UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

An Inuit Experience of Wellness:

Living Together in Harmony with the Land

by

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The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Inuit Wellness: Living in Harmony with the Land" submitted by Madelene Heffel Ponting in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Nursing.

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ABSTRACT

The experience of wellness is affected by an individual's lifestyle, spiritual beliefs and culture (Travis and Ryan, 1998). This study explored the wellness experiences of a group of Inuit people who live in a remote Arctic coastal community, Paulatuk, N.W.T. The research was guided by grounded theory method (Glazer, 1992; Glazer and Strauss, 1999). Community residents between 18 and 85 years of age volunteered to participate in informal interviews. Additional data collection consisted of field notes, local publication review, and participant observation. The major findings were:(a) cultural mores influence the experience of wellness, (b) an Inuit experience of wellness is supported by strong spiritual health, (c) the personal ability to adapt to cultural change while continuing to maintain cultural beliefs and values, enhances a sense of well-being and, (d) relationship with the Land is the source of holistic health.

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Dedicated

To

The People Of Paulatuk

Whom I have had the privilege to know

And to

My Husband Bill Ponting

With whom I have shared this journey of learning.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Throughout the span of approximately 20 years of my nursing career, I have been involved, to a greater or lesser degree, in the practice of providing health services to a diverse range of Canadian Aboriginal groups throughout the provinces of Alberta, and British Columbia as well as the territories of Northwest Territories, and Nunavut.

In 2000, I had the opportunity to serve as a Community Health Nurse in the Eastern Arctic Community of Gjoa Haven, in the territory of Nunavut. This was my first visit to this community and to this Arctic region of Canada. During my stay in Gjoa Haven, I became increasingly aware of how my education, to this point had left me with a perception about Arctic communities that was really quite different from the real world in which the Inuit residents existed. In particular, I came to recognize specific differences of our world-views - theirs and mine. It was at this time that I began to question my knowledge about the Inuit perceptions of the world. I also began to question if Aboriginal Wellness models to which I had previously been exposed, addressed the understandings and beliefs of the Inuit population.

On my return from Gjoa Haven to my home in Lethbridge Alberta, discussions with my nursing colleagues in the hospital setting, and with nurses involved in the areas of academia, as well as discussions with various allied health practitioners, revealed that although most of these professionals were interested in the diversity of the population, they too had a limited understanding of the realities of Inuit life. Following my experiences and discussions I began to question the current understandings of the

experiences of wellness. In particular, I was interested in understanding the experience of wellness from an Inuit perspective.

Assumptions

The assumptions I held prior to the outset of the research project were somewhat grounded in my previous experiences with First Nations groups, not identified as Inuit. Based on these assumptions I expected that, although the Inuit reside in a geographically diverse area of the world, their world-views would be similar to the more southern aboriginal populations. I expected Inuit wellness would be grounded in specific folkways, which incorporated the use of indigenous plants and animal species for the purpose of health maintenance and healing. I also assumed that the spiritual relationships of the Inuit people would be similar to those presented by other First Nations groups which I understood to be engrained in the connection of an individual to specific elements of one's environment (i.e. animals, ancestors, plants, etc.). My previous experiences also led me to assume that the Inuit people would exercise rituals such as prayers and ceremonies to provide the individual and the group with balance and harmony.

Throughout the data collection process, I attempted to recognize my assumptions and the impact they may have on the analysis of the data from this study. To adequately address this issue, I entered my thoughts into a journal. This process began prior to the initiation of the study and continued throughout the analysis of the data. As the opportunities arose, I also conferred with various community members to assess my understanding of their specific cultural practices. Feedback from such discussions helped

me to recognize the degree to which my previous assumptions influenced my understandings of the realities of the Inuit people

The Research Question

The research question for this study was: ***What is the experience of wellness/being healthy/feeling good in the Inuit population of Paulatuk?*** (It is important to note here that the name Inuvialuit is used to identify the Inuit population of the Western Arctic region. The name Inuit and Inuvialuit are both used in discussions pertaining to the population of Paulatuk.) Using a qualitative approach, grounded theory method, the experience of wellness/being healthy/feeling good of the Inuvialuit population of Paulatuk was explored. A qualitative approach was selected because aspects such as human values, cultural norms and relationships defy accurate quantitative measurement (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). It was my desire to incorporate the sociological underpinnings of qualitative research to explore the wellness experience through the study of human behavior in the creation of the social experience of wellness/being healthy/feeling good. In particular, I was interested in the richness of the knowledge of human reality. I was supported in this thinking throughout the process of obtaining consent to complete this project in the Hamlet of Paulatuk when Council members asked, "Will we have a chance to be heard?" As one Council member stated, "We are happy to be considered as people with a voice"(Personal Communication, R. Ruben, January 2002).

CHAPTER 2

Present State of Knowledge

Aboriginal People of Canada

Under the Constitution Act of 1982, Canadian Aboriginal people, although frequently addressed as a single entity, include three specific cultural groups, Indians, Metis, and Inuit. The title Indian includes both Status and Non-status Indians. Status Indians represent the group of Canadian indigenous people who are registered in one of 605 Indian bands throughout Canada. They are entitled to specific, subsidized benefits under the Indian Act, such as health care, education and housing. The Assembly of First Nations represents status Indians. In contrast, individuals classified as Non-status Indians, do not qualify as members of specific Indian bands for many reasons too numerous to mention here. In their position, they do not qualify for specific rights and privileges set out by the Indian Act (Frideres, 1988; Standing Committee of Health, 1995). First Nations is the name most frequently used to identify Canadian aboriginal people of Indian origin. Throughout my thesis, the names Indian and First Nations are used interchangeably to ensure clarity in terms of identifying the specific population groups.

The group identified as Metis represent a specific group of individuals of mixed ancestry who were originally French Canadian and Indian in origin. Throughout specific parts of Canada, they have come to be recognized as members of a distinct population group, or society. In the Province of Alberta, for example, specific tracts of land have been designated as Metis land (Frideres, 1988; Standing Committee on Health, 1995).

Who are the Inuit?

Several names are used to identify the Inuit population. Until approximately 1970, they were collectively known as Eskimos. This name, still used amongst the indigenous people of Alaska, is "...a corruption of a French corruption of a Cree Indian word meaning, approximately *eaters of raw flesh*" (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1966, pg.1). Canadian Inuit find the foreign term Eskimo to be derogatory, and as a result prefer to be addressed as Inuit. Translated, the word Inuit means *the people*. The name Inuvialuit is used distinctly by the Inuit in the west-central regions of the Arctic (Personal Communication, A. Ruben, Summer, 2001) Singularly, an Inuk, is defined as "...a member of those people known as Inuit, Eskimo or Inuvialuit, who claim traditional use and occupancy of the land...[or]...an individual who possess a disc [or government assigned identification number] ...or has one-quarter Inuit blood, or is considered to be an Inuk by the local community, and such other person as may be agreed upon" (Frideres, 1988, pg. 10). The Inuit represent approximately 4.7% of the entire Aboriginal population of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2001). This unique population forms the group of indigenous people of the Circumpolar regions of Canada, Alaska, Greenland, and Russia. They share a common culture as well as a common language, Inuktitut, which has many dialects (Personal communications, K. J. Williamson, July 23, 2003).

