land. The landscape is full of stories of hunger, of the supernatural, of the incredible feats of humans and animals, each of which gets told and retold so that it becomes a manifestation of memory and identity. Spending time on the land with Jamisie helped me to learn some of these stories.

Once, not far from town, he pointed to a cliff and told how in the 1950s two girls, on their way to a dance not far from their homes, had become disoriented in a snowstorm, and lost their way. Some time later their bodies were found at the bottom of that cliff at which we sat looking.

Another time, on a flat October day, we were out hunting by boat. We passed through a place called Upirngavik—"the Spring Place", because people would camp there in spring—and Jamisie told me about a measles epidemic in 1963 when he was a child eight years old. It had hit the whole community at once. Due to the illness, people had been unable to go out and get food, so supplies were running low. Jamisie and his brother-in-law were the first to recover, so they went out hunting. He explained that in this place they had managed to kill enough geese to feed the community.

The following summer, I was out in a boat with Salamonie zooming amongst the islands along the coast of Hudson Bay. We were a big group, in six boats going from

²⁷ This is the plural of *inuksuk*; a stone marker erected by Inuit.

island to island looking for eggs and keeping an eye out for moulting Canada Geese. The elder of our group, a man in his seventies called Miku, had recently got a new motor for his boat. According to his wife he was so happy the wrinkles were falling off his face. As we travelled, Salamonie pointed to a marker high on an island out at sea and said this was where Miku's father was buried. He pointed even further out to some islands on the horizon and said that as a child he had gone there with his parents to get seals because this was the place where the best sealskins could be found for making kayaks.

For many of the people living in Puvirnituk, home is not simply the houses they live in, but a vast area, which represents many things. In part, spending time on the land allows people to gain knowledge about the land, to learn about its nooks and crannies. This helps people to understand themselves in relation to the land. Such knowledge can be both practical and existential. Qitsualik writes how, “[t]he land was the grocery and hardware store of Inuit, providing them with everything they required, including food and tools. Just as one knows one's neighbourhood or the town where one was raised, so Inuit regarded the entirety of the Land as their home” (n.d., n.p.).²⁸

Amongst Inuit, this connection between land and home also links geography to identity (Brody 2000; Rasing 1999). Where English speakers use the suffixes “-(i)an” or “-(n)ite”, as in “Canadian”, “Albertan”, “Torontonian” or “suburbanite”, Inuit use the suffix “-miut” to signify that they are from a certain place. As with English, the term may be used at different scales. As a people who have had to rely on knowing the land

²⁸ A word that is used in Inuktitut to signify ‘environment’, *avatik*, also reveals another interesting semantic connection between the concept of home and the land. Its meanings are twofold: it may betoken everything that surrounds a person until the land or sea touches the sky, in other words, the horizon; or it may mean the area in an igloo where the wall touches the ground, which suggests being surrounded by a home. Thus, for many Inuit the environment is not simply about every physical thing surrounding people up to the horizon. It also incorporates the idea of the environment as a home, a place that is linked to social and cultural structures, a place that is linked to personal identity (Gombay 1995).

where they are from in order to survive, this geographical identity is important to many Inuit. In fact, when people first meet one another they might ask where they are from—“*Nani nunaqarpit?*”—which literally translates as “Where do you have land?” Nunavik has several examples of settlements that have come into being because people from a given area could not feel at ease removed from the places they know and in which they feel at home. Thus, Akulivik was created by people who did not want to be in Puvirnituq, Umiujaq was created by people who did not want to be in Kuujjuaraapik, and, although it later closed, Taq Pangajuk was created by people originally from Killiniq who did not want to be in Kangiqsualujjuaq.

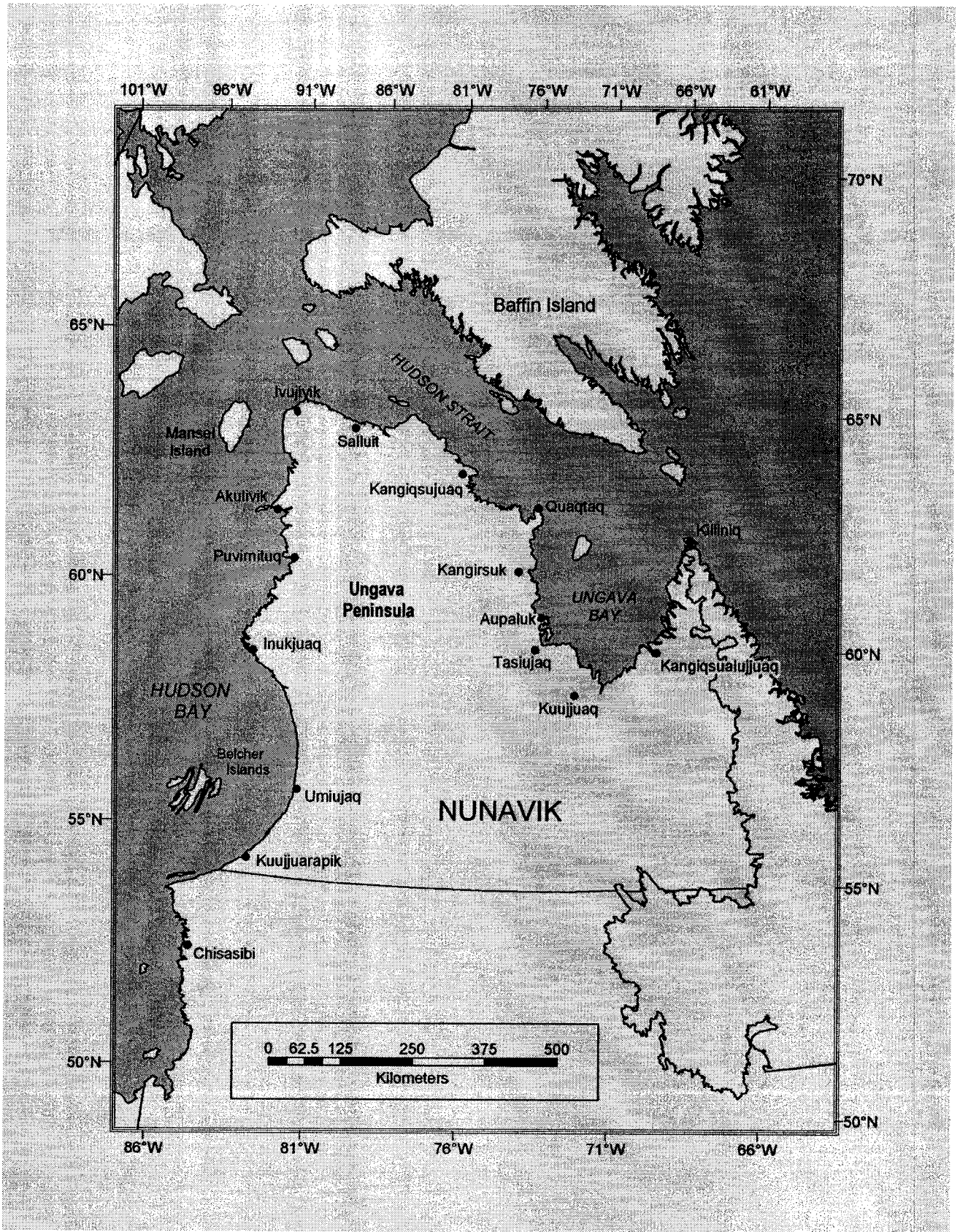


Figure 3. Settlements of Nunavik

In each case, although the people concerned were often related to people in the communities which they were leaving, the attachment they felt to the places they came from and the knowledge they had about those places, reveal how deep and important are the links between place, identity, and knowledge for many Inuit.

In addition to such knowledge, however, land is also important because it can literally help to remind people who they are. In spending time on the land, in the activities that people undertake in hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, or just being on the land, people can reinforce their memories and understandings of themselves through time and in time. As Moss (1994, pp. 29-30) puts it: “For people native to a place, landscape is an extension of being, as intimate and far-reaching as genealogy, an existential fact.”

The land is also a place of invisible narratives that link people to the past and give meaning to the present (cf. Osborne 2002). The world over, people have stories and events that link them to place, but this is particularly true in areas where people have lived over a long time, where their narratives make them *of* that place. Such places are full of the past, full of an awareness that goes beyond life’s daily workings to a time far stronger and more fundamental, a time that Euro-Canadians, as relative new-comers to North America are in the midst of creating.²⁹

Many of the stories that link them to place were created long ago by the Inuit. This is how land becomes linked to memory and home. In getting country foods, in spending time on the land, these links are continually being forged and reforged, so that

²⁹ Maybe one day people will tell the story in New York of the World Trade Centre as the site where a grand battle occurred, much in the same way as people in Puvirnituq speak of the fight between the *Tuniit* in Inikjuaq.

past and present are part of an on-going process of meaning-making. As Moss puts it, “landscape is the living presence of our passage; history in the end is history” (1994, p. 91).

August 18, 2002

There's so much here that I am learning to see. Yesterday we stopped for tea on an island. Near the shore were the usual papers, a can of cocktail sausages sitting in a puddle, toilet paper, chocolate bar wrappers, pop cans. But I went to some markers higher up on the hill. There was a stone circle—remnants from a tent long gone—nestled in amongst some rocks on what had once been a beach. There was the usual cache. Then further on I came across some rocks lying in a depression. I knew they meant something, but I didn't know what. They didn't shout their presence, rather, I felt them. Then, at the

very top of the hill, amongst the various inuksuit, was one that so clearly said, “there is a grave here”. I could see the image of a person lying horizontally, straddled between two upright rocks. It was so clear and so loud in its silence. That whole place was loud with the presence of people.



They were everywhere, leaving messages in rock. Then I went below to the others having tea by the shore. And I realised that there was information beyond the cans and the toilet paper. Somebody before us had caught a seal. The grease stains on the rock were there to see, I just didn't know how to see them at first—too busy looking at upright rocks.

Out on the Land: Knowledge, Place, and Country Foods

~ The accomplished hunter consults the world, not representations inside his head. ~
Ingold (1996b, p. 41)

Spending time on the land is a challenge. One is vulnerable to the whims of unpredictable forces, both seen and unseen. In ways both great and small, knowledge plays an important part in ensuring that people survive, that society reproduces itself, that life goes on.

At a purely physical level, adequate knowledge is important. One of the areas that is particularly important, as I have discussed above, is knowledge about the weather, and about the behaviour of the environment in general. The weather can change from one moment to the next. Animals with the capacity to kill may appear from around a corner. If misfortune should befall you, help is not necessarily easily at hand. People must be knowledgeable about the workings of the world, for if they are not, it can be a matter of life or death.



Early in December of 2001 winter had finally settled in. The cold had arrived, the ice was strong enough to travel on, and there was enough snow on the land to go out by skidoo. I had heard from Kublu that someone had gone out hunting and not returned within the expected time. A search and rescue team was sent out looking for him. On a grey morning, the day after his disappearance, I watched three skidoos

cross the frozen river and head into town, and soon after, some skidoos headed out again pulling kamotiks behind them. They had found the man's body. His skidoo had broken down and he had frozen to death. He left behind a wife and small children.



Survival is not guaranteed. It depends on one's knowledge about the land, about how to behave and how to find one's way around. As various land use and occupancy studies can attest (cf. Balikci 1964; Brice-Bennett 1977; Freeman 1976; Makivik Corporation 1997), people travel vast distances: in the past on foot, or kayak or dog-team, and today using motorized vehicles. People carry immense maps in their heads. These maps are multi-dimensional, and include, time, space, and knowledge about the vagaries of nature. They must know how to get from A to B, where safe anchorages and shoals are³⁰, the places where the tides affect one's ability to get in and out, the locations of animal dens that must be avoided, areas where the ground is mucky and others where it is firm, and so on. As they travel, people must keep all of these things in mind.

³⁰ Today, such knowledge is less widespread. For this reason, Makivik Corporation has a project to map harbours along the coastline of Nunavik.



While out camping with people in July, several hours' boat ride away from town, I wanted to go for a walk. Asking Mosesie, a man in his 40s, what was out there, he pointed at a hill in the distance and told me there was a spring on that hill, but I should avoid it, because there was also a wolves' den nearby. I was curious, but I heeded his warning and set out for another far-off hill. On my way, near the summit, I heard a noise and looked to my left. In the distance what seemed like sixty Canada Geese were running in low, silent streams, up and over a ridge—their necks spread forward, trying to be invisible in their vulnerable state: moulting, they lacked the ability to fly. Getting to the top of the hill I turned and faced into the wind of a clear, blue day.

On the way back I stopped for a bit to sit amongst an outcropping of rocks and appreciate the day that was. Then, not far away, I spotted a lone fox jumping and prancing for what seemed to me nothing more than pleasure at being alive. I watched it for some time. The fox seemed oblivious to my presence until I started to move in too close. The vixen started an unholy screeching unlike anything I had ever heard. "Stay away from my cubs," she yelled.

I walked on, picking my way carefully through bogs, jumping from tussock to tussock. I passed the skeleton of a caribou, recently torn apart, with bits of meat still clinging to the bones. Then again, there came a noise. At my feet was a male ptarmigan, standing with neck stretched up in warning. I stopped and it stopped. I made a step and it made a step. We continued thus as I let the bird slowly lead me onwards. I looked for the young it was trying to protect, but could see nothing; so, after a time, I went on.

As I reached low land it got wetter and wetter until it was hard to tell where water ended and land began. The two were inescapably merging. But in between, I could see the countless webbed footprints and drifting feathers of nervously moulting Canada Geese.

Eventually, coming back to dry land, I discovered a golf ball, and then a sweet wrapper, and then the hole that the ball had never found. Then the caches appeared, and not far away, tent rings. I followed their lead back to the camp, and I never did meet the wolf that Mosesie knew waited on the distant horizon, beside the spring.



Amongst the things that people must also know, are how to read directions using, for example, the sounds of waves in the fog, or the shape of snowdrifts in the winter, or,

more in the past than today, the stars for guidance (MacDonald 1998; Wachowich 1999). Adamie told me that the really knowledgeable can even recognise the four levels of waves that exist out on the water, and they know how to navigate their way through them. They must know how to predict the weather, using the world around them. Thus, the clouds and the animals, the light and the winds, the ice and the plants, all have messages to tell the informed person (cf. MacDonald 1998; McDonald, Arragutainaq, and Novalinga 1997; Wachowich 1999).

October 23, 2002

A man came to our department last Friday to talk about the effects of external symbols on cognition. Listening to him I thought about how few external symbols people have fashioned in the North, relative to elsewhere. People only create the symbols they need — stone markers for hunters versus writing for tax collectors. There are times, when I've been out alone on the land, and I've tried to figure out which way to go, I've seen a rock, a small rock, placed in such a way that I know that it was put there to beckon me in that direction. "Come here," it says, "this is the way to go." And I follow, reassured that someone has helped me on my way. I wonder, without the overload of those symbols that people have created here in the South — the ads, the road signs, the flags, fire hydrants, and the lights — what other things people are able to read — birds, other animals, the winds, the vastness of the environment.

Carpenter

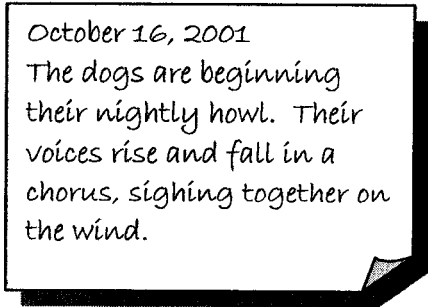
describes how he has been out on the land with Inuit who are able to read signs that to him, are invisible. "By and large these are not actual objects or points, but relationships: relationships between, say, contour, type of snow, wind, salt air, ice crack. I can best explain this with an illustration:

two hunters casually followed a trail which I simply could not see, even when I bent close to scrutinise it; they did not kneel to examine it, but stood back, examining it at a distance" (1973, p. 21).

Survival also depends on one's knowledge about the things necessary to survive when one is out on the land. I have been on an island in Hudson Bay and watched people fix broken propellers using their Coleman stove, rocks, and pliers. I have shuffled from side to side, stamping my feet and trying to keep warm on the sea ice, as someone welded together a makeshift ski for a broken skidoo.

People must also know about the behaviour of animals, where they can be found, how to attract them. I have watched in amazement as Jamisie whistled to an eider duck flying away from us, as we went by in our boat. The eider, trapped by his call, did an about face, and followed us until Jamisie stopped whistling and released it from its prison of sound. Another time, out in the boat, we were out looking for caribou. When eventually we spotted one, it stopped its grazing and looked up at us, wary of danger. Jamisie told us to raise our paddles over our heads to give the animal the impression that here were other caribou antlers so that it might not be alarmed. The hunt was eventually successful. Such behaviour is echoed by Rasing (1999), who writes how people from the Igloodik area train caribou to get used to them. People also learn animals' habits and imitate them when hunting. Thus, Rasing notes, hunters crawl and slide on their stomachs over the spring ice in imitation of the movement of seals.

Sometimes, it is not knowledge about other animals, but other animals' knowledge, that ensures survival. People talk about dogs as being particularly shrewd. They know when there are polar bears about and their frenzied barking warns people of their presence. They know how to find their way in blizzard conditions where humans are at a



October 16, 2001
The dogs are beginning their nightly howl. Their voices rise and fall in a chorus, sighing together on the wind.

loss. They know routes they have taken in the past. Alurut, a man in his 50s, told me about sending a friend out to check his nets:

...I sent him out with my dog-team telling him that, "just follow; just follow them. You will get there". I used to have nets in the lake, and there was quite a few nets close together. I told him, "just let them go there and they'll stop exactly where they are". He'd never gone there before. He didn't know. Only dogs know. So he got there. The dogs stopped there, exactly where my nets are, and when he finished, he went home with the fish. [We both laugh.] That's how the dogs are. Very good.

As a relative new-comer to this northern world, I had constantly to face my own ignorance. When I first arrived in Puvirnituk, the woman with whom I was staying would tell me that if I wanted meat, I needed only to go out to her shed and help myself to whatever I found in the freezer. When I finally headed out there in search of some caribou meat, I opened the freezer and was faced with large, seemingly unidentifiable cuts of meat. Confronted by such a thing—meat devoid of the tidy packaging and cut into “manageable” pieces—I had no idea how to proceed. How was I to cut this up? Instead, I closed the lid of the freezer and went back inside to open a can of soup. Yet it is in the cutting up of the animal that people learn whether or not it is healthy, what the animal has eaten, how old it is, and so on. Ultimately, this enables them to know what it is they are eating.

I told an Inuk friend about another misadventure of mine. It was a cold day in December, and I had gone alone to the spot where people get fresh drinking water.³¹ I had many jugs to fill, and I was feeling quietly proud of myself for my initiative. First, I managed to get the Jeep stuck in a snowdrift, and used all of my ingenuity to devise a

³¹ In Puvirnituk, although all houses have water tanks that provide them with potable, running water, many people find that the water does not taste fresh, so they go and collect it up the river. People do this in other communities too.

way out of it. Then, when I arrived at the water spot, I found that the snow had covered over the hole in the ice that people maintained to get the water. I kicked at it, and my foot met with solid ice. I kicked again, harder this time, but the ice did not give. So I moved on to the next hole. Having learned from the last spot, I gave this one a great wallop with my heel, and almost fell into the water. There was no ice underneath the covering of snow. Telling this story to my friend, he looked at me and said, “You are learning. When you go out with people, you must always watch them closely”. This is how people get information and gain knowledge when they are out on the land. It is not taught in a linear causal fashion. It is amassed slowly, over time, by observation, and by trial and error.³² Those who do not learn it, go out at their peril.

For all the knowledge that is necessary in the getting and eating of country foods, one of the most subtle lessons I was taught by an Inuk friend involved something that took place far away from the Arctic. I was heading off for a working holiday on the Lower Saint Lawrence and complained about feeling frazzled. My friend told me that while I was there, I should go out and kill a goose. I should go out and find plants to eat, he said. I responded that I had no need to do that, as the shop was just down the road and the vegetable garden was not yet ready. He replied, “No. Go out and *look* for it elsewhere.” It is the process of getting food that is as important as the product. It is not about having things under control, but about knowing and understanding what is there. From my perspective, it was the product that is of primary importance while the process fell into obscurity. Yet, as I have learned again and again in the North, process cannot be

³² The works of Briggs (1970 & 1998) contain interesting discussions about the nature of Inuit teaching and learning practices.

divorced from product, and much of what Inuit talk about when they discuss how to behave on the land reflects their recognition of this.

My friend then went on to say that he had recently been out to pick springtime cranberries, the ones that appeared soft and full of taste after a winter buried under the snow. “Alone?” I asked. “No one wants to come with me.” He said that he had found tent rings there—that there had been lots of them. “It made sense that they were there,” he said. I thought at the time, here I was, living in a society that seemed so far removed from place. So many of the processes that govern the running of my society and the functioning of the economy—the “knowledge” economy—is beyond place. The knowledge economy is for an economy of exchange, not an economy of use. What is valued, in monetary terms, is predicated on activities that remove most of us from our place.

This sense of being removed from place, and the realisation of the often unconscious knowledge that accompanies being in place, has periodically struck me while spending time in Inuit communities. Knowledge is not always something of which we are conscious, particularly if, as in the case of a great deal of Inuit knowledge, it is not formally taught. The tradition of stepping back, identifying what one knows, identifying how to communicate it, and then doing so—something that is at the heart of the Western system of education—is not generally part of Inuit tradition. Rather, as I mentioned above, people generally learn by observing and doing. Thus, knowledge is not something that is outside of oneself, but rather, becomes internalised and understood in innate ways. This has some important implications. First, people are not necessarily aware of what they know, particularly in the case of a people, such as the Inuit, who have been

inundated by a whole new knowledge base, with new sets of valued skills and ideas about learning.³³ Second, knowledge translates into action, both great and small, in ways we often do not even recognise. This came home to me most strongly while spending time on the land with people from Puvirnituk.

³³ While doing research for my Master's thesis I asked people who had participated in the study of their ecological knowledge how it had affected them. One man responded,

At first traditional knowledge, I'd never heard that thing before, at one time in my life. "Traditional knowledge? Never heard of it." I didn't even know I had it. "What's traditional knowledge? Oh, that's nothing. What's the world thinking of it for? Oh, could that be put to use somehow?" That's when I started to realise "I have this knowledge. I know something too." I think I told you that before, that when people used to come to the community from the governments ... "Oh, government people, big shots! Important! What are we going to do?" But I don't do that anymore, because I don't do that anymore, since I know where I am from, who I am, what I am trying to do, and what I'm supposed to do. ... And that's when I started to realise that I didn't have to be afraid because they might know something that I don't know, plus I know something that they don't know. "You want to argue? OK, we'll argue." He might lose, I might lose, but we come out with nothing really. If I go down south and "blah, blah, blah" in legal realities, or whatever, I might lose. But if I took that guy to go for a hike, or whatever, to live, he might lose. So I never put myself down anymore (Adamie in Gombay 1995, p. 81).

August 14, 2002

Just back from camping for a couple of weeks, and I find myself thinking about life out there under the skies of Hudson Bay. The only thing people seemed to worry about was the weather. Coming back to town was a real contrast. It has made me understand what Inuit have told me before: that you only see them living how they really live — they only feel truly themselves — when they're on the land. ...

I realised something a couple of days ago. Here in town people seem to sleep a great deal and generally to take it easy. The ways in which the white people who live here approach their work and the employed Inuit approach their work is very different. The latter are more relaxed, and seem far less driven than the former. When I was camping, things just didn't seem so drifting; in contrast, I, with no office to go to, read and slept more than I would usually. The shoe was on the other foot. It really is a sign to me that life in town is lived according to the white world, and people, being somewhat displaced in terms of how to operate in it, live accordingly.

In town, time and place are measured, controllable, and demarcated. The things people know a lot about — the land, the animals — are not so valuable in a white world. They don't fit into our regimen. While I, being in a world I can relate to, go about my business doing what it is I have to do. On the land, the roles are reversed. This came out most markedly in sleep. On the land, I slept more than I do in town. By comparison, in town, Inuit sleep more than they do on the land. I asked Jinnie and Billy about this — whether people sleep more in town than on the land — and they agreed with me. I think it's 'cause one is the white world, while the other is the Inuit world, and each of us reacts accordingly. In town, I know what I have to do, and I do it. I'm trained for this world. On the land, they're trained; they know the work that they have to do. Imagine a whole society that's not trained for this life. The striking thing is that Inuit live the vast majority of their lives in town. And I think this causes a malaise. People don't just automatically fit into living under wholly different conditions. Knowledge about how to operate doesn't just spring from *nothing*. Ways of being evolve, are taught and are learned, over time and in unconscious ways. When I was camping, I didn't know what to do with the geese, caribou, and fish. I didn't know how to move properly in a boat, how to remove fish from a net, how to prepare the food that people had caught. I didn't know how to skin an animal, to eviscerate it, and cut through a joint. I didn't know when to relax and when to take action. I didn't know the rhythm of the day, and so could not focus or feel like a fully contributing and knowledgeable adult in comparison to the others who were with me. What works in one environment, just doesn't in another.

The knowledge that people have developed in order to survive on the land, the ways of being and operating that it engenders, are certainly multifaceted and often

unacknowledged. Yet for all that, there are many elements of this knowledge that are discussed and compared by a lot of Inuit. Whether it is over a cup of coffee, on the FM or short-wave radios, at the Co-op, or over the telephone, people are constantly exchanging information about the things that they have observed or done on the land. The location of animals, unusual behaviours, malformations in the animals people have caught, where they picked berries, the state of the ice, remarks about environmental conditions are all part of public discussion, and may be passed on from one person to the next. As Bodenhorn (2000) points out, such knowledge is ultimately common property. The sharing of this knowledge reflects a commitment to the well-being of society as a whole.

Health and Country Foods

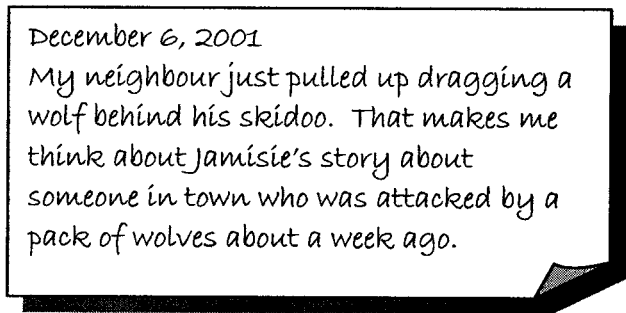
Food is a requirement of human existence. We must eat in order to survive. But what we eat and how we eat are also very much related to how well we survive. For Inuit, at different levels, both physical and metaphysical, people's health was, and is, tied to country foods; they are a source of both spiritual and material nourishment.

Numerous studies have been done by non-Inuit about the health effects of eating country foods (cf. Bjerregaard and Young 1998; Blanchet *et al.* 2000; Jensen 1997; Jensen, Adare, and Shearer 1997; Lawn and Harvey 2001). On the whole, these studies have confirmed the fact that country foods are an important source of nutrition for Inuit. They have added health benefits, such as preventing the occurrence of heart disease (Blanchet *et al.* 2000). But these studies simply confirm what Inuit have always

maintained; namely, that theirs is the best food for them. Thus, it is from their point of view that I consider the links between health and country foods.

Inuit have, of necessity, been aware that their access to food was not guaranteed. Tales and personal experience of starvation have not been forgotten, and when food was scarce, people would eat whatever they could find (cf. Adult Education Centre 1989; Usher *et al.* 1995).³⁴ This sometimes meant eating food that had washed up on shore, or food that was left behind by other animals. I once met a man in Kangiqsualujjuaq whose family had vowed never to kill wolves. This was because in the past, they had been near starvation and come across some meat that wolves had left behind. That meat had saved their lives. In recognition of that gift, the family had sworn never to kill a wolf—an oath that was carried down through the generations.

Such stories are not restricted to pre-settlement times. As Jamisie's tale of near starvation



December 6, 2001
My neighbour just pulled up dragging a wolf behind his skidoo. That makes me think about Jamisie's story about someone in town who was attacked by a pack of wolves about a week ago.

during the measles epidemic in Puvirnituk suggests, even into the 1960s people were threatened with starvation if they could not find food. Simard (1979) and Steinmann (1977) both describe how the getting of that food was of primary importance to the people of Puvirnituk. Steinmann, the first Catholic missionary in Puvirnituk, recounts how, in the 1950s he was pressed for time, trying to build a chapel and shelter for himself

³⁴ In fact, the name 'Puvirnituk' may be linked to one such event. Its literal translation is 'Place where there is a Smell of Rotting Meat'. There is some debate as to its meaning. Some say that the name comes from an accident in which many caribou were drowned and the smell came from their rotting corpses, while others claim that the smell was from a camp in which the families died of illness and there was no one left to bury the bodies (Makivik Corporation n.d.).

before the winter set in. He had hired Inuit to help him in his task. At the first sign of passing animals however his employees dropped their tools and went hunting. The money they were earning was of secondary importance to the immediate potential of getting food.

Since that time, things have changed. Inuit rely more on imported foods,³⁵ but at a fundamental level many people do not view it as wholly trustworthy. Such food is not truly healthy food. Nor does it really fill a person up properly or provide them with strength (Sejersen 1998). Many consider only country foods to be truly healthy³⁶ (cf. Wein, Freeman, Markus 1996). Only country foods can really nourish people.³⁷ In a place where the elements can kill, people remark that certain foods keep people warm (Bjerregaard and Young 1998; Usher *et al.* 1995). Ringed seal meat, particularly the blood and meat of a male in rut (*tiggaq*) keeps people warm, healthy, and strong (Usher *et al.* 1995). Similarly, aged walrus meat (*igunak*) heats people so much that they start to sweat. Certain foods, and their by-products have been used to treat illness (cf. Adult Education Centre 1989). Lemming skins are used to treat boils. When I had a cough, people on the Belcher Islands told me that I should eat raw blue mussels.

Although people are clear that country foods keep them healthy, there are times when these foods should not be eaten. For example, there are restrictions on what

³⁵ In fact, Duhaimé, Chabot, and Gaudreault (2001) note that only about five per cent of Inuit eat a diet in which more than 50 per cent of what they consume is made up of country foods. All the same, 40 per cent of the protein intake for adults in Nunavik comes from country foods. These numbers vary depending on age and sex. Men eat more country food than women, and consumption of country foods increases with age. It represents 59 per cent of all meat and fish eaten by people younger than forty-five years of age and 77 per cent of meat and fish eaten by people older than forty-five (Chabot 2001).

³⁶ This assumption has been challenged in the last few years as a result of research on the presence of contaminants in the country foods of the Arctic (cf. Jensen, Adare, and Shearer 1997); however, people generally continue to believe that northern foods are healthier than southern foods.

³⁷ Wenzel (1991) shows that seal meat is healthier, in terms of nutrients, than beef.

pregnant women may eat. Although they are encouraged by their families to eat country foods to ensure their own and the baby's health, they are also told to avoid certain foods. For example, people on the Belcher Islands say that eating beluga flippers can cause malformations of the baby, and eating brains can cause the birth to be slow and arduous; so they should be avoided by pregnant women (Usher *et al.* 1985). Similarly, people on medication are judged to be fragile, and are discouraged from eating *igunak*, because it is a very powerful meat that can react badly with the medications (Usher *et al.* 1995).

Certain foods are avoided not only because of the health of the people eating them, but also because of the health of the animal from which the food came. People remark upon the health of animals, and if they do not seem healthy, they avoid them. In extreme cases unhealthy animals have killed people, as in the case of *Trichinosis*, a disease that affects walrus meat. So people are wary of animals that appear sick. Some years before my stay in Puvirnituk, people had killed a musk ox not far from town. This animal is extremely rare in the region, and so, one would think, something that would be desirable to eat out of curiosity. People noted, however, that it was not healthy, so some refused to eat it.

People's health and behaviour also has an impact on the animals. Deviant or immoral behaviour has been known to affect the animals, which in turn, affects the humans who depend on them. Apphia Agalakti Awa, a woman from the Igloodik area who was born in 1931, talks about how in earlier times, before she was born, if a woman miscarried or had her first menstruation, she ought not to tell anybody because then the animals might not come (Wachowich 1999). She also tells the story of what happens if people treat animals badly. It can come back to haunt you.

I remember one time there was a person from around here, he removed the feathers from a duck that was still alive. He left just the wing feathers and let the bird fly away without any feathers on its body. After awhile that same person got a big sore that went all over his skin. He still had bones and meat left on him, but he lost his skin. He was still alive. That happened to him because he had abused wildlife. We had to kill animals right away when we caught them and not let them suffer. If you were abusive to wildlife, that is what happened to you (Wachowich 1999, pp. 125-126).

Animals are also used by some people as a metaphor of a person's health. I was speaking to my former landlady on the telephone after I had left Puvirnituk. I had been ill and unable to shake a cough that dragged on. In the midst of our conversation I was wracked with coughing. She said that I have a Canada Goose cough—*nirliujaq*—"When I say this, we know exactly what kind of cough you have".

So it would seem that the food and animals from which they come, are an integral part of Inuit ideas about health and ill-health. As with so many things in the view of Inuit, to separate things, to perceive somehow that cause and effect are not interconnected in intricate ways, is absurd. What people eat and what they are cannot be separated, and are linked to larger ideas about the environment and their place in the world. As Sejersen puts it,

The personal body is part of a bigger system. By consuming products from the bigger system ... one can become an intimate part of it. A hunter underpins the aspect quite well by saying that his body has an inner calendar telling him when to eat what, according to what season. His body can feel when it is time to hunt and eat caribou or beluga whale for example. The statement indicates that he perceives his body and the seasonal changes of his homeland to be in a symbiosis, in some way body and system are interlinked and the relationship can be strengthened through consumption [of] country foods. A Clyde River Inuk elder expresses this symbiosis in the following way: "Seal blood is in all Inuit who (eat) animals. Seal blood gives us our blood. Seal is life-giving" (1998, p. 55).

Politics and Country Foods

~ They should be fishing, not fighting. ~

My colleague Kooyoo, with whom I worked in Sanikiluaq, said these words to me on a July day in 1993 as we were looking out the windows of our office at the boats taking off from the harbour. It was a sunny summer day with sparkling water and blue skies, the kind of day when anyone would feel pangs at working indoors in an office while seeing others set off for a wholly different world. We had been listening to the news on the radio. War was going on in Bosnia. Somalia was in tumult. Faced with the beauty of the day before us, and the knowledge that people were taking advantage of that day to go out hunting and fishing, the thought that people were fighting and dying *anywhere*, seemed nonsensical. And so, those words came out of Kooyoo's mouth, "they should be fishing, not fighting". In a world in which all that seemed to matter was the weather and food, in a culture in which displays of anger are repugnant,³⁸ the thought that people should want to fight was incomprehensible. All the same, the world of Inuit as it relates to hunting, fishing, and trapping is not free of politics. Tensions over resources and their use exist both within Inuit society and in their dealings with non-Inuit.

In a society that functions based on communal access to resources, the ideal that all food is shared operates within an understanding that the animals that people catch are theirs to share as they choose. Thus, except in exceptional circumstances, people do not have the right to take from the nets or traps of others. If such rules are broken, generally

³⁸ Briggs (1970) does a wonderful job of explaining the ins and outs of how anger is not acceptable in Inuit society. As Adamie once explained to me in very simple terms, one doesn't want to be out on the land, where people are deeply dependent on one another, with someone who is angry.

Inuit habits of non-confrontation prevail; however, the individual can eventually receive his or her just desserts.

...there was a guy who was stealing foxes from somebody else's traps. Just not too long ago. Everybody knew about that. He was stealing dead foxes from somebody else's traps. People knew him, that he was doing that, but nobody ever told him because he is big enough, he is adult, he is supposed to have his sense. Sometimes even the people doing something wrong, they don't talk about it. "Oh, you're doing something wrong here." They don't tell him that. Because the people know what kind of consequences he's going to face at the end of his life. Because he have to change by *himself*. Anyway, this guy was stealing foxes from the traps. He was dying. When he was dying he could hear foxes crying coming out from his mouth. I'm not kidding. That's only five years ago. They could hear voices from inside of his voice—foxes crying—because he was stealing foxes from somebody else's traps (Adamie in Gombay 1995, pp. 57-58).

Although it is viewed ill by most Inuit to steal without cause, there are times when the theft of food is sanctioned. Nungak and Arima (1988) quote a man from Puvirnituk who tells the story of how once, when people were short of food, they visited a family that had lots of food. They were fed, but did not receive extra food for the people back in their camp who were hungry, so when they left, they stole food for the others. The narrator says this was acceptable, because the people were not treated properly; the hosts should have given food for the others. In most cases, however, the socially sanctioned norms and behaviours that I have described in this chapter ensure that within Inuit communities, everyone has access to the foods they want and need.

It is in their dealings over country foods with the *external* world, that Inuit have greatest cause to be wary. As non-Inuit have moved into the Arctic, Inuit have had to learn how to negotiate their way through systems of understanding about the world and how to behave in it that are not of their own making. They have learnt something about

how they are viewed by others. They have confronted animal rights activists and regulatory regimes that sometimes neither conform to their own way of understanding animals nor to their use of them.

As a people who like to eat raw meat, Inuit have learned that others can view this as barbaric. Thus, as Qitsualik (2001) mentions, many Inuit are embarrassed to eat “Inuit style” in front of White people. “I still remember how Inuit used to deliberately feast out of sight of the White people, and I know some older Inuit, even today, still flinch at the idea of eating *niqimmariit* (“authentic foods”) openly” (p. 12).