Where do the Inuit live?

The circumpolar regions are not easily defined. However, one may best visualize the Canadian circumpolar region, or the Arctic, as the geographical region within the

Arctic Circle at 66 degrees 33 minutes North latitude. In this region, the mean temperature does not exceed the freezing point of zero degrees Celsius, with the summer time average temperature about 10 degrees Celsius. Topographically this land mass ranges from mountains to expanses of plains dotted with lakes, rivers and creeks (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998).

The winter season in the Arctic region extends from approximately early September to mid June. Minimal snowfall and strong winds are common. Direct rays of sunlight do not reach the land surface in some areas from late November to mid January each year, leaving much of the territory in various degrees of darkness. Conversely, during the summer season, the territorial expanse experiences 24-hour sunlight. Herbivores at the bottom of the food chain, capitalize on this intense growing season as they forage on grasses and other plants. Many of the low growing varieties of plants produce a colourful range of flowers - bringing vast beauty to the region during this time of the year (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998).

The dry, thin layer of poor soil, in the region, supports limited plant growth. Further bio-diversity of plants is curtailed by the permanently frozen subsoil, or permafrost, found at various soil depths throughout the Arctic. Out-croppings of permafrost occasionally produce hills of ice, also known as pingos. The people of the region have traditionally incorporated pingoes as refrigerated food storage facilities. Poor soil and permafrost also hamper the growth of plants which require a substantial root system, such as trees. As a result firewood may only be found in the form of driftwood, along the Arctic coastline (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998).

Inuit and Indian: Similarities and differences

Vague identifying parameters have resulted in a somewhat restrictive understanding of the Canadian Aboriginal population as a whole. Similarities and unique differences between the Inuit and Indian populations, as identified by the Canadian Government, become apparent in the review of basic historical, geographical, and cultural factors related to both population groups. Through the process of reviewing unique relational aspects of the two groups, one may develop an enhanced understanding of the position of the Inuit.

Historically both Inuit and Indian societies were nomadic, hunter-gatherers who followed the migratory patterns of the animals they hunted. Both populations have also experienced the realities of acculturation related to European colonization. The Indian population outside of the Northwest Territories has experienced a larger degree of external control as the result of treaties with the Federal Government of Canada. In accordance with the Indian Act, Indians were identified as wards of the government. Some members were subsequently placed on Indian Reservations or designated tracts of land, on which they were expected to live. To govern Indian people, the Federal Government established band councils to be responsible for band activities on reservations. In the context of this relationship, band councils continue to be presented with restrictive parameters within which to function (Frideres, 1988)

Conversely, the Inuit population "who have never entered into treaties with the British or Canadian Government" (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998, p.38) do not live on reservations. Instead, they exercise greater control of the land on which they live. In 1999

the Eastern Arctic territory of Nunavut was established, giving control of 352,000 square kilometres of land, to the Inuit people of the region (Purich, 1992). In general terms, an elected municipal council governs Inuit communities. The municipal council is responsible to the territorial government (Frideres, 1988).

Geographical factors have also produced unique differences between the Inuit and Indian populations. Indians who live on reservations throughout the more southern regions of Canada no longer have access to roaming herds of buffalo and other indigenous food sources. In contrast, the Inuit continue to enact many of their historical patterns of existence as they exercise their freedom to hunt and fish throughout their land.

Both Inuit and Indian populations of Canada have experienced a loss of their culture that has subjected them to many changes throughout the past century. Such changes, although somewhat unique to each group, have had far reaching implications for the indigenous people of Canada. Indian and Inuit alike who speak and write of their losses as they relate to changes in their spiritual practices present one example of cultural loss. Such changes have occurred with the introduction of Christianity by Europeans (Minor, 1992). Various Indian bands have begun to revive traditional spiritual rituals (Ross, 1996). The Inuit, however, continue to reflect on their relationships with the shaman, or *angokuk*, with a certain degree of hesitancy. Although the angokuk may not be visible to society in general, many Inuit continue to secretly believe in such spiritual connections of their ancestors (Ernerk, 2002).

Both populations have also experienced cultural losses as the result of advancing technology. The people of Paulatuk speak of the loss of cultural activities related to such

practices as sewing, hunting, and food preparation. For them, technology has changed many of the social aspects related to these activities. Retail suppliers provide ready made clothing, hunting trips are shortened with the incorporation of motorized snow machines, and non-traditional food sources are replacing the traditional diet.

Health Status of the Canadian Inuit

Due to enumeration irregularities it is somewhat difficult to ascertain the exact number of people who are Inuit in origin. In 2001, 46,165 persons in Canada registered as Inuit, a significant increase from 5,000 in 1930. The increase in numbers may be due, in part, to the Inuit birth rate that is approximately 2.5 times the Canadian average. Within this population, approximately 39% are less than 15 years of age, compared to 21% in the rest of Canada. The 65 and over age group represents approximately 3% of the Inuit population compared to 11% for the Canadian average (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998; Health Canada, 2001)

Published literature addressing Inuit specific health statistics is limited. Data describing this information generally include all aboriginal groups in Canada (Health Canada, 1999). The Inuit, like other Canadian Aboriginals, experience an increased incidence of poor health as indicated by decreased life expectancy, increased infant mortality, and high rates of accidental and suicidal deaths (Health Canada, 1999; Dion Stout, & Kipling, 1998; Macmillan, et al, 1996). Canadian Inuit experience a three to six times greater risk of death related to infections, respiratory diseases, perinatal conditions, and injuries than other Canadians. Generally, the risk of death related to neoplasms is

somewhat higher, and the risk of death related to circulatory diseases is somewhat lower than the Canadian average (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998; Health Canada, 1999).

Age-related Health of the Inuit

Pregnancy and Childbirth

In 1995, Inuit women on average give birth to their first child at approximately 19 years of age. This compares to the age of 26 years for the general Canadian population (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998). Traditionally, Inuit women gave birth in their home with the assistance of a midwife or sanaji. "The sanaji would bestow qualities to make sure that if it was a boy he would be an excellent hunter, and if it was a girl, an excellent seamstress"(Ekho, 2000, p.39). Today all deliveries take place within a hospital, usually outside the community. Inuit women from smaller communities must leave their families, their home and their community to give birth in the unfamiliar hospital setting. Generally, Inuit women debate this practice. They feel this amounts to a lack of respect for their "traditional skills, knowledge, values, and approaches to life" (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998, p.88). The need for hospital deliveries is supported by data which reveal that approximately 9% of all Inuit deliveries are complicated with excessive bleeding, twice the rate of non-Inuit women (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998). Schaeffer (1982) suggests that excessive bleeding tendencies may be related to higher intakes of n-3 fatty acids and placenta acreta. The challenge for Inuit women and providers of health services, at the community level, is that local Health Centers do not have the facilities, staff, or resources to cope with high-risk pregnancies (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998). Therefore the policy of

in hospital deliveries has become a contentious issue for Inuit women and health care providers alike.

Epidemiological studies reveal that ectopic pregnancies are more prevalent in the Inuit population. This may be related to the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases which are approximately 10 times the national rate. Sexually transmitted diseases may also be a contributing factor in increasing rates of infertility in both Inuit women and Inuit men (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998).

Infants and Children

Infant mortality amongst Canadian Inuit is approximately 2.7 times the national average. In the Northwest Territories 55% of infants experience at least one episode of pneumonia or acute respiratory infection within the first year of life. Haemophilus influenza type b or HIB infections resulting in meningitis affect 33 times more Inuit infants. Inuit infants also experience higher rates of gastritis and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (Bjerregaard & Young 1998).

Compared to the general Canadian population, Inuit children in the one to five year age range have been found to be six times more likely to suffer from anemia. They also experience increased upper respiratory infections and otitis media resulting in increased incidences of hearing loss (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998). Fetal Alcohol Syndrome also affects large numbers of young children. However, due to poor and inconsistent assessments it is unclear what proportion of this population is actually affected (Personal communications, S. Burrows, Child and Youth Counselor, January 2001).

Outside influences pose a health risk to young children. In particular, children between the ages of one and 11 years are severely affected by nutritional deficiencies, related to non-traditional use of processed and sweetened foods. Severe dental caries and total loss of baby teeth to tooth decay are commonplace with large numbers of young children (Personal Communications, Dr. Clark, Dentist, Inuvik Region, Winter 2002). In addition accidents, drowning, or house fires most frequently cause childhood deaths. Inuit children also become victims of social problems related to alcohol abuse, such as physical assault, sexual abuse and neglect (Minor, 1992).

Adults

As evidenced by their significant lower percentage in the over 65 cohort, Inuit adults have a shorter life expectancy than their counterparts in the general Canadian population. Eighty percent of deaths of the younger adult population are related to suicides and fatal accidents. Inuit adults, in general, are experiencing increasing incidences of diseases related to a sedentary lifestyle, such as, hypertension, obesity, diabetes and stroke. Acculturation, and in particular, dietary changes related to the introduction of processed and sweetened foods are producing nutritional deficits such as anemia and obesity. Social problems related to alcohol abuse put Inuit women at high risk for injury and death related to violence, spousal assault, and sexual abuse. Sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, trichomonas, herpes virus, human papilloma virus, and Human Immune-deficiency Virus, are also prevalent in the adult population. Canadian Inuit suffer the highest incidence of cancer amongst all Inuit groups, with lung cancer being the most prevalent. The world's highest rates of naso-

pharyngeal, salivary gland, and esophageal cancers are found in the Inuit population. Inuit women experience high rates of cervical cancer (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998; Edgecombe, 1998).

Elderly

The elderly represent approximately 3% of the Canadian Inuit population. Members of this sector of the population are at increased risk for falls. Chronic diseases, however, are the major cause of mortality. Tuberculosis rates, which are seven times the Canadian average, are found most frequently in the elderly (Smylie, 2000).

Prior to European influences, Inuit elderly remained with their group until such time as their physical health no longer allowed them to perform the duties necessary to support the continued maintenance of the group. When older adults could no longer take part in such activities, some chose to end their lives with a form of assisted suicide. During my stay in Gjoa Haven, I met a young adult who shared with me the story of his grandfather's death. He related that his grandfather had been a successful hunter, so successful that he actually took a second wife. The grandfather was seriously injured in a shooting accident, which resulted in a permanent injury to one leg. He was able to hunt for only a short period after the wound healed. The man decided to end his life because he was no longer useful to the group. At that time, he chiseled a hole through the ice of his dome-shaped igloo. He called for his favorite nephew to pull on the rope which he passed through the hole. The nephew complied with the old man's wishes. The older man had placed the rope over his head, around his neck. He died by strangulation (Personal communication, D.N., Gjoa Haven, May 2000).

In the past 40 years, many of today's elderly have served as pioneers in a new way of living. Previously relatively few Inuit reached advanced age. For present day older adults, the history they follow as they continue to live in modern communities is the history they make themselves.

Aspects of Inuit Health

Many aspects contribute to the health of a population. For the Inuit, many of the aspects affecting their health are related to changes in the traditional way of life. These changes have had far reaching implications. Five aspects of change will be discussed here; (a) diet and activity, (b) living conditions, (c) water and waste management, (d) social conditions and, (e) environment.

Diet and Activity

Traditionally, the Inuit have led a physically active lifestyle related to traveling on the land, hunting, and food preparation. This active life style was supported by the protein rich diet of sea animals. However, technological advancements have altered the Inuit way of life. Dog teams, no longer the sole means of transportation, have been replaced with motorized snow machines and all-terrain vehicles. As a result, physical activity, in particular, the activity of walking has been greatly decreased (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998).

Traditional foods are important to the well-being of the Inuit. "Several studies of traditional Inuit food show that the density of most nutrients is superior to that of store-bought food [which is] generally rich in saturated fatty acids [compared to] the fat of marine mammals and fish [which] is believed to counteract atherosclerosis"(Bjerregaard

& Young, 1998, p. 202). Although non-traditional foods are more readily available, incorporation of such items into a family's diet can be costly. In the winter of 2001-2002 I researched the cost of one ten-kilogram bag of whole-wheat flour. I discovered that to obtain this product I would need to make an investment of eighty dollars compared to less than a twelve-dollar investment in a non-Arctic community. With a general decrease in physical activity, the high cost of making healthy food choices, and the replacement of traditional foods with non-traditional foods, the Inuit are experiencing increasing incidents of cardiovascular disease, anemia, obesity, and diabetes (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998; Health Canada, 2000; Pauktuutit, 1991).

Living Conditions

Today many Inuit are housed in semi-modern, permanent homes, in contrast to the traditional temporary homes which were constructed of whale bones, stones, hides, ice or snow (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998). In the absence of roads, materials used in the construction of today's prefabricated homes arrive in the Arctic regions by way of barges, which traverse various waterways only on an *annual* supply journey resulting in high transportation costs and limited availability of supplies. These factors contribute to a lack of adequate housing in many communities resulting in overcrowding and less than optimal home maintenance. In the community of Paulatuk as many as 16 people may reside in a two-bedroom home. During the summer of 2002, the local housing authority compiled a waiting list of 15 families who had applied for housing. In order to accommodate their housing needs members of these families were dispersed throughout various homes in the community, in some cases resulting in further overcrowding.

According to information provided by the Northwest Territories Housing Authority, no new homes were scheduled for this community for at least the next two years (personal communications, A. Thrasher, Manager, Northwest Territories Housing Authority, August 2002).

Water and Waste management

In larger Arctic communities such as Inuvik, water is piped to homes via an above ground, insulated utilidor system. However, in smaller settlements residential water supply is provided by means of truck delivery and storage tanks. Waste disposal methods are similar to water delivery methods. In larger centers, waste products flow through separate pipes which are also housed within the utilidor system. Smaller communities, incorporate sewage holding tanks and truck removal of waste products.