The differences in the ways in which non-Inuit and Inuit view animals have also been a source of strife in the North. When the animal rights movement rose to the fore in public opinion, and Brigitte Bardot helped to convince the world to save the seals, this had devastating effects upon the trapping economy of the North (cf. Wenzel 1991). Within a very short time people were no longer able to earn a living from trapping. ‘Environmentalists’ are tarred by the same brush, and are viewed with distrust by many Inuit. Biologists can sometimes also be viewed with similar misgivings. In communities across the North I have met people who take exception to the tagging and monitoring of animals. They see it as disrespectful of the animals and something that causes them pain. Moreover, the influence of biologists on the regulatory systems that affect what Inuit can and cannot hunt has long been a source of strife between them and many Inuit. Recently in Greenland, Nunavut, and Nunavik beluga populations have been the most significant bone of contention between Inuit and non-Inuit regulatory systems (cf. Caulfield 1997; Department of Fisheries and Oceans 1994; George 2002a). The biologists argue that the

populations are decreasing while the Inuit argue that the sampling methods used by the biologists are faulty. Speaking about fish sampling techniques Jamisie said,

... somebody spent two weeks in the North, and didn't see any fish. Yes. He was maybe from a university and did an interview, and it was—they came at a hard time. But two weeks later, the river was overflowing. [Nicole: I won't say anything.] You understand what I mean? [We both laugh.]

Nicole: *I won't say anything.*

Similar arguments are used for the population sampling of other animals. Inuit maintain that the sampling was done only in a limited area, at a limited time, which means that things like weather conditions or other environmental factors are not taken into account. They also assert that the noise of motors affects the willingness of the animals to reveal themselves. So when the biologists come in their noisy boats, the animals stay away.

At a basic level these various disagreements exist because, for many of the reasons I have discussed in this chapter, Inuit view animals in a fundamentally different way from non-Inuit. Essentially, however, the idea that the land and animals are there to be controlled by humans simply does not make sense from the perspective of most Inuit. So Jamisie explained,

No. That's not in our nature ... to try to own the wildlife. That's something that most Inuit don't like at all, that's somebody who says, "don't harvest this species; don't catch too many; don't go that way; don't go there". It's never been in our tradition and culture. We never had boundaries. And when they try to impose that, naturally, we get angered by this. It's like trying to put up a fence. That's when the problems started in the North American, in North America, and that's when the problems, the Range Wars started, and everything, let alone Indian Wars. Because fences, naturally, make people angry. Even today there are wars over fences and boundaries. That's why there is war, because of boundaries and ownership to the land.

The regulation of wildlife is essentially the addition of one more invisible fence.³⁹ Moreover, as Nielsen (1999) points out, for many Inuit the regulatory systems that *have* been established in the North do not seem sensible. If, as they view things, a specific animal stock is part of a larger whole, then it makes no sense to set up laws about such things as methods and tools for hunting a particular species without considering the animal within the larger context in which it lives.

Today in the Canadian North, many Inuit are concerned about the introduction of the gun registry. They see it as yet one more way that non-Inuit are imposing uninvited hoops that they must jump through in order to be able to continue to live as hunters. People expressed concern that unilingual Inuit are unable to deal with the forms involved in the process of registering their guns. They also object to the expense. Finally, some ask, if an Inuk has been in trouble with the law, even for a minor infraction, this could jeopardise their getting a firearms license, which means they will not be entitled to own a rifle. How is a hunter then to get country foods?

Within the larger context of Inuit non-Inuit relations, country foods represent an important way for Inuit of establishing themselves as a people. As Sejersen (1998) puts it, these foods represent the dichotomy internal:external with the parallel clean:polluted. Most Inuit who eat these foods do so because they *like* them. However, at a political level their continued consumption represents, for some, a determination to pursue an Inuit

³⁹ Interestingly, the issue of boundaries was one of the reasons that Puvirnituk refused to sign the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. As Jamisie told me,

We just didn't agree with having just fourteen miles to our name. [Nicole: Yeah.] I mean, fourteen miles territory, Category One, where we've — we totally didn't agree with that; living in a ... they didn't call it "reservations" but that's what it is basically.

way of life in such a way that they are able to assert control over external forces that would shape their destinies while maintaining internal social cohesion and safeguarding their cultural distinctiveness.

“Nobody’s Starving”: Economics and Country Foods

These were the words of a woman in Puvirnituk when I asked about welfare in the community. She pointed out that while people may sometimes lack money, at least they do not lack food. Because everybody knows everybody, they tell people to come and get food from one another when they need it. Such sharing keeps body and spirit alive.⁴⁰

Economics, as I discussed in the previous chapter, can mean different things to different people. At its most basic, it can mean basically ensuring that the essentials of life—food, shelter, and clothing—are provided for, or at a more complex level, it involves the understanding of values and institutions that underpin the production, circulation, and consumption of goods that ensure people’s survival. So economic systems entail both the physical manifestation of goods required for survival and the principles that identify why certain things have particular values over other things. These two ways of understanding—both physical and epistemological—have expression in the economics of country foods.

As I have maintained in much of this chapter, Inuit generally have a logic internal to their understanding of country foods and their role in the world, that governs how the food is produced and how it circulates and is consumed. Quantitative studies have been

⁴⁰ Although people tend to share food, there are always exceptions to the rule. While I was in Puvirnituk, one person told me that sometimes it was hard to get food from others, and another person said that in the past there had been a food bank in the community for about a year. However, it provided store-bought, not country foods.

done that discuss the cycling of food in Inuit society. For example Kemp (1971) used a human ecology approach that focussed on energy flows, looking at inputs and outputs in the production of country foods. Other researchers have used money as a way of measuring production, circulation, and consumption of country foods (cf. Chabot 2001; Duhaime, Chabot and Gaudreault 2001; Usher 1971; Wenzel 1991). People measure, for example, the amount of food caught by Inuit and attempt to quantify its replacement value, were they obliged to buy the meat instead. An underlying economic rationale can be, and has been, made that asserts that country foods make good sense from a numerical point of view. But such an argument sees only half the picture.

Seen from a purely statistical perspective, the consumption of country foods relative to imported foods seems insignificant. Most of the food eaten by people in Nunavik is imported. In 1995, 85 per cent of the food eaten in Nunavik was store-bought, two per cent came from the Hunter Support Programme, and 13 per cent came from outside the market, i.e., through sharing networks (Chabot 2001).⁴¹ Moreover, a 1992 dietary study of food consumption in Nunavik revealed that younger people get 80 per cent of their energy from imported foods (Chabot 2001).⁴² Chabot (2001) found that

⁴¹ Chabot (2001) points out, however, that these numbers vary from family to family, with some eating more imported foods and others eating more country foods.

⁴² In fact, people now complain that they must prepare different meals for the different generations: country foods for adults and imported food for kids. Mesher laments, "Even the meals, then, tend to make us into strangers!" (1995, p. 89). Rhoda Kaujak Katsak expresses something of those feelings of strangeness:

...if I don't have store-bought food on the table every day, my kids act like we have no food that day, no "real" food. It's called "real" food — chips and pops, pizza, hamburgers, tacos, spaghetti, that sort of thing. When we go to my mom's for lunch, my mother feeds us land food. She makes really nice cooked caribou soup. Maybe she'll have some seal fat to go with it. At certain times of the year she'll prepare a dish made with caribou fat and blueberries. If she doesn't have blueberries, she'll use raisins. For us that is dessert. So we have cooked caribou meat, a cup of tea, and dessert. That is fine by me. But if that's the only thing available, my kids will say there's nothing to eat

on average households in Nunavik spent \$1,000 per month on imported foods, and the amount of these foods consumed is growing. People's reasons for eating store-bought foods are many, from simply wanting variety in their diet to not having access to country foods.⁴³ All of this would suggest that imported foods are economically far more important to Inuit than country foods, and from a purely financial perspective this might in fact be the case. Certainly, for most in Nunavik, eating country foods is now more a matter of choice than a matter of necessity. However, as much of this chapter has indicated, country foods are valued by many Inuit for reasons other than monetary. The getting, sharing and eating of country foods helps to build community, establish identity, and maintain time-honoured ways of living.

Whether or not people consume imported foods, one cannot take this as a sign that they have ceased to set great store by country foods. Bodenhorn (2000) argues in the case of the Iñupiat of Alaska that though they were glad that shops came to allay starvation, they continue to see store-bought foods as a supplement to country foods. Of the country foods that people *do* eat, little goes to waste: from the skin right down to the marrow of the bones. And those portions that are not eaten are often given to dogs.⁴⁴ At

because there's no rice, there's no fried chicken, there's no juice. They have different standards than I ever had (in Wachowich, 1999, pp. 193-194).

The fact that younger Inuit eat less country foods than older people is confirmed by various studies. For example, research involving Inuvialuit settlements revealed that elders eat 1½ cups of country food per day compared to those aged 20-40 who eat 1 cup per day, while those 15-19 eat ½ cup per day (Anonymous 2001b).

⁴³ A survey conducted in Nunavik in 1992 revealed that various socio-economic factors affect the consumption rate of country foods. For example, single-parent females eat less country foods than other Inuit. The key factor that affects the consumption of country foods is whether there is a working male head of household. Households with two parents where only the female works had the highest consumption of country foods (Duhaime, Chabot, and Gaudreault 2001). This is because the female's salary supports her husband's hunting, and fishing.

⁴⁴ Other parts may not be eaten, but have other uses. For example, I have seen people use caribou skins to sleep on, the wings of seagulls to sweep with, or sealskin to make boots and mittens.

the same time, however, not all country food is created equal. As Dahl (1989) discusses there is a hierarchy of country foods in terms of what people value. Thus, even though one species may be economically significant in terms of how much it is actually consumed by people, another species, for example, beluga *mattak* is far more prized, and therefore, sought-after. In other words, some foods have more symbolic than strictly economic significance.

The fact remains that Inuit across the North continue to spend time on the land. They continue to hunt, fish, trap, and gather country foods, and they continue to eat them. As Kublu put it, “people go camping just to eat [country foods]. They always come back fatter.” Amongst aboriginal peoples in Canada, Inuit have the highest consumption rates of country foods (Weihs, Higgins, and Boulton 1993), and Nunavik has the highest per capita consumption of country foods of all the regions in the Canadian Arctic, with an average of 284 kilograms per person per year (Chabot 2001). According to Chabot (2001) between 1970 and 1995 there have not been large changes in the quantity of country foods eaten by people in Nunavik, which indicates that their importance in people’s diets has remained steady. Moreover, the consumption of local foods helps to defray the costs of imported foods, which are far more expensive than in southern Canada (Chabot 2001; Duhaime *et al.* 2000; George 2002). A comparative study of food costs by Laval University in 2000 found that on average food in Nunavik cost over 69 per cent more than food in the region of Quebec City.⁴⁵ Studies on the replacement costs of country foods have been done across Canada (cf. Berkes *et al.* 1994; Myers 2000; Ross

⁴⁵ For example, ten pounds of potatoes in Quebec City cost on average \$2.40, compared to \$7.80 in Nunavik. Food costs in Puvirnituq are somewhat less than in other communities in Nunavik (65.5 per cent more than in Quebec City) because Puvirnituq is a transport hub in the region.

and Usher 1986; Usher 1971; Weihs, Higgins, and Boulton 1993; Wenzel 1991). They have all found that the monetary value of country foods in aboriginal economies is vast. For example, Myers (2000a) cites research on Holman Island in 1989, which found that hunters spent \$1 million to produce \$10.5 million worth of food.⁴⁶ The cost of replacing this food is beyond the reach of many people. Chabot (2001) cites a study in Nunavik in 1993 that found that a family of four on welfare spent 86-93 per cent of its income (after rent) to feed itself on imported food.⁴⁷ She concludes that country foods provide high quality foodstuffs that people would otherwise be unable to afford were they obliged to buy something close to its equivalent in imported foods.⁴⁸ However, as much of this chapter suggests, imported foods do not have equivalent values in non-monetary terms.

Apart from the in-kind, or replacement, value of country foods relative to imported foods, money also gets drawn into the country food economy in other ways. It costs money to produce the food. This includes equipping oneself to go out on the land and providing the fuel and goods needed to be there.⁴⁹ As Jamisie complained,

You see it's very expensive to go hunting. It's something like... My son went three days, and I had to buy him four hundred dollars of supplies. That's at least a hundred dollars a day, just to be out on the land. That's

⁴⁶ It should be noted that the study of replacement costs has been criticised by some for being both an inexact science and for not properly representing the value that people ascribe to country foods (cf. Chabot 2001).

⁴⁷ Many people recognise the difficulties faced by people in situations where money is tight: "I sometimes give bannock to the most needy and to people on social assistance, especially at the end of the month. At the end of the month there are some people who eat absolutely nothing, because food is too expensive" (my translation; Chabot 2001, p. 420).

⁴⁸ Qitsualik (2001) draws attention to an interesting state of affairs for the Inuit: unlike most other places in the world, even poor Inuit are able to eat meat.

⁴⁹ For example, in 2001 gas in Puvirnituq cost \$1.15 per litre while it cost about seventy cents a litre in southern Ontario. Wenzel (1991) calculated that in 1984-1985 it cost a hunter \$13,439 to equip him or herself. Chabot calculated that in 1995, each household in Nunavik spent, on average, \$3,907 to spend time on the land (2001, p. 126). This includes buying, maintaining, and operating equipment. This average includes those who spend no money hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering, and those who have spent great deals of money to equip themselves and go out.

*fuel, oil, parts, and food, and so on. [Nicole: Yeah. That is expensive.]
Not to mention the warm clothes that we have to buy every year.*

In fact, many people from Nunavik are aware that life in the North is expensive, and protest that they pay the highest prices and taxes of anyone in Canada. They complain that there is a double standard for them as compared to food producers in the South. For example, farmers can claim tax deductions for the equipment they buy to produce food, while Inuit, who use skidoos to hunt, are not only unable to claim this expense on their taxes, but must pay an *added* tax on such machines because the government deems them to be recreational vehicles. Given that money in northern communities is not easily come by, such expenses are difficult to absorb.⁵⁰

Because of the expense, some people are unable to spend time on the land because they lack the funds. As Sandra Pikujak Katsak explained,

My dad's father used to be a really good hunter. He caught seals all the time. Every Saturday night he would come home with some. Now he can't go out because he has no job. He is too old to have a job to buy the things he needs to go out hunting, like a good snowmobile and gas... My father, though, he still hunts every week-end. No matter how small a catch, my father always gives half of it to his parents.

Sometimes if there is a lot he will give some to my mother's parents too. He doesn't give as much to my mother's family because my mom's dad has a job, he can afford to go hunting" (in Wachowich 1999, p. 247).

Yet, as this passage suggests, people find ways around the lack of funds to ensure that they get country foods. One man, for example, told me that he would not go out by boat

⁵⁰ Many Inuit feel that the value of subsistence food production in the Arctic goes unrecognised by governments (Berger 1985; Bourgeois 1998; Hensel 1996; ICC 2000; Lyng 1998; Sejersen 1998). As a result, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), an international organisation that represents the interests of Inuit, has started a project to calculate its value to the northern economy as a means of ensuring that governments take subsistence production more seriously. As ICC's past President insisted, "Anything which falls outside a monetary assessment is of no interest to the statisticians. For governments' economic planners, what cannot be counted in money, doesn't exist" (Lyng 1998, n.p.).

because it was less fuel-efficient than a skidoo, four-wheeler, or dog team, so he generally limits his hunting and gathering to these modes of transportation.

Others, who lack the money to equip themselves, make arrangements to contribute money or labour to those who do have the

October 23, 2001

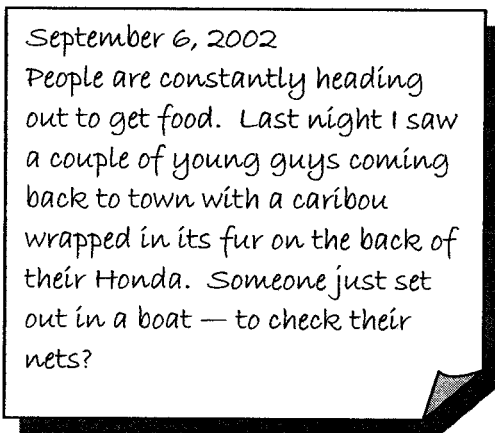
Janisie told me on the week-end he'd been seal hunting. They were ten, including his son. They got four ringed seals and one bearded seal, and divided the catch between the households.

equipment in order to be able to accompany them on hunting or fishing trips. This pattern seems to be repeated throughout northern Canada. St-Pierre (2001) in Labrador, Chabot (2001) in Nunavik, and Collings, Wenzel, and Condon (1998) in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region also describe how people contribute money in order to be able to participate in hunting, or to be able to have access to some of the produce of the hunt. St-Pierre (2001) contends that such an exchange of money for food is somewhere between trade and gift, but, as I shall discuss in Chapter Five, I believe that for most Inuit the penetration of money into the production of country foods is not related to the pursuit of profit that is normally associated with trade. Most people do not take money for country foods as a way of earning profit for their own benefit. Rather, the fact that people may contribute financially to the hunter is simply a reflection of the modern necessity to have cash in order to produce country foods. People cobble together whatever means they can to be able to get that food, which they then share with others. Whatever money people *do* earn from the sale of country foods, generally they reinvest into the production of those foods. As Wenzel (1991) points out, the goal of hunting, fishing and trapping is not individual self-sufficiency, nor capital accumulation, but a continuous flow of goods and

services. In a study involving three communities in Nunavik, Chabot (2001) found that a small minority of people actually provides country foods for most of the population. Many of these people do not have regular salaried work, but rather, subsidise their hunting and fishing either by part-time work or thanks to the contributions of family members. Otherwise, the majority of people hunt and fish only occasionally, when they

- have the time or opportunity to do so.

Stern (2000) argues that subsistence activities are now merely forms of leisure for



September 6, 2002
People are constantly heading out to get food. Last night I saw a couple of young guys coming back to town with a caribou wrapped in its fur on the back of their Honda. Someone just set out in a boat — to check their nets?

Inuit. After all, people are eating less country food than they did in the past and are relying more on imported foods. Moreover, because of the need for access to money in order to be able to equip themselves to go out on the land, those who have the time, may not always have access to the money to hunt, and those who have the

money to hunt, may not always have the time to do so. In fact, the majority in Puvirnituk are now only able to go out on the land in the evenings, during week-ends, or when they are on holidays. Otherwise, the necessities of money, the need to send children to school, the demands of a job, the draw of the comforts of houses, the desire just to be with others, and any number of other reasons, mean that on the whole people do not live on the land in the ways that they did until the 1960s. One might think, then, that these activities are of less importance, both economically and socially than in the past, and conclude that they are leisure activities. But I would argue against this view. Certainly, some people

see their approach to hunting as far different from their southern neighbours. As Jamisie put it,

When down South, when they talk about hunting or fishing, they automatically think about their holidays and the fun they are going to have. Just sport. It's like a baseball game. Hunting down South, it's like a sport. That's what they call it: "sports hunting". But when you go to native communities we do it not to have any fun, we do it to eat; to survive. We always have, even though now we can order food and food comes from the South a lot now, but still, well over fifty per cent of our diet in the Inuit communities is off the land. When people down South, like governments, that's what I've been explaining since the day I first sat down. Hunting for us, it's not a game.

Generally people, when they are out looking for food, do not approach the activity with the relaxed, lackadaisical air of someone out on a holiday. If there is no food in a

particular area, they move on until they find it. At

Sunday August 25, 2002
Town was empty yesterday.
Everyone was out. People keep
on asking me if I'm going
berry-picking. Food, food,
food. It's always on people's
minds.

such times that people know exactly what they

have to do, and they do it. Furthermore, whenever

people are able to, they head out looking for food.

On week-ends, weather permitting, Puvirnituk can

feel like a ghost town as everyone goes out

looking for whatever food happens to be in season and available. At the end of the day, after work or school, people leave the community with guns, fishing rods, or buckets in hand. There is a constant movement of people out of the community looking for country food. This is not for leisure purposes. People are not doing this because they want to take it easy. They do it because ultimately, the food they produce is extremely valuable to them, not just economically, but socially, and even existentially. This is reflected in the words of a Greenlander,

People live off animals. If there are no animals, we will not be able to live anymore. If there are no animals, life will be meaningless (Delegate from Greenland in ICC 2000, p. 10).

It is not easy to obtain country foods; to get them people must toil under sometimes difficult conditions. It is expensive to equip oneself, and not everybody has the time or money to go out on the land. Yet in the face of all of this, people continue to want these foods, and they continue to get them. And, what is more, the institution of sharing ensures that most people are able to have these foods. All of this suggests that there is a value associated with country foods that is more than monetary. The yardstick against which people measure the value of these foods is not monetary but social. By sharing food, people are able to reproduce the kind of society that most of them hold to be more valuable than money.

When our sons and sons-in-law in town go out hunting, they bring back meat for us. They give us whatever they catch, and we decide who we want to give it to. We distribute it to whoever we want. We might have a feast, have a group of people over, or we might just give it to people in our family, it depends on how much there is. All of this has nothing to do with money. We don't even think about money when we are sharing like this (Aphia Agalakti Awa in Wachowich 1999, p. 137).

October 8, 2001

Tonight Arnarjuaq said it's easier to have kids here than in the South. There's a government allowance that covers the expense of having a kid, plus there's free country food. She told me how her grandfather and grandmother each had their own skidoos and kamotiks and how her grandmother used to go fishing every day. They'd give her food. She was adopted by them. When I asked about the HSP, she said some hunters sell to it, but it didn't used to be like that.

The balance between the need for money to get the food, and the wish to share the food that they produce is a delicate one. As I have discussed above, and shall discuss in Chapter Five, people are

creative, and find different ways to do this, but in Nunavik the balance clearly comes out in favour of sharing.

The economic value, writ large, of country foods—getting it, sharing it, consuming it, and perpetuating this process—are tied into larger forces of meaning-making that are not reflected in a simple process of accounting on balance sheets. The fact that country foods are constantly circulating within and amongst Inuit communities, as in fact, are many other goods (including money) is testament to the fact that from the point of view of most Inuit, the value of country foods is not monetary. Their value is in what they like to eat, in what makes them feel healthy, in the ways of living with the environment that comes with the getting of these foods, and in the kind of society that has enabled them to live together in sometimes challenging circumstances. These are the things by which country foods are measured.

In Sum

It must have become apparent, in reading much of this chapter that the various divisions I have provided are, at some level, arbitrary. Who is to say where society begins and environmental relations end? How is time separate from memory? How is land not also part of identity? And how is what people do on the land separate from what they put in their stomachs? These questions reveal precisely why country foods are important to Inuit. To separate the getting of them from the sharing and eating of them does not make sense. To separate these activities from the places in which they occur or the forces that shape these places is also nonsensical. They are all tied up together, and they are all part of the context in which the economics of country foods ought to be

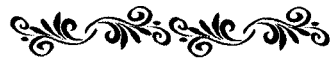
considered. Economics may, in part, be something that allows people to calculate that x per cent eaten is worth y dollars and cents. But the economics of country foods is also about other things that are immeasurable and intangible. It is about time in place; it is about family and memory; it is about community; it is about health and politics; it is about knowledge and all that is needed to spend time in the world outside your own house; and it is about life and death.

All of these things contribute to, and constantly rebuild place and people's sense of themselves in it. They build up history and confirm memory. They help people to affirm their knowledge and reinforce a sense of community. All of these things are predicated on a system that stresses that the value of country foods is social rather than monetary. This emphasis on social value has allowed people to survive and is at the root of how they make sense of themselves in place.

Economies may have physical manifestations, but at their root, they operate because of beliefs—they are only as sound as the beliefs that hold them together. Just as money can only exist if we believe it to have the value it purports to represent, so at its root, the vernacular economy of Inuit, with its currency of country food, exists based on, and as long as, people maintain the set of beliefs that allow it to operate as it does. Given this, given that the getting and eating of country foods are interwoven with layer upon layer of meaning and import in northern societies, and that at the root of these processes lies the sharing of food, what happens when money gets thrown into the equation? What does it mean to people when they start to see country food being sold both within and outside of their communities? This question is what drove my research, and this is what I shall examine in the remainder of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4

SOME CONTEXT: NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT, THE COMMODITISATION OF COUNTRY FOODS, AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF NUNAVIK



I went to ask Malachi whether he would be willing to talk to me about my research. He was in his office, struggling to make sense of a new piece of software that involved something to do with a tiny camera perched like an eye on top of his computer. He asked whether I knew anything about it, and with an apologetic laugh^{} I responded that he was ahead of me in the technology department. He fiddled with the computer, answered the telephone at various points, and listened with half an ear, as I explained that I wanted to learn about his experience as a businessman selling country foods.*

He paused, and proceeded to tell me that he had a grade ten education — impressive—and that most of what he had learnt on the business side of things, from computers to jumping through bureaucratic hoops, he had learnt himself, and not

without a struggle, a struggle which continued. He would talk to me, he said, because it might help him. If the government understood what he had had to go through to get to this point, it might help him.



In the previous chapter I tried to communicate something of what is involved for many Inuit in the getting, sharing and eating of country foods. I wanted to convey how these processes are central to the construction and experience of place, and how they continue, again and again, to maintain that order. Yet at the same time, it would be foolish to think that these activities exist in a vacuum. People are not eternally waiting like patient hunters at the floe edge, frozen in time and space. Caribou skin clad hunters with dog teams have given way to skidoos and store-bought parkas. They do not go out looking for food without gas in the tank, bullets in their barrels, and the knowledge in their minds that quotas are supposed to be respected. Although at one level country foods are constructed by and construct experience of place, that experience is affected by external forces, so that the iterative process that this entails is, in some ways, both circular and a spiral. If the last chapter looked at the circle, this chapter looks at some of the forces—particularly economic and political—that propel that spiral.

Economic systems in the North do not operate in a void, especially in this day and age as government has increased its presence in the North. Larger political processes play a vital role in shaping what people do and how they do it. As Seavoy (2000) so succinctly puts it, economic development is not so much an economic process as a

political one. Hence, any market development involving country foods in the Arctic must be viewed, in part, as the result of government policy (cf. Weihs, Higgins, and Boulton 1993). Whether it is the Hunter Support Programme (HSP) that provides subsidies to hunters in Nunavik (cf. Government of Québec 1982; Kativik Regional Government 1998), or the local hunters' markets in Greenland (cf. Marquardt and Caulfield 1996), these processes exist as a result of government policies, and are a reflection of those policies. Thus, it is important to have a grasp of how policy has directed the commoditisation of country foods in the Arctic. For example, the difference in political approaches to country foods between Greenland and Nunavik are revealing. Since the late nineteenth century, Inuit in Greenland have used money to buy and sell country foods. The Danish government promoted such development (Marquardt and Caulfield 1996). In Nunavik, the Hunter Support Programme was developed as a way of subsidising traditional land and sea-based hunting and fishing. Ultimately, it provided a way of augmenting social transfer payments while promoting productive activity. As a result of the differing government policies related to the development of their northern territories, in Greenland country foods are far more commoditised than in Canada, being bought and sold in supermarkets and in open-air markets, while in Nunavik no comparable trading involving the exchange of money exists. The role that money plays in the exchange of country foods in the territory is much more restricted.

Other government policies have also affected how country foods have been commoditised in Nunavik. As I shall discuss in this chapter, any hunting and fishing that takes place in Nunavik is constrained by a series of rights and obligations set out under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA). It identifies who can hunt,

what may be hunted, when and where one may hunt, and so on. Such policies exist throughout the North. At times, the regulations of place (those indigenous to the North) can conflict with those of space (which are imposed from outside). Hensel (1996) refers to a particularly poignant example of this clash. As I stated in the previous chapter, many Inuit believe that animals give themselves to the hunter. Therefore, out of respect to the animal, they must accept that gift and hunt the animal.¹ Yet, "... one young Yup'ik man ... said that whenever endangered or out-of-season birds were within range, 'I feel guilty if I shoot and I feel guilty if I don't shoot.' The first action would violate Western law, the second Yup'ik morality" (Hensel 1996, p. 77). To understand more fully the context in which northern economies around country food are situated, this research is necessarily grounded in questions of how policy, regulations, and political accords define the development of the vernacular economy and the commoditisation of that economy.

Government Ideas about Economic Development and the Inuit

In a general way, when it came to the development of policy related to northern development, the Canadian government could not, and cannot, help but reflect a larger set of ideas about the nature of development in general and aboriginal peoples in particular; ideas that are at once complementary and contradictory. On the one hand, Euro-Canadians were the heirs to views that developed in the late eighteenth century about how societies "naturally" progressed through four stages of advancement from hunting to pasturage to agriculture to commerce, the apotheosis of development (Meek 1976). So in

¹ Moreover, as I mentioned, some Inuit have told me that they feel *obliged* to hunt animals in order to ensure that there continue to *be* animals: the more animals you hunt, the more animals there will be.

the natural order of things, one would obviously wish to advance to the highest level of achievement. On the other hand, aboriginal peoples were deemed to be “noble savages”, nature’s children, without guile and living in a state of preternatural innocence, a state that we all must strive to achieve (cf. Ellingson 2001). Saddled with such paradoxical points of view, Euro-Canadian policy-makers who gradually moved into the North struggled to reconcile these two views.

So subsistence production was both something to be disparaged and something to be preserved. Aboriginal peoples are not unaware of the internal inconsistencies inherent in this view. They must preserve their traditions while advancing their social, economic, and political structures; certainly such a difficult balancing act is at the heart of moves to commoditise country foods.² If they are to advance, they must give up what Seavoy (2000) calls the “indolence” that goes with subsistence production. After all, he reasons, in a society that does not use money as an incentive for labour, but only the fulfilment of basic needs, where is the motivation to progress beyond dire poverty with its accompanying hardships? For this reason, he maintains, the government must enforce policies that apply pressure to induce people away from subsistence production.³ Yet at the same time, moving away from such production in too precipitous a manner brought

² This has been particularly apparent to Inuit in the ban on sealskin and the pressures to control whaling. “You seem to be ready to let us eat our traditional food, you seem to be ready to accept or even demand, that we introduce modern means in our hunting methods — when do you in addition allow our economy to evolve — by opening your markets to our marine mammal products?” (Egede 1995, p. 2)

³ See also Bauer (2000) for a discussion of these ideas. Rasmussen (2000) provides a vivid example of such thinking. He quotes Egerton Ryerson, Chief Superintendent of education in Upper Canada from 1844-1876, who wanted to ensure, as part of their education, that natives would gain the “concept” of private property. With the urge to gain private property came “the dawn of intelligence in the individual. The savage knew little, and therefore wanted little; but as his knowledge increased, so did his desire for exchange” (2000, p. 82). In contrast to this view Sahlins (1974) argues that on the contrary, where needs are limited and wants are few, who is to say who is superior to whom? So, ideas about development are a matter of perception, and something far more nuanced than is traditionally understood by formal economists.

with its own hardships. Saddled with these ideas about northern development Euro-Canadian bureaucrats debated the extent to which one or the other view prevailed.

Truth be told, for the longest time the British and then Canadian government essentially disregarded the Arctic. In the process of colonisation, and later, nation-building, it was little more than a blurry image at the edges of the country, left to the domain of traders and the odd missionary. Given its inhospitable climate, colonisers had no great wish to settle there. Rather, the Arctic was seen, above all, as a source of raw materials.

Although interest in northern resources was, and is, an on-going concern of governments, little by little, the North was forced for other reasons into the consciences of those occupying seats of political power. At first, it was because of concerns about sovereignty in the face of American whaling ships that plied the northern waters (cf. Dorion-Robitaille 1978). Later, it was because of concern about the plight of the Inuit. Struck low by diseases introduced by Europeans and suffering from periodic shortages of food, the Inuit were indeed in need of aid at times. Accordingly, southern institutions gradually moved into the North, sent there by policies forged with the goal of development. After the traders came the missionaries, then Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), who was soon followed by nurses, the odd doctor, teachers, the army, and eventually the media.⁴ Yet, as Duffy (1988) and Mitchell (1995) contend, this development was piecemeal and lacked coherence.

⁴ See Commission Scolaire Kativik (n.d.b), Damas (2002) and Duffy (1988) for a more detailed history of the movement of southern institutions into the North.

How to deal with the “Eskimo problems”,⁵ as the director of Northern Administration and Lands Branch called it, gradually became a matter of concern to the Canadian government (Duffy 1988, p. 147). Prior to governmental recognition of responsibility for the Inuit of Canada⁶, any hardship experienced by the Inuit had been alleviated, and only occasionally, by traders. However, with the federal government’s gradual recognition of its responsibility to ensure the welfare of Inuit, starting in about 1939, at the outset of World War II, it also gradually introduced various components of the welfare state to the northern territories, such as Old Age Pensions, family allowance⁷, and “relief” to destitute Inuit—at first disbursed via the HBC and later by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and later still, by Northern Services Officers (Damas 2002). However, throughout the implementation of these policies, the government was always concerned not to create excessive dependence by the Inuit upon the government purse or upon Euro-Canadian institutions. Thus, for example, the federal government adopted the “Flour and Sugar Act” in 1949 which gave Inuit ammunition, rather than food, in order to encourage the Inuit to continue to hunt (Commission Scolaire Kativik n.d.b). Despite this approach, however, government spending in the North grew exponentially.

Between 1945 and 1951, during the period when the government first started getting involved in northern development in earnest, the amount of money spent on relief

⁵ Generally, today, the term that they apply to themselves is “Inuit”, and so, that is the term I too use for the majority of this thesis. I use the term “Eskimo”, however, in this chapter to reflect the terminology of those involved in developing and implementing policy in the Canadian Arctic during the period about which I am writing.

⁶ There was much debate about who was responsible for what with respect to the Inuit. See Damas (2002), Drummond (1997), and Duffy (1988) for more details.

⁷ This was set up in 1948.

to Inuit increased from \$11,000 per year to \$115,000 per year, with a total during that period of \$405,000. If family allowances are added to this sum, the total outlay by the federal government was \$1,687,000 (Duffy 1988). During the same period, the prices for foxes dropped from \$25 per skin to \$5 per skin. Thus, in the Baffin Island-Ungava Bay area, 53% of the income of Inuit came from government sources. By 1952, this had increased to 59%, with only 28% of the income of Inuit coming from earned income (the rest being in unrecoverable debt and relief issued by the Hudson's Bay Company) (Duffy 1988). This trend continued. Simard (1979) notes that between 1965 and 1975 public expenditures on the administration of the North increased tenfold. As a result, federal, territorial, and provincial governments felt the urgent need to improve this situation, with the ever-present fear that otherwise, Inuit would become wards of the state and a drain on their coffers. How this was to be done was not obvious. As both Duffy (1988) and Damas (2002) indicate, the debate arose about whether to leave Inuit untouched or whether to bring them into the larger Canadian fold, with all of the social, economic, and cultural changes that entailed.

In 1952, the federal government set up the Committee on Eskimo Affairs whose main goal was to determine the fate of what they viewed as basically wards of the Canadian state (Duffy 1988). How were they to be dealt with? Should they be relocated in the South⁸, or concentrated around mining centres, or develop their own cottage

⁸ This notion of relocation in order to ensure the well-being of Inuit came up again and again in the government's approach to resolving the material uncertainties faced by Inuit. For example, Inuit were relocated to the High Arctic (cf. Tester and Kulchyski 1994). Some view the move as a way of ensuring that the Inuit might find more productive hunting, fishing and trapping territories, while others view it as no more than an attempt by the federal government to establish its sovereignty in the North — with the Inuit serving as “living Canadian flags”, as Jamisie once called them. In either case, the Inuit involved in these schemes often were unaware of the government's designs for them. One person on the Belcher Islands told

industries (Balikci 1959)? As the invitation to the organisational meeting of the Eskimo Affairs Committee put it, “The basic issue seems to be this, are we to regard the Eskimo as fully privileged economically responsible citizens with the right to spend his income as he pleases, or are we to regard the Eskimo as backward people who need special guidance in the use of their income... I personally feel that if we are realistic we must consider the Eskimo to be in the second category”⁹ (Damas 2002, p. 45). The Committee’s first conclusion was to encourage Inuit to live off the land and to follow a traditional way of life. Yet shortly thereafter, and in contrast to this position, Prime Minister Diefenbaker introduced the “New National Policy” that was to be implemented between 1957 and 1963 and was designed to give private enterprise access to northern resources (Mitchell 1995). The idea of the northern treasure trove was not easily surrendered.

With this view in mind, the federal government published fifteen area economic surveys between 1958 and 1967. These surveys were designed to assess the renewable and non-renewable resource bases of the North, and identify the potential and present exploitation of those resources. Generally, these surveys came up with three conclusions: first, to expand non-renewable resource exploitation by non-Inuit; second, to expand

me how as a child he, along with others from the Islands, had accompanied a White man on a boat. They had been told to spend a day circumnavigating the islands and hunting and fishing as much as they could find. It was only much later that he found out that this White man had been sent by the government to decide whether the islands were capable of providing enough game to sustain the population living there. Had he judged the supplies to be insufficient, the government had intended to move the entire population off the islands.

⁹ Interestingly, the idea that governments have used money as a means of advancing particular relationships of power between themselves and aboriginal peoples has also been posited by Wenzel (1991) with respect to the Inuit, and Peterson (1991b) with respect to aborigines in Australia. They argue that governments, believing that aboriginal peoples could not understand money, served as the monetary intermediaries between aboriginal peoples and the larger economy, thereby ensuring that they had maximal control over them, while at the same time limiting their own costs related to the governing of aboriginal peoples by forcing the sharing economy to continue.

capital investment, such as airfields, telephones, and education and health services; and third, to improve harvesting of renewable resources with an eye to improving the lot of the Inuit, for example, by encouraging the harvesting of eider down, the development of tourism, handicrafts, and commercial fisheries (Mitchell 1995). As Brody points out, however, "... these surveys were rather crude, and somewhat informed by an implicit, if not explicit, anticipation of a final transformation of hunter-gatherer economics and society into some form of frontier capitalism, with the Inuit as minimally qualified labourers" (2000, p. 316). Usher (1971) echoes this view, arguing that the government placed an emphasis on non-renewable resource development, in the assumption that the fur trade and the renewable resource economy was dying. Yet the tug between modernity and tradition continued to pull policy setters in various directions. Thus, for example, a report published by the federal government in January 1957 prepared for the Advisory Committee on Northern Development concluded that "primitive Eskimos in remoter areas" who were "relatively free from contact with white civilization" were to be left undisturbed, while those with permanent contact would be integrated into the White economy (in Duffy 1988, p. 154). So, the government took the view that Inuit should be encouraged to remain culturally and economically pristine where possible and integrated where necessary.