In Paulatuk, maintenance of water delivery and sewage disposal becomes a troubling task for some households. Large numbers of residents in overcrowded homes frequently produce serious imbalances in water consumption and waste production. Households are frequently faced with several days of no water supply. Factors such as poor weather conditions or vehicle failure further contribute to this situation (personal communications, J. Ruben, December, 2001).

Social Conditions

Inuit communities have been transformed from isolated, self-reliant settlements. Today, these communities operate within a political infrastructure, which provides access to schools, health care, and churches. Communities are linked to the world through travel, radio, television, telephone, and satellite communications. This transformation, or

social change, has resulted in acculturation, which is marked by integration, assimilation, marginalization and separation. Acculturation stress, which may be described as the anxieties which result when technological changes occur at more rapid rate then cultural adaptations to the change, is believed to result in lowered mental health status giving rise to health consequences such as substance abuse, suicide, homicide and family violence (Berry, 1990; Minor, 1992).

Alcohol and substance abuse amongst the Inuit may be viewed as by-products of the stress of social change (Minor, 1992). The rapidity with which alterations to the Inuit lifestyle have occurred has not allowed for physical and psychological adjustments necessary to support the individual adaptation to the changed condition (Perry, 1974). As Inuit continue to struggle with the adaptation to a more sedentary lifestyle, they must also struggle to alter traditional beliefs and values of self-reliance and survival (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998; Health Canada, 1999; Minor, 1992).

Environment

Global Climate Changes

Global climate changes have far reaching effects throughout the polar regions of the world. Evidence of such effects are visible in regions where increasing temperatures and the resultant thinning of Arctic ice has had serious implications on indigenous animal species, such as the polar bear. Ecological changes, which affect indigenous animals, also affect the Inuit who depend on polar ice to support travel and hunting activities. As well, as indigenous animals attempt to adjust to the realities of global warming by changing migratory patterns, important food sources for many Inuit will be lost (Foley, 2001).

Environmental Contaminants

Environmental contaminants also place the Inuit at a risk for less than optimal health. "Persistent organic pollutants (POP's) such as [poly-chlorinated byphenyls] PCB's, toxaphenes, dioxins, and various other pesticides are introduced from lower latitudes by long range atmospheric transport" (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998, p.12). These contaminants are poorly degraded in colder climates. Bioaccumulation is apparent in the high concentrations found in whale and seal blubber. Kuhnlein, et al (1995) also found elevated chlordane levels amongst Inuit women whose diets included ringed seal blubber or meat, walrus blubber or *muktuk* (skin of the narwhale). Accumulated POP's cross the placental barrier and are only excreted from the body in breast milk. Developing fetuses and newborn infants are therefore at high risk of contamination. Other contaminants found in high concentrations throughout the Arctic are mercury, cadmium, and lead. These chemicals are also found in the meat, liver and kidneys of marine mammals and birds (Bjerregaard & Young; 1998; Health Canada, 1999; Kuhnlein, 1995).

Contamination of traditional food sources may position the Inuit at an increased risk for cancer, congenital defects, immune system disorders, liver disease and altered neuro-behavioral development, However, the nutrient value of a traditional diet rich in marine animals is believed to outweigh the risk of these diseases (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998; Health Canada, 1999). Therefore, the Inuit continue to hunt and consume the seals, whales and, fish found in Arctic waters.

Inuit Values and Culture

The Inuit are not identified as members of a tribe or band. They are best defined as members of a group. Amongst the Inuit each individual bears some relationship to most members of the group. Groups are formed "through cultural practice of name sharing, adoption of children, assisting as a midwife at the birth of a child, or the formal recognition of hunting and joking partnerships"(Inuuqatigiit, 2001, Inuit Tapirisat, 2001). The Inuvialuit community of Paulatuk represents one such group.

Within Inuit culture, men and women have equal status. However, cultural practices are such that they each fulfill rather distinct roles. Men continue to bear the responsibilities of hunting and fishing, or other means of providing food. Women fulfill multiple roles as mothers, caregivers, homemakers, and teachers. Inuit women continue to fulfill the tradition role of storytellers thus, maintaining oral traditions that remain a vital part in the maintenance of Inuit culture (Inuuqatigiit, 2001).

Ancestral relationships bear great significance in Inuit culture and are maintained in several ways, one of which is through contact with the land. For the Inuit, the term land refers to the relationship of all things in nature - plants, animals, water, earth, ice, wind and sky (Inuit Tapirisat, 2001). Ancestral relationships are also maintained through naming practices in which new born children are given the name of an ancestor who has died (Minor, 1992).

Inuit Issues of Change

Authors of published literature place significant emphasis on issues of change. related to loss of tradition and culture influenced by European contact (Million, 2000;

Minor 1992; Simonson, 1994). Historical accounts of European contact with the Inuit date back to the 1500s. The life of the Inuit reflected the incorporation of specific values and behaviors which ensured their continued existence.

> Prior to European contact, the Inuit were an entirely self-governing people who lived in small, egalitarian groupings that were nomadic and dependant upon hunting and fishing for their survival. Traditional customary law was characterized by its informal nature and flexibility, and the reliance upon social pressures . . . [S]piritual life centered around human-like and animal spirits, a variety of taboos that affected many aspects of their life, and a rich mythology that sought to explain both the natural and the supernatural world (Pauktuutit, 1991).

During the mid 1800s, Christian churches introduced residential schools, which attempted to assimilate Inuit children into a European-based society. Children were removed from their families and their communities, sometimes forcibly, to reside in unfamiliar settings and learn unfamiliar ways of seeing the world. Some children were unable to return to their home communities for several years. This resulted in a loss of culture, or acculturation (Million, 2000). The impacts of such actions are still apparent today. Adults, who have survived the residential school experience frequently experience various forms of mental illness. Alcohol, solvent abuse, spousal assault, the lack of parenting skills, and generally poor health are identified as possible by-products of residential school experiences (Minor, 1992).

Since the 1950s the previously nomadic Inuit have been drawn into settlements where the Canadian Government and various Christian organizations made schools, health care, housing, and supplies available to them. Poverty, unemployment, and environmental factors such as overcrowded housing, within these established communities, influence further deterioration of personal health practices (Schaeffer, 1990). The Inuit of today live in prefabricated homes, they wear less insulative, manufactured clothing, and much of their food is bought from the local store. They work for wages rather than hunting and many of them rely on social assistance. Motorized snow machines and powerboats have replaced the dog team and rowboats of the past. Many of these factors, related to a more sedentary type of existence, have had implications on the general well being of this population (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998).

Challenges facing the Inuit today

Arctic regions of the world face specific challenges related to the lack of economic development. Prior to the decline of the Canadian fur industry, Inuit trappers with few other resources available relied heavily on fur revenues. Inuit who relied on monies created through their participation in the fur industry have since experienced poverty, and in some cases, starvation because the worldwide anti-fur lobby has decreased the price of furs (Minor, 1992; Pauktuutit, 1991).

Some Inuit continue to rely on traditional indigenous food sources such as caribou, seals, whales, fish, and waterfowl. High costs of gasoline and equipment, such as snowmobiles and all -terrain vehicles, which have become the main source of

transportation across the vast expanses of Arctic Tundra, frequently hamper their success (personal communications, F. Thrasher, 2002).