Gradually, the latter view came to prevail in the North. Inuit were encouraged to move into settlements in the late 1950s and early 1960s so that they might learn the skills

necessary to take up wage employment (Ross and Usher 1986).¹⁰ As Max Budgell, a Northern Affairs Department projects officer, saw it:

Their true hope for survival is through education. As the caribou and other game dwindle, their hunting skills are dwindling, and they simply cannot live as they used to. They depend more and more on store-bought goods, and their kids, through lack of training, won't be as good hunters as their fathers were. All we can expect to do with the present flock of youngsters; because the time has been so short, is to teach them English—or possibly French, in the French-speaking areas of Canada—and the three 'R's." (Iglauer [1962] 2000, p. 71)

Yet the goal was to provide this education in order to enable Inuit to look after themselves. Similarly, for example, the government sponsored the development of the Co-operative Movement in the North in order to provide Inuit with a means of self-directed economic development (cf. Duffy 1988; Iglauer [1962] 2000; Mitchell 1995; and Riches 1977). Likewise, the government also developed such programmes as the Eskimo Loan Fund and the Canadian Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy (cf. Canada 1996; Lyall 1993), with the aim of promoting economic development of Inuit communities. Throughout all of these government-sponsored initiatives, from the

¹⁰ The implications of taking up wage employment were many, and at times, truly astounding.

Marriages back then, there were two different kinds. When we lived on the land, we had our own kinds of marriages. Then when we moved in off the land, there were marriages by the missionary. Me, I married my husband in 1967 [although they had married on the land in the 1940s]. We were married by the minister because the government told us we should. The government told us that men were supposed to work and support their wives. My husband was working, he was working for the government and even though we had lots of children, he was getting paid only enough money for himself. He couldn't get money for the children. We were told that if we were married, he could write down who he was supporting. That way he could write down all of our children's names and myself. That is why we got married, to support all of our children on his salary.

It was 1967 when we got married, and we got rings, beautiful rings. They told us to wear them on our hands. I still have mine. It was when I was pregnant with my eleventh child, my daughter Ida, that we got married. We got married because he was working and we needed money. If he hadn't been working at the time, I wouldn't have married him. It was the government's idea that we get married. They told us to get married, so we did (Apphia Agalakti Awa in Wachowich 1999, p. 112).

Eskimo Affairs Committee in 1952 (Damas 2002) to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1996, the idea that Inuit should be encouraged to use their traditional economy as a way of promoting economic development has been a recurring theme. As an RCAP publication put it, economic development “is about maintaining and developing culture and identity; supporting self-government institutions; and sustaining traditional ways of making a living” (Canada 1996, p. 780). For these reasons, the idea of commoditising country foods has been an idea oft repeated by policy makers, advisors to those policy makers and academics (cf. Berger 1999; Dragon 1999; Iglauer [1962] 2000; Myers 1982; Reimer 1995; Weihs, Higgins, and Boult 1993). Writing from the perspective of agricultural societies, Seavoy puts the idea of commoditising food production in more basic terms:

Economic development must begin by commercializing food production. Economic development will fail unless the first priority of central governments is policies that initiate and sustain the transformation of subsistence agriculture into commercial agriculture.... The focus of commercializing policies must be on extinguishing the institutions and customary laws that sanction subsistence agriculture (2000, p. 1).

Using the case of Puvirnituk, in Chapter Five I shall discuss the extent to which the selling of country foods has, in fact, extinguished the institutions and laws that sanction subsistence production. For the time being, however, I shall focus upon the various forms that that commoditisation has taken amongst Inuit in Canada.

The Commoditisation of Country Foods amongst Canadian Inuit: an

Overview

To remind you of the discussion in Chapter Two, a commodity is a thing that is exchanged, generally within a market, and thus, it is removed from exchange based on

reciprocal social relations. The commoditisation of country foods in the Canadian Arctic has essentially been limited to exchange between Inuit and non-Inuit, while amongst most Inuit country foods have generally continued to circulate based on the principles of sharing that are central to their vernacular economy. So Inuit worked for European and American whalers during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Similarly they traded furs with various trading companies and were hired, for example by the HBC, to catch fish, which were shipped South. Goldring (1986) writes that commercial whaling and fisheries began off Baffin Island in the 1820s, while in Nunavik, the HBC had commercial fisheries in Kuujjuaq and commercial whaling from Kuujjuaraapik as of 1900 (Commission Scolaire Kativik n.d.b.). Ungulates were also incorporated into monetarised economies in the first half of the 20th century. For example, in the 1930s, the Canadian government imported reindeer herds from Alaska to the Mackenzie Delta with the intention of raising them both for domestic and export use (Nasogaluak and Billingsley 1981; Stager 1984). Yet throughout these processes, Inuit essentially managed to keep their vernacular economic system separate from the monetarised system, sharing food amongst themselves and selling only to non-Inuit.

It was only with the move into settled communities that Inuit became deeply incorporated into market economies, and consequently, the need for money became greater (Wenzel 1991). One response by the government to this need was to promote various schemes for Inuit to process and sell country foods to one another. This would serve not only to provide much-needed cash to Inuit, but would also help to alleviate intermittent shortfalls of food and provide alternatives to the unhealthy and expensive imported foods that Inuit were eating in increasing quantities. Accordingly, the federal

government developed the Specialty Foods Programme in 1960 to sell tinned country foods (cf. Iglauer [1962] 2000; Weihs, Higgins, and Boulton 1993). It also used the burgeoning co-operative movement, whose development it had sponsored, to provide a mechanism for the production and sale of country foods (Iglauer [1962] 2000). These various schemes met with mixed success. Weihs, Higgins, and Boulton (1993) indicate that this was because Inuit felt able to produce this food themselves, while Iglauer ([1962] 2000) seems to suggest that Inuit were simply bemused by the prospect of tinned country foods. The governments of the Northwest Territories, and later Nunavut, have also sponsored programmes to sell country foods, for instance, in the 1980s developing a programme to fund freezers and meat processing plants in every community in Nunavut, the produce of which is then sold by the local Hunters' and Trappers' Organisations (HTOs) (Myers 2000b).

Country foods are sold, then, by HTOs across Nunavut (cf. Condon, Collings, and Wenzel 1995; Myers 2000b; Myers and Forrest 2000; Reeves 1993; Weihs, Higgins and Boulton 1993). Yet, Myers (2000b) notes, these stores are not run for the sake of profit, but rather, as a way to supplement hunters' incomes. Moreover, para-public organisations of one form or another, from HTOs to various regional Inuit Development Corporations, generally mediate the sale of these foods amongst Inuit in Canada.¹¹ This supports Chabot's (2001) contention that the sale of country foods in Canada is generally not self-financing, but it also points to a fact that I shall discuss in more detail in Chapter Five;

¹¹ Thus, for example, apart from HTOs, the other organisations that produce country foods for sale that I have come across in Canadian territories other than in Nunavut are: Ulu Foods owned by the Inuvialuit Development Corporation (Whittington 1986); the Labrador Inuit Development Corporation (Weihs, Higgins and Boulton 1993); and Kivalliq Arctic Foods in Rankin Inlet and Kitikmeot Foods Limited, which are both operated by the Nunavut Development Corporation in Cambridge Bay (Verreault 2002). Private businesses owned by individuals are few.

namely, that the private sale of country foods amongst individual Inuit is severely limited.

Apart from attempts to develop markets for country foods within communities, there have also been programmes developed to encourage the export of country foods on a larger scale, either in the form of intersettlement trade in both Nunavut (cf. Reeves 1993) and Nunavik, or in the form of export sales to southern markets.¹² In each case, the reasons for their limited success can be traced back to issues of logistics and the law. In order to understand the forms various attempts to commoditise country foods have taken, we must first understand the regulatory frameworks and rationales within which they have to fit. In each Inuit region the laws and regulations can be somewhat different, particularly in terms of the rights accorded to Inuit under the various land claims agreements, which affect how country foods may be commoditised. Given this, since the focus of my research is Nunavik, I shall limit my analysis to this region.

Legalities and the Commoditisation of Country Foods in Nunavik

The commoditisation of country foods in Nunavik is limited by a number of factors. The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement stipulates that, with the exception of commercial fisheries, country foods may only be sold to beneficiaries of the Agreement. That means that, apart from fish that have been tagged as commercial, to all intents and purposes, non-Inuit who are not beneficiaries under the Agreement, cannot

¹² Early on, the government encouraged the Co-operatives in Nunavut and Nunavik to sell such goods as Arctic Char or sealskins to southern markets. Projects were developed in what was then called George River (Kangihsualujuaq), Port Burwell (Killiniq), and Fort Chimo (Kuujjuaq) in the late 1950s and early 1960s (cf. Iglauer [1962] 2000; Riches 1977). Graburn (1969) also mentions the sale of country foods in Salluit, Payne Bay (Kangirsuk), and Ivujivik.

legally buy country foods. In addition, under the JBNQA there is a hierarchy of harvesting rights (cf. Bennett 1982). Hunting and fishing for personal use, which includes use for gift, exchange, or sale within a family, is of primary importance. Once these needs have been met, then animals may be harvested for community use, which again includes gift, exchange, or sale both within communities and between communities, and only once these needs are met, and subject to a quota, may country foods be harvested by outfitting camps, which involve bringing people in from outside of Nunavik to hunt or fish. With the exception of fisheries, the JBNQA did not originally allow for the commercial export of meat outside of the region. Makivik Corporation has negotiated an amendment to the Agreement to allow it to harvest caribou for export out of the region, but only after all of these needs have been met, and once again, subject to quotas established by the Hunting Fishing and Trapping Co-ordinating Committee, a co-management body set up under the JBNQA.¹³ Access to country foods under the JBNQA is limited to beneficiaries. Unless they have a sport permit, or have bought commercial tags, non-beneficiaries are not legally allowed to harvest country foods or to take them out of the region of Nunavik, even if they have been given them as a present by a beneficiary.

If country foods are to be sold outside of Nunavik, or even within Nunavik to non-beneficiaries, the commercial sales of country foods are only permitted if the products have commercial tags and meet provincial, federal, and if they are for export outside of Canada, international regulations governing the standards of slaughter and

¹³ When Makivik negotiated this amendment it also ensured that the commercial harvesting of caribou for export sales could only be undertaken by beneficiaries, thereby ensuring that southern businesses did not move in and profit from northern resources and retain the profits in the South. To learn more about the various co-management boards set up under the Agreement see Peters (1999 & 2002).

processing.¹⁴ Together these various regulations effectively limit the commercial sale of country foods. For example, it is not always an easy task when slaughtering animals far from a community to meet the regulations required to ensure that meat is acceptable for commercial sale. Processing must take place in certified settings; federal and provincial vets and inspectors are required to ensure that standards and regulations are met in the processing of fish and meat; meat-cutters must slice the meat in a particular way that is different from how it is customarily done by most Inuit, which makes staffing difficult; waste and emissions must meet federal and provincial regulations, which sometimes means disposing of products that might otherwise have been consumed by Inuit, which represents a deplorable waste in some people's view. Respecting all of these requirements is a challenge in the North where the infrastructure is minimal, the movement of animals is unpredictable, and the training required by people in terms of processing and handling is only of periodic use to them. As a result, much of the country food that is harvested for sale in one form or another within Nunavik cannot be sold outside of the territory, nor can it be sold even to non-beneficiaries within the territory. While some accept the regulations and recognise that they are there to ensure public safety, others, who would like to be able to produce country foods for export, find the regulations galling and feel that there is a double standard at work. They ask why it is that they have to meet regulations for the processing of meat if it is to be sent to the South, but when southerners come north to hunt and take the meat back with them to eat in the South, no one regulates the quality of the meat. By the same token, why is meat

¹⁴ The only exception to this rule are country foods that are bought for export to beneficiaries in the South, for example the health board sends country foods to beneficiaries receiving medical care in the South.

sold in the North not subject the same rigid standards?¹⁵ Moreover, to meet these various requirements generally involves a vast expense, for example, travelling to and from the slaughter area by air, or building the refrigeration and packing plants to process the meat or fish. Unlike in the South, where the infrastructures necessary for commercial production of meat already exist, and producers need only rent them, the northern infrastructure is minimal and transportation costs are vast, which means that producers must cover large start-up costs and sustain sizeable fixed expenses.

The commoditisation of country foods is not only defined by the regulations designed to ensure that the products meet quality standards for mass consumption, but is also limited by quotas established by provincial and federal agencies. These government quotas exist to ensure that the resources are conserved. Duffy (1988) maintains that the emphasis placed by government on the conservation of animals reflects its concern to conserve resources upon which Inuit depend for their welfare. For this reason, in the case of Nunavik, a legal emphasis has been placed on consumption for domestic rather than commercial use. Preferential access to the resources is based on whether the harvester is a registered beneficiary under the JBNQA. This effectively limits access to the resources above all to Inuit. Initially, the reason for limiting access to renewable resources to use within Nunavik with some use by sport hunters, and the reason for precluding the commercial development of these resources for export sales, was the fear that such sales would threaten the resources (cf. Hertz and Kapel 1986; Geist 1988). The fact that commercial fisheries or sports hunting were not prevented by the JBNQA, says more, I

¹⁵ There are also peculiar contradictions in the regulations, which make them all that much more dubious for people who find themselves bound by them. For example, scallops that are shucked on a boat may be sold without inspection, while if they are shucked on land, official inspection *is* required.

think, about already established commercial interests that predate the Agreement than about the need to conserve the resources for domestic use. Moreover, these large-scale fisheries may involve species such as shrimp or turbot that have not been customarily eaten by Inuit, and are seen, therefore, as permissible because there is no tradition of their use for domestic consumption.

While quotas are supposed to ensure that resources are conserved for long-term use, the imposition of those quotas has at times been the source of some strife in the North. As I discussed in Chapter Three, at a very general level, people can resent the obligation to adhere to rules that they see as foreign to their thinking or knowledge. How can people from the outside know what is appropriate? These are laws from the abstract space out there, not from the places in which people were born and raised. Berger cites Jasper Joseph who, though talking about Alaska, expresses views similar to those of many Inuit in Canada:

Ever since the Claims Settlement Act, [I've] heard some regulations. Somebody made laws. Eskimos did not make them. We do not go outside of our state and tell other people how they should live. We do not put a limit on how many cattle or how many cows or how much food should outsiders have. We do not make any regulations on that. We do not tell them that they should have this much supply of food. We do not make rules and regulations for them so they will have a limit on ... certain items of food.

When we try to hunt and provide for ourselves and feed our family, our children, somebody comes and tells us, "If you catch birds, if you catch moose, or, if you gather food, we will put you in jail. We have rules and regulations that you have to follow." We do not believe in the rules and regulations, when we try to survive and provide for our family, our own, very own existence. We have been promised punishment for trying to survive (1985, pp. 65-66; square brackets in original).

This suggests a basic problem with the imposition of laws that attempt to define subsistence as opposed to commercial harvesting rights. Where does one draw the line?

At what point does subsistence cease and commercial production begin? Many have pointed out that so-called “subsistence” economies are, in fact, mixed economies, that people use the money they earn from sales of by-products from their hunting, fishing, or trapping to support their subsistence activities (cf. Caulfield 1997; Feit 1991; Government of Japan 1994; High North Alliance 1995a & 1995b; Kalland 1994; Moeran 1992; Weihs, Higgins, and Boulton 1993; Wenzel 1991). But beyond this, some people simply resent the fact that their economies must remain static, victims of outsiders’ views of “tradition”. Time does not stand still, they argue, and they must be allowed to move along with it (cf. Egede 1995).

Interestingly, as Weihs, Higgins, and Boulton (1993) indicate, government ideas of subsistence rights are somewhat limited for other reasons. Although subsistence users have the rights of access to the resources, the government does not consider them to be the owners of those resources. As a consequence, for instance, subsistence users do not have the legal claim to compensation for any damage to those resources that might occur.¹⁶

A legal approach to defining who does and does not have access to resources also has the effect of imposing Western ideas of individual rights on collective traditions. Thus, for example, Caulfield (1997) and Sejersen (2001) both note that quotas for caribou and whales in Greenland have caused splits amongst community members, some of whom have greater access to these much-prized foods than others. This forces greater and greater individualisation in food production, distribution, and consumption. As Dahl

¹⁶ See Asch (1989) and Usher (1983) for interesting discussions about the shortcomings of Euro-Canadian legal systems vis-à-vis aboriginal understandings of landholding.

puts it, “There is ... a far-ranging tendency towards disintegration of community-based hunting rights and customary rules in favour of generalised rights based on belonging to the Greenlandic nation and fulfilling certain professional and non-geographical criteria...” (2000, p. 98).¹⁷ The hard and fast rules set up under the law negate the give-and-take of vernacular systems of management and understandings about who may and may not have access to resources. Laws, which reflect the abstraction of space, thus preempt customs that reflect the knowledge, understandings, and immediacy of place.

Through the imposition of the various regulatory regimes that have been developed to control access to, and use of, resources, common custom and legal classifications butt heads. The former emphasizes the community over the individual, while the latter employs notions of rights that underscore the individual. In fact, in the North, laws designed somehow to maintain and enforce community, such as those that determine beneficiary status, or those that emphasize local rights to use resources, actually serve more to refute the existence of community. A sense of community cannot be legislated. Rather, it exists, in part, because people establish ways of interacting together that become custom. As in the case of “beneficiaries”, if notions external to customary practice are enforced through the law, then people’s sense of community can be undermined. As you will see in Chapter Five, at the same time as community is

¹⁷ It is worth noting here that Greenland, unlike Nunavik, has a far more restrictive set of hunting regulations that reflect, in part, the Danish legal position that the indigenous population of Greenland not be granted particular rights based on ethnicity. Harvesting rights are based on residency in Greenland. As a result, Greenlandic hunting regulations are more segmented than in Nunavik. For example, in Greenland there are full and part-time hunters’ licences, each of which has different rights of access to resources and determines how those resources may then be distributed and consumed. Some believe that in imposing more and more quotas on resource use, the government of Greenland is ultimately aiming to decrease people’s dependence on living resources (Anonymous 2001c).

challenged by legal processes, so too are some people's understandings of such things as identity, morality, and economy.

Forms of Country Foods Commoditisation in Nunavik

For all of the rules and regulations enumerated above, it can come as no surprise that commercial ventures of country foods in Nunavik are very limited. What commercial processes *do* exist in the region, fall into three categories.

First, there are a limited number of individuals who have commercial country foods ventures in Nunavik. In Kuujjuaq there is one privately owned country foods store called Inuksiutiit, which is able to sell country foods legally only to beneficiaries under the JBNQA. In various villages there are individuals who sell processed country foods such as *misiraaq*, a sauce made from rendered whale or seal blubber, and *tuktuviniq nikkuk*, or caribou jerky. There are also a few people who fish commercially for Arctic Char or scallops, which they generally sell locally through community stores or Hunter Support Programmes.¹⁸ Their operations have tended to be sporadic, piecemeal, and generally problematic, as it proves difficult for the animal populations to sustain such operations,¹⁹ it can be difficult to meet the various government processing regulations

¹⁸ There are scallop fishers in Salluit and Quaqtaq; however, they are not able to live exclusively from the income of these fisheries. Puvirnituq has a commercial Arctic Char fishery that is privately owned. I shall discuss it in more detail in Chapter Five.

¹⁹ Arctic Char and salmon fisheries have been particularly prone to over-fishing. For this reason, at various times, fisheries have had to be shut down in Kuujjuaq; Kangiqsualujjuaq; and Kangirsuk (George 1998a & 1998b; Mitchell 1995)

discussed above, and the costs due to the lack of infrastructure and transportation can prove prohibitive.²⁰

The second form of commoditisation of country foods in Nunavik has been undertaken by Makivik Corporation. It has commercial fisheries operations called Seaku Fisheries Incorporated, and tried unsuccessfully in the 1990s to establish an inter-community trade project within Nunavik (cf. Chabot 2001; George 1998b & 1999; Weihs, Higgins, and Boulton 1993). At first glance, the idea of inter-community trade seems an appropriate form of northern development. As Weihs, Higgins, and Boulton (1993) indicate, such trade aims not to maximise production or profits, but rather, to supplement exchanges within the domestic economy. So, they argue, it serves not to replace ideas of sharing, but merely to adapt them. Furthermore, they argue, such trade avoids conflict over resource use that can arise from export to faceless markets in the South. Moreover, given that northern animal populations are not farmed, and so, their populations cannot be controlled, large-scale commercial developments of country foods might threaten the long-term viability of the populations for domestic use. No doubt, it was for these reasons that when the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was signed in 1975, it included stipulations that permitted the possibility of intra and inter-community trade, but, apart from fisheries, precluded the possibility of trade for export. So why was the project unsuccessful?

The lack of success was due to a number of reasons. First, the four processing plants built by Makivik in different communities in Nunavik did not meet federal

²⁰ For example, in the 1990s in Inukjuak a local resident tried to develop a joint venture with a Japanese company involving the sale of caribou, but it was unsuccessful. Although it met federally approved regulations, it was unable to make money because of high freight costs and competition from cheaper meats raised in the South (George 1998b).

specifications. Second, because the animals are always on the move, and are therefore killed at a distance from the communities, it was difficult to get them back to the abattoirs in such a way that met government quality standards while not being prohibitively expensive to transport them. Third, there was also debate within the communities concerned about the ability of the caribou populations to sustain a commercial hunt. Finally, Makivik had difficulty getting a sufficient supply of meat from local hunters. In some cases, hunters, who were able to earn more by selling meat to the Hunter Support Programme, were unwilling to supply meat to Makivik. Chabot (2001) also postulates that given that there are a limited number of hunters who supply meat to communities in the first place, they might have been unwilling to add meat to the commercial sphere which was necessary for the domestic one. Chabot (2001) also notes that what meat *did* make it onto the market was not always liked. For example, one of her informants complained that the seal meat which Makivik attempted to sell did not taste good.²¹ Makivik's view was that inter-community trade would be appealing to the people of Nunavik because it would allow them to have portions of meat that were manageable, rather than having to cut off pieces from a larger section of the animal, which is normally how animals are stored either in individual freezers or in the HSP supplies. In fact, one of Chabot's informants, who worked for the Makivik project, cited this as his reason for buying the meat. However, clearly, as one person in Puvirnituq pointed out, people asked themselves why they should buy meat that they can get "for free".

²¹ This must be a general property of seal meat, as people in Greenland also informed me that they had difficulty selling seal meat.

With the end of the inter-community trade project in 1998, Makivik focussed its attention of selling country foods to export markets (cf. Anonymous 2001d & 2001e; George 1998a, 1998b, & 1999). Using mobile abattoirs, its production was certified by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, thus allowing it to export country foods outside of the province.²² Again, although the project is on-going, it has been problematic, and has yet to be sustained over the long run. It has been difficult to meet the regulations, expensive to carry the transportation costs, and difficult to find regular, trained employees. In addition, since the caribou are migratory, it can be hard to find sufficient numbers of them to make their commoditisation worthwhile (George 1999).

The third form of commoditisation of country foods that exists in Nunavik is the Hunter Support Programme (cf. Duhaime 1990; Kativik Regional Government 1998 & 2000; Government of Québec 1982). The HSP was created as part of the JBNQA, which was signed in 1975. A temporary version of the HSP was set up in 1979, but it was not formally established until 1982. It has guaranteed funding for an indefinite future. The objective of the programme is "...to favour, encourage and perpetuate the hunting, fishing and trapping activities of the beneficiaries as a way of life and to guarantee Inuit communities a supply of the produce from such activities" (Government of Québec 1982, p. 4).²³ Thus, it is designed to support both production and consumption of country foods. In order to do this, each community in Nunavik receives funding, which may be used, amongst other things, for "the marketing of products and by-products from hunting,

²² Amongst its products are pâté, stew, ringed seal oil, and sausages.

²³ Interestingly, in the annual report of the HSP for 1998, "Inuit" replaces the word "beneficiaries" in the above sentence. This suggests that, since beneficiaries may also be non-Inuit who were living in Nunavik at the time that the Agreement was signed or are married to beneficiaries of the Agreement, issues of identity have been debated within the context of the HSP.

fishing and trapping activities” (Kativik Regional Government 1998, p. 39).²⁴ In practice, this generally means that the municipality, through the HSP, pays hunters in each community to supply the community with meat on an intermittent basis. People may then help themselves to the meat. So, while the meat is paid for, and thus, has a monetary value, it is not bought by individuals. I discuss the nature and implications of this programme in Chapter Five. For the time being, however, what is worth noting is that the HSP represents a hybrid—part gift and part commodity—for it is neither truly involved in market exchange nor truly a reflection of the reciprocal exchange that has been central to the vernacular economy of Inuit.

So how are we to understand all of this? What has been the effect of government development policy? How are we to comprehend forces of commoditisation within the larger context of northern development, not in terms of policy, but in terms of lived reality? To try, as I shall do in the next chapter, to appreciate how a particular community experiences the commoditisation of country foods, we must first learn something about the basic political economy in which all of these processes are taking place.

“Born to Hunt Forced to Work”: The Political Economy of Nunavik

These were the words printed on the t-shirt of a man in Puvirnituk, the same man whom I mentioned in Chapter Three, who was sent out by his friend Alurut with his dogs to get fish, those dogs that knew the route without having to be told. No doubt the t-shirt

²⁴ For a full list of the various possible programmes carried out by the HSP see Government of Québec (1982).

was meant to be worn by some thwarted southerner who fancies himself a deer or moose stalker. The man in Puvirnituk who was actually *wearing* that shirt had likely been amongst

November 29, 2001

This place is on a cusp, on a cusp. Those people who have lived another life are fewer. As Jamisie said, his is the generation that lived that change — the coming of English and machines, the loss of self-sufficiency and autonomy — “just like the family farms in the South,” he pointed out. But I think it’s more than that.

the last generation of people who was born when people were more on the land than they were in communities, and amongst the first generation of people who, with the move to communities also learned the skills—English being one of them—that enabled him to get a job. He really *was* born to hunt and forced to work. And work he did, when it was available and he was able. I was also interested by these words because they revealed another fine point: that somehow hunting and work were two separate things. So today, some Inuit are considered “unemployed”, an idea unknown in the past. Such a view negates what it is they have always done up until that point: hunting, fishing, and gathering. In that one term a whole economic form has been swept aside, subject to ideas that cannot see hunting and work as one and the same thing; and so people are swept into a gulf whose presence is not recognised, and they get misplaced. When he appeared with that t-shirt at a community feast, some pointed and laughed, appreciating the deep irony of the words. Better to laugh than to cry.

Inuit occupy, at best, a marginal position in the world of work, and in the world of money that comes with it. According to the statistics that measure their potential to participate in these things, they face some challenges. Of the 10,000 Inuit in Nunavik, which represents 25 per cent of the Inuit population in Canada, 60 per cent of the

residents are under the age of 25 (Panetta 2002). The high school graduation rate is 33 per cent, in comparison to 71 per cent across Quebec, and the average income is \$16,800 per individual compared to \$22,400 per capita for the province as a whole (Panetta 2002). People spend almost half of their incomes on food, compared to Quebec City, where people spend only 12 per cent of their incomes. And the “unemployment” rate in Nunavik hovers around 15 per cent, compared with 9 per cent province-wide. Finally, between 1987 and 1994, the youth suicide rate was twenty times greater in Nunavik than in the rest of the province (Panetta 2002). Behind these numbers are many stories, great and small, about how people in Nunavik manage to survive and how they make sense of themselves in the world geared for work rather than for hunting, fishing, and gathering.



Northern economies face numerous challenges. Immense transportation costs make life exceptionally

expensive. While they are navigable, sealift boats ply the northern waters bringing bulky items in to communities across the Canadian North. But during the majority of the year, many other goods must be flown into the North. In 2000, Duhaime *et al.* (2000) compared costs in Nunavik with those in the region of Quebec City. Amongst other things they found that camping equipment cost 35 per cent more in Nunavik than in the

Quebec City region and the average price of 26 household products was approximately 78 per cent greater in Nunavik. People in the North *know* that life there is more expensive than for other Canadians, and they resent it.

They know that when they pay such taxes as the Goods and Services Tax, they are paying more than others, because the costs of the goods are higher to begin with (cf. Ningeongan 2001). Chabot (2001) has calculated, based on figures from 1992,

October 16, 2001

Making the presentation at the municipal council about my research interests—how people can make a living in the North—one of the councillors said that it was important that people know about life here: the high cost of transportation, heavy taxation, high prices for groceries.

that the average disposable income of an individual in Nunavik in 1995-1996 was \$4,850 compared to \$14,115 for Canada as a whole.

October 10, 2001

I asked Jamisie about the mining; there are so many mining companies here. He said that they had no options — some people were concerned about it, but they have nothing else to offer — that's all there is.

While life in the North is

expensive, people are subject, at the same time, to forces and decisions made elsewhere that are beyond their control. Moreover, there are only a

limited number of options that people have to *make* money. These things mean that northern economies are extremely vulnerable to changes made by those external forces. They are a classic example of a staples economy. First developed by Harold Innis, staples theory is based on the idea that Canada's economy, dependent on the export of primary resources, is unstable and susceptible to external shocks if demand for those resources should diminish. This creates inbuilt inequalities and dependency, as the

suppliers of resources are reliant on external markets to sell their materials, which they then buy back as finished goods (cf. Barnes 1996; Watkins 1997; Whittington 1986). The North has already felt the impact of one such turn in its economic tides. In the past, economic development of the North was based on the fur trade. In the 1980s, with the boycott of sealskins by the European Union, northern community economies collapsed (Hovelsrud-Broda 1997; Marquardt and Caulfield 1996; Myers 2000; Wenzel 1991). According to the government of the Northwest Territories, 18 out of 20 Inuit communities lost more than 60 per cent of their yearly income following the demise of the fur trade (Hovelsrud-Broda 1997). In 1978, Inuit earned \$320,000 from the fur trade; by 1991, eight years after the ban on furs by the European Union, Inuit earned \$47,000 from that same trade (Chabot 2001). Having felt that shock once, people in communities make money, whether in reality or in kind, where they can. This includes: guiding tourists²⁵ or people working on mining exploration; working at outfitting camps; working for public and private agencies; selling arts and crafts; bootlegging; garage, rummage, and bake sales; raffles; bingo; lotteries; going to the dump to get things that may be re-used; renting rooms to visitors to the community; going to meetings or taking a course;

²⁵ Appiah Agalakti Awa, who was born in 1931, provides a poignant example of how government forcefully promoted the notion that Inuit become tour guides. She talks about how her son was taken from the family in the 1960s and sent to school. They did this in order to be able to continue to receive family allowance, which would otherwise have been withdrawn by the government.

We talked to ITC [Inuit Tapirisat of Canada; a national Inuit organisation] about him. ... They told us that when he got to be fourteen, he would have to go to school. They told us that when he was fourteen he would be a student and learn how to write in English and Inuktitut. He would learn about animals in school—that is what we were told. We were told that he would be an interpreter. We were told that in the future, Solomon was going to take *Qallunaat* out hunting and out to see all different kinds of animals. He was going to learn the names of animals in English and Inuktitut (in Wachowich 1999, p. 109).

Such training continues. In 1994 I was in a community in Baffin Island where the territorial government sent a White teacher to come and teach a course to community members on how to lead a group of eco-tourists.

stealing; selling their possessions; exchanging skills, for example one person does income tax returns and gets mittens in exchange from an old woman; and even prostitution (cf. Oakes and Riewe 1997). As various researchers point out, such forms of bricolage allow individuals to make ends meet (cf. Kleinfeld, Kruse, and Travis 1983; Wenzel 1991).²⁶ However, in terms of the formal economy, that is, the economy that gets measured by government statisticians, the majority of people's incomes comes from formal employment, and the majority of those jobs in Nunavik are in the public sector (Chabot 2001).

As the government policy of introducing salaried work to the Inuit took hold, so people's incomes from this work increased. In Nunavik in 1966, the per capita revenue was \$426. In 1973 it was \$1,288. In 1983, it was \$15,596 (Chabot 2001). By 1983 salaried jobs were the primary source of money for Inuit in Nunavik, and this trend has continued (Chabot 2001). Certainly this is a remarkable increase. Yet, at the same time, income from social transfer payments has also increased; in fact, it grew more than

October 15, 2001

As I read about how little people can earn with the HSP, around me, here, people are taking a course in "pre-employment training": learning how to get a job. I listen to the list of jobs and skills on the résumé of one woman (shelf-stocker, keen worker, likes to dance, will work at any time) and I think, what does the future hold for her? What choices does she have? And what does hunting have to do with her livelihood?

salaries (Chabot 2001). Moreover, in 1993 approximately 60 per cent of working-age Inuit were "unemployed"

for most of the year, with underemployment affecting many others (Kativik Regional

²⁶ They argue, moreover, that this is necessary in order to be able to continue to participate in subsistence activities. Yet some in Puvirnituq to whom I asked the question told me that people would rather have full-time than part-time jobs. At the same time, it is worth noting that these people were also full-time employees working in the public sector.

Government 2000a). The increased transfer payments are a reflection of the fact that as the population grows there are increasing numbers of people of working age compared to the number of jobs that are available to them. People have also complained to me that as the rule-bound system of judging who is competent to hold a job based on official measures of qualification—what grade do you have?—has moved into the North, Inuit have been unable to qualify for jobs that they would be more than capable of filling. In fact, while I was in Puvirnituk, twice the electrical wires were accidentally disconnected, cutting off electricity in much of the community. Despite the fact that there were people in Puvirnituk who had the skills to fix the problem, we were forced to await the arrival of an officially sanctioned person from the South to come and repair the wires. This has led some to feel that the standards discriminate against Inuit (cf. D'Souza 2003; George 2001b). But Jamisie points out that this emphasis upon southern ideas of who is and is not qualified has deeply distressing implications.

*I don't ... like the word "drop out". It doesn't work. I think that drop out means, it's only a term, a term of describing somebody, or **degrading**. I don't consider myself a drop out. Yes, I dropped out of learning the Qallunaaq tradition and culture, but I didn't drop out of learning my own traditional culture. Many of the people my age went all the way, and then they came back and they couldn't work, because they didn't know enough Inuktitut, or they have lost their culture and tradition. They lost their self-esteem. And they were shy. They didn't know how to live here any more. Many have died from depression and alcoholism, and so on. And now their children, the next generation, is even **more** confused. Because **these** people have lost their values, traditional values, and traditional knowledge, which is still very essential here in the North. Like I say, we're not very well going to grow tomatoes and potatoes.*

...Those who took us when we were ... normally we used to finish eighth or ninth grade at the tender age of 14, 15. Then we were shipped out of town for the next eleven months. Eleven months of every year we were taken out of town, to live as somebody else, down South. If it wasn't South, they made it look like the South. Like, I went to the vocational school in Kuujjuarapik. They used to call it the Nordique High School. And we

weren't taught traditional knowledge or language there. We were taught how to discipline ourselves. Qallunaatitut [the White people's way]. Trades that we would later have to know, like mechanics, electricity, carpentry. ... When we came back we were laughed at, ridiculed by our older brothers and older sisters. Because they didn't have a chance to learn English or another culture and tradition. Because they only came in the late fifties. That's when school started, and we were of age at that time, my generation. And we came back not knowing how to live off the land, and also even talk, we were ridiculed, laughed at. This hurt a lot of people. Today there are people who still are in their fourteens, the way they're thinking, their mentality, their way of life. And now they're having grandchildren! And you know how troubled they can be. They've not been taught morals and things that are regular to regular families. There are people who are very troubled. Especially those who have been sexually abused. And there was a lot of that. That happened to just about everybody who ever went away from home. We were used. And that's why you've seen anger. Sometimes I get very frustrated still. ... I'm well to do. I have a good family. My kids are graduating from college, and all my boys are good in traditional knowledge. I teach them everything I know. There are families who are not as fortunate as myself; who are hurt. And that leads to social strife.

As a result of these changes that people have lived through, as a result of the displacement that they have experienced, there are people who somehow are able to participate actively in neither the vernacular nor the market economies; people for whom welfare has become the only form of living that they know. People have mixed feelings about welfare. Some in the North view welfare as necessary, ensuring, at least, that people are not starving. Others see it as crippling people's initiative and independence.

Given the difficulties in finding work, and given the limited numbers of jobs that are available in the North, the government is encouraging the development of private enterprise. In 1991, 1.5 per cent of the population earned money from the private sector (Chabot 2001). With increased reliance on wage employment, some researchers have argued that there is a growing unevenness in the distribution of wealth in northern communities (Mitchell 1995). People who moved to communities from life on the land

were most conscious of these changes. So Rhoda Kaujak Katsak explains how she first experienced the social differentiations that can accompany the introduction of money,

Up to the age of eleven or twelve, I never really thought about money. I remember being a kid, when I first started going to school, my aunts and uncles, I remember they had pocket money in the settlement, because they had their parents with them, but we were staying at the hostel. I had food and I had clothing to wear every day, so I didn't think about money. I never really thought about having it or not having it.

When I was about eleven or twelve years old, my parents moved [off the land] into the community. I remember around that time feeling kind of poor at times. I think it mostly had to do with my age, but I remember feeling poor because I didn't have the clothing that was the latest trend, the clothing that the other young girls were wearing at that time, the bell-bottom jeans and the jewellery and stuff. I didn't have this record or that tape. My father couldn't afford those kinds of things. That was when I was made to feel poor. I wasn't poor, but I was made to feel poor. You know how kids are, they tease each other all the time, "You tramp from an outpost camp" type of attitude. But that didn't last all that long (in Wachowich 1999, p. 192; square brackets added).

Chabot (2001) notes that with all of these changes in the northern economy, the vernacular economy has dropped in importance. She calculates that 5 per cent of the active population of Nunavik now earns a living from hunting and fishing for a total of 222 people in the region or, on average, approximately 15 people per village. At the same time, the people who are participating in hunting, fishing, and gathering appear to be the older members of the community, with the youth showing less commitment to these activities (Condon *et al.* 1995). As Jamisie put it, when I asked whether there are people who would prefer not to have to work at a job, but just to hunt,

*Yes there are. Yes. The elders. And besides, there's not enough work to go around. And especially if you don't speak any English, or learn any trade. They **have to**. It's those people that many young people depend on, many young people who work and still need country food. It's our traditional diet.*

Reimer (1995) found that there is a gap in the perception of economic processes between the young and the old, with the former seeing cash as the basis of all economic activity while the latter retain a place for subsistence activities in their understandings of economic processes.²⁷ Condon *et al.* (1995) also found divisions in the perceptions of the different generations, with young men placing little emphasis on subsistence production. Some people to whom I spoke in Puvirnituk did not confirm this point of view, however. Imalie said that young men, in particular, were increasingly interested in spending time on the land, and needed only the opportunity to do so. Jamisie also pointed out that, like anything, there are those who are good at and interested in activities on the land, and those who are not.

There are young ones [who go hunting]. Yes. Those who try. Those who turn off the TV in the morning and do things. Those are the people who go places. It's like all over the world, there are people who prefer not doing hard things and there are people who are active. Those are the ones who learn. Those are the providers in the community. ... There are some people whom we have trained, and who are becoming providers.

Those who are interested find a way to participate in hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering when the opportunity arises, accompanying friends and relatives, borrowing equipment, working for the HSP supplying meat and fish, and so on.

²⁷ Young people are not all so blind to the roots of their vernacular economy as Reimer or Condon *et al.* suggest, nor do they necessarily like their reliance on money. As Sandra Pikujak Katsak puts it:

Today there's so much of the old ways in us. Even today, though we live in a settlement, I was born, I realise, just a breath away from the old life. I always thought my grandparents lived in camps a long, long time ago. I always thought we had all been living in a modernised world for some time, my family, I mean. Now I realise that it hasn't been that long for them at all. They moved in 1968. When I ask my grandparents about why they don't go back to the old ways, they say they don't want to go back because it was too hard. I'd like to tell them, "It is just as hard for us now!" The modern world is just as hard today. There are high prices for food, clothing, gas, snowmobiles, hunting gear. Now we young people must work, work, work, work if we are going to get anywhere (Wachowich 1999, p. 253; born in 1973).

In Sum

So life in the North is complex. As they have settled into fixed communities Inuit have experienced enormous changes in their ways of living over the course of the last fifty or so years. They have had to adjust not only to changes in the spaces they occupy, but also to accompanying changes in how they go about occupying that space. This is a challenge. The commoditisation of country foods appears to be a good way of building an economic future upon the shoulders of customary ways of living. It would appear to mitigate some of the challenges that people face. From an economic point of view, it would give those who wish to continue hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering, including the younger generation, the opportunity to earn a living by doing so. It would provide a way of using existing skills and resources while providing a level of economic self-reliance that allows for the local retention and investment of profits; after all, when money circulates within an economy, rather than draining quickly out of it, it contributes more effectively to that economy. Moreover, since country foods could theoretically meet the tastes of a local market, demand would be far more stable than in a staples economy, and therefore, it would avoid the insecurity of the export trade.

From the point of view of health, the commoditisation of country foods also represents one means of trying to ensure that people have access to foods that are good for them (cf. Bjerregaard and Kue 1998; Lawn and Harvey 2001). If people are turning increasingly to unhealthy imported foods, having access to country foods on a more predictable basis through their sale in local shops might alleviate this problem.

Yet, as much of the discussion in the previous chapter reveals, the value of country foods goes beyond the purely monetary, or ideas of physical health. The getting, sharing and eating of these foods serve to build place, to construct ties amongst people, to maintain community, to establish identity, to help people to maintain a sense of themselves through time, to build knowledge, to determine people's understandings of their relations with the natural world; and so forth. What does the commoditisation of country foods mean for all of these things? How do people perceive the commoditisation of these foods in light of these processes? Let us turn to the next chapter to find out some answers to these questions.

CHAPTER 5

SO WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SELL COUNTRY FOODS?

SOME EXPERIENCES FROM PUVIRNITUQ

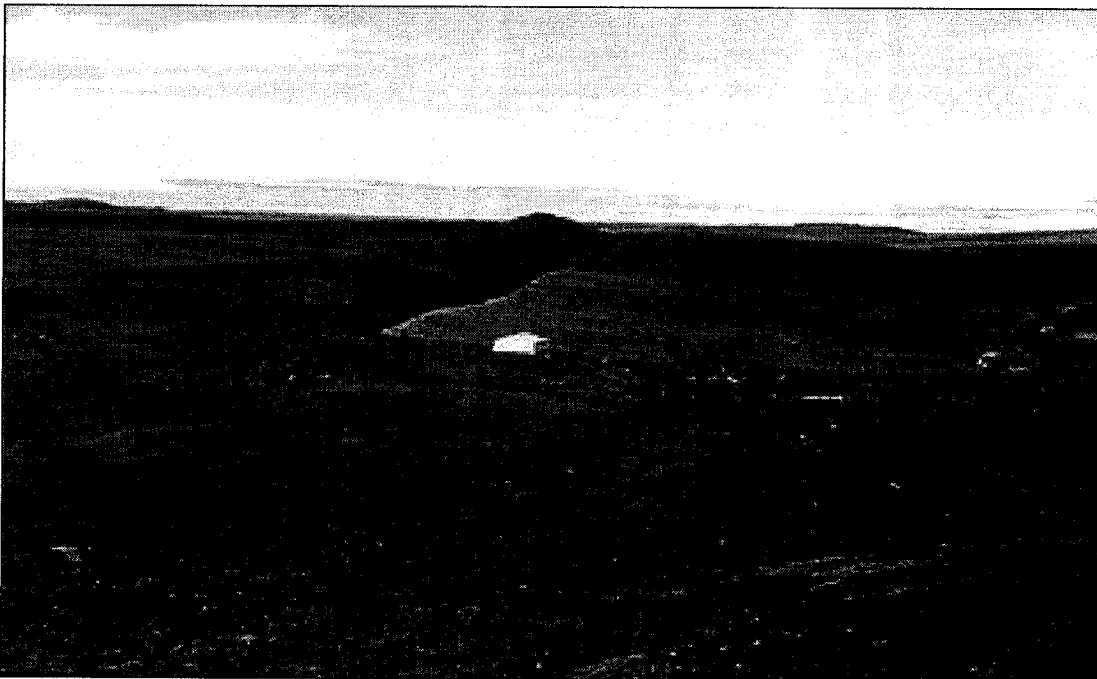
As I wrote earlier, in this thesis I have tended to move in and out, up and down, from the abstract to the concrete, from theory to lived experience, and in some ways, from ideas located in space, to life lived in place. In this chapter, I zoom in again, trying to take place, economy, political development, and culture together to understand something of what it has meant to people in a northern community to sell country foods. In a sense, in the selling of that food, there is an encounter between elements of two ways of understanding and operating in the world.

One is the world of place and movement, of uncontrollable forces that determine one's survival. It is a world in which things are eternally changing, all is becoming, and the job of humans is to understand and learn to live within the flux of time and the elements. It is a world in which these forces have been alleviated by social systems predicated on respect and responsibility to others that is expressed in sharing. As the environment shares its bounty with humans, so they, in turn, share that bounty with one another.

The other world is contained in the settlements that have sprung up across the Canadian North. This world assumes a level of permanence and control over the elements. It relies on predictability to ensure one's means of survival. Once the elements have been understood, they can be tamed to the extent that humans can then settle, have shelter, food, drink, clothing, as well as other, non-essential things that have become part

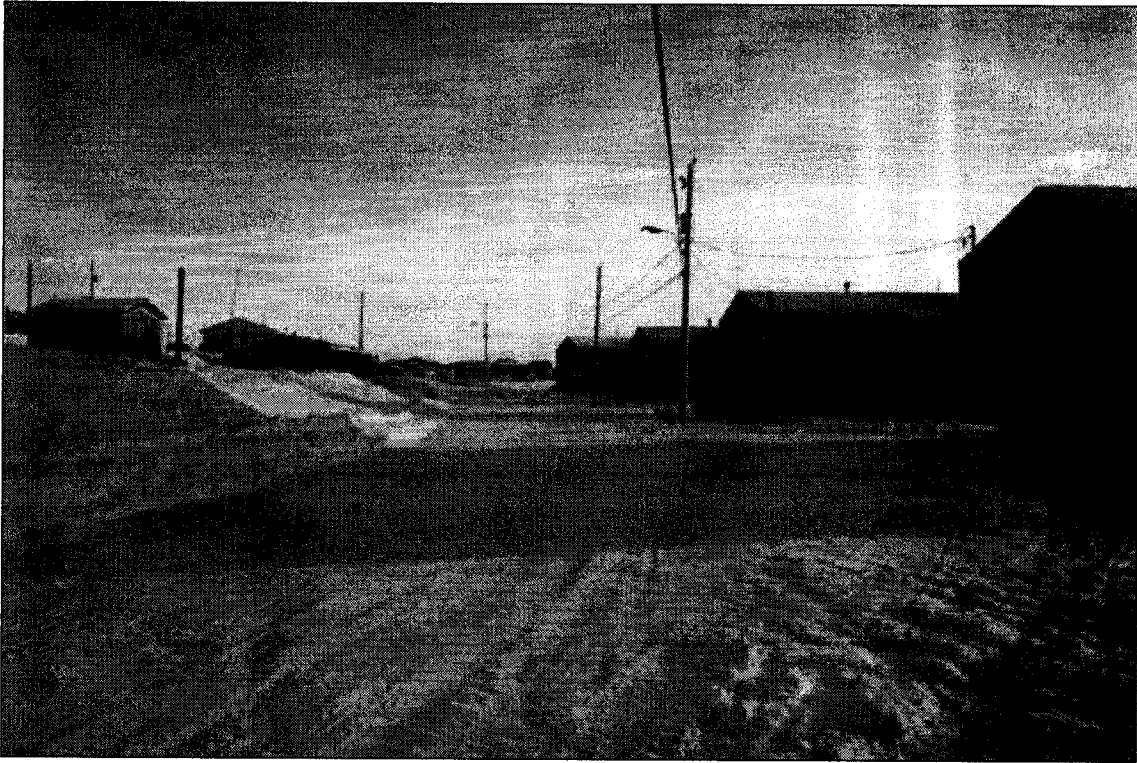
of life in communities. The medium by which these things may be gained is money. By whatever means it is secured, it pays for the houses, the food, the water, the clothing, and all of the other conveniences of life. Flux gives way to permanence and becoming gives way to being.

Of course the world within settlements is not wholly separate from the world outside them. Although these two worlds seem essentially different in some of the assumptions that underlie them, it would be foolhardy to assume in an overly simplistic way that the world and life that exists within communities exists in a bubble; that the world out there has not found a place within northern settlements. Life for Inuit is not a question of assimilation versus pristine tradition. Rather, it is about the ways in which people have managed to combine things, to create hybrids. In the selling of country foods, the world outside the community



Source: Government of Nunavut, n.d.b

meets the world inside the community.



The ethics and ways of behaviour that govern the two meet, sometimes collide, and come to some sort of adjustment. These are the issues of this chapter.

How have people managed to mix the ideas and ways of living that underlie survival in the big wide world out there in life on the land with the ways of living that sustain life within communities? What does it mean to people when the foods that they have generally shared become commodities that are sold? How have they made sense of these processes and what do they think about them? And what does this suggest for the future? These questions are at the core of this chapter. I look at them within the context of one community on the east coast of Hudson Bay.



Puvirnituaq: Place, History, Economy, and Society

As a non-native, flying into Puvirnituaq after several stops up the Hudson Bay coast—first Kuujjuaraapik, followed by Umiujaq, and then Inukjuaq—the community looks much like the ones I had already passed through. There are the fuel tanks for the electrical generators and the various vehicles that maintain life in the North. There is the old Hudson’s Bay Company post with its ubiquitous white walls and red roof, kept



perhaps as a talisman for White history in the North. There is the school and the hospital and the

roads leading to the garbage dump, the pump house, and the sewage lagoon. There is the Co-op and the Northern Store, the church and the government offices.

There are the houses, each looking like the other, varying according to colour and the year they were built. There are the dogs and,

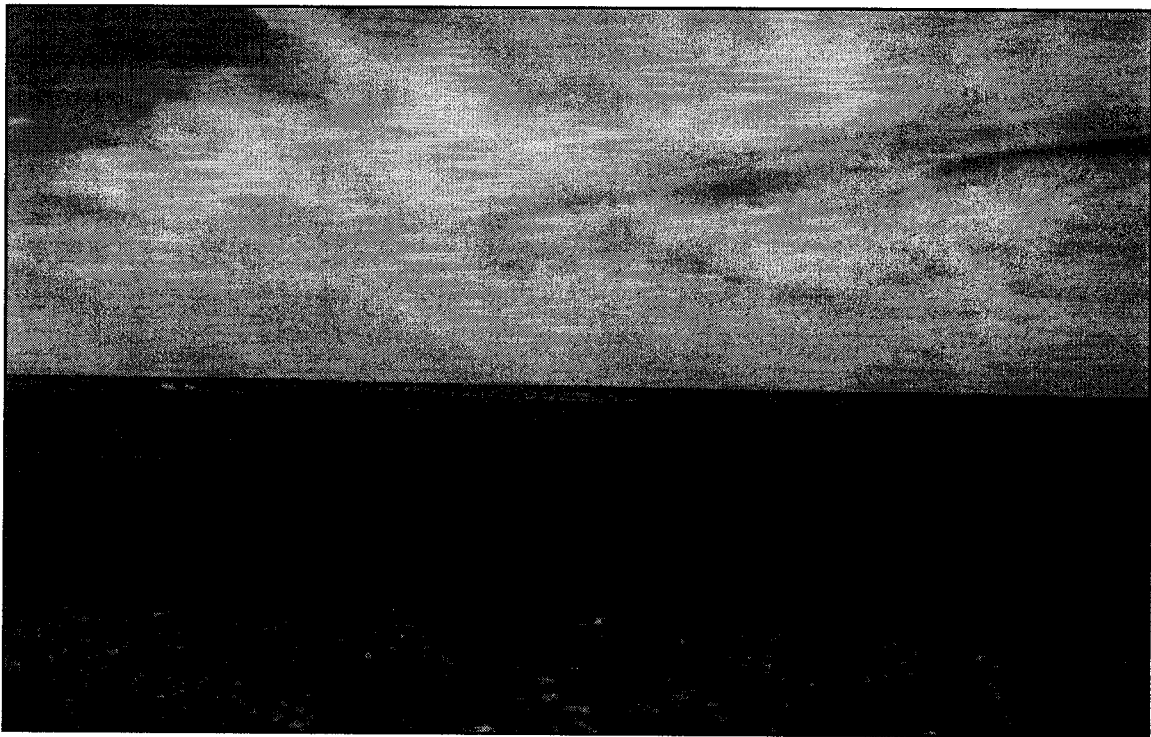


depending on the season, the skidoos or four-wheelers.

When you are standing in town, with the school to your back, the courthouse and Co-op to one side, and the government offices in front, you might be forgiven for thinking that this is life in the North. What you see is what you get.



Here is the buzz of skidoos racing along the main drag, their drivers stopping in front of the Co-op for a quick purchase and a chat. There are people strolling by, on their way to visiting friends or relatives. People might look at you and smile and say, “hello”. Going into someone’s house you might hear a television on, or the radio playing in another room. Perhaps there will be children fiddling at this or that, and waiting on the stove, is a silver kettle filled with bottomless supplies of tea. Here is where people live. Here is where they spend the vast majority of their time—inside these houses or within the confines of the community. But, if you look beyond the buildings, you will see there is another world. Out there are the water and the land, and a world in which Inuit have lived until very recently, stretching as far as the eye can see. And when you are out there, the settlement is no more than a speck on the horizon, seemingly insignificant in the vastness of it all.



Yet, do not be fooled. In people's minds, and in their understandings, out there the land is as inhabited as the settlement. Spread out along the coast, in the bays, on the islands, at the tops of hills or nestled beside lakes and rivers are campsites, caches, travel ways, a birthplace or a deathplace, areas where you will find geese and caribou, fish and berries; in short, all of the things that have enabled Inuit to make this place their home for countless generations. Out there is a world and way of life that rotated around the seasons and the animals. Survival depended on knowing these things and knowing how to use them appropriately. As Jamisie said,

Traditionally, we were wanderers of the land. We never lived one place. One place couldn't sustain the people. If you stayed in one spot, then you would decimate the wildlife population, and also the vegetation. So naturally, we move to one spot seasonally, like in the Puvirnituaq, for instance, the Puvirnituaq river system. For caribou, they used to go inland. And then that was at the time when the skin and the fur was at its best. The hair is not too long and the skin is at its prime. That's in August, September. Then in July, they were out in the bay where the char were plentiful. And then, as the fish were moving closer to the river, they would move with the fish, to be near. And also in springtime, when it's time to get skins for the qajaqs and the boats, naturally, they would go out to the sea ice and harvest the sealskin they needed, and the fat would be stored for misiraq, for the summer, and even to next winter. So that's how we used to live.

This way of life has existed for millennia. Puvirnituaq is located in a rich fishing area where people would spend time in the spring in the yearly round of hunting, fishing and trapping. Balikci (1959 & 1964) maintains that despite its wealth of fish, waterfowl, seals and whales,¹ the area is poor for hunting and trapping, which, meant that in the 1950s when he was there, people had to travel vast distances to their traditional winter

¹ Since the time of Balikci's fieldwork in 1958, the beluga have left the area, frightened off, the people say, by the noise of the engines of the motor boats. One woman in her forties told me about how when she was younger she remembered women lining the shores of the river leading in to Puvirnituaq with their babies in their arms. They would cause the babies to cry, using the noise to herd the belugas up the river to the hunters who were waiting for them.

and summer grounds to hunt and trap, which necessitated the purchase of boats for summer travel.²

Despite what Balikci might have written, clearly the area around Puvirnituk has long been a source of sustenance to the Inuit and *Tuniit* (or Dorset people) who preceded them. It is rich with memories and signs of the past, from tales about their ancestors to archaeological remnants from the *Tuniit* (cf. Nungak and Arima 1988; Rowley n.d.). It is a history that essentially lives in the stories told by people through the generations, although Johnny Uitangak (1991 & 1993) has recorded some of it, writing two publications in Inuktitut about the history of the people and the settlement. For outsiders, however, the history of Puvirnituk only begins with the arrival of European traders.

Until the 1950s, people lived in camps at the mouths of the rivers that flow into Hudson Bay both north and south of present-day Puvirnituk, moving inland to trap and hunt according to the seasons (Vallee 1967). It was only in the 1950s that people started to congregate in what was to become Puvirnituk, although Vézinet's (1980) maps of Inuit camp locations in Nunavik from 1900 to 1945 suggest that the process of centralisation had been gradually taking place for some time, and in fact, Simard (1979) states that in 1932 the Inuit of Puvirnituk made their last seasonal migration inland. Thereafter, they would only go inland for short trips, often leaving the women and children behind.

Inuit were little by little drawn into the non-Inuit economy. During what Balikci calls their "first adaptive period", in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Inuit

² Balikci was writing at a time when the caribou were scarce in the area. Today they are anything but. During the last few summers at the end of July and beginning of August tens of thousands of caribou have passed by the community, so that people can look out their windows and see the masses on their way through the area. Afterwards, the land is stripped of vegetation and the ground is muddied by the hundreds of thousands of hooves that have passed steadily by.

around Puvirnituk had limited contact with Whites, seeing and working with them when whalers came through, or during their yearly visit to the HBC trading post at Little Whale River (Balicki 1959).

During the “second adaptive period” (from the end of the 1800s to the 1930s) Inuit were increasingly drawn into the trading economy. Like most northern communities, the site for Puvirnituk was chosen because of its proximity to trading posts, bearers of what Simard (1979) calls “mercantile colonialism”. The literature does not wholly agree on the dates; however, generally the history of the trading posts in the area indicates that Revillon Frères opened a post in about 1910, while their competitors at the HBC only moved into the area later, setting up a post in 1920, 1921, and again in 1927 (cf. Balicki 1964; Commission Scolaire Kativik n.d.a; Vallee 1967). In 1936, the HBC bought out Revillon Frères and became the only kid on the block. The HBC did not stay in one place, but rather, opened and shut its trading posts as circumstance dictated, moving between what is now called Akulivik (then, called Cape Smith) and Puvirnituk. So the Inuit, who came only periodically to the post to trade and for special events such as to help with the arrival of the supply boat or for Christmas or Easter, moved with it. During this period, Inuit increased their trapping, and grew more dependent on the trading post, with the post disbursing medical treatment, petty justice, intermittent wage employment, credit (and debt), and help in periods of scarcity. This last grew increasingly important as caribou herds were decreasing in the area.

The “third adaptive period” (during the 1940s and 1950s) was a time of crisis for the Inuit of Puvirnituk. The caribou had almost completely disappeared, while seals and other food species were also in decline. As a result, not only was it difficult to get

country foods, but people also earned less from trapping, which meant they could not buy imported food to fill the gap. This was a time of great hunger (Balicki 1959).

The “fourth contact period” started in the 1950s with the concentration of Inuit into a fixed settlement with increased government services and other institutions of the White world. Between 1952 and 1962, all of the camps between Port Harrison (Inukjuaq) to the south and Kettlestone Bay (around Akulivik) to the north of Puvirnituk were abandoned (Vallee 1967). The settlement was first established as Kangirsurjuaq (or Shallow Bay) located about ten kilometres south of its present location. It was moved, however, when people found that the large ships that supplied the North were unable to enter the river. Thus, in 1952 the father of the current mayor of Puvirnituk chose the new location based on soundings that he did of the Puvirnituk River. At first, the only buildings there were HBC buildings, with Inuit living in tents scattered nearby.



Source: Uitangak (1993)

As Qumaq (n.d.) puts it, and this photograph attests, though the Inuit started to live in houses when the Whites first arrived in Puvirnituk, they did not *really* start to live in houses until the 1960s. Along with the move to Puvirnituk came a school in 1958 and a dispensary in 1960³ (Commission Scolaire Kativik n.d.b). A Roman Catholic mission arrived in the area, building a chapel there in 1956 (Steinmann 1977), followed by an Anglican missionary in 1962. The buildings of each of these institutions appear in the photograph above: the HBC compound on the extreme right along with the school and dispensary slightly to the left of it; the Anglican church visible in front of them; and the Roman Catholic mission near the shore in the bottom right section. Otherwise, there are only a few houses, with tents scattered here and there. During this period, the Inuit of Puvirnituk were drawn ever more deeply into the White economy, and their society adapted accordingly, as people learnt more about what it meant to participate in the institutions that accompanied the White world.

Not surprisingly, as the physical circumstances in which people lived changed, so too did their societal ones. With increased centralisation, people were brought together to live at a scale, and in circumstances that they had not heretofore experienced. Two families had generally used the area around Puvirnituk. However, with centralisation people came from other far-flung locations to settle. Balikci (1964) notes that when people first moved to Puvirnituk in the early 1950s there had been five camps based on kin groups and functioning as economic and religious units, each with its own lay preacher, camp leader, and boat captain.⁴ Upon arrival at the settlement, they clustered

³ A large regional hospital for the Hudson Coast was opened in Puvirnituk in 1987. Puvirnituk is also home to a midwives' programme.

⁴ He describes how families had pooled their resources in order to buy Peterhead boats.

their tents according to these pre-established groups, so that when Balikci was doing his fieldwork in 1958 these camps were the social units within which country foods were shared.⁵ Balikci (1964) argues at the same time, however, that the camp settlement patterns were breaking down as people started to rely on income from family allowance, carving, and casual employment. As a result, social structures and power relations were changing. The nuclear family was becoming the most important social unit for the acquisition, distribution, and consumption of food, taking the place of the traditional patterns of food sharing that had incorporated all members of a given camp prior to settlement (Balikci 1960 & 1964).⁶ At the same time, Balikci argues, people were developing new group identities based on the trading posts where they settled. Thus, those who traded in Port Harrison (known today as Inukjuak) to the south of Puvirnituk became known as Port Harrison Eskimos while those who settled near the HBC in Puvirnituk became known as Puvirnituk Eskimos, this despite the fact that there were long-standing familial links between the two populations (Balikci 1964).⁷ Mitchell (1995) mentions that people from Cape Smith moved to Puvirnituk in the mid-1950s. This occurred because of the government-sponsored surveys for tuberculosis that were taking place across the Eastern Arctic, when many people were being sent to southern sanatoria. At the same time, the HBC in Cape Smith closed in 1952 leaving open only

⁵ I had noticed groupings of tents somewhat removed from the HBC post in old photographs of the settlement which I saw during my stay in Puvirnituk. Of the two people I asked about it, one confirmed Balikci's assessment, while the other said this was because the people felt they had to stay away from the trading post so that their dogs would stay under control and not disturb the White people.

⁶ Kublu seemed to confirm Balikci's view. He told me in 2001 that most people in Puvirnituk had family to care and provide for them. Even in households where there is no one to provide country foods or there is no equipment for hunting or fishing, most people still receive country foods from other family members. He, for example, provided food for his wife's parents who were too old to go out.

⁷ Doubtless such appellations were used for administrative purposes, but Balikci does not indicate whether these new identities were self-imposed or used only for the benefit of the White authorities.

the post at Puvirnituk (Vallee 1967). In 1975, many of the families from Cape Smith moved back to their old hunting grounds to live in the new settlement of Akulivik; however, the links between the communities remain. Yet although Inukjuaq and Akulivik feature large in the extended families of people in Puvirnituk, social and kin relations spread throughout the region, up and down the Hudson Bay coast, across the Ungava Peninsula and across the waters to the Belcher Islands and Baffin Island⁸ (See Figure 3 in Chapter Three for more details.) As I shall discuss below, these social links between communities continue to influence the commoditisation of country foods in Nunavik.

With the centralisation of Inuit, the population of Puvirnituk increased exponentially. Vallee (1967) writes that in the early 1950s, when people were living in camps there were approximately 30 people in each camp⁹ comprised of a core *ilagiit*, or family group, along with other unrelated people who had married in, or had chosen to associate themselves with, the group. Thus, extrapolating from these numbers, there were approximately 150 Inuit when the community first came into being. By 1964, the population of Puvirnituk was approximately 500 Inuit and 30 Whites (Vallee 1967). In 1966, the combined population was 598 (Commission Scolaire Kativik n.d.a). Twenty years later, in 1986, the census showed that 868 people lived there, increasing to 1,091 in the 1991 census, 1,169 in the 1996 census (Employment and Training Department 1999) and 1,290 in the 2001 census. As you can see in Appendix 1, birth rates have been

⁸ People told me of how their disparate ancestors met when Inuit from Baffin Island were employees on whaling ships that passed along the Hudson Bay coast. Families from Puvirnituk would also travel north to Mansel Island and other areas along Hudson Strait to hunt for walrus and other marine mammals. Thus, people have relatives all over the region.

⁹ I can only take Balikci's (1964) word, and assume that there were five such camps.

steadily increasing and, as a result, there is a large bulge in the younger population with 735 people under the age of 25 in the 2001 census. This makes the need all the more pressing for people to find a means of earning a living.

Because Puvirnituk is a regional service centre, there is also a significant non-Inuit largely itinerant population in the community. By reviewing the employee rosters I calculated that in 2001, there were approximately 115 non-Inuit (excluding spouses and children) living there, working primarily with the various services that are located in the community, such as the school and the hospital. Although some of these people are long-term residents with committed links to the community, many are there for a short time. They bring with them behaviours, assumptions about, and relations with the Inuit population that reflect their transience. The presence of the large population of non-Inuit has exerted a powerful influence on the community. For some, the kinds of isolated and parallel communities that Brody (1983) so effectively described in the 1970s continue to exist today, with Inuit and non-Inuit communities living side by side, but rarely meeting, each with different ways of understanding and behaving in the world.¹⁰ Jamisie described one amusing example of this,

I live in a house where I have seen fifty people pass through in the last ten years. And they were all sorts. I live next door to the Northern [formerly the HBC] staff house. And they change staff every four months; so every four months we have new neighbours.

Nicole: *Do they come through? Through your house?*

Jamisie: *Some. Some are quite friendly. But some weren't. Like my next-door neighbour, she's living there since three months now. I see her all*

¹⁰ I do not want to suggest here that all non-Inuit are stand-offish. Many whom I met were truly interested in participating in northern life. Some were able to do so, but others, due to feelings of shyness or inadequacy, feelings with which I could wholly sympathize, did not know how to go about creating meaningful links with members of the Inuit community.

the time; I don't even know her name. There are people like that. They only come here to make money, and so on. ... I think our... he has a pet, eh? A dog. I think our dogs know more each other more than we do. [Both laugh] Yes! It's true! I've seen them sniffing on him. I mean they wanted to eat him at first. But they found out maybe he smelled like baby powder, or something, and the dogs are trained not even to bark at kids. And maybe he smelled like a ... maybe they're using baby oil on it. It's their "baby"! I heard her saying, "Hey, baby!"

People have had to accept the ways of the *Qallunaat*, and tolerate, for the most part, that they operate according to a somewhat different set of principles of behaviour and belief. For some Inuit residents, this provisional population is a source of income, people to whom they sell carvings, knives, food, and so on. But for others, they are a source of frustration, behaving in ways that some Inuit might deem to be objectionable, letting their dogs loose, hunting in ways that frighten the animals, bringing in drugs and alcohol, seducing local people, or simply being unfriendly. Some say that these people come north only to make money. Whether they are considered a malevolent or benign force, generally the non-Inuit population is viewed as transitory.¹¹ In response to my question about whether non-Inuit perceive the North differently from Inuit, Kublu observed,

*... people who like open country tend to stay up here more, and work longer here. We have people who have come up here for years and years and years now. Sometimes people tell stories, like, since he's been coming up here year after year after year for many years now, we think that he lives in this town. But when he will have to leave, for sure, he will be gone. Because there's very few *Qallunaat* that die in this region and are buried here. Most of them go back South and die with their relatives. I don't know how a *Qallunaaq* would view, would view this area, but that's the way I've seen it in the past.*

¹¹ In fact, some have made fun of me, saying that researchers from the South are like mosquitoes, coming with the warmth and disappearing at the first sign of cold weather.

Despite the generally temporary presence of individual non-Inuit, their impact on the Inuit population, as I have suggested throughout this thesis, has been far from passing.

If the population of Puvirnituk has changed significantly in the last fifty years, so too has its economy. A number of circumstances conspired to bring about this change. At the turn of the twentieth century, the caribou population fell dramatically, which meant that people turned increasingly to fox trapping in order to buy imported foodstuffs to replace the food that was no longer available (Balikci 1964). At first, as I mentioned, people had to travel to the post at Little Whale River. However, when trading posts moved into the area, they grew even more disposed to rely upon the goods they might get from the post, which in turn transformed the migration cycles of the people who were less inclined to travel inland with their families in search of food (Balikci 1964). The food shortage also contributed to changes in the economy. In the 1940s and 50s, people around Puvirnituk experienced periods of starvation. There are tales that a man and several children starved to death in about 1945 and, in 1955, some were begging for food and feared starvation (Balikci 1959 & 1964). As a result, people became increasingly reliant on relief payments (Vallee 1967). In the late 1950s, family allowance and relief to the needy was distributed by the federal government via the local trader (Balikci 1959). However, by the 1960s the federal and later the provincial governments moved into the settlement with all of the services and institutions that that entailed. And people came to rely more and more heavily on money to provide them with the necessities of life.

One of the ways that they earned this money was through carving soapstone sculptures, with Puvirnituk being amongst the most well-known sources of Inuit carvings. As sculpting grew in importance, so trapping fell as a source of income for Inuit in

Puvirniq. So, for example, in 1952-53, the HBC purchased \$740 worth of carvings. In 1957-1958 this had risen to \$48,000 (Balicki 1964), and by 1963 it totalled \$100,000 (Vallee 1967). In the meantime, fur purchases by the HBC decreased, from \$18,232 in 1952-1952 to \$5,388 in 1957-1958 (Balicki 1964). Yet all the while, the overall purchasing power of the Inuit was rising, so that the HBC served less as a trading post and became quite simply, a store. Accordingly, sales made to Inuit by the HBC rose from \$24,611 in 1952-1953 to \$95,629 in 1957-1958 (Balicki 1964).

People started selling sculptures to the HBC in Puvirniq in 1953 but, by 1958, with the help of the Oblate missionary living in the community, they created the Sculptors' Society of Povungnituk, which eventually became a Co-operative in 1960, and later branched out into other services¹² (Commission Scolaire Kativik n.d.a & n.d.c; Steinmann 1977). As Mitchell (1995) notes, Puvirniq's was amongst the earliest and most successful Co-operatives in Nunavik, and as a result, received copious amounts of support in its development from the federal and provincial governments.

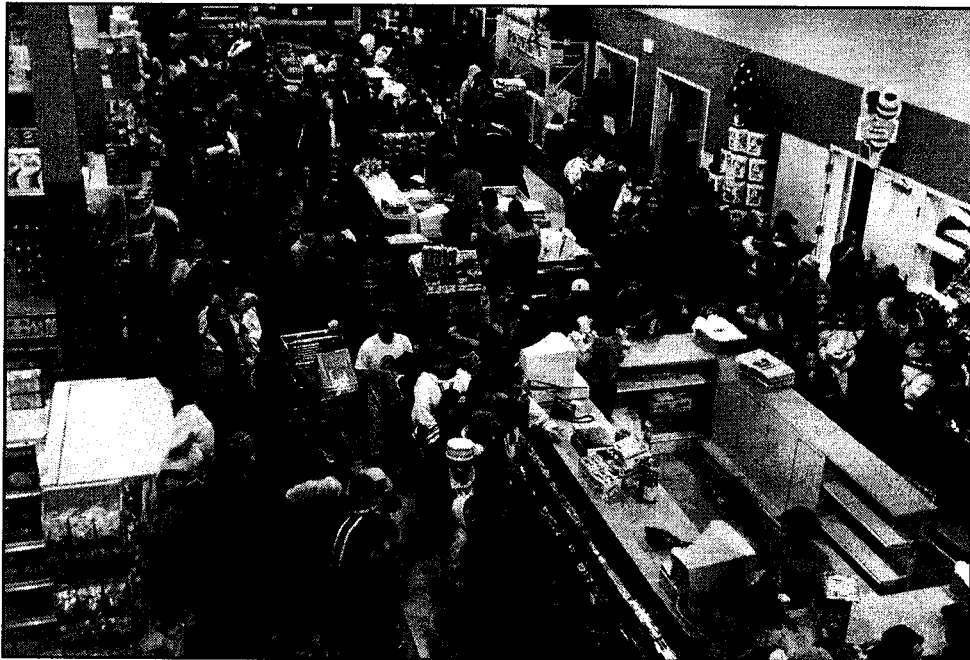
The history of modern Puvirniq cannot be separated from the development and community support of its Co-operative.¹³ It has been a source, not only of economic growth, but also of political action and community pride. At the opening of its new shopping centre in December 2002, after the Co-op had burned down in May of that year, Alashuak Nutaraluk, one of Puvirniq's founding Co-op members, said,

¹² For example amongst other things, the Co-op opened a Caisse Populaire (or credit union) in 1962 (which has since closed), operated a hunting camp for tourists (which is now privately owned), and today it runs the largest hotel in town and is an internet service provider.

¹³ For a detailed history and analysis of the Co-op movement in the Eastern Arctic, see Iglauer ([1962] 2000) and Mitchell (1995).



The building is beautiful. It's so fancy, and big too. It's just like in the South, but it's not run by *Qallunaat*. It's 100 per cent Inuit owned. ... This means a lot more freedom for Puvirnitug (in Nelson 2002, n.p.)



Early on, the government decided that Puvirnitug was to become essentially a model of what government-sponsored community development could be in the North

(Mitchell 1995). As a result, it was chosen to act as a regional centre on the Hudson Bay coast of Nunavik with a hospital, school, courthouse, and so on. Today, after Kuujjuaq, it is the second largest community in the region, and will only continue to grow.

Puvirnitug has the second highest rate of full-time jobs in Nunavik after Kuujjuaq, with 14 per cent of all the full-time jobs in the region (Chabot 2001). Despite this, however, smaller communities have higher rates of full-time employment relative to their populations, because there are fewer people to take the jobs necessary to maintain northern communities. According to a study conducted by the Employment and Training Department of the Kativik Regional Government,¹⁴ in 1998, Puvirnitug had 25 employers who provide 322 regular full-time or part-time jobs (1999).¹⁵ Of those 322 jobs, 22 per cent were with private businesses or the Co-op, 75 per cent was with public and para-public organisations, and 3 per cent was with non-profit establishments (see Table 1 below). Of these jobs, approximately 65 per cent were held by beneficiaries under the JBNQA.

Table 1
Puvirnitug, Distribution by type of jobs, status & sex

1998	Regular full-time	Regular Part-time	Seasonal	Occasional (casual)
Total occupied jobs	244	78	7	20
Held by beneficiaries	160	71	7	16
Held by non-beneficiaries	84	7	0	4
Held by men	147	50	7	9
Held by women	97	28	0	11

Source: Employment and Training Department (1999).

¹⁴ The Kativik Regional Government was set up following the signing of the JBNQA. It has a number of administrative responsibilities for Nunavik such as employment, welfare, and the HSP. It is a public body, charged with representing the interests of all residents of Nunavik rather than only the Inuit.

¹⁵ Compare this with Vallee's findings in 1962 that the community provided 12 full-time jobs (1967).