The past 60 years have been a time of transition for the Canadian Inuit, who survived for centuries in their land. For the modern Inuit, continued existence depends greatly on the ability to adapt to a rather unfamiliar European world. Poorly defined roles and the loss of cultural values related to such changes have resulted in a society wrought with social problems (Minor, 1992).

Inuit Wellness

Since my first contact with the Inuit people in 2000, I began to wonder about the poor state of their health and why programs aimed at improving the health of members of Inuit society seemed to be less than adequate. Many questions came to my mind. Do non-Inuit outsiders place more emphasis on their worldview than they do on the worldview of people whom they serve. Are health promotion activities based on the principles of community involvement and do they incorporate the processes of community-based program development? I also began to wonder with the paucity in current literature, where did we, as professionals providing health care to this diverse population, come to know this population's understanding of wellness, health or illness? In response to these questions, I began to wonder if an expanded understanding of the Inuit experience of wellness might serve to encourage greater awareness of Inuit cultural mores, thereby encouraging culturally appropriate approaches to health.

Travis and Ryan (1998) present that an individual's current state of health, like the tip of an iceberg, represents only one tenth of his/her wellness. They go on to explain

that wellness is affected by the individual's lifestyle, spiritual beliefs, and culture. A substantive theory of the Inuit experience of wellness may enhance the understanding of this population thereby increasing effectiveness of services provided to them.

Wellness

Hippocrates introduced the phenomenon of wellness in writings that date back to approximately 370 B.C. At that time, wellness was introduced in relation to exercise, aging, and the disease process (Montague, et al, 2002). Although health care literature has focused largely on discussions of health and illness, wider attention has recently been given to wellness as an integral part of health promotion programs and activities related to their incorporation at the individual, group, and community levels (Johnson, 2003).

Defining Wellness

Multiple defining phrases are presented to provide meaning to the phenomenon of wellness. Discussions of this aspect of human life are guided by the context in which they are developed. Wellness is defined as "a dynamic state of health in which an individual progresses toward a higher level of functioning, achieving an optimal balance between internal and external environments" ("Mosby's Medical, Nursing and Allied Health Dictionary", 1998, p. 1728). Wellness is also presented as "...the conscious development of the whole self" (University of Buffalo, 2002b); "...more than just survival"(University of Buffalo, 2002a); and "...an integrated and dynamic level of functioning orientated toward maximizing potential, dependant upon self-responsibility (Georgia South Health Education, 2002).

Wellness may also be viewed as "a complete way of being and existing" (Aboriginal Youth Network Centre, 2001). This definition reflects one Aboriginal group's belief that wellness is a state of balance and harmony among the physical, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of one's life (Simonson, 1994; Assembly of First Nations National Indian Brotherhood, 2001). Some Aboriginal groups also believe that wellness is achieved through the cyclical journey around the *Sacred Hoop,* symbolic of the medicine wheel (Medicine Eagle, 1991).

Wellness as a phenomenon is thus presented within various contexts. To add further clarity and perspective to the phenomenon, several models of wellness, from several contexts will be presented in the following discussion.

Models presenting Wellness

The following models each present a dynamic view of wellness which, although unique to the context in which they were developed, also represent aspects within every other model. Specific aspects of these models will be discussed collectively in the following section.

Bruhn, et al, (1977) and Travis & Ryan (1981) each describe a linear model of the health process which presents illness at one end of the continuum and wellness at the opposing end. Health is viewed as a dynamic position between the state of illness and the state of wellness. These authors discuss wellness as a culturally specific concept that develops throughout the stages of one's life. Wellness is achieved through the process of modelling from one generation to the next. Fahlberg and Fahlberg (1997) present

wellness as an optimal state of health, which is constructed through cultural and historical bias.

Wellness Education Service at the University of Buffalo (2002) presents a two-part circular model of wellness that portrays four basic tenets believed to form the underpinnings of the wellness phenomenon. These are: (a) holism, or the inter-relational aspects of all areas of one's life; (b) balance, which is seen as the guided activity of giving attention to all aspects of one's life; (c) self-responsibility for individual choices and decisions; and (d) pro-active positivity, or a positive attitude which leads to value driven, deliberate actions geared toward the development of self. These guiding principles form the basis from which an individual develops the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical, cultural, occupational, social, and environmental dimensions of life. Simonson, (1994) supports this model in presenting that humans experience their maximum potential of wellness as they approach a state of harmony within the mental, physical and spiritual dimensions of life

The Iceberg model of wellness, as developed by Travis and Ryan (1998) and presented by the Division of Student Affairs at the University of Buffalo, Wellness Education Services, uses the metaphorical analogy of wellness as an iceberg. In keeping with iceberg realities, these authors introduce the current state of health and well being as the visible 10% of the iceberg. Beneath this visible level or layer, are three supporting levels, which form the remaining portion of the iceberg. They are, in descending order; (a) the lifestyle and behavioural level, which represents concepts such as diet, exercise, relaxation and safety; (b) the cultural/psychological/motivational level, which represents

the influences of cultural norms in lifestyle choices; and (c) the spiritual/being/ meaning/ love level, which represents such aspects as the meaning of life, one's being in the world and the mystical and metaphysical realities which guide daily decision making. The authors suggest that action in any one level will have profound impact in the levels, which are situated above it.

The Medicine Wheel, or Sacred Hoop, depicts another philosophical model of wellness. It is incorporated throughout many North American Aboriginal health promotion programs, and serves as a guide on the journey to balance and healing. Although Medicine Wheel philosophy is grounded in many ancient cultures, for First Nations members, it serves as a connection to the early ways of their ancestors who placed significant emphasis on the Medicine Wheel as a symbol of life and incorporated the circular design in construction of their homes. The circular design also served as a calendar, and an astrological guide (May & Rodberg, 1996).

The Medicine Wheel philosophy incorporates beliefs of a cyclical, spirit-based, interconnection of all aspects of the universe and life. Activities or practices undertaken in any part of the cycle are believed to have an impact on the other parts within it (May & Rodberg, 1996; Medicine Eagle, 1991). Diagrammatically, this model of wellness is presented as a multi-dimensional sphere, which may be divided into four quadrants representing the cardinal directions, East, South, West, and North. The axis of the sphere represents Father Sun and Mother Earth. Each sector, which is symbolic of a position or event in an individual's life, is assigned specific life dimensions. The dimensions are supported by various symbols such as; animals whose innate natures exhibit behaviours

felt to represent the dimension; specific colours which relate to the activities of the dimension and; seasons of the year which reflect activities related to the dimensions. Symbols may vary from one region to the next, depending on the realities of a specific population (May & Rodberg, 1996; Medicine Eagle, 1991). In one presentation of the Medicine Wheel the East is representative of life dimensions related to illumination and new beginnings. The animal symbol for this quadrant is the Golden Eagle, who is believed to be visionary in nature, thus illuminating life realities. Spring, the season of new birth and growth represents this direction. It is supported by the color yellow, which represents the illuminating morning light of day. It is believed that insight, balance, and a general understanding of life are achieved through meditative reflection focussed on each of the representative symbols (Medicine Eagle, 1991; Moondance, 1994).