According to the same study, the average household income in Puvirnituk in 1991 was \$44,204, compared with the province as a whole at \$40,826. To understand these numbers properly you should know that due to a housing shortage, households in Nunavik contain more people than in the province as a whole, with an average of 4.3 people per household compared to 3 people per household in southern Quebec (Société d'habitation du Québec 2001). Often this includes several generations, which means that there will be several residents with wage incomes under one roof, and explains why household incomes in Nunavik may appear surprisingly high in comparison to the province of Quebec as a whole.

Individual incomes have been growing. The average individual income in Puvirnituk was \$19,626 in the census of 1991, \$20,132 in 1996, and \$25,521 in 2001, compared with the Quebec average of \$29,385 (Employment and Training Department 1999; Statistics Canada 2003). Yet, at the same time, as I stated earlier, the cost of living in Nunavik as a whole is greater than in the South, with household products costing approximately 78 per cent more in Nunavik compared to Quebec City (Duhaime *et al.* 2000).

The unemployment rate in Puvirnituk for 1991 census was 17.6 per cent. In 1996 it was 13.5 per cent, and by 2001 it was 11.2 per cent, compared with the average for Quebec as a whole of 8.2 per cent (Employment and Training Department 1999; Statistics Canada 2003). There were approximately 100 welfare recipients in 1998 (Employment and Training Department 1999); however, I was told informally that these numbers are decreasing.

It would seem then, that the economic situation in Puvirnitug, as far as wage employment and income are concerned is improving. Yet, with a growing and increasingly young population, there is a mounting need to create employment.¹⁶ In fact, what the statistics do not reveal is the extent to which people use not only formal but informal ways of earning ready cash, for instance, selling products such as *ulus*, mittens, sculptures, or even contraband material. The sale of country foods basically fits into the category of informal income. Those involved in it generally do so on an intermittent and informal basis, as theirs or the buyers' needs arise. Most are hunters or fishers without regular jobs who are obliged to adopt a mixed strategy for earning money, taking temporary or seasonal work, that will enable them to continue to spend time on the land and to meet the daily expenses of life.

November 22, 2001

Last night, at Susie and Zachary's, Zachary asked what I was studying. When I said that I was interested in selling country foods, their daughter responded immediately, "But people shouldn't do that." This morning, when I went by there again at about 9:30, Zachary was just coming in, having gone out early this morning to hunt. He had a cooler full of something — I couldn't see what — and he threw a ptarmigan in the furnace room — it was small and white. Amazing he could see it in the snow.

So this is something of the community in which country foods are commoditised. Ideally, the morality that governs the vernacular economy dictates that people must not sell country foods. But they do. The foods are exchanged for money in various ways, each taking place at different scales and, therefore, involving somewhat different levels

¹⁶ See Appendix 1 for a more detailed information on the population and employment statistics of Puvirnitug.

of commoditisation with different reactions by community members as a result. At one end of the commoditisation spectrum hunters are paid for their produce, but the consumers do not pay for the food. At the other end, producers are straightforward merchants. What is clear is that at some level, what is important to people in these various processes is not that the food is exchanged for money, but who is exchanging with whom. Depending on the configurations of these various relations, the sale of country foods is either acceptable or unacceptable. So, it is to these various configurations that I shall now turn.

The Commoditisation of Country Foods in Puvirnitug

As I discussed in the previous chapter, Inuit have been involved in the commoditisation of country foods in one form or another since the whalers arrived in the North during the nineteenth century. Since that time, they seem to have grown accustomed to trading in country foods with White people. At first it might have been through a straight exchange of goods. However, as the northern economy evolved the exchange came also to include money. Today in Puvirnitug, the commoditisation of country foods incorporates various forms of exchange. Some reproduce past relations, such as the sale of food to non-Inuit individuals and the institutions that people perceive to be embodiments of the White world. Others represent wholly new forms of exchange that involve trade between Inuit. As you will see, the former is far less controversial than the latter.

The vernacular economy of Inuit is predicated on notions of common property and reciprocity, both between humans and the environment and amongst humans.

Underlying these processes is the belief that through sharing, people ensure their own and others' survival. Through sharing, the environment provides the necessities of life. If sharing stops, so their very survival is threatened. As a result, most people to whom I spoke in Puvirnituk expressed dismay at the notion of Inuit selling country foods to Inuit. Such a thing would break with all of the moral precepts that have held their society together in extreme circumstances. Everyone to whom I spoke said that they would never sell country foods to another Inuk, but rather, would give it away. Such sharing, as I discussed in Chapter Three, is varied, and extends to many within the community who might otherwise go without country foods. So, people share amongst friends and relatives. If they go out with others to hunt or fish, and the others are not successful, they do not return empty-handed, because those who *have* been successful will share with them. That is what they were taught—always to share—and that is what they continue to do. Yet, while they continue to be shared, country foods *are* being sold in the community. How this is done, and what it means to people proved to be more complex than at first glance.

What follows is somewhat messy because life is messy. It rarely fits into clearly defined boxes. I have tried, to put some order to this mess, but, precisely because I wish to respect life's variety, I have also given room to the contradictions I heard and saw. Though we may be conditioned by scores of unspoken impulses born from what we have chosen to call "culture", we are also each individuals with our own set of beliefs and desires, born from experience. So there is no monolithic Inuk who reacts with one voice to the commoditisation of country foods. I came to understand that the many voices that I heard reflected the variety of responses people had developed as they tried to make

sense of themselves in the world, as they tried to understand how their way of living before the coming of settlements fits into the world in which they now find themselves.

The Commoditisation of Country Foods to Individual Qallunaat

Although the various regulations I discussed in Chapter Four are designed officially to prohibit the sale of (uncertified) country foods to non-beneficiaries, such sales do, in fact, take place. Non-Inuit who are in the community to work for one reason or another buy such things as fish or caribou from local hunters or fishers. So teachers, hospital employees, people working on construction crews, people working on the sealift boats all represent a potential client base for Inuit wanting to exchange country foods for other scarce commodities. In most cases, this exchange involves money. However, in other instances the exchange may involve a trade of goods. One person told me that, in the past, the construction crew's kitchen would trade ham or other prepared southern meats for caribou. Sometimes the trade involves alcohol. In all cases, the sale or trade is informal and irregular, and takes place as the opportunity arises or when the producers are in need of cash or the particular good being exchanged.

The sale of country foods to non-Inuit can occur in two ways. Either someone will come to people's doors asking if they would like to buy some Arctic Char or caribou, or else the non-Inuit will have regular suppliers who, upon a successful hunt or fishing trip, and after taking meat for their own families, will ask their regular clients whether they would like to buy some country food. In the first case, the producers are generally strangers to their non-Inuit customers, appearing to them as itinerant salespeople. In the latter case, they are a known entity. In fact, I was told by one such customer, that when

she bought caribou from her regular supplier, the person who sold her the meat would tell her about where they had got the animal, the circumstances in which it was killed, and so on. She felt that she was getting the story of the meat, and so a piece of the place, just as she felt Inuit would do amongst themselves. So she felt that despite the exchange of money, there was also an exchange of relations in her purchases of country foods. At the same time, however, she also expressed the thought that her supplier was interested in selling her meat, not on a regular basis, but when the producer needed cash for other things.

That these non-Inuit customers are generally treated by Inuit as a source of needed goods is simply a continuation of the forms of relations that have existed between Inuit and non-Inuit since the latter first started to appear in the North. On a social level, the relations between the two groups are fairly distant, which allows for money as a medium of exchange for goods and services. Davidie, who periodically sells country foods to *Qallunaat*, said that when he returns from fishing and he is unloading his catch, White people come up to him, and even though he would be prepared to *give* to them, they ask, “how much, how much, how much?” He observed that they always assume that things can be got only with money. Even when he’s willing to give it away, they ask, “how much”.

White people fall into an odd category. As they are accustomed to buying and selling, so Inuit have grown accustomed to buying from and selling to them. This is not the exclusive form of relations between the two groups, however. For those non-Inuit who establish social relations with Inuit in the community, they may be treated by many as *members* of that community. So, I was given meat after outings with people, or so,

when they had meat to spare, I would receive a call asking if I wanted some, and so, I could walk uninvited into people's houses and share in their meals. But non-Inuit with no social links with the community may be viewed as outsiders, and thereby fall into another category of being and behaviour. This has led to some rather aberrant behaviour, as I was to find out.

December 12, 2001

I just saw all sorts of huge Arctic Char — two kamotiks worth — come in to the community meat house. It was locked. They came from between Akulivik and Ivujivik. "When you throw a net in, within seconds there are fish," the man told me. They'd been gone for "weeks". A week??? I don't know. It wasn't clear... As I left, the guy said they'd be for sale.



I wrote the words above in my journal rather innocently, thinking that I should make note of the commoditisation of country food in action—ever the studious observer. Yet that one event actually spoke of many hidden things. That the community meat house¹⁷ should be locked when I visited it that cold December morning, came as a surprise to me. I was under the impression that it was open to people at all times. I had approached it rather timidly, thinking that I did not want to intrude—ever my feeling—and worried somehow that by visiting the meat house I

¹⁷ The community meat house is where meat bought by the HSP is stored. When it is available, people may go there to pick up country foods provided by the HSP.

was treading on territory that was not my own. After trying the door, and finding to my secret relief that it was locked, I turned to see the arrival of the two kamotiks bearing fish, accompanied by several men of various ages. The oldest amongst them, a man whom I knew was recognised by the community as a serious hunter, looked on in silence as I engaged one of the younger men in conversation. It had turned cold, so I was curious about what it was like to be on the fishing trip. I wanted to know what they would do with all those fish and was trying to do my research in what I thought was a friendly, informal way. As I asked my questions, all the while the older man threw the large, frozen Arctic Char into the doorway of the meat house, listening, but never saying a word. When, as I was leaving, the younger man said that some of the fish would be for sale, I idly thought he assumed I was looking to buy fish. Because I did not want to intrude—that phrase should be on my gravestone—I left them to their work, thinking that I would return to the meat house another day to see what it was like.

This I did, not many days later. I was lucky to find the door unlocked and discovered the manager of the Hunter Support Programme was inside cutting mattak for the Christmas and New Year's festivities that were soon to be held in the community gymnasium. We chatted about this and that, and then I asked whether he might show me around a bit. There was more than one building, and I was curious

to see what they were like, and what they contained. He was somewhat hesitant, which seemed curious to me, as he had agreed some weeks earlier to show me around.

Thinking to excuse myself for making the request, I mentioned that I would have shown myself around, but had been unable to do so since the buildings were locked.

This surprised me, I said, as I had been under the impression that they were always open. Ignorance is bliss. Unbeknownst to me, as he eventually explained, my comments were poking at events that had caused some distress within the community.



There were two reasons why the meat houses were locked, the first of which I shall tell you now, the second of which I shall reserve for a later time. It seemed people had discovered that some of the younger men in the community had been taking Arctic Char from the houses—char that was supposed to be reserved for those in need and for beneficiaries under the JBNQA—to sell to non-Inuit in town. Because of this, the HSP made a rule that only two Arctic Char per household would be allowed, and had decided, moreover, that when there was food in them, the meat houses would only be open for a specific period at lunchtime and at the end of the afternoon. Otherwise they would be locked. Later, in discussions I had with others in the community about the selling of country foods, they mentioned that this had also happened with people's private meat supplies.

Behind each house in Puvirnituk is a shed where people tend to store various things, including country foods. Because people generally did not steal, these sheds have

tended to be open. After all, if, as so many told me, people had only to ask for meat and they would receive it—if it were available and could be spared—why would anybody have to steal it? I was told, though, that some of the younger generation had started to take fish without informing their “owners”, in order to sell them to non-Inuit.¹⁸ As a result, some had taken to locking their sheds.

In earlier times we never needed to lock any doors or secure any personal belongings because everything was shared. Our elders told us stealing was a very bad thing to do. As children, we were told that if we took something we were not supposed to have when no one was at home, a big hand would appear and grab us. Communities had different superstitions to discourage stealing. Today, it is still like that in some communities. When we enter a house where no one is home, we simply make tea and wait. This is considered one of the ways to become part of the family. The host feels esteemed and valued for her or his generosity. In bigger communities, locking doors has become a new custom, but this doesn't mean you are not welcome when your hosts are not at home (Hanson, n.d., n.p.).

The presence of a largely separate community of non-Inuit has had the effect of changing age-old patterns of behaviour. As people have told me, “we did not steal until the White man came”.

If people have taken to stealing country foods to sell to individual non-Inuit, whom they perceive to be outside of the circle of morality that governs relations within Inuit communities, they have also extended this practice to the institutions that they perceive to be foreign outcroppings. So, I was told, people have stolen fish to sell to the hospital in town. The hospital chef, like the other itinerant workers in the community who might have bought country foods from people coming to sell at their doors, probably knew nothing about this, being excluded from some of the goings on in the community.

¹⁸ Collings, Wenzel, Condon (1998) have also noted that theft of country foods is a new appearance in the Central Arctic.

Such exclusion is partly because they lack the linguistic skills to understand what was being talked about openly on the community radio and partly because they lacked the social relations with Inuktitut speakers in town to learn that such thefts were taking place.¹⁹ It is such distances—linguistic, social, ultimately moral—that permit the sale of country foods by Inuit to non-Inuit

The Inuulitsivik Health Centre

The Inuulitsivik Health Centre is a major institution, not only in Puvirnituk, but also on the Hudson Bay coast. It has services that are not available at other communities on that coast, which means that it provides extensive health care to people all along coast. These include: a pharmacist, psychologists, mid-wives, an audiologist, a dental hygienist, and access to various other medical specialists. It has beds for 17 short-term and eight long-term patients. Given its specialised services, it has a large number of patients travelling from other communities for treatment at the hospital. For this reason, it is committed to providing country foods both to the residents in the hospital and to those eating in the hospital cafeteria.²⁰ Thus, it tries to keep a supply of country foods on hand.

Like all the sales of country food that take place in Puvirnituk, such sales are irregular, with people contacting the hospital to ask whether it is interested in buying country foods generally only when they need money. In fact, because the hospital has

¹⁹ Because of the power differential between non-Inuit and Inuit, Inuit have also historically tended not to let *Qallunaat* know about things with which they do not agree. Qitsualik (1998) explains that *ilira*, or passive silence and compliance, was a reaction that Inuit developed to deal with such situations in order to avoid conflict. Thus, despite the fact that many Inuit knew that non-Inuit sometimes buy stolen goods, they did not tell the non-Inuit community of this problem.

²⁰ It also tries to provide country foods for people who have been sent for more specialised treatment to Montreal.

been unable to find a steady supply of meat, it has chosen, in the past, to buy from the country foods shop in Kuujjuaq, because at least then it knows that the quantity and the quality of the meat is assured. When I asked the person responsible for buying country foods who supplied him with meat, he did not know their names, which suggests that unlike the other institutions in the community that buy country foods, the hospital appears not to have more intimate relations with people producing country foods in Puvirnituk. This might, in part, explain its lack of success in ensuring a steady supply of meat.

The Catering Company

Another institution involved in buying country foods in Puvirnituk is the catering company that operates out of the Co-op hotel. It provides meals for patrons of the hotel as well as for members of the community. Though it has been buying country foods for some time, it has only recently become more deliberate and formal in its transactions, for example weighing the fish before paying for them. Before that, fish sales were more informal, with the fishers receiving whatever amount they needed at the time. So, for example, if they needed \$50 they would sell the bag of fish for that amount; but if they needed less, the very same bag would cost less. This suggests that the people supplying country foods were not out to make a profit. They did not aim to make money from the sales of country foods, but rather, to meet other, more immediate needs. The money was just a means to an end.

As the comparative price list in Appendix 2 indicates, the catering company pays the highest amount to the suppliers of country foods of any organisation in Puvirnituk. It was not the suppliers of country foods who asked that the prices be increased, but rather

the company itself that made this decision. It did so because the owners decided that this only seemed fair, given that the company was making the best revenues in town from the resale of these foods. The catering company also felt, in making this decision, that it was providing important support to local hunters and fishers. Although some of the people who supply country foods to the company do so only when they need money, others are more regular and dependable. These are the people upon whom the company relies, buying food from them when they come asking, or contacting them to go out and get country foods when in need. One of the company owners said that he tried particularly to encourage people who face otherwise difficult circumstances, for example, buying from young men who are adopted.²¹ This, he felt, encouraged them to hunt rather than to steal. He does not say, “yes” to every person who comes wanting to sell country foods, otherwise he would be broke, but he says “yes” when he sees that the person needs the money, whether or not the company actually needs the meat. Despite the owners’ public-spirited approach to buying country foods, they also recognise that there is a level of resentment within the community about selling country foods to them. One of the owners told me, “...a lot of them, they would never sell here, because they know it’s to make a profit. While they sell at Mikikkatiit²² [HSP], they know it’s going back into the community, you know.” This view is reflected in the findings of Chabot (2001) who calculates that the vast majority of the country food sold in Nunavik in 1995 went to the

²¹ Inuit have a widespread practice of adopting the children of friends and family. Such adoptions are not based on anonymity, as they are in southern Canada. The children, the biological and the adoptive parents all talk openly of their various relations.

²² The importance of country foods to people is reflected in the very name that people in Puvirnituk chose to give to their Hunter Support Programme. *Mikikkatiit* means “eaters of raw meat”.

HSP.²³ This suggests, she writes, that people are reticent to sell country foods on the private market. Part of this reticence, whether conscious or not, may reflect a point raised by Gudeman,

It is not alienation from the means of production which is socially divisive, but rather the dependence on impersonal market forces unrelated to indigenous social control, the separating of economy from society by divorcing resource allocation, work arrangement, and product disposition from expressions of social obligation. And to be sure, the consequent loss of socially guaranteed subsistence, as well" (1986, p. 78).

This suggests that for some in Puvirnituq, the HSP falls into a different category of institutional exchange, one in which control remains under the hands of the Inuit, and so, one that is less threatening to the social structures that have governed the exchange of country foods.

Mikikkatit (The Hunter Support Programme)

As I discussed in Chapter Four, the Hunter Support Programme was created as a result of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. So, it falls into an odd category. On the one hand, it is just one more institution that has been introduced to the North that reflects ways of perceiving human relations and how to operate in the world that is not indigenous. Formal, mass institutions with budgets and bureaucrats were not part of Inuit society, which functioned on a far less codified basis. Yet on the other hand, the HSP is the offspring of Inuit land claims, and so, at another level, there is a sense of

²³ In 1995 she found that 450 tonnes of country food were sold in Nunavik. Of these, 83.3 per cent were sold to the HSP, 4.5 per cent were sold to the Co-ops, and 12.3 per cent were sold to Nunavik Arctic Foods (Makivik's company). Because they are so difficult to calculate, Chabot did not take informal sales of country foods into account in these numbers. Thus, sales of the kind made to the catering company did not figure in her calculations.

ownership of the programme that must surely never have been there with many other alien institutions. This means, I think, that it fits into a strange category: it is both a creature born from the anonymous space out there beyond the regions generally inhabited by Inuit, and it is their own issue, linked to the people and places they come from. As such, it treads a fine line. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the commoditisation of country foods. As the first, and most widespread instance of commoditisation of these foods amongst Inuit in Nunavik, I discovered it was the cause of some debate amongst people, which is, to varying degrees, a manifestation of the contradictory nature of the programme.

Although the HSP in its current form was legally established in 1982, Puvirnituk, because of its rejection of the JBNQA, was hesitant to take on any of the creatures created under the Agreement. As a result, it did not adopt the HSP until some years later after people in the community had observed what the programme was doing for people in other communities and decided that they too wanted to have access to it.

Each community in Nunavik receives funding based on its population, which it

December 19, 2001

When I spoke to Alurut a couple of days ago he said that he had a woven mat made of branches that he'd bought from the HSP. His wife doesn't know how to make it, only elders. It's used when sleeping on snow: first the mat, then a tarp, then a skin, and then the sleeper.

then uses to support activities that take place on the land, such as providing people with subsidised materials to help people to hunt, training to young people to give them the

skills for spending time on the land, and buying country foods from people in the community as well as from other communities, which are then available generally free of

charge.²⁴ When food is available at the HSP, people may go there and help themselves. The notion that the food at the HSP is given away is important to people. Imalie said she was against Makivik's project to sell country foods, because if people start selling food, then "it's just for money". But she felt that the HSP was acceptable because the hunters were not paid for the animal, but for their gas and their work. The food was given away freely. So for her it appeared that the HSP is simply a new extension of the practice of sharing. This seems to be supported by the fact that although some people sell country foods to the programme, others periodically give it, free of charge. Although I was to discover that there were limits to this view, in some instances it appears that the notion that the HSP is an extension of age-old sharing practices has sometimes extended to non-Inuit. A non-Inuk resident who had been in the community for several years told me that she had been going South for the Christmas holidays one time and was keen to bring some Arctic Char to her parents. But there was none in the community to be bought. The only place she could find it was at the HSP meat house. She went on to explain the situation and asked whether she might buy some. At first, the person there told her that as a non-beneficiary she was not entitled to the fish. But she persisted. Eventually she was given a fish, but the person would not take any payment.

When the HSP in Puvirnituq first started buying country foods from people it sent out a blanket request, saying that it would buy from anyone. For a number of reasons, however, it soon changed this strategy. First, people started complaining that some were killing animals, taking only the parts they were able to sell to the HSP, and leaving the

²⁴ In 2001, the HSP had a budget of \$405,492.29. Of that it allocated \$65,000, or approximately 16 per cent, to buying country food. This included \$60,000 for buying food locally and \$5,000 for resale or exchange between communities.

rest of the carcass behind. Or they were killing inappropriately, for example, taking skinny animals or females, who should be left to reproduce. Or else, they were simply stealing food from people's shacks in order to sell them to the HSP. The administrators of the programme also found that buying food by the pound was more expensive than hiring people for the day to go out and get animals for the HSP. For these reasons, the municipality decided that when it needed country food it would rather hire specific

December 13, 2001

This morning I was watching six skidoos assemble on the river in front of my kitchen windows. At lunch I found out that they were going out for the HSP to get caribou for the Christmas feast that will be taking place here. ... [T]hey're going out 'till about Saturday. And I feel so jealous! I feel as though I just haven't spent enough time there, out there away from this place, the lights and noise and hustle of town. And now looking out upon that sky I want all the more to be out there enjoying it all.

people to go and get food, and where possible, it would hire them for the day, rather than by the pound.²⁵ In this way, the HSP avoided the indiscriminate killing of animals, discouraged the

theft of country foods, and cut

down on its expenses. Because the funds for the HSP are limited, the municipality has also devised schemes to stretch its funding a bit further, for instance, sometimes it will

resell food, such as ptarmigan, buying it for \$5 per bird and selling it back to the community for

October 16, 2001

When I made my presentation to the municipal council tonight about my research interests [one of the councillors] said that the older people think that the municipal council is not helping enough. But they have a limited budget. "Don't believe them," he said, when they complain that the council isn't helping them. ... The HSP hires experienced hunters without permanent jobs, but the budget is limited. There's never enough money.

²⁵ Although the HSP tries to hire hunters by the day, at times, when people's availability is limited or food is difficult to obtain, it does buy country foods by the pound.

\$2.50 each.²⁶

Duhaime (1990) contends that the HSP acts, in some ways, as a continuation of the relationship between hunters and the HBC in that hunters are able, through the programme, to have access to money to buy industrial goods, but the relationship complements subsistence activities and promotes autonomy and independence.

However, many people to whom I spoke about the programme pointed out, since the HSP's funds are restricted and available only to a few on a periodic basis, it does not provide people with an income sufficient to meet all their needs. In 2001, for example, the HSP provided approximately 27 people with some form of income through the sale of country foods to the programme. It simply cannot provide enough money to live off. Rather, it serves as no more than a supplement to people's incomes. In fact, Jamisie argued that the HSP was a form of government assistance that resembled that given to subsidise farmers in the production of food.²⁷

Davidie, a man in his fifties who sells country food to the HSP, told me that the fact that funds to the HSP were limited was, in fact, a good thing. As he saw it, if the HSP were to provide country foods for the community on an on-going basis, people

²⁶ In the past, the HSP has also bought and resold *mattak* from Iqaluit and mussels from Salluit. This suggests that although the HSP may be viewed as a hybrid, in which country foods are cast somewhere between the gift and commodity, in some instances the food has become a pure commodity.

²⁷ Chabot (2001) found that the money provided by the HSP only covers on average 20 per cent of the costs of production of country foods for hunters and fishers. This means that people must cover the other 80 per cent using other means. More than 80 per cent of the households of two of the Nunavik communities involved in her research in 1998 earned less than \$2,000 from the HSP, and very few households earned more than \$5,000. This leads her to suggest that the HSP serves less as an alternative source of income for the poor and more as a subsidy to those who are already wealthy enough to own the equipment that allows them to go out on the land. All the same, Weihs, Higgins, and Boulton (1993) point out, such a form of financial support – one that invests in production as opposed to, for example, social assistance, which is designed to support consumption – has some unmeasured benefits that spill out into the community. Each dollar spent has a multiplier effect on a household's income through the resulting production and distribution of food.

would get lazy. Because the food is only occasionally available, people are still obliged to go out hunting for themselves. Moreover, he added,

When the Hunter Support would ask for the meat from all the hunters it would make difficulty for others to get meat. It's not right when it's all the people who are able to sell the meat to Hunter Support. It's open only for one or two weeks during the fall.

So he argued that the Hunter Support Programme in its current form was able to avoid affecting the system of food sharing that has been at the basis of the vernacular economy of Inuit.

Certainly, the HSP was conceived of as a way to subsidise hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering, while perpetuating the notion of sharing the produce from those activities. In fact, one might argue that the HSP is simply one of many other newly-introduced institutionalised approaches to sharing, for example, people now give food to other church members, yet there is some debate about the ways in which the programme has affected food sharing. Chabot (2001) and Kishigami (2000) both assert that the HSP allows food sharing relations to continue; however, Kishigami points out that the patterns of sharing have changed, so that people are no longer so reliant on pre-established reciprocal obligations to share food. Moreover, with changes in the economy and way of

November 14, 2001

Samuel told me last night that the HSP had got Arctic Char, but they were all gone the next day. Jamisie gave me one for dinner last night. He said he normally didn't take from the HSP, but now he has no time to go out. The HSP freezer has more food in winter and less in summer 'cause people can get it themselves, and less in the fall 'cause people can't travel on the land with skidoos, though women are ice fishing right now. I guess they used their four-wheelers. The Arctic Char are in the lakes over the winter and in the bay in the summer, so now people are netting them in the lakes.

living amongst
the Inuit, some
young men are
now no longer
participating in
or contributing

to the vernacular economy, which means that they take food from the HSP without contributing any to the community. Such forms of behaviour would have been unlikely a generation ago. Yet, with the advent of wage labour, the HSP has served, in part, to provide food for people who might otherwise not have the time to go out and get it themselves.²⁸

- However, not everyone in the community shares the view that the HSP has generally not affected food sharing. During a conversation I had with Alurut—who has periodically sold country food to the HSP—he expressed some reservations,

Nicole: OK. OK. One of the things I was wondering about, when the HSP first came in, and people started paying for country food through the HSP, did people worry about that at all? Did they —

Alurut: Yes. Yes. For some, the first time when we was making a decision if we should get the Hunter Support money, some people didn't agree. Like myself, I didn't agree to get the Hunter Support money at that time.

Nicole: How come?

Alurut: 'Cause I was scared to lose our tradition. Like, we share our catch. That's our tradition. We've done that for thousands of years, like, our ancestors. [Nicole: Yeah.] And they never buy or exchange any food. So I was scared that if we started to use Hunter Support money when it would be starting to pay for food, I was scared that we were going to lose our tradition.

Nicole: And, what do you think?

Alurut: It's like that.

Nicole: You think that's happening.

²⁸ Despite the fact that those who, in the past, might have been actively involved in getting country foods are not contributing as much as they might, according to analysis done by Duhaime, Chabot, and Gaudreault (2001) of data from Nunavik collected in 1992, the majority of people who take meat from the HSP tend to eat less country foods than other households in Nunavik or live in households in which there are no males or male heads. Thus, it would seem, that the HSP is generally serving its intended purpose to provide country foods to those people who would otherwise not have access to it.

*Alurut: Yeah, it's happening. Slow but sure. Slow but sure. Like, when a hunter catches lots of fish, if he doesn't want to sell it, he's going to divide it to **anybody**. But now, right now, even if he got **lots** of fish, if some people, if some Hunter Support or Pitsituuq²⁹ or Co-op wants to buy from him, he's not going to give **anybody**! He's not going to share with **anybody**, because he prefers to have money. That's how we're losing our—it's happening. That's what I fear at **that** time. I was against getting Hunter Support money for that.*

For Alurut, the HSP was the beginning of a slippery slope. I asked him about selling country foods in Puvirnituaq and he responded ruefully,

They're going, for sure, they're going to start to do that in the coming years. Because the Hunter Support Programme started that in the past years. It started. That's what I was afraid of. It's going slowly but slowly, and Inuit are going to start to sell to their fellow Inuit people.

December 4, 2001

I asked Kublu today why they were taught to share food by the elders. He said because animals and food are scarce. They don't always have it, so they must share it. In the past people said life will change; people will not have respect for each other and people will go hungry. He said today hunters share less. They listen to the radio and wait to hear if country food is wanted by the HSP [and then they go out hunting]. But they need the money, he said.

Others to whom I spoke expressed a similar opinion: that with the advent of the HSP people shared less than they had in the past. Despite this concern, people recognise that they face a predicament. Though they try to maintain the tradition of sharing, they also acknowledge that hunters *need* that money in order to be able to continue to hunt, fish, and gather. As Jamisie put it,

²⁹ This is a business that sells Arctic Char. I discuss it later in this chapter.

... we try to stick to the traditional culture and our traditions in sharing food. But also, because the fact that jobs are hard to come by, and the Hunter Support dollars are well accepted, not totally depended upon yet, because a lot of people still share, traditionally. Those who have food give it away for free for those who need. And that's something we're still proud of doing. But if we can get paid for doing it, well then, that's acceptable too, since there's no other work—not too much other work to be done for a lot of people.

So, according to some, the requirement for money is not to the exclusion of sharing. As one person said to me as a non-Inuk, “If you want to buy, I’ll sell it to you. If you’re asking for it, I’ll give it to you.” And as for the exchange of country foods between Inuit, Benjamin, an older man who sells to the HSP, said that although he sells to the programme, that does not prevent him from sharing with others: the shack where he stores meat is always open to anyone who needs it, and when he goes hunting or fishing with others, he still shares with those who accompany him.³⁰ However, the sharing has, perhaps of necessity, adjusted to the modern economy. So Alurut told me that when he goes hunting or fishing with someone who intends to sell part of the catch, he takes less than that to which he might otherwise be entitled. He does so because, since he is earning a salary while the other is only allowed to sell because he is on welfare, he thinks it is only fair that his companion should receive more of the catch. Despite the fact that money will potentially change hands over the produce of hunting or fishing, sharing *does* continue.³¹

³⁰ Interestingly, Oakes and Riewe (1997) discuss how in Nunavut, where people sell meat to the Hunters’ and Trappers’ Organisations (HTO), which then processes and resells it, some people will sell meat to the HTO in secret in order to avoid losing face.

³¹ A non-Inuk told me that he had heard that some people from Puvirnituk had been given permission to kill an ailing musk-ox that had wandered unaccountably into their area – musk-oxen are unknown in those parts. He asked one of the hunters for the skin, saying that he would buy it from him. When the hunter returned, he offered the man only a quarter of the skin. This was all he had. As four hunters, they had divided things equally, so the hunter had received his share of the skin. Unfortunately, under the circumstances, my informant did not wish to buy the skin.

December 6, 2001

Lily, the woman who came to our house and asked for food, said it was difficult to get food here from people, but others tell me they share. Where's the truth? Is it Briggs'* emblem phenomenon? Certainly people come to Suula's, they come to Jamisie and Maggie's, and they get food - as much store-bought as country food. But Kublu told me it's done less than it was in the past, now that the HSP is in place.

As I mentioned above, Davidie saw the fact that the HSP only offers food to people intermittently as a good thing, because it prevented people from getting lazy. Not everybody shares this view. As Nutaraluk Iyaituk expresses it, some see the HSP, not only as promoting laziness, but as eroding the very core of Inuit culture,

This Hunter Support Programme is eating away at the culture of the past. It's difficult now to find anybody who's willing to finance his own hunting trip. If they have to go a great distance, they'd rather wait for money from the Hunter Support Programme. It's not a way of life. You can't call anybody a hunter if he waits and refuses to go hunting until he gets paid. People still take trips close to the village to do ice jigging, but if they have to go hunting for walrus their supplies are financed by the Hunter Support Programme and they are paid for every day they are out. They waste a lot of animals because, in order to get paid more, they stay out much longer than they would really need to. They kill too much, much more than the village requires so that they can get paid. I can't understand why this programme was introduced today. It should have been introduced a long time ago when our parents were poor and in need of help. People even starved to death in those days. It's an insult; it's destroying our culture. People used to help other people by sharing their catch and going out on long trips not only for themselves but for the entire village. I feel that people should be independent, but there is now too much dependency on southern money, even for hunting. Sure, there are people who need help, the widows and old people, but we get more than enough for them. It's not the way of life for Inuit to be paid to go hunting (in Mitchell 1995, pp. 286-287).

* Briggs (1997) provides an insightful discussion about symbols of ethnicity. She makes the distinction between cultural traits, which are generally unconsciously expressed, and cultural emblems, which those traits become in situations when people are under pressure.

Others echo fears of such dependency, what Paine (1977b) has labelled “welfare colonialism”. Some in the community, seeing the introduction of codified institutions that are supposed to mimic informal ones, claim that they cannot be anything but pale imitations of the original, imitations that bring with them hidden costs. As Malachi said of the HSP,

... it's taking away the spirit of the people. Initially the fish that they bought was supposed to be for widows and people that didn't have anything. But in recent years it's been fish for everybody. And it's free. Because you're a beneficiary, from the Hunter Support Programme, once these fishers have been out, everybody can go and get fish without paying for it. And that's killing the spirit of the people.

Nicole: *Why?*

Malachi: *Because they don't want to do anything anymore!*

Nicole: *You mean, they're not going out and fishing?*

Malachi: *No. Otherwise, they would try. Otherwise they would try and live. They would try to do something on their own. But what is happening is they are getting handouts. And this kills the spirit of the people. I am very much against that. I don't like that at all.*

Nicole: *And... but do actually ... the people who go to the Hunter Support Programme, are they people—I mean, I thought the people who went were mostly the people who couldn't go fishing anyway. Or is it?*

Malachi: *No. No.*

Nicole: *It's anybody.*

Malachi: *Anybody. Because they're entitled to it. They're beneficiaries. They're saying, “why should they be the only one getting fish? I'm a beneficiary too. I'm entitled to have it.” So what Taamusi Qumaq [the man who wrote the first Inuktitut dictionary in Canada] used to say, when this programme came, “Now they're selling our land, and now they're going to give us money for killing our animals and give it away!” So, his philosophy was that we must try to survive by ourself and do it by ourselves instead of getting handouts. This is no good! I'm really very much against that.*

Nicole: *But in some ways you could argue... I'm just arguing with you here. You could argue, because Inuit, in the past, it was all sharing. [Malachi: Yes! Yeah.] You would share the food.*

Malachi: *And the sharing, this is our tradition. But this is not sharing anymore. It is a programme. Yeah. It is a programme. And there's no spirit in it. Before, it was real sharing. Yes. It was real sharing, and you depended on these people that were hunting. And you appreciated that, for that reason. There was spirit in it. There was real sharing. But this is not real sharing. It's a programme, and there's no spirit in it. There's no life in it. There's no heart-felt appreciation in that kind of thing. You know what I mean?*

Nicole: *I do.*

Malachi: *Yeah. So it's not the same thing.*

Nicole: *It's always—*

Malachi: *You see, what has happened in the last thirty years, people are getting handouts. First they have very low housing; very low-cost housing, \$295 for a three bedroom, every month. And it starts from there. You know, people, a lot of people are on welfare. And, you know, they see that you can live without doing anything!*

Some people remember what it was to live outside of communities with all of their services. They have often mentioned to me their fears about Inuit dependency on these services, which they see as promoting a lack of initiative, responsibility, and self-respect on the part of some people. Yet, I believe that at the root of this is the loss of the value and affirmation of ways of living and making a living that have been part of the vernacular economy of Inuit until very recently. For generation upon generation, people developed knowledge and ways of living that were geared toward hunting, fishing, and gathering. Such skills were central to people's understandings of what it meant to be a fully functioning adult in society. These skills and the ways of living continue to be useful to people. Life in communities and the wage economy that goes with it does not generally validate such talents, yet for many they have not been replaced by any viable

form of earning one's way. This is why welfare has had such debilitating effects in the eyes of some people. While participation in customary activities of hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering may have waned, some of the new generation does not seem to feel itself able, and so willing, to participate productively in the market economy that has taken its place. And, as some people have lost the ability or willingness to contribute productively to society, they also seem to have lost the motivation for respecting some of the conventions that allowed the vernacular economy to function. I asked about this in a conversation I had with Salamonie,

Nicole: So then, ... OK, for those people... like, I'm wondering if the way, people now, they're sharing, eh? Maybe, will it always be that way? I wonder.

Salamonie: Well it's hard to tell. It's very hard to tell. Like those young guys, in their age, we used to be inland with our parents, with our uncles. But today they're not. They're not inland. They're hanging around in the Co-op, in Northern, waiting for the welfare cheques. But not all of them.

Generally, the older generation fears for the younger generation, whom they see as not understanding where they are from, and so, as somewhat bewildered.³² People spoke about how some members of the younger generation had been affected by the commoditisation of country foods. So they talked about the fact that some were taking food from individuals or the HSP to sell it, or were killing animals inappropriately. They also referred to something that had happened in the past. There had been a scheme to sell caribou antlers to the Orient for medicinal use. In their eagerness to get them, some of

³² I was at a small conference once, involving scholars and Inuit from Nunavut and Nunavik. During our last session, the Inuit at the table said that the elders were worried for the younger generation about what will happen to them after the elders die. As someone who is the offspring of European Jews who refused to talk about their war experiences, I assumed the fear was that the younger generation would lose access to their connection with their past. But the Inuit said, *no*, the fear was that the young people would lose a connection to their *future*. To steal and twist a line from Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*, the future is a slingshot thrown by the force of the past.

the younger people had gone out looking for the antlers and had got lost. So, some of the older people to whom I spoke feared that if there were more commoditisation of country foods they would spend more time looking for young people lost on the land.

Yet, as Salamonie mentioned above, not all of the younger generation is unschooled in the ways of the land. In any community there are those who are taking their place in the vernacular economy. The HSP is helping to train them to do so, hiring them to get country foods and holding a training programme to bring them on the land to acquire land skills. Some people to whom I spoke saw the selling of country foods as a fitting alternative to welfare for young people. After all, at least people who were selling country foods were being *productive*. Coming just a short time ago, from a society in which Inuit could not afford to sustain unproductive people for any length of time, the notion that people should not contribute to society as a whole simply does not make sense. Yet, as in any society, there have always been those who were more successful at what they do than others. Jamisie pointed out that some of the grandchildren of those who depended on his father are now depending on him. It is because he, like his father, and like countless generations before him, shares what he has that they are able to make ends meet.

Originally, as Malachi observed, the HSP was conceived of as a means of providing country foods to those who were otherwise unable to get access to them, such as the elderly or those without hunting equipment. However, this caused some debate within the community. Some people argued that, as beneficiaries, they too should have access to these foods, whatever their age or financial circumstances. Alurut explained what happened,

The HSP is for hunting. That's what that's for. That's what it's there for. So at the beginning we didn't buy any food from the hunters at the beginning. ... But people started to complain. And we wanted to help elders. So we started to buy food from hunters to distribute to the elders. That's how it started; for less fortunate, for those who doesn't have hunting equipments, we used to do that. If a person had hunting equipment, we didn't give out the food. But the people who have good hunting equipment started to complain.

Nicole: *How come?*

Alurut: *They said, "I'm also a beneficiary. How come I don't get anything from Hunter Support?" That's what they started to say. That's what I was afraid of at the first time.*

Nicole: *It's so complicated, that stuff.*

Alurut: *And it's like that. That's what I was afraid of. Even today, even now, they're, "how come we could not sell food to Hunter Support?" They're asking. Even today.*

Nicole: *You mean, the people who have money? [Alurut: Yeah.] And who have hunting equipment and all of that? [Alurut: That's right. Yeah.] They want to be able to sell too?*

Alurut: *Yeah. Because they're also a beneficiary. They have a right to do that. It's hard sometimes. It's very hard sometimes to be in control.*³³

Here, again, the introduction of non-Inuit institutions, with their rigid definitions that include or exclude people's access to services is a new thing, one that has had some significant implications. Whereas in the past, before the coming of the HSP, ideally food was to be available to all, based on people's willingness to share and need, now for some, with the introduction of legal definitions, through the HSP sharing has become at once a legal *right* for those to whom it applies and a means of *excluding* those to whom the law does not apply. People are not people; they are *beneficiaries*, with privileges that accrue

³³ As a result, access to the food at the HSP at Puvirmituq became open to all beneficiaries within the community; however, at certain times, for example when country food is most difficult to get, the administrators of the programme continue to limit access to the food to the elders and those in need.

to them. This points to what Harhoff (1991) has called “the limits of dogmatic law”. The give and take according to the circumstances that has been associated with custom gives way to the rigidity of rights associated with the law. In the process, people’s understandings of themselves undergo a change.

Do you recall the story of my visit to the Hunter Support house where the meat is stored? When Samuel told me that the meat house was now locked in order to prevent people from taking fish and selling it to White people, there was also *another* reason why it was being locked. It so happened that some weeks before, a group of non-Inuit workers had been passing the HSP house one evening when it was open and people were coming to get fish. Seeing that fish was there, the non-Inuit too joined in, and helped themselves to fish. At the time, no one voiced any objection to their taking it. However, some community members *did* object. As non-beneficiaries, surely they had no right to this food? As a result, access to the meat house was monitored to ensure that non-beneficiaries did not take what they did not deserve.³⁴ When I mentioned this to an Inuk I knew in the village, she was scandalised, and said, “But that’s not Inuk!” To be Inuk is to share meat with anybody, no matter who they are. As Ingold (1986) argues, the notion that things should be shared is based on the belief that all humans are equal. So, in refusing to share with certain humans, this goes against the tenet of equality. Some people are more equal than others; and what serves to put people into one camp or another is simply a legal construct that has come only since the signing of the JBNQA in

³⁴ Interestingly, several months earlier when I had first spoken to the person responsible for administering the HSP, he was unable to tell me how many people were helping themselves to country foods from the programme because he did not keep track of such things. It was open to all. Circumstances a short while later required that they start to monitor people’s access to country foods supplied by the HSP. At some level the self-regulating system was breaking down.

the 1970s. People are no longer all equal, rather, some are beneficiaries, and some are not. So the HSP has, for some, affected how they understand who they are, and the morality that has governed their membership in society.

For all the debate that has taken place with respect to the HSP, many do see it as a useful programme that contributes more good than ill to the community. People recognise that hunters and fishers need money in order to be able to continue to go out on the land, and it represents an essentially acceptable way of paying them to do so. It both prevents purely individual self-interest that can come with the selling of country foods and underscores sociality. The commitment of the HSP to providing an important subsidy to hunters, which then spills out into the rest of the community, was made apparent to me in a conversation I had with someone who had been involved in Makivik's now defunct inter-community trade project. He remarked upon something that did not make sense to him. Given that the prices paid by the HSP to hunters came out to be more per pound than the meat sold by the inter-community trade project, he wondered why administrators of the HSP did not simply buy the meat produced by Makivik's project rather than paying more to individual hunters within the community. As he pointed out, it would cost the HSP less in the end, and enable it to have more meat. That man's cost-benefit analysis was done purely on the basis of money, and it missed the fact that administrators of the HSP were presumably more interested in providing support to the community members, and in sustaining their local economy, than in getting cheaper goods. The HSP was, in fact, also doing a cost-benefit analysis but it was measured against not only money, but *society*.

The Co-op

Further along the continuum of commoditisation is the Co-operative. Like the HSP, it is essentially an institution whose origins are from the South, yet it is one that has a long history of support in the community, and has been enthusiastically adopted by most people of Puvirnituk. As such, like the HSP, it is a quasi-Inuit organisation that is involved in buying country foods from the local population for resale within the community. It is this second component of the commodity equation that is somewhat different from the HSP, although, to be sure, the HSP *has* started to resell country foods.

The sale of country foods amongst Inuit, through the medium of the market, has a history in Puvirnituk that predates the Co-op. According to Balikci (1959) the HBC trader in Puvirnituk tried to set up a system of exchange between carvers and fishers that would compensate the fishers for the constant gifts of fish that they gave to the carvers. The trader would buy fish and sell it to the carvers. As Balikci saw it, “Thus the traditional sharing patterns were to give way to formalised inter-Eskimo trade relations, reflecting the occupational differentiation within the community” (1959, p. 131).³⁵ Yet, he notes that the system only worked under the trader’s supervision. Once the trader relaxed control, Inuit reverted to sharing the food. So given this history, how has the Co-op fared in the sales of country foods?

Vallee (1967) remarks that while the Co-op has been selling country foods since the 1950s, such sales have been nominal in its overall accounts. The manager of the Co-op told me in 2001, that such a pattern had persisted, with the store having only a limited budget for buying country foods. Yet, he thought, the budget for buying country foods

³⁵ Graburn (1969) expresses a similar fear.

was likely to increase in the future. Given Puvirnituk's growing population, the manager observed, there would be more people who would want, and be able, to hunt commercially. And similarly, the demand would be greater.

For the time being, the Co-op buys only fish for resale within the community, although in the past it has sold snow goose, caribou, ptarmigan, mussels, and *mattak*.³⁶ In some cases, it is no longer able to sell these foods because of the various regulations that limit people's ability to sell protected meats. One person told me that in the case of snow goose, it was illegal to sell it—for reasons unknown to him—and as a result, the federal government charged the Co-op and they had to go to court. In the case of beluga, once the quotas were put in place, it became illegal to sell it commercially. Over and above legal restrictions, the manager told me that the Co-op no longer sold meat such as caribou because it did not have enough facilities to store it, and besides, there was no demand for it.³⁷ In fact, the manager thought that the amount of meat that the Co-op sold had decreased over time, mostly as a result of the lack of facilities to store the meat, although in the case of caribou, he also observed that since the supply was great at present—the caribou are, for the time being close to the community in large quantities—the demand is small. Why would people *buy* caribou meat when they can easily get it themselves or from friends or family? Thus, today the Co-op limits its sales of country foods to fish.

³⁶ Salamonie told me that in the past the Co-op had also bought caribou antlers from local people, which it hoped to sell for medicinal use in the Orient. Fearing that people would kill indiscriminately, the Co-op set a policy of buying only antlers that had fallen off by themselves, as they do each year, rather than buying antlers that had been sawn off. However the scheme was unsuccessful, because it turned out that the medicinal properties of the antlers were only present if the antlers still had their felt on them and blood in them.

³⁷ In the past, it had had more freezers for meat, but they had been destroyed in a fire, and not been replaced.

The Co-op buys the fish from the fishers according to weight, but the price varies depending on the seasons. This reflects the fact that in some seasons fishers face more hardships in getting the fish than at other times. Yet, the manager informed me, the price that the fishers receive for their fish has not changed very much over time, which is similar to the HSP. As one Inuk bureaucrat to whom I spoke commented, since the prices that fishers and hunters receive have not noticeably increased over time, yet their costs to get the food have steadily increased—he cited fuel and equipment in particular—people’s returns are getting smaller and smaller. Yet, as the manager observed, people continue to want to sell fish to the Co-op.³⁸ They do this, not because they want to make a profit, but simply in order to try to get some money for gas or groceries; and in fact, they generally only sell after they kept some of the fish for themselves.

Those who buy the fish generally do so because they are hard to come by, particularly in the winter, when they are in lakes at a distance from the community, and people are unwilling to face the hardships involved in getting them. So, because it is in short supply, the Co-op buys fish mostly in the winter, and has no problem selling it, particularly given that the HSP supplies are limited and go quickly. As the manager observed, Puvirnituk is big now, so the meat does not stay long in the HSP meat house.

If the fishers make little in the way of profits, the same is true of the Co-op. As the manager informed me, the store buys fish mostly in order to provide support to those who wish to continue to earn a living from it. It makes only a small profit from the sale. This fits with the mandate of the Co-op, which is as much social as it is economic.

³⁸ The Co-op gets fish in two ways: either people come to ask if they can sell fish, or the Co-op asks fishers to go out and get fish. In both cases, the fishers are independent of the Co-op. There are about three people who supply the store with fish in this way.

No one to whom I spoke expressed any reservations about the sales of country foods by the Co-op. This is perhaps, in part, because they see the Co-op as an important home-grown institution within the community, and moreover, since such sales are limited to fish, which have a long history of commoditisation in the North, people have grown accustomed to it, and so feel less reluctant, to buy and sell it.

Pitsituuq (The Smoked Fish Plant)

Of the various structures involved in the commoditisation of country foods in Puvirnituq, the one that most closely resembles the capitalist mode of production as it is commonly conceived is Pitsituuq. Initially, it was set up in about 1985 by the municipal government as—so one municipal employee put it—a “make-work” project of the federal government under LEAP, or the Local Employment Assistance Programme. Another municipal employee called it “some wild idea” of the government’s to raise money and provide work while promoting Inuit tradition and culture. It was not clear whether the wildness of the idea related to the economic viability of the project, or to the notion that it would promote Inuit tradition and culture. In any case, the project involved smoking and selling Arctic Char.

In due course, the municipality pulled out of the venture and handed it over to the Co-op for a time. Unable to make a go of it, the Co-op then sold the business to one person in town, who also met financial difficulties. Finally, it ended up in the hands of the current owner who invested a great deal of time and energy into the business, which seems to have proved successful. For the time being, because of regulations that prohibit the sale of uncertified fish outside of Nunavik and to non-beneficiaries, his sales are

limited to Nunavik. However, he wishes to be able to expand the business and has built a new plant that he is in the process of having certified to ensure that the fish will comply with provincial and federal regulations.

Regulations have affected the business in other ways. In order to be able to sell his fish outside of the region, and to non-beneficiaries, he is obliged to buy fish through commercial quotas.

But due to over-fishing in the past, commercial quotas in Nunavik are limited, and therefore, difficult to come by. He gets around this problem in two ways. First, he buys Arctic Char from

December 12, 2001
I talked to Malachi today. ... He said it had taken him 17 (??) years to get to this point. He has to deal with regulations, e.g., right now the Quebec Environment Ministry is questioning him about smoke-stack emissions and the effluents he puts in the waste water. They're worried about pollution... He said he also has to contend with Inuit learning — there's a lot of change to deal with — 'Cause in the past, Inuit didn't sell, they shared, so sometimes now, even with his own relatives, he has to close his ears and his eyes. People sometimes give him a hard time about selling. He said he has got a lot of educating to do. In the past, Inuit weren't educated about this. There's lots of development opportunities here, people just don't think about them; they have to learn to think that way.

commercial fishermen in Nunavut. Second, he gets fish from Mansel Island, which is located in the waters between Nunavik and Nunavut. Like many of the offshore islands, Mansel Island is in regulatory limbo, subject to on-going claims negotiations between Nunavut and Nunavik. Thus, fish from the island cannot be given a commercial status because no one has authority to grant it. Since he has yet to receive a letter of approval about the emissions from his processing plant, he cannot yet sell his fish outside of Nunavik or to non-beneficiaries. As a result, he has not yet started to buy the

commercially produced fish from Nunavut. The owner *does* get his Arctic Char from Mansel Island, however. He started fishing there in order to avoid competing for fish with subsistence fishers in Puvirnituk who, having noticed that they were getting smaller, wanted to ensure that the Arctic Char were protected.

The owner informed me that he has a problem meeting the demand for his fish, which means that he also has to work to ensure that he has sufficient supplies. He does so in a number of ways. Some people from Puvirnituk supply him intermittently with fish; and, he also buys fish from Akulivik and Salluit. In addition, he hires men himself to go and get fish from Mansel Island. Like the HSP, he has found that hiring people by the day is less expensive than paying them by the pound. He charters a plane that takes them quickly to and from the island, but this adds to the expense. They go there in the wintertime, when the fish freeze quickly, and so they are not faced with problems of preservation during transit to the smokehouse in Puvirnituk.

People in Puvirnituk buy his products, both smoked and fresh. He sells not only to individuals, but also to the Co-op, the hospital, and the catering company. Pitsituuq appears to be doing well, although one regional bureaucrat expressed concerns that the Arctic Char stocks might not prove sustainable in the long run. For the time being, however, the smoked fish has been winning awards, and the owner looks forward to being able to expand his sales to southern Canada.

I was curious, given that Inuit tell me that an Inuk should not sell meat to another Inuk, how his business was perceived by people in the community. No Inuit of whom I asked this question expressed reservations about the fact that Pitsituuq was making a profit from the common pool of resources. Nor did they say that the owner of the

business was breaking social norms. However, someone else, a non-Inuk in the community commented,

*The fish plant, they're, there's a lot of people jealous about that, amongst themselves. That guy's making a bundle, but they have to sell the fish. Like, he goes, right now, there's not enough fish. So he had to go in front of Ivujivik—Mansel Island—that's where most of his fish comes from. He goes there two or three times a year, comes back. ... [H]e had problems a little bit with the... because, that's considered Nunavut, you know. It's not considered Quebec. You know those kinds of arguments ... They're not really doing nothing about it, because there's... anyway, it's not as though—there's nobody from Nunavut going there **anyways**. ... I don't know, like Ivujivik could say something, but they don't. I mean, Ivujivik, they're content with the mattak and walrus and fish. They have fish for themselves. They know they don't have the place to sell it anyways. And nobody has plans over there to open a fish plant, or anything.*

So it seems that Pitsituuq is benefiting from the fact that it is alone in the field—or more correctly, in the water—at this point. At the same time however, being amongst the first of its kind in Nunavik, and as the first such business in Puvirnituuq in which an individual Inuk is selling country foods to other Inuit, the owner faces some challenges that go beyond the regulatory issues imposed by resource management agencies. As I will discuss below, the owner has had to confront his own and other people's reactions to the breaking of social norms about the sharing of food.

To Local Inuit

It would seem, then, that the selling of country foods both to non-Inuit and to Inuit has taken hold in Puvirnituuq. Nonetheless, time and again people in the community would differentiate the selling by institutions from the selling between individuals. To sell to one's neighbour was anathema, but to sell to the various organisations in Puvirnituuq was tolerable. So, for example, one person who sold to the HSP said that he

was shocked and disgusted when he heard people on the community radio offering to sell meat or bannock. They were asked to stop doing so.³⁹ Others told me that such sales did not take place in Puvirnituq, but were, rather, in other communities in Nunavik and

November 30, 2001
Anneak told me that people are starting to sell country foods and people are talking about it. Some don't like it. "They're going the Qallunaaq way." She said that people sell country foods for special occasions, but also some poor people sell it to others. They go on the radio to sell. "Those people have not been well brought up by their parents". But it's hard to balance the demands of life. "It's changing" she said. Those who sell have been asked to stop by the municipality and by the community, but they ignore it. ... People are talking about selling country foods a lot. ... I wonder why Jamisie and Kublu didn't mention that people are selling country foods — trying to maintain a front?

Nunavut. Another said that Inuit who sell country foods to other Inuit are thinking only of themselves, which points to an important thing: in the sharing of food, community is both built up and sustained. And community is part of what has ensured Inuit survival.

Thus, anything that threatens that sense of community, threatens people's unspoken notions of survival. Yet the very same people who said these things would also affirm that people need money and are justified in trying to get it in order to continue to be able to spend time on the land. That conundrum poses a difficult problem, and how people manage to resolve it can be complex.

One way they do so is selling things *other* than country foods. So Davidie, who sells country foods to the HSP, observed,

³⁹ Interestingly, the selling of country foods between Inuit, if it is transformed in some way, posed less of a problem to some to whom I spoke.

*When it comes to [selling] the meat [amongst Inuit] it's kind of a shock.
When it's just the material, the equipment, like TV, like radio Yeah.
It's OK, but when it comes to the meat it's kind of different.*

Samuel said that although people did not sell country foods in the community, sometimes what they will do is pay for gas to go out with someone else, and then they will split the catch. In such a way, although there was an exchange of cash, the food itself was not commoditised, and so social norms were not threatened. In fact, in order to ensure that these norms are adhered to, people talk on the community radio about the importance of sharing. They fear that without such discussion, the younger generation might not understand or respect its importance.

Yet, for all that, people, both from Puvirnituk and from other communities sell country foods to various institutions from which local Inuit then either buy or are given the food.⁴⁰ The local coffee shop used to sell dried fish, and at the time that I was doing my research, a newly-opening restaurant intended to buy caribou to cook and sell to its patrons. Moreover, in the past, someone in the community clandestinely sold beluga *mattak* to others in the community. It caused a stir, but, as one of the people who told me about it said, the municipality could not stop it because it recognised that it did not have the money to pay the hunters who got it so that it might be distributed to the community as a whole, and the hunters needed to recoup some of their expenses incurred in getting it.

Clearly, then, the commoditisation of country foods in Puvirnituk is not simple. In trying to earn a living, people must find ways to get money. Those who wish to continue to hunt, fish, and gather as their main occupations face the greatest challenge.

⁴⁰ And Kublu told me that he remembered as a child that someone asked for dogs in exchange for country foods. This was at a time when dog teams were still in regular use and there was a real shortage of dogs.

On the one hand, they need money to undertake these activities and, on the other, they are morally prevented from selling their food to Inuit. How they have managed to combine these contradictory requirements reveals something about how age-old ways of living have combined with relatively new ideas about what is and is not permissible in earning a living. In the process, people manage both to respect conventions while breaking them.

Experiences of Commoditisation: Variance and Continuity

There seem to be contradictions here. How can people both oppose the commoditisation of country foods and accept it? What has gone on in their minds and in their lives that has enabled them to sustain these seeming discrepancies? The reactions of people in Puvirnituq in confronting these issues reflect something of the variety that exists in the world.

The commoditisation of country foods, both affects and is affected by people's notions of relations with the environment; ideas about sociality; and processes of economics in general and valuation in particular. Ultimately, how the commoditisation of country foods influences all of these matters is closely linked to issues of scale. It is to these matters, then, that I turn.

Land, Sea, Sky, and all that they possess

According to Polanyi (1957a), land is the basis of human existence. It determines how people live and hence the institutions that they develop to give order to that existence. So, land is inextricably woven into the fabric of those institutions, be they economic, social, or political. "To isolate it [the land] and form a market out of it was

perhaps the weirdest of all undertakings of our ancestors” (Polanyi 1957a, p. 178). Yet this is precisely what is involved in the commoditisation of country foods. As I described in Chapter Three, the land, sea, and sky, and the things they contain, have been central to the vernacular economy of Inuit. They have been integral, whether conscious or unconscious, to how people made sense of themselves in the world, to their understandings of appropriate behaviour, and what amounts to their notions of what constitutes a proper life. Two phenomena, in particular, have been central in the formation of these beliefs.

First, is the idea that resources are common property. No one has more or less rights to have access to those resources. If people meet with success, they have generally done so because they have acted appropriately and shared those resources, and in continuing to share them, they will continue to meet with success.

Second, is an abiding awareness of how unpredictable the world can be. Qitsualik (2003a) argues that traditional Inuit culture reflects this view; going so far as to say Inuit culture *is* the environment. Thus Inuit have developed what she calls a “survival mind” that has allowed them to survive in the face of a sometimes hostile and threatening world. Such a mindset determines how people perceive the world and their place in it, and is based on people’s awareness that environmental conditions can change from one moment to the next, so people must constantly be attentive to what is going on, and react accordingly. Consequently, they do not assume that they have control over the forces of nature, nor do they assume that the future is a predictable thing. This means that people live very much in the present: what is past is past, and what will be is hard to foresee, and as a people, Inuit have essentially learnt to live in the here and now. As hunters or

fishers, people *must* live like that. They have had to watch what goes on in minute detail in order to understand it and use it appropriately. Such watching is not in the speeded up time of a nature show, but in the real time of wind and sun and snow and wet, in the flick of a tail and the blink of an eye. This affects the kind of society that has developed and affects how people react to new situations.

The spirit of the Inuit was always that of contentment, even through hardship. It's reflected in the saying "*Ajurnarmat*" (which means "it can't be helped"). Inuit were quick to accept the natural occurrences in life and move on. They had a great respect for their fellow man, the environment, and every living creature used for their survival. One would dare not say "I'm going to catch that game," even if it seemed certain that the chances of catching the game were high. The only comment was "*Angunahuarniaqara*" (... this means "I'll try and catch it"). Successful hunters were not boastful or proud; simply grateful and very fortunate (Otokiak, n.d., n.p.).

The uncertainty that people have always known is present in the environment translates into the primacy of social relations over financial ones that is at the heart of the edict not to sell country foods amongst Inuit. If the world is an unpredictable place, then at least food is a necessity that can always be relied upon. Money, in contrast, is a figment of people's imaginations that can cause people to behave in unpredictable ways. As one person complained to Oakes and Riewe,

Recently there were over a hundred people down on the beach helping themselves to some muktuk. In Coral Harbour the Co-op began buying muktuk from local hunters because Dorset was asking to buy some. My parents in Coral Harbour were really angry to see people selling food. She grew up when starvation was at hand. She always said, "Give what you can to your neighbour". My dad always comments about the fact that they're selling muktuk and caribou. Now, some men kill narwhal just to sell the muktuk. They also try to get one with tusks so they can sell the ivory. The attitude changes between the hunter and the wildlife when the relationship becomes commercial. If the price of muktuk is up too high it's like gold fever. If lower prices are paid to the hunters then it is more likely that there will be meat in town. My mom would give us kids fish to

take to the old man over there, and to the woman with no husband. I would die if I had to buy meat from my brother (1997, p. 123).

The very notion of money is predicated on the assumption that the future is predictable and the world is a place that can be controlled.⁴¹ Through money, people start to possess more and more things and assume ownership of them in ways that may challenge notions of common property. Yet, given the experience of Inuit over millennia, money can seem like a rather transitory and illusory thing in comparison to the basic necessities of life. The commoditisation of country foods, to some extent, represents for many, a challenge to their notions both of time and space.

In the abstract, the selling of country food would seem to assume that what was once common property can now be taken by one individual and sold, thereby excluding others from the resource. At various times I asked people about this. I sent an e-mail to the person who wrote the letter to *Nunatsiaq News* that I included in Chapter One. His response suggested that the selling of country foods goes against notions of common property. He wrote, “I personally think that the sale of country food should not be allowed. The animals are not ours, so who are we to sell them?”

With this view in mind, I asked some of the people to whom I spoke while I was in Puvirnituk what they thought about this. Did the selling of country foods somehow imply that people were beginning to think they owned the animals? I used the case of the private fish smoking plant as a way of asking about this. To some extent, people’s responses were symptomatic of the view that the animals are common property. Thus, in

⁴¹ In nineteenth century Greenland, Danes, who had been preventing the Greenlanders from having access to cash with the view of preserving their vernacular economy, eventually started to allow the trade of country foods for cash. They did so as a means of encouraging—they hoped—the Greenlanders to learn to plan for the future, because money, as an abstract store of wealth, might potentially allow them this freedom (Marquardt and Caulfield 1996).

response to my question about whether people resented the fact that Pitsituuq was taking fish to sell that the general population might otherwise have been able to catch Jamisie said,

No. That's not in our nature either, to try to own the wildlife. That's something that most Inuit don't like at all, that's somebody who says, "don't harvest this species; don't catch too many; don't go that way; don't go there". It's never been in our tradition and culture.

I received a somewhat more ambiguous response from Kublu, who had been involved in the fish smoking operation in its early stages. He seems to indicate that people are at once noting the fact that resources are being taken out of the common pool, and yet are not bothered by this. I asked whether people got upset about the fact that common resources were being taken and sold; and he responded,

No, not really. Even though they have noticed that the business owner is sending much of his cooked fish out of town to another communities, or some person who sells, they don't complain, because they know that there's more fish out there that hunters can catch.

Some, then, accept the commoditisation of country foods, because they have faith that there are enough resources to meet their needs. Yet not all tolerate this commoditisation with such equanimity. In a conversation I had with Alurut he discussed the fact that on the one hand, people adjust their behaviour to make allowances for the fact that people are earning money from country foods, but at times, they can also resent this. I asked,

When people were—I was wondering about this, when ... did people complain about the fact—I mean, it's the same for the HSP in a way, say I'm here living in town, and I see my neighbour who's going out to hunt, to get something and they make money off of it; they're taking something away from me that I could have hunted. Was there any talk like that?

Alurut: *Yes. Yes. Yes. [Nicole: There was.] Yes. Yes. A few times I have been hunting with a friend, in the past, who's hunting to sell, and me, hunting not to sell. [Nicole: Yeah.] We would have divided **equally** if we're not—if both of us wasn't going to sell, or both was not going to sell. Myself, thinking that he's hunting to make money ... so I cut down my half, just to help the hunter, 'cause I'm earning good money, and he's not earning any. So that's how it is.*

Nicole: *So people don't **mind** that the hunter's taking...*

Alurut: *Yes we **do** mind. It's been—they have been talking that "I don't want to hunt where people were getting paid". [Nicole: Aye.] Even, like, those... those ... the school, the school board employs a couple of men every summer, when there is no school, to train the kids to hunt. [Nicole: Aye.] And they can go anywhere they wanted to. And I hate to see them. I don't mind if they are teaching little kids, but I don't want to be close to them.*

Nicole: *How come?*

Alurut: *'Cause they're earning money and I'm not earning money. And they seem to usually get the best spot. And there have been complaints about that.*

Nicole: *Even though they're teaching kids?*

Alurut: *Yeah. 'Cause they're making money.*

It seems that, for some, the experience of being on the land is different when people are after money. There is a sense, in his words, that people can sometimes take exception to the fact that people are making money from resources while at the same time excluding others' access to them.

Give and take is an important aspect of common property systems. In the case of Inuit, I think that they have functioned because people are willing to accept that people's sometimes disproportionate access to resources will be evened out through the process of sharing. Yet in the commoditisation of country foods, such sharing becomes complicated.

As I discussed in Chapter Three, one of the concepts that has sustained ideas of sharing amongst many Inuit was that animals were, in fact, sharing themselves with hunters or fishers, who out of respect for the animal, and in order to ensure their future success, then shared their catch with others. What goes around comes around, both in the human world, and in the world between humans and other animals. I wondered, in that case, what would happen if people started to sell the animals rather than to share them. Perhaps the animals would react badly to what represents a denial of that process of sharing. I wondered whether people in the community had the same thoughts, and so, tried to ask people about this.

The response I received was generally a concern that is also reflected in the literature of non-Inuit (cf. Freese 1997; Hansen 2002) about the commoditisation of country foods; namely, that the selling of country foods might affect the sustainability of the animal stocks. This reflects the very real concern of most Inuit that animal populations continue to be viable. People are worried that selling country foods might threaten their stocks. People had seen this happen with the Arctic Char, they knew that the caribou had been gone for a long time, and were concerned that it not happen with other animals. So one person, who sold country foods to the HSP, said that the fact that limiting the sale of country foods to the HSP was a *good* thing because it prevented over-harvesting, or the taking of animals at inappropriate times in their reproductive cycles. Many people also said that in hunting or fishing for the HSP they were careful never to take more than they needed. Despite people's concern that the commoditisation of country foods might affect animal stocks, one person said that the caribou *should* be sold, because this will help to prevent a crash of the population.

I wondered, though, whether over and above issues of sustainability, people thought that the selling of country foods affected the metaphysical behaviour of the animals. I was tentative when I asked this question. As people have told me in the past, the power of animals is so great that people do not always feel comfortable talking about it. I wanted to know, however, whether people ever discussed these things amongst themselves. Most people stuck to issues of sustainability, but from those who were willing to talk about the metaphysical nature of animals I got different replies. Salamonie and Taamusie had talked to me about how selling country foods would be a good thing, because it would bring money to the community and give income to those who might otherwise be on welfare. But all the same, I wondered whether the animals might be affected by this.

*Nicole: ... when I was working in Sanikiluaq, and there they did that big study of, like I said, traditional knowledge, and they were going to communities: southern Baffin Island and all around Hudson's Bay. And from there I learnt a little bit about how people think about the land and how they think about the animals. And a little bit about how—what makes ... that you should respect the animals, and that if you treat them properly you'll be more successful. And one of the things I was wondering about—and in a way, what they were saying, as I remember, is part of treating the animal properly, is that you share what you get. Do people ever talk about, now, if people are **selling** the animals, they're not sharing them, do the animals **behave** differently? You see what I mean?*

Salamonie: Umm. Maybe.... In the past our grandfathers were hunting. There were lots of caribous everywhere. There were not many people hunting, but there were lots of caribous. They knew they had lots of meat to catch, and they knew... what they catch, they only take the best part: the back and the best skin in the back. The fur. And when they did that the caribou disappeared for forty years. They didn't come back for forty years. They were killing more than what they need. [Taamusie: They were not respecting—] That's how it happened. More than what they need.

Nicole: Do people talk about that now for selling?

Salamonie: *It comes [Taamusie: Yeah. Yeah.] Sometimes it comes. I think everybody have some kind of story about this caribou thing.*

I asked Benjamin, an older man who sells country food to the HSP, whether he thought selling country foods affected the relations between humans and animals. He responded,

In the past they used to hunt more than they need. Today it's kind of different now; they catch only what they need and only what they can carry. In the past they used to kill all the available [animals], and put it under the... [Nicole: To store it for the winter?] Yeah, to store it. But today they don't do that. They catch only what they need now. They don't store it there; they bring it back here now, and catch only what they need. Before they were using dogs, and they had to feed also the dogs and they had to catch almost everything that they could catch because they were feeding the eating machine dogs. And today it's different now. They don't have the dogs. They catch only what they need.

Nicole: *What I'm wondering is, do people ever talk about if you're **selling** the animals, do the animals behave differently now than in the past when people weren't selling?*

Benjamin: *When it's open [i.e., when the HSP has asked people to get meat to sell to the Programme], the selling, when it's open, the meat they want to catch usually disappears. When it's time to catch, but it's kind of disappeared or moved away. It's kind of like that.*

In a way, the responses of both Benjamin and Salamonie suggest that when animals sense that they are being mistreated, this can sometimes make them go away.

Yet, others to whom I spoke, had no such concerns. I asked Kublu,

*And... one of the things... I mean, I don't know, I've just wondered about this, when I was in Sanikiluaq, people were talking about how you behave properly to the animals, and they respect that, and they—that's when you get the animals, if you behave properly, like, you share, and all of that. And I was just wondering whether, if, like, do people ever worry about, if they pay, they get **paid** for the animal, whether it would affect how the animal saw them? You know what I mean?*

Kublu: *Yeah. People, locally, they never, never really thought about this, it seems like. For sure, they know that certain animals have spirits, like, 'cause they don't hunt them without having the animal **notice** the person first. Or they don't kill them. For example, polar bear [Nicole: Aye! I didn't know that.] Polar bear... [Nicole: They have to see you.] Yup.*

They have to see you first before you kill it. [Nicole: And if you don't see it first? {She laughs}] And if you don't see it first, something happens all the time, something weird happens all the time. [Nicole: Really.] 'Cause the polar bear has a spirit and... that's the way it is. Our fathers before us have taught this. For polar bear, you have to notify the polar bear to kill it, 'cause if you don't, you can lose the bear.

This response seems to suggest that, although certain animals *do* possess powers, the commoditisation of country foods does not appear to have affected how the animals react to those hunting them.

All the same, in various ways the commoditisation of country foods does affect natural systems. Conversely, natural systems also affect the commoditisation of those foods. They determine the supply of country foods and hence, the people who supply the food for sale. Most of the institutions involved in buying country foods in Puvirnituk get much of their fish from Akulivik where the supply of Arctic Char is more plentiful and predictable. In the summer, it is particularly difficult to get Arctic Char in Puvirnituk because they are out in the salt waters of Hudson Bay at a distance from the community. Thus, any Arctic Char that they get in the summer, they keep for themselves. Arctic Char are far easier to come by in Akulivik, however, because it is on the coast, with islands nearby, where the fish spend the summer months.

The fact that people are willing to accept that people from other communities come to get country foods from their area is because, as I discussed earlier, the common property systems of Inuit reject the notion that people own animals, and thus, have a pre-established right to harvest them. This is bolstered, in the case of Puvirnituk, by the fact that people in Akulivik have family relations with those in Puvirnituk. All the same, the sale of country foods can throw a ratchet in the works. There was an instance, as I mentioned before, when people from Puvirnituk went to another community for beluga,

and then came back and sold it in Puvirnituk. This caused some friction. As Joseph put it,

It was not right. I mean, they don't mind, you go hunting there and give it to the community... But not to make money off of it, you know.

The issue of sharing country foods versus selling it is complex. Sharing it always takes precedence over selling it, but, in the case of sales, there are ways and ways to do so. What is clear, however, is that in trying to understand the commoditisation of country foods, we need to understand its impacts upon the social systems associated with those foods.

Social Processes: Sharing, Community, and Identity

As I have argued throughout this thesis, for most Inuit, country foods are inextricably bound up in social relations, and social relations are similarly bound to country foods. Thus, some of the repercussions of selling country foods are perceived by people as having an impact upon Inuit society. In many ways, as they express their views about the commoditisation of country foods and the impact this has had upon sharing, they reveal something about their notions of community and identity.

The social relations so tightly connected to country foods, and particularly the requirement to share those foods evolved as ways in which Inuit were able to ensure their own stability. Through getting, sharing, and eating country foods, people were able to survive, both physically and psychically in sometimes challenging circumstances. In getting food together, in sharing it, and in eating it with the many people who move in and out of their lives, Inuit are able to build and make sense of the world they inhabit

both spatially and temporally. Central to these processes are the social relations that hold them together and have ensured their continuation. One must wonder, then, as the processes that regulate the getting, sharing, and eating of country foods are commoditised, have the social relations at the centre of these processes also been affected? What happens to the processes of production, distribution, and consumption of country foods that I described in Chapter Three as these foods are commoditised?

Polanyi (1957a) argues that as labour becomes a commodity, as it is separated from the other activities of life that take place in the cycle of survival from morning to night, from season to season, and from year to year, its inclusion in the market somehow destroyed these “organic” forms of existence. Instead, individualistic, atomistic forms of life replaced it. With this, he argues, came many changes. Society was arranged by contract between individuals. With the emphasis on individuals free of social constraint, kinship and community suffered in consequence. For labour to develop as a commodity, for people to start to sell their toil, Polanyi argues that “traditional institutions must be destroyed, and prevented from re-forming, since, as a rule, the individual in primitive society is not threatened with starvation unless the community as a whole is in a like predicament” (1957a, p. 164).

In some ways, Polanyi’s words are convincing. At one level, the legalistic forms of social relations that are part of the market relations he describes have started to appear in the community. So, people say that they, as beneficiaries of the JBNQA all have an equal right to the country foods provided by the JBNQA. Why should only the needy have access to these rights? It seems that for some, their identities as far as the social relations around country foods are concerned, might have altered so that they see

themselves in the legalistic terms defined by an agreement signed with the governments of Canada and Quebec, rather than in the social terms defined by millennia of existence. But I am inclined to think that such a view is applied primarily to the institutions that came with that agreement, institutions that are seen by people as somehow external to their own ways. People still *do* share country foods, amongst the many other things they share. Moreover, the sharing of that food is not limited to so-called beneficiaries, but extends to those who have developed the social ties that allow them to be included in those sharing relations. Thus, as a visitor, I was privy to the limited extent of my social relations, to have a share of the bounty.