Dimensions of Wellness

The phenomenon of wellness may be further developed within the view of specific domains, identified as the physical, occupational, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social, environmental and cultural dimensions of life (University of Buffalo, 2002b; Georgia South Health Education, 2002; Medicine Eagle, 1991; Montague, 2002). Selected concepts serve to outline issues encompassed within each dimension and are discussed as follows.

Within the physical dimension of life, individuals focus on basic needs as well as behaviours, which enhance the physiological aspects of the body. Individuals strive to maintain a state of physical wellness, which may be enhanced through body movement, aerobic exercise, and muscle strengthening. Nutritional balance based on principles of

controlled fat consumption and caloric intake, necessary for optimal body function and maintenance, are also considered (University of Buffalo, 2002b; Georgia South Health Education, 2002). An optimal state of physical wellness enhances the individual's ability to focus on the other dimensions of life.

The attainment of personal gratification and satisfaction from one's chosen vocation supports development of the occupational dimension of life (Georgia South Health Education, 2002). Within the parameters of this dimension, the individual seeks to develop a personal system of rewards based on both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. It is within this dimension that the individual strives to maintain balance between the aspects of work and leisure. Workplace safety issues, which also encompass all areas of the individual's relationships within the workplace, are addressed in this dimension (Chinook Health Region, 1998).

A significant relationship exists between individual spiritual development and health promoting or wellness behaviours (Waite, et al, 1999). Within the spiritual dimension, an individual experiences a sense of peace with oneself. Activities within this dimension are frequently related to an individual's self esteem and are supported in values related to honesty, compassion, integrity, and the development of one's inner self (Georgia South Health Education, 2002). The goal of an individual's spiritual development is to arrive at a state of being which supports a clear understanding of the relationship between oneself and the world in which one exists (Macrae, 2001; Medicine Eagle, 1991; University of Buffalo, 2002a).

Within the educational dimension of wellness, the individual seeks to participate in activities that expand personal knowledge. This involves processes of curiosity leading to critical thinking and evaluation of life issues. Creativity leads to expanded knowledge and increased self-esteem which supports the advanced capacity to identify, organize, and cope with life events (Georgia South Health Education, 2002).

As individuals strive to achieve a maximum state of wellness emphasis must also be given to the aspects of the emotional dimensions of life. Through processes leading to the understanding of one's own emotions, the individual strives to experience self love and self acceptance ultimately leading to a greater acceptance and understanding of others (Georgia South Health Education, 2002). Within the emotional dimension of life individuals also develop decision-making and problem solving skills, leading to adequate coping skills (Chinook Health Region, 1998). Within the philosophy of the Medicine Wheel, also, an individual constantly strives to accept the self in relationship to the world in which they live (Medicine Eagle, 1991).

Through the process of building and maintaining relationships with others around them, individuals develop the social dimension of wellness. These relationships may evolve through the contact with persons of like interests within the workplace, the community, or the family. It is through relationships that individuals are able to feel acceptance and support from others. Social structures also reflect the values and rules of a society. Individuals who live comfortably within these parameters are better able to accept the diversities in the world about them. Well-developed social dimensions

encourage individuals to feel less threatened by differences apparent in others (Chinook Health Region, 1998; Georgia South Health Education, 2002).

The environmental dimension of wellness incorporates concepts related to the world in which an individual exists. Environmental factors include basic biological needs such as air, food and water as well as various aspects of community environment, including safety and health promoting activities. Adequate, safe housing is also an aspect of the environmental dimension of wellness (Georgia South Health Education, 2002; Chinook Health Region, 1998).

Within the cultural dimension of wellness, individuals begin to understand their unique ways of knowing and how this knowledge can impact their health choices. Culture, as defined by Madeleine Leininger is "the learned, shared, and transmitted values, beliefs, norms and life-ways of a particular group which guide thinking, decisions and actions in patterned ways"("Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary," 2001, pg. 2490). Travis and Ryan (1998) encourage individuals to recognize and reflect on the insidious nature of cultural norms, such as the dysfunctional patterns of some childhood experiences and how they may affect lifestyle choices in adulthood.

Wellness may be viewed within the context of harmony and balance within various dimensions of life. Specific conceptual meanings are influenced by the individual's cultural mores and ways of knowing about the world within which that individual exists. Health promotion activities based on the premise of addressing these basics domains of existence, aim to "help people cope with [the] conditions of life as long as they live"(Breslow, 1999, pg. ix). Gaining an enhanced understanding of the

meanings of these concepts from the perspective of the Inuit people may serve to enhance the development of culturally specific health promotion programs.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design

Method

Two basic criteria drive the selection of a research method - the research question and the "researcher's perspective on the human condition"(Walters, 1995, p. 791). A grounded theory method was used to explore the study's research question: **What is the experience of wellness/being healthy/feeling good for the Inuit population of Paulatuk?**

I chose to use a holistic approach to study the human experiences as they relate to this specific culture. I was interested in understanding the wellness experience from an Inuit perspective with the goal of developing a substantive theory of an Inuit experience of wellness. I chose to use a qualitative research design because I believed that it would best incorporate the oral traditions of Inuit storytelling. Grounded theory method was selected because, "[It] serves as a valuable heuristic in understanding and explaining human experience as it is lived, especially those subjective phenomenon that can only be interpreted through the eyes of the beholder or those in which the whole is more than the sum of its parts"(Stern & Pyles, 1985, p. 2).

Wellness is presented as a developmental process of life. In keeping with this presentation, Stern and Pyles, (1985) suggest the sociological underpinnings of grounded theory provide as suitable means of investigating the wellness phenomenon for the following reasons:

1."[G]rounded theory [method] focuses on a process and trajectory resulting in identifiable stages and phases" (p.2).

2. Gerunds, which indicate action and change, are used to identify specific concepts arising from the data.

3. A core variable is identified which serves to unite the stages and phases of theory.

4. The resultant theory "...is unique in that it makes the synthesis of descriptive data readily apparent through its concepts and relational statements" (p.2).

Grounded Theory Method

Ethnographic research is commonly used in the study of the life-ways of particular cultural groups (Streubert Speziale & Carpenter, 2003). To achieve this purpose, ethnographic studies generally "...study the social structures of whole communities [whereas, grounded theory studies]...look at slices of social life" (Charmaz, 2000, p.522). I have selected a grounded theory approach to this study because I feel the experience of wellness represents a specific aspect of the life of the Inuit people.

Grounded theory method produces a theory that "...is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents...it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). Stern and Pyles (1985) support the constant comparative processes that guide grounded theory as an appropriate method of defining cultural concepts, including those related to the experience of wellness in the

Inuit population. In particular, the constant comparison method ensures an enhanced understanding of the underlying processes of the phenomenon.

Grounded theory method has also been "particularly useful for research in situations that have not been previously studied, where existing research has left major gaps, and where a new perspective might be desirable to identify areas for nursing interventions" (Schreiber & Stern, 2001, p.57). Current knowledge of the Inuit experience of wellness/being healthy/feeling good is limited. Grounded theory method was used in this study both to describe the experience of wellness/being healthy/feeling good for the Inuit of one community, and to develop theoretical formulations that will contribute to a substantive theory about Inuit wellness.