Simmel ([1900] 1978) argues that as people start to produce goods for the market workers start to see the product of their work as objects, because they are producing for “unknown and indifferent consumers who deal with [the producer] only through the medium of money. [Their] work is thus objectified...” (p. 335). This certainly is not the case in Puvirnituk. In fact, the difficulty that Inuit face in selling country foods is that they generally *know* who consumes the produce of their labour, and it is only to non-Inuit (and their institutions), who are somehow outside of the realm of social relations built into country foods, that they generally feel comfortable selling country foods.

Building upon Simmel’s idea of workers being distanced from the product of their labour, Ingold (2000) makes the interesting point that in industrial society as labour comes onto the market and is socially disembedded, society starts to place more of an emphasis on consumption than it does on production. Work becomes separate from the rest of our lives—what Simmel calls the “whole life system”—rather than being incorporated into it. It is something that we feel obliged to do in order to be able to

survive. In the process of earning a living, we must give ourselves over to an alien will that compels us to act in particular ways at particular times in order to have the wherewithal to buy the things that we need to survive and thrive. Thus, we produce only to the extent that it enables us to consume things, and in the process, the social relations that had been present in productive processes are dissolved.

In some ways, this too appears to be taking place in Puvirnituq. So, for example, the HSP places an emphasis on consumption of country foods rather than on its production. People such as Balikci (1964), Buijs (1993), Dahl (2000), Graburn (1969), and Mitchell (1995) have argued that with changes in technology, such as the introduction of guns, Inuit are no longer obliged to hunt communally. For example, they are no longer forced to work together to herd caribou so that they might kill them collectively. Certainly people go out alone to get food, as, in fact, they always *have*. Yet, the fact remains that people *do* go out to get country foods together, whether to get food for their own consumption or for sale, and the getting of country foods continues to be a communal experience. In part, they do this in order to be safe, but they also do this out of the pleasure of being together on the land. Many people choose to go ice fishing in a group in the spring; women and children will gather to fish in the late summer when the Arctic Char are returning to the lakes or go out collecting berries. In fact, the sociability that Inuit show on the land was one of the things that was most remarkable to me as a non-Inuk. Many of us southern Euro-Canadians go out into the “wilderness” in order to experience the great outdoors in its purest form, and perhaps somehow to get in touch with something beyond humanity’s sometimes petty existence. So, when we are in such places, should we come across others, we steer a wide berth clear of them so that our

experience of nature not be sullied by the presence of others. Inuit do exactly the opposite. Should they come across others, whether on land or on sea, they will go out of their way to meet them, to share a conversation, and perhaps a cup of tea and a bite to eat, to find out the latest news, how the trip was, and just to be together. Being on the land is often an extremely social event.

The emphasis on sociality in the getting, sharing, and eating of country foods is nowhere more apparent than in the findings of Chabot (2001), who discovered that in 1995, 99 per cent of the country foods produced in Nunavik stayed within the region, and that, moreover, 85 per cent of the total production stayed within the vernacular economy.⁴² Accordingly, only 15 per cent of the total production was sold on the market. She also found that generally very few people in any given community provide the vast majority of country foods consumed in that community. She established that in the majority of cases, these people came from households where the male head of the household did not have full-time work, but subsidised his activities with the help of periodic part-time work, financial contributions by people with full-time work within his family and within the community, and by the HSP. They, in turn, distribute their produce amongst people in the community. Chabot (2001) concluded that those men who have full-time work are less able to go out hunting, fishing, and gathering. However, many of them spend what time they can spare doing this. This came out in a conversation I had with Jamisie,

⁴² Reeves' (1993) study of the sale of *mattak* in Arctic Bay also found that people kept more than they sold. This suggests that people only sell what they need in order to get money, and, in fact, prefer to keep the majority of the *mattak* for use within the vernacular economy – either to share with others or for their own consumption. Thus, it seems that people are not motivated by profit but by need to get money.

Nicole: *Does commercialisation interfere with sharing?*

Jamisie: *Not really. We don't let it. We do like to sell our catch too. I mean, it's good to have money for your—for what you've caught, especially when you're fishing ... But most of the time we don't even sell our catch, we share it, myself especially. Now that I am working full-time I only go out on weekends mostly, and I still try to catch more than I need to be able to share it with elders and people who are less fortunate than I am. That's our tradition, and that's something I want to preserve and promote forever, and that's the reason we have survived in the harsh environment we have over thousands of years. It's something we must keep and preserve and promote. So that's what I do, I like to do most, promoting and preserving and teaching what I know.*

So it seems that by hook or by crook people wish to find ways to ensure that there are enough country foods available in town to allow for its informal redistribution within the community. In fact, people with the cash to spare, ensure that this takes place, and those with the inclination and time to spare, are willing to forego the possibility of earning an income via other means. Given that so few people are involved in the production of country foods, which then get shared out within the community, excessive sales of country foods threaten their supply to the community, and thus, occur only minimally. But such sales also threaten people's notions of community, for the sharing of food is one way that people have of sustaining community.

Community is an important component of the vernacular economy of Inuit. Community means many things. What became clear to me in spending time in Puvirnituq was that part of what is involved in the construction of community is the accretion of life experience that people have shared with one another. On the whole, there is none of the anonymity that so marks the lives of many who live in southern Canada. Until not very long ago, Inuit lived in small groups on the land. The composition of those groups changed depending on such things as people's inclinations,

the availability of food, or their social obligations, but everyone knew everyone, and everyone was required to get along, for the alternative was truly frightening isolation—there was no city or town just down the road to which people could move. The move to settlements has not been that long ago, and many of the social structures and understandings that developed when people were living on the land have persisted. Generally, as people pass one another, they are not passing strangers, but people they have known their whole lives. They are related to one another; they know the stories of their ancestors; they know who went out with whom; they know that this person's father once had a really fast dog team, or that person's sister has married and moved to another community. They know both the good and the bad that has taken place in people's lives, and they know the good and the bad of the people themselves. And they have learnt to accept people as they are, and accommodate this knowledge in their interactions with them. There is no place for it being otherwise, because they will continue to meet these people in the daily course of life. It is necessary to maintain this sense of acceptance of one another in order to ensure that sense of community. After all, it is community that has enabled Inuit to survive, it is this commitment to the group that is vital to ensuring their continued understandings of themselves. One way in which it is done is in sharing the necessities of life, including food.

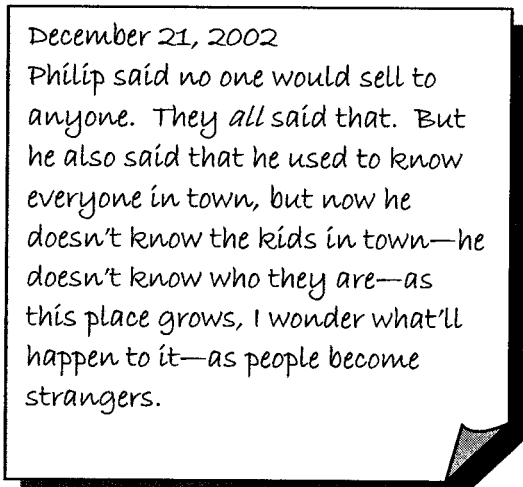
Today, when people talk about the ways in which they see signs of their community belonging, one thing they talk about is whether people visit one another. One of the great markers, as they see it, that divide Inuit from the non-Inuit who inhabit their settlements is the fact that Inuit just drop in on one another unannounced. There is no knocking on doors, no need to ask permission to join people in a meal or a cup of tea;

people just arrive, walk into the house, and join, or not, in whatever happens to be taking place. They shake their heads at *Qallunaat* formalities, and know that a knock at the door means a truly foreign person waits outside. So it was, that I noticed Jamisie and Maggie remarking, upon their return from another community, that nobody *visits* there. And so it was that I have noted others, both in Puvirnituk and elsewhere, remark with distress that no one visits them. In these words people are noting the fact that basic ideas of community are being threatened, they are referring to the breakdown of, or their exclusion from, many of the social processes that define Inuit understandings about themselves. One of these understandings is that with notions of community, with the idea that people belong to society, come obligations to help one another and to share food, things which as Dorais (1997) puts it, many Inuit consider to be the cornerstones of their culture and identity.

Sharing food is an expression of responsibility to and for the group. When I addressed the board of the Hunters', Fishers', and Trappers' Association in Puvirnituk some members expressed their support of selling country foods, citing people's perennial need to find ways of earning money. Others, however, pointed out that if people started selling country food more than they were doing at the moment, people without money would not be able to have access to it, which would mean that they would simply get less of it than those who *have* money. As things stand, people can go on the local radio and ask for meat. But these people might not receive it if people were to start selling meat. The same is true for the Peterhead boats. Right now, when people go out to get such things as beluga or walrus, upon their return to the community, they share what they have got—hence the big crowd in one of the photographs I put in Chapter Three that turned

out to welcome the beluga hunters back. If these hunters were to start selling their catch, again, only those who could afford it would get beluga or walrus. It would be a “disaster to lose the tradition of sharing”, one of the board members said, and people could not call themselves hunters anymore. Community, ideas of social belonging, are bound up in the sharing of country foods, and so some people fear the impact of selling them upon these important components of who and what many Inuit believe themselves to be.

In places where the sense of social belonging is great, the sharing of country foods is more prevalent, and in places where that sense of belonging is less great, it seems that sharing also is diminished. Generally, for Inuit in the eastern Canadian Arctic, society still remains deeply embedded in the economy of country foods, and is generally disembedded only in so far as it is linked to what appear to many as non-Inuit organisations, such as the Co-op or even the HSP, or to non-Inuit individuals. The selling of country foods amongst Inuit continues to be frowned upon, and the stricture remains, at least in public discourse, that Inuit must not sell country foods to one another. So it was that those people who sold country foods to such organisations as the HSP or the Co-op were adamant that they would not and should not sell country foods to one another. Some people seemed to view the communities where Inuit *have* taken to selling country foods as having lost something of their Inuitness. So, for example, one person speculated that in the communities where the selling of country foods between Inuit *does* happen, it is because Inuit have been too long



December 21, 2002
Philip said no one would sell to anyone. They all said that. But he also said that he used to know everyone in town, but now he doesn't know the kids in town—he doesn't know who they are—as this place grows, I wonder what'll happen to it—as people become strangers.

with people from other ethnic groups, and so, the sense of community, or social cohesion—to use a popular term—has been eroded. This is literally an example of Sahlins' point that central to subsistence production is the "... principle that one does not exchange things for food, not directly that is, among friends and relatives. Traffic in food is traffic between foreign interests" (1974, p. 216). Scale is important in this directive. Both Chabot (2001) and St-Pierre (2001) found that people in larger communities shared country foods less than in smaller communities. As Oakes and Riewe (1997) point out with the move to settlements, Inuit have had to confront what it means to live with strangers, people with whom they may not feel a sense of kin because they are from distant, unrelated camps. In the process, they have had to learn both how to sustain the sense of community that has been part of their understandings of themselves and how to adjust to new forms of community. Given these changes, food becomes even more important as a medium by which people try to maintain social relations.

Those Inuit who have chosen to sell country foods to other Inuit face difficulties that come with having moved, in some ways, into a world of foreign interests. What Polanyi (1957a) calls the "whole man" —a member of a family and a community—is faced with real difficulties. As Malachi reveals, such people must confront deeply seated ideas about how others should be treated,

Malachi: Yes. Yeah, well, we—the Inuit had a problem before, and they still do, because of their tradition of sharing, and because of their religion too. And we've always been told to share as much as we can, and not to sell at all amongst ourselves. That was our tradition. But, if we keep that tradition, nobody's going to start any business in country food. And it's been very hard for me in that area, where, in my tradition we're supposed to be providers and share, amongst the needy. And now since there's hardly anyone in need, because of the other programmes, and welfare, and... So. So it's... I've had to be—to turn a blind eye in order to stay in business.

Nicole: *I can imagine that would be hard.*

Malachi: *Yes. Like, even selling to relatives is a no-no in our tradition, but is the kind of thing that I have to overlook. Because I can't stay in business if I just keep on giving everything away. So I have to change. I have to change my tradition. I think, even if it's not an Inuk person, and they're in business, and they have a tendency just to... they're so kind-hearted, you know, that they just give everything away. Out of a good heart. They can't stay in business. It's the same thing. Especially in our tradition it's been difficult to try to get into a business that deals with country food. I ... you... I have to turn a blind eye. I have to be as if I had a cold heart.*

So Malachi recognises that with the change in the circumstances in which Inuit now live, so he must change his ways and develop new modes of behaviour in order to be financially successful. As Simmel ([1900] 1978) saw it, money, the pursuit of money, leads to impersonal relations between people, which in turn, affects the degree to which people are dependent on, or independent of, social obligation. In the process, people's social relations change from personal ones to objective ones. In this whole process hierarchies develop that contain within them new forms of domination and subordination. This, Simmel argues, is a general trend that happens as economies move from barter systems to money systems.

To some extent, people are exhibiting certain forms of these changes. Duffy (1988) and Mitchell (1995) both argue that economic inequalities have appeared amongst Inuit in the Canadian Arctic in ways heretofore unseen. There are those who drive big cars, big skidoos, and big boats, and those who must walk. The walkers are dependent on the drivers for many things, including food. And on occasion, the very same people who have shared food and told me what a pleasure it is to do so, have expressed resentment about doing it. Yet, as I have already discussed, although egalitarianism is an ideal,

people also know that there have always been people who were more successful than others. And as in the past, those in positions of power continue to use that power to ensure that sharing is perpetuated. They subsidise the vernacular economy both politically and financially. And when the phone call comes from someone asking for food, or some other item, people spare what they can. This extends beyond food to money.

Money and Processes of Valuation

In order to understand something of Inuit reactions to money, we need first to know something of their history with it. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, Inuit had nothing that served the set of functions that money generally serves; put simply: as a store of value; a unit of account; and a medium of exchange. Rather they generally produced what they needed in order to meet their requirements of survival. Thus, when money started to appear and be used by Inuit, they saw it in quite different ways from the Europeans who brought it with them. The very word in Inuktitut for “money”—*kiinaujaq*, or, “which looks like a face”—reveals something of money’s foreignness to Inuit. Seeing the head of some monarch, that is what money *was*, something with a face.

Without money, and functional ideas of value associated with it, the major way that Inuit were able to store value in the future was by establishing and respecting social relations. If you do not know what the future holds, if survival is uncertain, then you can always hope that others will look after you in times of need, and so likewise, you look after them. It was *social* capital that people had an interest in building up. This was amassed through sharing and co-operation, and above all, through the exchange of food,

one of the most basic necessities of life and sometimes, the most difficult to find. Thus, in the selling of country foods, social capital and financial capital come head to head. The question is, however, has one given way to the other, or have they reached some form of accommodation? Have the values of reciprocity that are at the root of the vernacular economy of Inuit given way to the individualising, objectifying forces of money that I discussed in Chapter Two?

In some ways, certain people *do* express concern that money has caused a distance amongst Inuit. This is particularly note-worthy for those who knew life on the land before the move into settlements with its increased reliance on wage labour and money. So Apphia Agalakti Awa, who was born in 1931, said,

As Inuit, we would trade things. We didn't pay each other. Paying makes you distant from your relatives. We would trade things. If my husband needed kamiks and I didn't have any bearded seal for the soles, I would ask someone, "My husband is out of soles, can you give me soles?" And of course that person would say, "Yes, come and take what you want." There wouldn't be any talk of payment. That is how families were kept together. Asking for things, it is not part of our life anymore. I never thought we would end up thinking so much about asking for things. Now we are trying to be like the Qallunaat. Qallunaat want things to be paid for right away.

I don't like this business of paying for some things that you get from your relatives. It makes me sad; it makes me very sad. When Rhoda [the speaker's daughter] couldn't make warm clothing for her husband, I used to help her. I used to make clothing for my son-in-law all the time. She never paid me, and I didn't ask for a payment. I never mentioned anything about payment. My son-in-law knows that I am his mother-in-law, and he knows that I will make things for him without wanting money. When he gets animals, he is very generous. I can have anything that I want from what he hunts. I never thought about them having more money than me. They always bring things to me because we are not distant. They give me everything that is available...

This business of paying for things makes you distant. I want this to be known. Just thinking of my grandchildren, if one of them says, "Grandmother, I want you to make me something," I will say to her, "If you chew this particular caribou skin, I will do that for you." If she says that when her money comes she will pay me, I get lazy. I get lazy because

I am sad. I don't know where they learn this from, that they have to use money to get things. I don't know where they learn that there is a cost to everything. I try to instruct my children and my grandchildren, I try to tell them that we are relatives and that there is no need to pay for things. That is the way it used to be...(in Wachowich 1999, p. 133).

Mesher, who grew up in Kuujuaq, also complains that compared with the past, money

has come too much to dominate people's behaviour. "They have moved, in just a few

years, from a world in which nothing that people did for one another had a dollar value to

a world where it's commonplace to think that *everything* has a dollar value" (1995, p.

94). Like Apphia, Mesher believes that the corruption comes from *Qallunaat*.

October 31, 2001

On *NewsWorld* they just had a financial woman reporter talking about how to teach your kids how to deal with money. She said to start teaching them at three—to give [an] allowance at three. And then she said financial knowledge was "the greatest gift you can give your child." What about kids here? What knowledge are they being given? At least the weather woman challenged her. She thought love and safety and happiness were the important things, and money was down on the list. It's amazing how early we're taught things and how early we learn them.

Some Inuit remark that young people are particularly drawn by money,

Things have changed so much from when I was a kid! My kids, they think about money every day. They are always saying things like, "mom, do you have two dollars, three dollars, five dollars? Mom, how come you gave me only a dollar?" They are always in the Bay store or the Co-op, seeing things they can buy. I am just thinking of my little child, Ruby, she is only three years old and she already knows what money is. She is already interested in coins" (Rhoda Kaujak Katsak, born 1957, in Wachowich 1999, p. 193).

This is perhaps why several people to whom I spoke about the selling of country foods

commented on the fact that young people were behaving in distasteful ways: stealing

food from the common pool, or killing animals ineffectually or inappropriately in order to

sell them. Yet, as I mentioned above, people also remark that they are working to ensure that young people do not get rewarded for such behaviour, talking to them in person, or on the radio, to ensure that they learn to behave correctly. Malachi pointed out that the younger generation may well break with tradition, despite people's attempts to socialise them otherwise.

[I]t's changing now. It's a new generation now, and they understand the principle of ... of achieving. ... And of course, we were educated in English, and our way of thinking is much different than the traditional way. So... we're going to be businessmen. We're going to break some rules, our traditional rules.

This may well be true. Yet, for the time being money appears to be no more than a tool for many people that has immediate use when and where it is needed. The idea that money should be saved for future use, or to maximise profit, or to accumulate wealth, are not considerations for a lot of people. The immediacy of life—living in the moment—which people have been taught, and which is from their understanding that the world is constantly changing, extends to the ways in which they live with money. To some extent, this explains Chabot's findings that people in Nunavik live with fairly significant debt. Yet, while part of this is attributable to people's ideas that money is a thing to be used when and how they choose at any given moment, she also notes that there is rationality to this debt. People often acquire and juggle debt in order to be able to spend time on the land. For many, this is of greater value than the requirement to pay back debt.⁴³ This also suggests an explanation for the impression stated by many of the

⁴³ Reeves (1993) provides an interesting example of how people are forced to make difficult choices in order to have money. In his study of the sale of *mattak* in Arctic Bay he found that sometimes people who had previously sold *mattak* to the HTO would later buy it back again. He postulates that this was because people were willing to pay for the use of the freezer rather than having to process the meat themselves. However, I would argue that this was because they needed the money from its sale then and there, and later

non-Inuit who are involved in buying country foods from people that people are only selling these foods when they need money for a particular thing; they do not sell them on a regular basis in order to get money on a regular basis and nor are they interested in making a profit or accumulating capital. Kublu, echoed these views, saying that people sell country foods in order to get money—which is generally in short supply—but they would like money in order to be able to get other things; profit is not the issue.

Nicole: ...*[O]ne of the things I've been trying to figure out is ... like, I've been talking to different people and sort of saying—"where people sell meat"—and asking them, "OK, so what do you pay?" So then I'm starting to think, like, before, 'cause people never **paid**, someone [at the HSP] had to make a **decision** about starting to pay, how much to pay; that kind of thing. Do you know where that's something ... do you know how [the HSP] **made** the decision about how much to pay for different animals?*

Kublu: *People never really got into pricing, pricing meat or what they would like to sell. But as we were developing [the Hunter Support Programme], or... it seems like everything has prices. You make money to buy your cup, your tea, your sugar, your bannock, or flour. And people, from the way I noticed it, people didn't really try and start selling meat just to make money or just to have money. It's when they **really** needed something, that's when I started noticing, when I was a younger person, it was because they really needed something; either to make something or cook something. If they had something to sell, they would sell it, in those days. So...*

Nicole: *And is it the same kind of thing now too?*

Kublu: *That's ... mainly, that's what we think; that's what we think; that's what I think they still do. Just to buy something that they don't have. And if they have something to sell, then they would sell it to a person who needs it, or if they knew who looked for something to get.*

Certainly things have changed in the North, as Mesher and Wachowich attest, but “monetization of the mind”, to take a phrase from Basil Sansom (in Peterson 1991b),

on, once they had money again, they came back to get what they *really* valued; namely, the *mattak*. In other words, the HTO acted as little more than a pawnshop.

seems not to have set in. Rather, money appears to have been assimilated into forms of behaviour and understandings that have existed amongst many Inuit long before money's advent. It looks, in many ways, as if their existing worldviews have given rise to particular ways of understanding and using money. Perhaps not for all, but for many, money continues to be something that is shared, like the other goods in life, in the interests of the collective, rather than the individual. In a conversation with Jamisie I said,

[We] need money for everything now. [Jamisie: Right.] It's too bad.

*Jamisie: Well, to eat here in the North, or in the Nunavik territory, anyone shouldn't go hungry because it's in our culture not just to overlook people who are in need. That's our tradition and culture. So that's why you never see a very rich Inuk because we **do** make a lot of money, but we spend it a lot too on other folks. Or, at least some of us. There **are** people who really don't care anymore, but there are some of us who are still traditional.*

December 6, 2001

Joseph told me Simigak gave an old man \$1,500 from their account to pay for his skidoo, which was broken, though the engine was still good. ... The old guy had maxed out his credit at the Co-op.

In fact, there are social pressures to redistribute money, and those people who *do* hang on to it can meet with resentment. As one person explained, he and another member of the community have a business that is fairly successful,

Yeah. Well, that's—the thing is, the problem is not of making a profit. How would I say? Everybody sees the money that's going to us through the Co-op. Like, it's open. [Nicole: The books are open] Yeah, the books are open; the account is there. And everybody in there, "blah, blah, blah, blah", you know, when they see. You know? Like, if you have, I don't know, maybe fifty, sixty thousand dollars that's lying there, and some people, they don't save money, they spend and spend as fast as they can.

And then they say, they look at that, "he's rich", you know. There's a—like to me, they don't bother me too much on that. They'd rather see me working than doing what I was before. [He laughs] But, I mean, like, Simigak [his partner], he's [got many business ventures] and you know, they're saying, "how come he's making all the money".

For many, people's social relations affect how their money is redistributed: family and extended family being the primary recipients of their largesse. As Joseph explained,

But I mean like, here, let's say, my brother in-law, when he's got money in his pocket and all that, if my wife asks him for money, he's going to give it to her, no questions asked. My wife's oldest daughter is gonna come and bum off of him, and he's gonna give it. Like, when somebody has money, it doesn't matter, "you need some, you need some, you need some". Goodbye. That's it. There's no "lend me this, lend me that".⁴⁴ [Nicole: Yeah.] That's what... But I'm not saying that everybody's like that. But that's the way I see it. ... And that's it; when there's no more, there's no more. The next day, whoop! And it's another one that's got some... It's a big commune.

Wenzel (1991) suggests that such sharing of money is a sign of how it has been included into the customary system of social networks within which Inuit have always functioned. Yet money clearly falls into another category of sharing, for, he notes, people may not help themselves to it without asking, as they can with food.

It is not only family, however, that benefits from the financial generosity of others. As in the days that existed prior to life in settlements, sharing can extend to any number of people with whom an individual has established social links.

⁴⁴ In contrast to this view, Oakes and Riewe write that "[a]nnouncements are sometimes made by people on the radio asking for a loan of \$50 or \$100. They say they will repay the loan when their baby-bonus cheque arrives" (1997, p. 90). Perhaps this is because such requests are made of non-family members. Such blanket requests for a loan suggest, nonetheless, that money is something that flows liberally in Inuit society. The circulation of money amongst Inuit can thus, depending on the situation, either be with or without expectations of repayment.

September 5, 2002

Yesterday Kublu asked me if I wanted money to buy food. He was worried that I wasn't eating properly. That he should just offer me money like that made me shocked. For me, that's such a difficult thing to talk about—just to offer money. Listening to the *St. Matthew Passion* I'm struck by how the Judeo-Christian view of money is that it's dirty. Yet we also want it. So there's this continual and shameful tug. I say to Jamisie and Maggie [in talking about the television show *Fear Factor*] that I wouldn't do something I found repulsive for money (like eating worms), but I'd do it to save a life. Is that a lie? I work at jobs I don't like for money, so how's that different? Maybe, I thought later, it was that push and pull thing going on. Whereas here, at some level, money's just a tool (as Jamisie told me), it's not worth anything in and of itself. People don't go after it for its own sake. So people care less for it. Just as Rebecca told me, her uncle stole money from the *Caisse Populaire* [which used to be run by the Co-op]—stole essentially from the people—but in response to my question about whether people were angry at him for it, she looked a bit confused and said, "No. People here are forgiving." But I wonder now whether it's just that money means less to people. It's not their ultimate measure of value. So what then of the taboo against selling [country food]? Is it that money is dirty? I don't think so. I think it's more that such a step would represent an exclusion of people from something that's really necessary. Or maybe it's that money challenges the established value system. But I don't think so. I don't think it's that people are fighting to prevent money from reigning supreme. It's not so straightforward as that 'cause here money, even in the money economy, doesn't reign supreme. It moves all over the place, as I've seen. It's not this end unto itself. It's just a tool. So Kublu offers it to me. But in the case of country foods, money becomes a tool in some ways (so it's ok to sell via the Co-op, HSP, etc.) but its blocking of access to larger necessities, its blocking of the greater value of sharing, is recognised, and therefore, repressed in the selling of country foods from person to person.

The superior value that sharing—particularly of country foods—has over money, is clear in the findings of Chabot (2001). As I mentioned earlier, she calculated that in 1995, Inuit in Nunavik sold only 15 per cent of their total catch of country foods, keeping 85 per cent for their own use. This represents lost earnings of \$3.9 million for the region as a whole. The primacy of sharing country foods over money also appears to hold true

amongst many Inuit in areas other than Nunavik. Thus, for example, people in both Nunavut and Greenland have told me that some people will actually *buy* store-bought food in order to be able to give away country food.

It would be overly simplistic, however, to assume that people do not know the value of money, and within limits, do not seek to maximise their access to it or, conversely, what it will allow them access *to*. So, for example, the administrators of the Hunter Support Programme try to stretch their funding to buy country foods as far as possible. Similarly, when they first started to implement the programme in Puvirnituk in setting the prices they found that the hunters were asking for as much money as they could get. Eventually, having called other communities to consult them on their prices, the administrators of the HSP in Puvirnituk adjusted the prices they paid hunters to reflect what they got elsewhere. Moreover, if you consult Appendix 2, which lists the prices paid for country foods by various organisations in Puvirnituk, you will see that the HSP pays more for meat without fat than for meat with fat. In addition, the days before the HSP started to try to control who could sell to them as a means of ensuring that people did not kill inappropriately, people would leave the ribs, and lighter material from caribou behind and sell only the legs and the rump which are far heavier, and therefore, could potentially earn them more money in sales by the pound. The amount of effort required to get country foods also plays a factor in the prices, which is why the Co-op pays more for fish in the winter than at other times of year, and why the HSP pays, what amounts to more per pound for ptarmigan than for caribou, because the former has less meat on it, but requires more effort per pound to acquire.

So it looks as if Adam Smith's and later Marx's labour theory of value hold true, to some extent, in the selling of country foods. Seavoy (2000) points out in subsistence production neither labour nor its products have a monetary value; these, he argues, are applicable only to commercial cultures. Yet, as I have demonstrated, Inuit have maintained the values inherent in their vernacular economy, while at the same time, allowing for the appearance of commercial notions of value. All the same, the latter is secondary to larger issues of value inherent in the former. For many, the social value of country foods continues to outweigh its monetary value. Kopytoff (1986) provides a useful way of understanding this process. He suggests that people develop distinct spheres of exchange, each with its own set of values. Often, he argues, there is a lack of common measures of value between the different spheres. As a result, "[w]hen a thing participates simultaneously in cognitively distinct yet effectively intermeshed exchange spheres, one is constantly confronted with seeming paradoxes of value" (p. 82). Perhaps this is why, as one businessperson to whom I spoke suggested, in order to be able to be economically secure, the injunction against Inuit selling to Inuit must give way.

I'm kind of leading in that direction ... for people to be business oriented, and if they are, then they've got to break some rules, traditional rules. So I'm kind of leading in that direction. And since that time, people are more free to advertise their products. They have pualuk—they have mitts—they have ... they now have kamiks, they have other things on sale. In fact, they now have a flea market every once in a while. [Nicole: Aye! I went to the one in November] Yeah. Yeah. So it's changing slowly. But it was not always like that. You know we hear people, when I was getting started in business, even my uncles, I heard them on the radio, that we shouldn't be selling to one another, because it's breaking up relationship; it's breaking up family. They said, "we are always the ones that were sharing and providing". But in doing that we'll never start businesses. We'll never become independent financially. We'll never have any..., you know, we'll never have aspirations. In fact, if we stick to those traditions we're

condemned to ... you know, to... not do anything. We wouldn't be business people at all.

The person went on to say,

Nothing is free. It's what you make, what you can earn, and the ability you have, you're able to sell it. [Nicole: That's the difference, though. I mean, Inuit tradition doesn't come with money.] No. No. But it's a kind of misunderstanding that the Inuit have. They just don't know that nothing's free anymore. Especially today. It might have been, it might have been when it was a small community. There was no money involved, and ...they felt that by doing this, even today.... It is! I mean, I share. I share my own food. I share my own... my own resources with my family, with my immediate family, or to those that are my friends. But, when it comes to business, it's a different thing. I say, "Business is business". You might feel this way, your emotions might feel this way, but I say, "Business is business". It's a Judeo-Christian principle—philosophy. And the Inuit just don't know that. Their principle, their philosophy is a little different than that philosophy, and it just doesn't meet! ... Yeah. So business is business, you know. It doesn't involve the emotions at all. It doesn't. But that doesn't mean that a person is heartless. It's just a principle, you know.

At some level, this person appears to be both promoting the development of a new ethic for Inuit—one that does not prohibit the selling of goods amongst them—and feeling the pressures to preserve the existing ethic of sharing. In fact, the person remarks, such an ethic is developing. All the same, the person seems to feel the pressures of going against these prohibitions. The push and pull of two spheres of value are manifest in this person's words. Business may be business, but the person still notes the importance of sharing amongst family and friends.

For Inuit, the value of country foods has been very real. Death by starvation exists within living memory, so food is not something that people take for granted; it is a matter of life and death. Money, in contrast, is an abstraction of value and the potential of something in the future. It may be that for Inuit the promise of value inherent in

money is, to some extent, questionable, because it is not real in the way that country foods are. The value of country foods—survival at a basic level and social reproduction at a more distant level—are still more important than the abstraction of value that money represents. So, they refuse to replace value with promises of value. For this reason, they are trying to preserve the injunction against selling country foods amongst Inuit. At the same time, people know that money is a useful tool, one that is worth having, so they have found ways to get around the injunction to sell country foods by selling them to those individuals and institutions that exist outside of the spheres of valuation which place a primacy on the sharing of country foods and the social relations inherent in that sharing. How precisely this is done, as I shall discuss before long, comes down to issues of scale. What is clear, is that with the introduction of money to societies that had no such tool, as Miller (2000) states, there is no simple trajectory from forms of value that are purely embedded in society to ones that are purely disembedded. Culture plays an important part in this process. I would also add that the particularities of place are an important component of processes of valuation. In attempting to maintain the notion that country foods must not be sold amongst Inuit they are trying to preserve values that remain embedded within community and larger notions of how society ought to work, and reflect the natural conditions in which they live. In the case of money, at the local level—that associated with place—it too generally reflects values that are indigenous; thus, like other things, money is shared and is used to sustain social relations and ideas of community. And for many, money functions in disembedded ways only at the larger, more impersonal scale, in the space out there that is inhabited by non-Inuit and the institutions they brought with them.

The Importance of Scale (Physical and Metaphysical)

In doing this research, one thing that became clear to me was the importance of scale, both physical and metaphysical, in determining, at least partially, the course of events. Its impact has been both negative and positive, serving, for example, to shelter people from some of the psychic distress that accompanies the breaking of rules, and causing those who wish to sell country foods some amount of grief. As with most things in life, the good and bad are mixed together. As Ursula Franklin puts it, if the scale is appropriate, then it will be stable, but inappropriate scales produce instability (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2003a).

At a physical level, what is clear is that the region's distance from large commercial centres where people might sell country foods, and the lack of infrastructure linking Nunavik to these centres, make the commoditisation of country foods expensive for anyone wanting to undertake such a venture. Yet, this distance also protects people. Because the commoditisation of country foods is essentially taking place locally, this allows people more control over how it is done, enabling them to apply local norms to the process. Thus, they are more able to preserve local ideas of how the land should be used, who should have access to country foods, how those foods should be obtained, and so on.⁴⁵ With such control, people are less dependent on impersonal market forces to regulate how the food is commoditised, and are thus able to control the extent to which

⁴⁵ Inuit in Nunavik are not alone in this regard. Citing the reaction of small-scale fisheries in Greenlandic communities to the large-scale commercial fishing being promoted by the government Nuttall writes "People are not necessarily against development of a fishing industry: they disagree over the level of development and who actually benefits" (1991a, p. 361).

economic systems become separate from the social systems within which they operate. Inuit have learnt the hard way what it means to be economically dependent upon external markets. They have the relatively recent experience of the impact that animal rights activists had upon the fur trade. Given this, many Inuit across the Arctic have on-going concerns about the ways in which they are viewed by the larger world out there, so, as Sejersen (1998) writes, local strategies for economic development cannot ignore the larger global issues. Their success depends on confronting them and adjusting to them.⁴⁶ In fact, Weihs, Higgins, and Boulton (1993) write that the Labrador Inuit Development Corporation was cautious about its commercial caribou venture. It did not undertake an extensive marketing plan because it feared getting attention from animal rights groups. As a result, its sales, and harvesters' incomes, were limited.

No less important than physical scale, however, is metaphysical scale. This comes down, essentially to the ways in which people are able to make a mental distance between themselves and the processes in which country foods are commoditised. How is it that the same people who hunt or fish to sell their produce to the HSP or the Co-op are also able to say that they would never sell country foods to other Inuit?

They can do so because they make a distinction between the two spheres of exchange that operate within the vernacular and market economies. The former is predicated on processes of valuation that place an emphasis on social capital while the latter emphasizes financial capital. In 1969, Graburn argued that people would soon be unable to sustain such a separation, as the pressures of acculturation and of world markets

⁴⁶ As I write this, northern businesses must contend with the fact that a recent discovery of Mad Cow Disease in Alberta has caused many countries to close their borders to meat from Canadian ungulates, including caribou (Nelson 2003b).

bore down on them. Yet, almost forty years later, to varying degrees, people in Puvirnituk *have* managed to sustain that separation. Those who sell country foods and those who consume them are still able to make some distinction between the two economies and to participate in both. Such separations are not unique to Inuit. MacDonald (2000) has noted the same thing amongst Wiradjuri in Australia. He does mention however, that they are able to do so, in part, because of their social isolation from Euro-Australian forces.

The ability to isolate themselves socially from non-Inuit gets harder as people spend more time in communities, in schools, watching television, and so on. But they continue to manage to do so.

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I've been thinking that this whole commoditisation thing, its acceptability or not, is a matter of scale. But I think it's more than that — it's a matter of basic explanations ... and institutions. The institution of sharing is from here and it's tied up in lots of indigenous processes. The institutions of money and business are foreign. This means the ways in which people here react and adapt to them are less tied up in tradition with all its substance and weight and all its associated processes, so people adopt and adapt and live with the contradictions more readily because they can erase many of them epistemologically much more readily. There's not the depth of time and meaning associated with them. I'm spewing words, but I think there's something here.

People generally accept that they should share foods amongst one another, but also accept that they may have to sell to, and buy from, the institutions that are part of the economy that came with non-Inuit; the one involves friends and relatives while the other is relegated to the world of strangers that exist outside the local realm. As people like

Bohannan (1967) and Sahlins (1974) observe, market relations, particularly related to food, amongst people who are subsistence producers generally can only develop when people have a certain social distance amongst themselves. The commoditisation of country foods through the medium of such institutions as the Co-op or the HSP seems to provide people with that sense of social distance.⁴⁷ This was echoed in a conversation I had with Benjamin:

Nicole: *What do you think about selling more [country foods], then?*

Benjamin (through an interpreter): *To other companies or person to person?*

Nicole: *What about person to person?*

Benjamin: *He never thought about selling person to person.*

Nicole: *Why not?*

Benjamin: *He's been taught. It's only to a programme he feels comfortable selling the meat. When it comes person to person, he never thought about it. When it comes to a company, he would like to sell that to them. If there would be another programme that would buy meat, nothing but meat, he would hunt and try to catch, which is possible. But it's not like that.*

I explored this same thought while talking to Jamisie. His response confirmed Benjamin's view that somehow, there was a difference between selling country foods amongst Inuit and selling them to an institution.

Nicole: *The thing I've been trying to understand is, I mean, it seems like people don't mind the thought of selling food to the HSP, and they don't mind the thought of buying it from, say, the Co-op. But they wouldn't sell it to one another. I mean, in Greenland, they sell right to one another. Can you imagine that happening here?*

⁴⁷ This might also explain Myers' (2000a) findings that northern businesses run by Inuit development corporations or HTOs, rather than individuals, are more successful.

Jamisie: *Yes, that'll be the day we will have lost our tradition, our culture. Because we're a sharing people. That's how we've survived here, as we have, by sharing.*

Nicole: *So then the people who sell, the people who sell to the Co-op—*

Jamisie: *The people who sell will be the bad Inuit according to our tradition. [Nicole: The ones who sell to each other?] Yes. They will have lost their tradition.*

Nicole: *What about the ones who sell to the Co-op? Are they seen as bad Inuit?*

Jamisie: *No, not necessarily; because they have to make a living to buy more fuel, for instance. If they're selling fish, they need nets; nets are very expensive. Also machinery, it's double the price when it gets here. Fuel is triple the price.*

In continuing to emphasize the importance of sharing country foods, many Inuit are sticking to a world of values that they have always known, a world that is predicated on an awareness of uncertainty, a world in which survival depended upon people's connections with one another. To some extent, life within communities has changed that. As people so readily acknowledge, they need access to cash in order to have the goods they appreciate and to which they are now accustomed. This conundrum—how to adhere to one's principles while getting cash—is not unique to Inuit. Most of us do this in one form or another. I, for example, have fairly strong moral principles about how to behave towards people and environment: they should both be treated with respect. Were I to live fully by these principles however, it would be difficult to participate in the world. It would be difficult to travel back and forth to the Arctic or to the various distant places that draw me for one reason or another. It would be difficult to eat or buy clothes. To live wholly according to one's principles can be an onerous task, so we find ways that allow us both to feel that we are respecting them and ignore the ways in which we violate

them. We need to live, so we learn to ignore the contradictions, or find ways to justify them.

Parry and Bloch (1989) have provided a useful way of thinking about how people are able to contend with the kinds of contradictions I have observed. Again, scale plays a part in their explanation, not in terms of space, but in terms of time. As I discussed in Chapter Two, they note that in societies that place a premium on reciprocity, short-term, individualistic transactions are morally acceptable as long as they do not threaten the long-term cycles of exchange that focus on the collectivity; in fact, they are desirable if they yield goods that are used to maintain this over-arching order. This is why for many, the HSP is an acceptable means of commoditising country foods, because it allows people to have access to cash while generally allowing sharing ideologies to remain. The same is true for sales to the other institutions, or “programmes” as Benjamin called them, that come from the outside world. Goods from the short-term cycle are often transferred to the long-term cycle. Thus individual interests serve to sustain those of the group. After all, it is the group, sustaining the interests of the group, that has ensured that individual Inuit have been able to survive.

That this ideological space should exist is, we believe, inevitable—for the maintenance of the long-term order is both pragmatically and conceptually dependent on individual short-term acquisitive endeavours. Not only do the latter provide much of the material wherewithal necessary for the reproduction of the encompassing order, but it also has to be acknowledged that this order can only perpetuate itself through the biological and economic activities of individuals. What we claim to be describing then is an extremely general set of ideas about the place of the individual in a social or cosmic order which transcends the individual (Parry and Bloch 1989, pp. 25-26).

Thus many people have learnt to create a distance between the needs and interests of the individuals who sell country foods and the collective requirement that they be shared. The individual, short-term necessity for money is used to sustain the long-term necessity that country foods should be distributed to any who need or wish it. Any behaviour that threatens this long-term order, such as the direct selling of country foods, is met with censure, and shut down by whatever means possible.

The Commoditisation of Country Foods: Scale, Value, Identities,

Community, and Futures

How am I to conclude a chapter full of so many things? What *can* I conclude? What I saw and learnt in Puvirnituk, what people told me about and what they did not tell me about, do have some implications, some of them physical, but many of them metaphysical.

Marquardt and Caulfield (1996) cite conditions identified by Langdon that allow for complementarity of cash and subsistence economies. These include: a low human population density relative to natural resources; an adequate supply of resources that are not degraded; limited external demand for those resources; ensuring that the demands of the commercial sector are within the capabilities of the local population; making sure that local production is not appropriated by taxation and that indigenous land and sea tenure systems are upheld; and maintaining kin-based production units. Each of these criteria is more or less important in Puvirnituk, and to some degree, they are met in the commoditisation of country foods in Puvirnituk. The population relative to the area is limited, although it *is* growing. Certain resources *are* bountiful, such as caribou, and

those resources that are degraded, for example Arctic Char, are being monitored by the local population. For the time being people's ability to sell country foods to external markets is severely restricted by the host of regulations put in place by the JBNQA and by provincial, federal, and international legislation. People certainly have the capacity to get the food, and have learnt the technical requirements to sell it. People are aware that the tax system in Canada works against them, adding inequitable expenses to their lives that do not exist elsewhere in the country, and are trying to rectify this by publicising the issue. Although the JBNQA limits the amount of land over which people may have primary control and use, local land and sea tenure systems are essentially intact within the limits of changing wildlife management regulations imposed from outside, and to the extent that massive industrial developments have not yet affected people's access to resources to any great extent. Finally, given the breadth of social relations that exist in the community, kin-based production continues to dominate hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering. So it would seem, having put a checkmark beside all of these criteria, that we may conclude that subsistence production and cash production of country foods are able to co-exist. Yet, as I learnt, life does not fit into easy categories, and behind each of these checkmarks are a host of issues that people have to confront and adjust to in order to be able both to sell country foods and to share them. These issues extend beyond the physical to the metaphysical.

One thing that became clear to me in doing this research is that the commoditisation of country foods is closely linked to people's notions of how community should function. People's survival has depended upon one another. The Arctic can be an unforgiving place. When a storm hits, when the wind blows and the air

and water rail against humanity, when food cannot be found and supplies are running low, people can be powerless to protect themselves against nature's forces, particularly if they are alone. Connections with others and the sharing of resources, in good times and in bad, have helped people to overcome these uncertainties. If the world is an unpredictable place, at least people could generally rely on one another to counterbalance it. This is, in part, why community is so important and is at the root of why people wish to maintain it by any means possible. This is why they place a premium on sharing country foods, for it is an expression of community, and part of the bulwark that they have built to protect them in the face of life's uncertainties. And this is why the commoditisation of country foods can pose such a threat to people, for it threatens sharing. For many, the value of social relations far exceeds other values and, so, must be preserved at all costs.

In order to combat life's changeableness people do not assume that they can control what goes on, but rather, must preserve enough flexibility to adjust to whatever comes. In contrast, money presumes that things behave in predictable, controllable ways. A monetary economy does everything it can to ensure that this is the case, and when, for some reason, as in the crashing of planes into the World Trade Centre, the world turns out to be uncontrollable, then monetary economies teeter in very much the same way as the structures they produce. Just as market economies develop regulatory systems, such as laws against counterfeiting or quality controls, to try to ensure stability, so Inuit developed regulatory systems to ensure stability, one of which is sharing food.

What I also learnt in doing this research was that at some level the knowledge and behaviours that have been vital to Inuit survival are built in at so many levels to the

vernacular economy. They have developed over millennia and are expressed in people's capacity to survive on the land. They come out in people's abilities to navigate their way over the land and water, in knowing that particular kinds of environmental circumstances indicate particular kinds of behaviours in the animals, in knowing how to kill and butcher an animal, in knowing what meat is good and what meat is bad, in knowing the stories that are held in the land and sea, in knowing when to act and when to sit back, in knowing that expressions of responsibility and maturity often mean not to interfere with others, in possessing the various components of Qitsualik's (2003a) "survival mind", such as stoicism, cynical humour, easy-goingness, and non-paranoid wariness. All of this knowledge, and all of these behaviours, have been integral components of people's ability to participate in life on the land.

With the move to settlements, the importance of that economy, with all of the institutions associated with it, seems to have diminished. Yet those institutions and their knowledge, understandings, and perceptions remain. They are not always manifest in the money economy that, in some ways, is built into the functioning of life in settlements. So many of the institutions associated with Euro-Canadian society, with market systems, with wage employment, assume that the world is a predictable, and therefore controllable place. In the face of

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I had a conversation with Adamie. ... He said I should write what I experienced. He said that the people who wanted to help each other, in the traditional way, were stopping because they were being told by authorities not to, 'cause they don't have the right training. He said that people had gone through too many changes too quickly - now they're busy trying to be *qallunaat* - but he hopes, he hopes that they will come back to themselves, that they will start to see all the good that they have.

this, people must act forcefully. In the face of this, money can allow us to meet many of our physical needs. And in the face of this, many of the skills and understandings that Inuit possess find no room for expression, and, in fact, are actively discouraged.⁴⁸ The monetary economy is all about standardisation and control, while the sharing economy is about irregularity and *not* having control.

Built into the commoditisation of country foods, then, are some powerful forces. Put simply, the world of behaviours, understandings, and knowledge that developed with life on the land meets the world of behaviours, understandings, and knowledge that came with the move to settlements. And how is this being played out? How have people learnt to accommodate these different ways of knowing, behaving, and understanding?

There is no simple or solitary answer to these questions. What I heard from people, what I observed, and what I learnt was that people, as always, reflect variety and contradiction. In trying to understand these things, the words of Kopytoff have served as a useful directive: “Commoditization ... is best looked upon as a process of becoming rather than as an all-or-none state of being” (1986, p.73).

In this process of becoming, I found that people express concern that the commoditisation of country foods will affect people’s ability and willingness to share them. For a few, this concern remains, but others have found a way of accepting the necessity for some to sell country foods while preserving the requirement to share them. Thus, people continue to subsidise the hunting, fishing, and gathering economy by whatever means they can, whether it is by sharing what food they have with others or by

⁴⁸ For example, I had a conversation with a teacher who mentioned that he spent much of his time trying to get his students to plan ahead. Yet this would seem to negate the general requirement amongst Inuit to be flexible, to wait until circumstances seem right, and then to act.

discussing publicly the importance of continuing to do so with those who might be inclined to break with this imperative; whether it is in providing money themselves to subsidise others' trips on the land or by lending moral support to the various institutions in which people may sell country foods.

These institutions exist in realms that are essentially outside of the mental or physical domain of the vernacular economy. They sell to non-Inuit, and to the institutions they brought with them, but they preserve—or *try to*—the notion that such sales should not take place within the Inuit world. By selling country foods to the HSP, or the Co-op, or the hospital or the catering company, they are able to get the money they need while preserving their notions of appropriate behaviour. Such a mental split in people's perceptions is of great symbolic importance, for it allows them to continue to be Inuit; to live as members of a community; to reflect the importance of relationship, both amongst Inuit and between Inuit and the natural world; to act as morally responsible adults; to confirm their knowledge and express their values.

Others are less able to retain a clear mental separation between the Inuit and non-Inuit worlds. Things creep in, and the moral order that regulates the divide between the two worlds appears to erode. So Austin-Broos observes,

Shame, the experience of self-inflicted injury on the person, becomes increasingly difficult to sustain as social relations are de-localised, divided into separate institutional spheres, and become increasingly impersonal. Morality conferred through habit is then less of a self-regulating mechanism and has to be tied to external and implicit reference points whether utility, human nature, or... to God. With morality no longer taken for granted and tied to a naturalised notion of the person, debate inevitably erupts concerning why certain values should not be breached. Morality remains but loses its power to confer the experience of lapsing from personhood, of shame with integral social rupture. Morality becomes abstracted, explicit and contested (1996, pp. 180-181).

In expressing various reservations about the commoditisation of country foods, people are, in a sense, reflecting their concern that the moral order that has governed Inuit society is being challenged. They fear that values of sociality are giving way to individual self-interest and, in the process, the very community upon which their survival has depended may appear to be fracturing. So they mention the appearance of theft. So they say that people are sharing less than they used to. So they say that some of the youth appear to be losing some of the skills and behaviours that are necessary to live on the land. So they say that people are losing their sense of initiative and are floundering in their dependency on non-Inuit goods and services. Such services might be an attempt to replace the knowledge systems associated with the vernacular economy, but they are not a true replacement. They do not allow people to feel productive in ways that give them a sense of pride or responsibility. This last came out towards the end of my conversation with Malachi, when I asked,

Is there anything... we've talked about a lot of things. Is there anything else that you think that I should know about that I haven't thought to ask about? Anything I've missed? Or anything you want to ask me?

*Malachi: Yeah, well... Like I said, you know, the Inuit are much more able to manage their own lives. You know. I wish they would be... they would have a ... be able to do a lot more on their own. Even if they don't have fancy roads, I would prefer that they would do it themselves instead of getting governments to do it for them. Even if they have not very good housing, I would prefer that they would have done it themselves and built it themselves. From their own resources, from their own money. Because they would be—they would be **real** people then. And that's what I want to see. If government stops all their subsidy coming in to the Inuit people, it would be a blessing in disguise because they would have to try and do it themselves.*

Nicole: Like before!

Malachi: Yeah, like before. They would be independent, and I'm very certain that with God's help, they would be able to do it. But the way

*things are going now, with all kinds of subsidies left and right, coming from the back and under, right and left with the Hunter Support Programme, people are **dying**. They don't **have** to do anything. All they have to do is watch TV and listen to the radio. People don't **need** to do anything. And that kills people.*

As an entrepreneur involved in the business of selling country foods, he acknowledges he must confront the gulf in values between the vernacular and market economies head on. Yet, he believes that change is necessary. Times are changing, and people must change with them. As he said,

Nothing is free. It's what you make, what you earn, and the ability you have, you're able to sell it.

The plethora of government services that have been provided to Inuit in an attempt to help them to deal with these changes are, he argues, debilitating. This is why he thinks Inuit must start to produce their own destinies. For him, business is one way of doing this. As a businessperson, his commitment to doing just this can sometimes come at the expense of breaking the rules that governed society. But if this is the price that must be paid, then so be it. At least he can feel he is being productive. For now, financial success is the new gauge of productivity and, in fact, as many recognise, it is also a requirement for other forms of productivity.

At one level, perhaps it is true that nothing is free. It may well be true that, in some ways, nothing is free. But is money the only way that Inuit have found to express and reflect notions of what is involved in making a living? For some, the answer is "yes", but for others, the answer is complex and rooted in the richness of their experience. To be sure, money is part of it, but people take that money, use it, and choose to be able to do what they *really* value.

Nicole: *What about selling to one another?*

Jamisie: *To one another? That's the only thing that's legal. But there's no money to generate; there's not too much. We're a big community. We're well off moneywise; we're well equipped. But there's just not enough money to go around. And its—besides, it's not in our tradition to sell to one another. I mean, we try to keep our traditions, traditional values, as best we can. And sometimes it's not the best, the best of us, or the best thing for us to do. But still we try to keep our tradition alive. That's why you've never seen a skinny Inuk, even though a lot of people don't practise their traditional hunting and fishing too much anymore. A lot of young men, under the age of forty don't bother. Because if they do, then that's going to interfere, like I said, with their welfare cheque. And you can't afford a skidoo or a canoe on your welfare cheque anyway. You need to have a full-time job to have those things. You need to work all year round to be fully equipped. And those of us who **are** only have a chance to work on week-ends now.*

Nicole: *So where does all the food come from in town?*

Jamisie: *Because we're good hunters and one day is good enough to provide.*

Nicole: *Really?!*

Jamisie: *Yes. [Nicole: Really?!] Yes. A lot of the men who work five days a week go on Saturday... [Nicole: And they get enough for everyone else?] Yes. That's how we live off, we're still living off the land.*

CLOSING THE CIRCLE?

MAKING A LIVING

This thesis grew out of a wish to find out how people were surviving in the North. I wanted to understand something of how the economy indigenous to the North was faring in the face of the newer economic systems that have moved into the area. As the poem at the beginning of this thesis suggests, for all the changes that Inuit have experienced, they cannot escape where they are from. How, then, are they to make sense of these changes? This is what I set out to discover.

I embarked upon this journey, though, with a certain amount of reticence. I knew that for all my focus on the vernacular economy, today there is a lot more to the economy in the North than that. I feared when I started doing this research that I was helping to perpetuate fixed ideas of Inuitness and stereotypical notions of how they survive: just as I was asked, as a child after moving to England from Canada, whether I lived in an igloo. Today, like other Canadians, Inuit are part of the market economy, so they need money. These days the vast majority also live in settlements, in which the skills associated with hunting, fishing, and gathering continue to be valued, as too is the ability to use computers, fly aeroplanes, and balance budgets. Not everybody is interested in hunting, fishing, and gathering, so I am loath to give the impression that that is all there is in the North; far from it. Yet, for all that, it has only been a short time since Inuit have moved into settlements; people and their ways of life do not quickly shed their roots. The forms that people's lives take, the ways in which they think about the world and participate in it,

are reflections of the ways of living and institutions that they developed in living on the land. Where the past takes people is to some extent a matter of the choices that people make, both formally and informally, as individuals, as communities, and as a collective.

I learnt a great deal while I was in Puvirnituk. I learnt a great deal about the world in which I live and what it means to live in the North, both in a settlement and outside of it. What became clear to me was that some people were having a hard time making the adjustment. The changes that they have gone through are enormous. Ideas about how to behave, knowledge that was required to survive, the spaces that people occupy, notions of time, the social scale in which people now live are only some of the ways in which people's lives have changed; and, as the poem suggests, they must adjust to them. I have tried, in this thesis, to identify some of these effects, because what people have known in terms of life on the land, and what they are experiencing now in settlements, all contribute to the ways in which they are reacting to the commoditisation of country foods. In thinking about these things, and listening to people, three things became clear to me: first, that ideas of community are central to the ways in which people think about country foods; second, that notions of time and place are the foundation upon which they construct these ideas; and finally, that in commoditising country foods people must deal with the fact that these things are being altered.

Anyone who has ever lived in a more natural setting—on the other side of the glass and steel and heating and cooling systems that insulate so many people in Canada from the world outside—must know that life is a transient thing, constantly changing, subject to the wind and rain and sun. Inuit developed their society and their understandings of the world in recognition of this flux, a recognition closely tied into

how they live in place. One way in which they have learnt to deal with the instability of life is by accepting and encouraging their reliance upon one another. If all is impermanence and uncertainty, then one of their means to provide some stability are the social relations that people create. This is their wealth. This is why things that challenge the links that people have worked so hard to forge are deeply disturbing to their notions of how to live.

At the same time, people have learnt to live very much in the present. I was once on a spring ice-fishing trip with people from the Belcher Islands. It was my first time camping with Inuit, and we were together, many families spanning many ages. It was May, and what snow remained was getting soft, so that as the skidoos with their heavily laden *kamotiks* were travelling from one white patch to another, they would sometimes get stuck, sinking into the snow. When this happened we would all get off and help the skidoo on its way. At one point, as we headed to a lake, we were confronted by one very steep hill. To avoid problems we let the skidoos speed to the top while everyone else walked up after them. Wanting not to slow things down, and thinking that people were anxious to get there, I kept a steady pace and marched up to the top. Looking at the others, however, I was struck how they walked in a relaxed way up that hill, talking, smoking, and taking their time. The contrast between my behaviour and theirs has stayed with me. In the years since, I have come to realize that for many Inuit, the awareness of flux means that they place a great deal of emphasis on process. Life is not about getting from here to there in order to get something, because, as they well know, they cannot count on being able to do that. The forces of nature do not allow them to assume that humans are in control. So, they have necessarily learnt to live in the here and now, to

appreciate what they have at any given time, and be flexible enough to act when the moment seems right.

As I spent time in the North I started to wonder what the here and now *are* for those who have been born and raised in settlements. For some, and those are the ones who are suffering, the here and now is reality from a box—MTV and *Fear Factor*—or from the end of a bottle or from a puff of smoke. But for millennia, reality has been out on the land, living in and with the elements, relying on others and doing all you could to ensure that they were well. This reality is about place. It is not time in the abstract—a fantasized present or some deceptively controllable future—but *now*. Life is lived in the here and now. Everything is a whole string of nows. It is true, you can never step in the same river twice. This is the world, I believe, in which Inuit developed the various institutions—social, psychic, political, economic—that enabled them to live. And this is the world that has had to come to some form of accommodation with life in settlements, with jobs and money and fixed buildings, predicated on notions of permanence, with a fixed present and a future that can be controlled.

In the commoditisation of country foods, these two forms of life come together. Permanence and impermanence; control and unpredictability; the forces that bind community and the forces that dissolve it must be negotiated. And negotiate it they do. As I learnt, many people are trying to navigate their way between the need to share and the need for money. This passage is not without problems, but for the time being, many people are nonetheless determined to stick to it.

As I listened to people, read, and thought, I came to see that to varying degrees, sometimes consciously, but generally unconsciously, we *make* our livings. We construct

the ideas and institutions that enable us to meet the requirements of life. This is what many Inuit are doing. Generally people make these choices automatically: they have been raised to share food. But sometimes they make them deliberately, for example, in choosing whether or not to adopt the Hunter Support Programme or to sell country foods to one another. In both cases, they are constructing the institutions and adopting structures of belief that establish the form of their existence. As far as I was able to determine, these choices are not easily made. In some cases, amongst those who have chosen to promote the sharing of country foods, individuals forego certain goods—be they in the form of food, or time, or money, or comfort—in the interests of the collective. In others, those who have chosen to sell country foods must choose to sacrifice social opinion in pursuit of what they deem to be valuable and constructive to society in the long run.

We live in a world in which society must increasingly fit into what seems to be economically rational. In the various ways that I have described in this thesis, many Inuit seem resolved to live in an economy that is socially rational. And so, at a fundamental level, they make their livings, as do we all.

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APPENDIX 1

Employment, Population and Earnings Statistics from Puvirnituaq

All information is from the 2001 Canadian Census

**Table 1 -
Population Statistics for Puvirnituaq, 2001**

Characteristics	Puvirnituaq	Quebec
Population in 2001	1,287	7,237,479
Population in 1996	1,169	7,138,795
1996 to 2001 population change (%)	10.1	1.4
Population density per square kilometre	15.0	5.3
Land area (square km)	85.73	1,357,743

Source: Statistics Canada 2003

Table 1
Population Statistics for Puvirnituk, 2001 continued

Characteristics	Puvirnituk			Quebec		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Age Characteristics of the Population						
Total - All persons	1,290	655	630	7,237,480	3,532,845	3,704,635
Age 0-4	165	90	75	375,765	192,275	183,490
Age 5-14	320	165	155	915,810	466,790	449,020
Age 15-19	130	70	65	462,070	235,855	226,215
Age 20-24	120	55	70	487,405	246,140	241,265
Age 25-44	350	180	175	2,165,760	1,077,480	1,088,280
Age 45-54	115	55	60	1,109,945	548,085	561,865
Age 55-64	50	30	20	760,905	370,960	389,945
Age 65-74	20	15	15	547,185	248,740	298,445
Age 75-84	10	5	5	318,180	120,940	197,240
Age 85 and over	5	5	0	94,450	25,580	68,870
Median age of the population	20.9	20.6	21.0	38.8	37.8	39.8
% of the population ages 15 and over	62.0	61.1	63.5	82.2	81.3	82.9
Common-law Status						
Total - Population 15 years and over	800	400	400	5,945,900	2,873,770	3,072,130
Not in a common-law relationship	675	340	335	4,933,975	2,365,765	2,568,205
In a common-law relationship	125	60	60	1,011,925	508,005	503,920
Legal Marital Status						
Total - Population 15 years and over	805	400	400	5,945,900	2,873,775	3,072,130
Single	520	260	255	2,421,290	1,270,285	1,151,005
Married	245	125	120	2,393,630	1,197,155	1,196,475
Separated	15	10	5	139,195	63,545	75,645
Divorced	5	0	5	595,170	268,670	326,500
Widowed	15	0	10	396,625	74,120	322,510

Source: Statistics Canada 2003

Table 2
Earnings Statistics for Puvirnitug 2001

Characteristics	Puvirnitug	Quebec
	Total	Total
Earnings		
All persons with earnings	495	3,815,265
Average earnings (all persons with earnings (\$))	25,521	29,385
Worked full year, full time	210	1,970,175
Average earnings (worked full year, full time (\$))	38,779	39,150

Source: Statistics Canada 2003

Table 3
Work Statistics for Puvirnitug 2001

Characteristics	Puvirnitug	Quebec
	Total	Total
Labour Force Indicators		
Participation rate (%)	56.3	64.2
Employment rate	49.4	58.9
Unemployment rate	11.2	8.2

Source: Statistics Canada 2003

Table 4
Income Statistics for POV

Characteristics	Puvirnitug	Quebec
Income		
Persons 15 years of age and over with income	720	5,506,245
Median total income of persons 15 years of age and over (\$)	13,424	20,665
Composition of total income (100%)	100.0	100.0
Earnings - % of income	80.2	75.1
Government transfers - % of income	17.9	13.9
Other money - % of income	1.9	11.0

Source: Statistics Canada 2003

Table 5
Numbers of Jobs in Puvirnitug by Employer 1999

Employers	Number of Employees*
Air Inuit Ltd.	7
Kativik Transport	6
Ali's Café	2
C.N.V. of Puvirnitug [Municipal Office]	29
Municipal Housing	6
Mikikattit [Hunter Support Programme]	1
Municipal Garage	4
CKPV-FM Radio	1
Co-op Puvrintitug	18
Cable Man (& telephone)	1
Skidoo Repair Shop	1
Hotel Co-op	4
Daycare Centre	7
Hydro Québec	2
Inuulitsivik Hospital	225
Social Services	8
Youth Protection	8
KRG Education & Training Department	3
Kativik School Board (Regular Sector)	52
Kativik School Board (Adult Education)	5
Naturaait [Women's Committee]	3
Northwest Company [formerly HBC]	13
Pitsituuq (Smoked Fish)	2
Qumaluk's Taxi	1
Surasiviq (Arcade)	2
Tulugak Enterprises	2
Niuvirpiapik Kuananack [convenience store]	1
Niuvirpiapik Angiyou [convenience store]	1
Christian Bookstore	1
Nuvalingaq Hotel	1
TOTAL	422

* N.B.: these include full-time and part-time employment

APPENDIX 2

Comparative List of Prices Paid for Country Foods in Puvirnituaq (2001)

Individual Non-Inuit (N.B.: according to one regular buyer)

- Caribou: \$20/backstrap; rear leg \$50, (four years ago was \$35, then \$40 3 years ago)
- Fish: (I do not know what kind) was \$10/fish, but they were very small so she stopped buying them

Catering Company

- Caribou: rear leg \$50 (which equals approximately \$2.50/lb); \$30/backstrap
- Canada Goose: \$10 (if not plucked) and \$20 if gutted and plucked
- Ptarmigan: \$5
- Arctic Char: \$3/lb if not gutted; otherwise \$3.50; \$8/lb if filleted
- Speckled Trout: \$2.50/lb for the whole fish

Hospital

- Caribou: rear leg \$25 according to one informant; \$50 according to another informant, however this may be for *two* of them
- Arctic Char: \$2.50/lb & \$8/fillet from Pitsituuq; another informant told me he paid \$2/lb

N.B.: The hospital chef does not buy birds because they are too much work to prepare, he already has to disinfect the kitchen when he cooks caribou, which is enough work. He also only serves raw country food to patients upon request, because regulations forbid serving it in the cafeteria.

Mikikatiit (Hunter Support Programme)

- Arctic Char: \$2.30/lb
- Lake Trout: \$2.25/lb
- Whitefish: \$1.85/lb
- Seal: \$2.95/lb (without fat) or \$1.15/lb (with fat)
- Caribou: \$2/lb
- Ptarmigan: \$5/each
- Rental of skidoo or canoe: \$75/day
- Hunting for the day: \$165 (with equipment) or \$90 (without equipment)

N.B.: The difference between how much a hunter is paid for a day's work depending on whether he has equipment is because the HSP essentially pays rent to the hunter for the use of his equipment.

Co-operative

- Arctic Char: \$2-2.50/lb (depending on the season)

Pitsituuq

- Arctic Char: \$2/lb.

Table 1
Comparative List of Prices Paid for Country Foods in Puvirnituq (2001)

Species/Activity		Individual Non-Inuk	Catering Company	Hospital ¹	Mikkatitit (HSP)	Co-operative	Pitsituq
Arctic Char	Whole Fish (per lb.)		\$3 (if not gutted); \$3.50 (if gutted)	\$2.50 (or \$2???)	\$2.30	\$2-\$2.50 (based on the season)	\$2
	Fillet (per lb.)		\$8	\$8			
Whitefish	(per lb.)				\$1.85		
Lake Trout	(per lb.)				\$2.25		
Speckled Trout	(per lb.)		\$2.50 (based on informant's calculation of whole fish's weight)				
Ptarmigan	(whole)		\$5		\$5		
Canada Goose	(whole)		\$10 (if not plucked); \$20 (if gutted & plucked)				
Seal	With Fat (per lb.)				\$1.15		
	Without Fat (per lb.)				\$2.95		
Caribou	Rear leg	\$50	\$50 (=approx. \$2.50/lb.)	\$25 (or \$50???)			
	Back strap	\$20	\$30				
	Per pound				\$2		
Rental of Skidoo or Boat	(per day)				\$75		
Payment for the day	With Equipment (per day)				\$165		
	Without Equipment (per day)				\$90		

¹ Prices vary based on differences reported by the two individuals at the hospital to whom I spoke.

APPENDIX 3

GLOSSARY

<i>agu</i>	hood of an <i>amautik</i>
<i>ajurnarmat</i>	it can't be helped
<i>akisussaassuseq</i>	a sense of responsibility to the land and to everything that lives there (Greenlandic)
<i>akpallugit</i>	inviting in a special guest
<i>amautik</i>	hooded parka for carrying babies
<i>amautiit</i>	plural of <i>amautik</i>
<i>angunahuarniaqara</i>	I'll try and catch it [in speaking of hunting game]
<i>angutjuak (angujjuaq)</i>	big male polar bear
<i>angusiaq</i>	godson
<i>anirniq</i>	breath soul
<i>atiq</i>	name soul
<i>avatik</i>	environment/horizon/line where igloo meets the ground
<i>igunak</i>	fermented walrus meat
<i>ilira</i>	passive silence or timidity that is induced by a form of fear
<i>ilagiit</i>	extended family group
<i>inik</i>	place
<i>initsaq</i>	space (literally: 'has the potential to be a place')
<i>inuk nammineq</i>	personal independence and individual strength (Greenlandic)
<i>inuksuk</i>	stone marker or figure
<i>inuksuit</i>	plural of <i>inuksuk</i>
<i>kalaalimineq (Greenlandic)</i>	country foods (literally: 'a small piece of a Greenlander')
<i>kamik</i>	seal-skin boot

<i>kamotiks (qamutiik)</i>	sled pulled by dog team or skidoo
<i>kiinaujaq</i>	money
<i>kiinaujatigut makittarasuarniq</i>	economy (literally: ‘by money try to stand by itself’)
<i>mattak</i>	beluga skin
<i>minnatuq</i>	opening a food cache
<i>misiraaq</i>	sauce made from the rendered oil of whale or seal
<i>nani nunaharpit?</i>	Where are you from? (literally: ‘Where do you have land?’)
<i>ningiq</i>	sharing between and man and his father/oldest brother
<i>ningiqtuq</i>	unrestricted sharing of meat from large animals
<i>niqisutaijuq/quaktuaktuq/pajuktuq</i>	giving meat to non-kin
<i>niqitatainnaq</i>	transfers of food and other things from the head of an extended family to a subordinate
<i>niqituinnaq</i>	country foods
<i>niqijaqtuqtuq</i>	communal meal
<i>nirliujaq</i>	cough sounding like Canada Goose
<i>nukauq</i>	young big polar bear
<i>nunamut ataqqinninneq</i>	a sense of pride in knowing the land (Greenlandic)
<i>pajuktuq</i>	sending a gift from one house to another within a camp/community
<i>pualuk</i>	mitten
<i>qajaq</i>	kayak
<i>Qallunaaq</i>	White person (singular)
<i>Qallunaat</i>	White people (plural)
<i>Qallunaatitut</i>	the White people’s way
<i>qulliq</i>	soapstone lamp
<i>sanajik</i>	godparent
<i>sauniq</i>	namesake or bone
<i>sila</i>	weather, outdoors, atmosphere

<i>silatujuq</i>	a wise person
<i>tarniq</i>	individual soul
<i>tiggaq</i>	seal in rut
<i>tigutuinnaq</i>	transfers of food from a subordinate hunter to superior kin
<i>tiqituar (tiqituaq)</i>	second older from the youngest male polar bear
<i>tukkussuseq</i>	generosity and hospitality(Greenlandic)
<i>tuktuviniq nikkuk</i>	caribou jerky
<i>Tuniit</i>	Dorset Eskimos
<i>ukpatiga</i>	my buttocks
<i>ulu</i>	half-moon shaped woman's knife

VITA

Nicole Gombay

PLACE OF BIRTH

Montreal, Quebec

EDUCATION

Ph.D. (Geography) 2003
Queen's University

M.E.S. (Environmental Studies) 1995
University of Waterloo

Honours B.A. (Philosophy & Environmental Studies) 1990
University of Toronto

ACADEMIC AWARDS

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Post-doctoral Fellowship, 2003
Queen's University Dean's Award, 2003
Queen's University Graduate Award, 1999-2001; 2003
Ontario Graduate Scholarship, 2001-2003
Senator Frank Carrel Fellowship, Queen's University (*declined*), 2002
Huntly MacDonald Sinclair Travelling Scholarship, Queen's University, 2001
Queen's University Graduate Fellowship, 2000
University of Waterloo Graduate Scholarship, 1995
Elizabeth Brown Award, University College, University of Toronto, 1990
Natural Science and Engineering Research Council Undergraduate Award, 1989

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Research & Consulting

Research Assistant - Queen's University (1999-2002)
Research project on food security in the circumpolar Arctic

Research & Consulting (continued)

Consultant - Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa (1999)
Research on the role of Traditional Knowledge in the development of the
Northern Contaminants Program

Research Associate - J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, Montreal (1996-1998)

Researcher - Algonquin Nation, Temiskaming Reserve, Quebec (1996)
Land use and occupancy for a land claim by Algonquin

Researcher - Makivik Corporation, Montreal and Nunavik (1995)
Land use and occupancy for a land claim by Inuit in Nunavik

Researcher - Hudson Bay Program, Municipality of Sanikiluaq, Belcher Islands,
Nunavut (1993-1994)
Analysis of the indigenous ecological knowledge of the Cree and Inuit of Hudson
Bay and James Bay

Research Assistant - Cancer Coordinator, Ontario Ministry of Health, Toronto
(1992)
Assisted in various studies related to the treatment of cancer

Urban Policy Consultant - Department of Planning, Université de Montréal
(1991)
Research on industrial and waste management policy in Toronto

Field Assistant - Botany Department, University of Toronto, Ellesmere Island,
Nunavut (1990)
Assisted in a study of plant ecology in a high arctic oasis

N.S.E.R.C. Research Associate - Institute for Environmental Studies, University
of Toronto (1989)
Research on environmental legislation & implementation in developing countries

Teaching

Teaching Assistant – Department of Geography, Queen’s University, Kingston
(2000; 2002; 2003)

Teaching Assistant – Department of Environment and Resource Studies,
University of Waterloo, Waterloo (1992-1994)

PUBLICATIONS

Gombay, Nicole. **"The Politics of Culture: gender parity in the legislative assembly of Nunavut"** in *Études/Inuit/Studies* V.24, no. 1, 2000, pp. 125-148.

Gombay, Nicole. *Traditional Knowledge and the Northern Contaminants Program*. Policy paper for the Northern Contaminants Programme, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa, 1999.

Gombay, Nicole. **"Canada"** in *The New Civic Atlas: Profiles of Civil Society in 60 Countries* Washington: Civicus: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, 1997, pp. 23-24.

Gombay, Nicole. **"Bowheads and Bureaucrats: Challenges for Nunavut"** in *Interaction* V. 8, no. 1, 1996, pp. 16-17.

Gombay, Nicole, et al. *Environmental Monitoring in the Laurel Creek Watershed: the Community-Based Approach*. Environment and Resource Studies, University of Waterloo, 1993.

EPSM. **"Air Pollution Control in Malaysia"** in *Clean air around the world: national and international approaches to air pollution control*. Loveday Murley (ed.). Brighton: International Union of Air Pollution Prevention Associations, 1991.

Gombay, Nicole. **"Reflections of a Concerned Navel-Gazer"** in *Alam Sekitar* V. 5, no. 4, 1991, p.26.

Gombay, Nicole. *Environmental Regulation in Developing Countries*. Report for the Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Toronto, 1989.

PRESENTATIONS

"The Experience of Cross-Cultural, Qualitative Research", March 22, 2002, Course on Cultural Research Methods, Queen's University.

"The Commercialization of Country Foods in Puvirnituk: Economy, Culture, and Place", September 17, 2001, Circumpolar Arctic Social Sciences Network, Apatity, Russia, September 2-21, 2001.

"The Commercialization of Caribou in Nunavik: A Case Study of the Impacts of Legal and Indigenous Conceptions of Subsistence", May 17, 2001, Fourth International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences, Quebec City, May 16-20, 2001.

PRESENTATIONS (continued)

“Gender Parity in the Nunavut Legislative Assembly: Inuit Gender Identity and Political Process”, May 13, 2000. Inuit Identity in the Third Millennium, Université Laval, May 11-14, 2000.

“Indigenous Ecological Knowledge in Nunavut - A Case Study on Baffin Island”, November 27, 1994. Fourth National Student Conference on Northern Studies, Ottawa, Ontario.

“A Methodological Examination of the Study of Traditional Ecological Knowledge”, June 14, 1994. Ninth Inuit Studies Conference, Iqaluit, Nunavut.

“Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Cumulative Effects Assessment: A Community-based Research Strategy”, Oct. 29, 1993. University of Waterloo Workshop on Sustainability in the Hudson Bay - James Bay Region, Waterloo, Ontario.