The four distinctive features of grounded theory are:

1. The investigator attempts to uncover the major social processes in the setting rather than just describing the units under study.

2. Constant comparative analysis of each piece of data explicates conceptual properties and generalized relationships between the categories and their properties.

3. The refinement of generalizations based on changes in the data collected proceed as the study progresses and the theoretical constructs emerge.

4. A conceptual framework or a theory results from the data at hand (Chenitz, 1986; Hutchison, 1986).

Data generation and data analysis proceed simultaneously throughout a grounded theory study. Theoretical formulations, rather than statistical measurements, are used to

interpret data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher, through this process, attempts to discover the dominant social processes, or symbolic interactions, which define reality, rather than simply defining the phenomenon being studied (Stern, 1980).

Symbolic Interaction

Symbolic interactions represent the relationships between an individual and society. They provide an illumination to the underlying meanings, which motivate specific behaviours (Milliken & Schreiber, 2001). Studies, which rely on symbolic interaction view the dynamic processes related to the individual and the world, and highlight the importance of the individual's adaptation to the social world. (Crooks, 2001). Symbolic interactions (SI) form the underpinnings of grounded theory method.

In this study, symbolic interaction formed the basis of understanding how the individual's reactions with the world about them, created a position of wellness. The participants discussed the socially constructed meanings that formed their realities and the behaviours that flowed from those meanings (Milliken, & Schreiber, 2001)

Selection of a Research Site

A realistic research site would provide a rich mix of people, process and structures. As well, the researcher should be able to build a trusting relationship with the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The remote Arctic community of Paulatuk, Northwest Territories, was chosen as the research site for this study.

Paulatuk is situated in Darnley Bay on the coast of the Beaufort Sea. It is approximately 90 minutes flying time by Twin Otter aircraft, or 402 kilometres from the nearest commercial community that is the town of Inuvik. Paulatuk came into being in

the 1920s as a seasonal camp for the Inuit people of the area. In the 1930s, a Roman Catholic trading post was established here (Kirby, 1994). The settlement is home to a population of approximately 295 Inuit people who range in age up to 85 years. Approximately 56% of the population is under the age of 25 years (Inuvik Regional Health and Social Services Board, 2000). During the months of August to May, which coincide with the school year, there are approximately 20 non-Inuit individuals living in the community. This group consists mostly of professionals such as teachers, RCMP and nurses who have come, either alone or accompanied by their families, to provide services to the community.

I have been in the community on several occasions in the capacity of the Community Health Nurse. These opportunities allowed me to experience the newcomer's position (Chenitz, 1986), which provided me with some insights into the differences between the culture of this population and my own (Kemmis, & McTaggart, 2000). Two of my visits have happened in the months of July and August. On another occasion I was in the community for the months of December to March. These visits have provided me with several unique opportunities. I have been able to be amongst the people of Paulatuk during two very different times of the year - summer and winter. As such, I have had the opportunity to gain an understanding of some of the concepts that shape their lives.

Being in Paulatuk on several occasions also provided me with the opportunity to establish trust relationships with many members of the community. My husband accompanied me during my most recent trips to the community. His presence encouraged

the development of a number of non-formal relationships. In particular, being invited to family homes as a couple gave rise to the opportunity to *step out* of the nurse-client role.

The existence of a possible chasm in the meaning, understanding, and context of the phenomenon of wellness, and the possible impact of such a void, became apparent to me in the summer of 2001 when I was in the community. During this time I had the opportunity to develop a comfortable relationship with several members of this Inuit community who shared with me, many stories related to their past experiences. Some of these stories focussed on experiences with various health/wellness related opportunities that the narrators had encountered. A community resident shared her recent experience in an alcohol treatment program with me. She related that throughout the treatment program, participants had been presented with sage and sweet grass which in some Aboriginal cultures is used for ceremonial purposes of spiritual cleansing (Medicine Eagle, 1991). Neither of these plants are indigenous to the Arctic region, and therefore, she stated, "I am sort of scared to use this stuff. I am not sure what it means. I don't understand what I am really supposed to do with it" (S. Lester, personal communications, August 17, 2001). Following this conversation, I began to question the appropriateness of current nursing practices related to issues of health promotion and health teaching in Inuit communities.

Throughout my practice, I had also noted rather poor attendance at pre-scheduled Public Health clinics in some Aboriginal communities, as well as in Paulatuk. This, coupled with the less than optimal health status of many Canadian Aboriginal people, has led me to question the meaning of wellness amongst one sector of this population, the

Inuit. I had also begun to wonder if a better understanding of the Inuit experience of wellness could serve to enhance future program development in a way that might encourage greater participation, ultimately improving the population's health status. These issues along with my perception of a gap in the general state of understanding of the experience of wellness within nursing and related disciplines resulted in undertaking this study.

Recruitment of Participants

Sample selection

Prior to the initiation of this research project, inclusion criteria were established. Initially a purposive sample would be selected for the group, which included male and female volunteers between the ages of 18 and 85 years who were of Inuit origin and who had been residents of Paulatuk and the surrounding area for a minimum of three years. Length of residency was included in the criteria to ensure consistency.

Theoretical sampling, or the "...simultaneous process of collecting, coding and analysing data"(Schreiber, 2001, p.64) guided further participant selection for this study (Glazer, 1999). As concepts emerged from the evolving theory comparisons were made. I was then guided to identify sources that would provide an enhanced understanding of the variation between concepts as well as to provide breadth and depth to individual categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Selection of participants and data collection sources continued until data saturation occurred.

Media communications did not exist in the community at the time of data collection. Posters were not a feasible option due to the prevalence of limited reading

skills among some of the age groups within the inclusion criteria. Participants were therefore provided the opportunity to volunteer through word of mouth communication. Identification of participants was the primary role of the Research Assistant, a trusted and respected member of the community.

The research assistant for this project was Agnes Ruben. Agnes served the community for a number of years as a liaison between health service providers and the community in the capacity of the Community Health Representative. She volunteered to take the position of research assistant. In this capacity, she was able to assist in the area of participant selection, as well as supporting my understanding of the emerging concepts.

As the project progressed, initial data were collected. Concepts were subsequently explicated and discussed with the Research Assistant. Additional data sources and participants were then identified to support the concepts and to add clarity to the emerging theory. Selection of participants continued until no new concepts arose from the data; the point at which data saturation was reached.

I believe it is valuable at this point to discuss the limited number of participants in this study. The three participants, who took part in formal interviews, represent more than 1% of the entire Paulatuk population. A large percentage of community residents do not meet the inclusion criteria, because they were under the age of 18. It must be clearly noted that even with this limited number of participants, the incorporation of informal interviews and information from other sources resulted in saturation of data.

Data Generation

Various data generating techniques were used throughout this study in order to capture the intricacies of the human experience such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Data were generated through the process of unstructured interviews, field observations, review of local and regional publications, and participant observation at community activities, including feasts. Attendance at feasts bares significance for the Inuit, who "... believe food makes friends out of strangers. When [they] eat, [they] feel more harmonious"(Meekitjuk Hanson, No date).

A number of other community members wanted to become involved in the study as providers of information but they chose not to participate in pre-scheduled interviews. This decision was influenced by several factors. First, the study was undertaken during the latter half of the month of July and the first half of the month of August. This is a busy time for community residents who, during the summer, harvest the majority of their year's food supply from the sea. The wind and the weather regulated harvesting activity. This presented two situations, either the residents were waiting for the first sign of calm water or they were unable to get back to the community long enough to commit to an interview. In order to gather data, I occasionally spent time on the shoreline chatting with folks who were performing preparatory tasks as they waited for the sea to calm.

The second factor that became evident to both the Research Assistant and to myself was that many of the residents did not wish to participate in an audio taped interview. Instead they opted to chat in a casual sense about their lives and the things that

they did to be well/healthy or to feel good. It was during these encounters that informal unstructured interviews took place.

Interviews

Formal and informal interviews provided an opportunity to collect natural data by natural means (Chenitz, 1986). Informed consent was obtained through the process of community approval, which had been granted earlier (Appendix A). Informants were also advised by word of mouth that I was involved in a research project and that I would continuously be gathering data in order to ensure accurate representation of the community.

Some volunteers participated in formal unstructured interviews which were audio taped with their consent. Informal interviews also became an integral part of the field note collection process. These interviews happened on the streets, on the shoreline, in the homes of community residents, and within the health center which was also my office and my home during this time. "The depth, theme and questions of the interviews [were] determined by ...questions from the data analysis, the events and happenings in the [community] and subject-interviewer relationships" (Chenitz, 1986, p 81). In this way, I was able to engage with the informants while at the same time gaining enhanced insights into daily experiences and perceptions. This information was then incorporated as part of the data. Such relational contact provided an opportunity for me to gain an understanding of daily experiences and social norms. I was also able to better understand the significance and meaning of the community-based colloquial language.

I soon came to learn that the Inuit of Paulatuk were relaxed with the informal interview setting. They were eager to share their stories and their information with me in a way that closely resembled their oral traditions of story telling. Information sharing became a way of teaching me and helping me to understand through the sharing of their wisdom. In hearing accounts of historical experiences, I was able to sense the feelings of joy, health, sadness, loss, and pride.

Participant Observation

Participant observation also supported my gathering of field notes. In conjunction with other members of the community health care team and residents of the community, arrangements were made to honor the elders of the community with 'Elder's Teas' which took place at the health center. It was the goal of the team, to encourage elders to see the health center as more than a treatment facility. The health care team also encouraged involvement of other members of the community with the hope of reinforcing respect for elders. Local drummers and dancers, the majority of whom were teen-age residents of the community, were invited to perform at some of these functions. These opportunities provided me with insights into issues such as inter-generational communication, community bonds, and the experiences related to drum dancing from the perspective of the drummers as well as the audience.

Research Procedures

Obtaining consent to conduct research

The consent of various agencies was required before this study could be undertaken. These agencies included the Community Council, Regional Boards,

Territorial agencies, Health and Social service agencies and the University of Calgary. In January 2002, I obtained consent from the Hamlet of Paulatuk to complete the study within the community. This process involved presenting the proposed research plan to the Paulatuk Hamlet Council (see Appendix A). The elected members of the Council discussed the research project, and asked several questions regarding the actual data collection process, such as; "How will you be getting your information?", and "Will we the people of Paulatuk, have a chance to speak?". Following this discussion, unanimous consent was granted through the voting process (see Appendix B).

The Scientific Institute, which represented all of the Northwest Territories, was established in 1984. In 1995 re-organization resulted in the identification of two specific research agencies within the Northwest Territories. The Nunavut Arctic College would represent the eastern portion of the Northwest Territories, and the Aurora Research Institute would represent the western portion of the Northwest Territories. The community of Paulatuk is situated within the western region of the Northwest Territories. Communication regarding this research project was thus undertaken with the Aurora Research Institute (ARI) located in Inuvik, Northwest Territories.

It is the mandate of the ARI to "...improve the quality of life for Northwest Territories residents by applying scientific technological and indigenous knowledge to solve northern problems and advance social and economical goals" (Aurora Research Institute, 1999, p.i). The responsibilities of the ARI encompass a wide range of activities, which support both community members and researchers. To meet these responsibilities, all research undertaken within the Northwest Territories must be licensed. Application for

this research project was made to the ARI. Granting of a research license was contingent on approval from the community as well as approval from the Conjoint Health Research Ethics Board of the University of Calgary which was granted on June 18, 2002 (see Appendix C).

In keeping with the mandate of the ARI, approval was also sought by the ARI from the Northwest Territories Health Research Advisory Committee as well as the Inuvialuit Social Development Program. I was informed via telephone conversation with Michelle Crossfield of the ARI that the issuance of license indicated approval from these two agencies. The Scientific Research License No. 13345 was issued on July 9,2002 (see Appendix D).

The community of Paulatuk is situated within the Inuvik Health Region. In order to identify any possible concerns that may have arisen from the governing Health Board, I also sought their approval for this research study. I began the process in January 2002 by requesting support for the study from B. Lee, Director of Patient Services within the Inuvik Health Region. I received approval in principle for the study, via email, in July 2002. A formal letter indicating that the research was approved by Nellie Cournoyea, Chairperson of the Inuvik Health and Social Services Board was later forwarded to me by mail (see Appendix E)

Informed Consent

In 1998, the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies (ACUNS) published a revised edition of the document, *Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Research in the North*. This document was originally published in 1982 in response to

community concerns regarding research practices that disregarded aspects of community values. Principles presented within the document address issues such as; local laws, community consultation, respect for culture and traditions, informed consent and publication of research findings (see Appendix F).

These guiding principles, as well as the principles of Ethical Research with Human subjects (University of Calgary), formed the basis for the development of the consent form that was presented to participants in the study (Appendix G). To insure that the principles of informed consent would be addressed arrangements were made to present consent information in the one of three styles depending on the participants' choice. Although the consent form was written in the English language, participants were given the option to have the consent form presented in the Inuktitut language. I had made previous arrangements with a resident of the community to serve as a translator should this service be required. As well, participants were provided with the opportunity to have consent information read to them either by the Research Assistant or by a self-designated member of their family. One study participant requested to have the information read by the Research Assistant. A family member later requested to have additional information in terms of the time commitment that would be required by the participant. All of the participants of this study were fluent in the English language and did not require the services of an interpreter.

Community residents were advised, individually and collectively, that I was involved in the research project. They were also advised that their participation was voluntary. Individuals who shared their knowledge on the seashore and other areas

throughout the community did not sign consent forms. The opportunity to sign consent forms was provided. However, community residents who took part in these discussions opted not to sign formal consent forms.

Initial Contact

The Research Assistant identified volunteers for the study. The participants were provided with a study information sheet. As mentioned earlier, this information was read from the sheet for those who, due to reading skills and language barriers, were unable to read and understand the material as it was presented. Interview times where also arranged by the Research Assistant.

Demographic data

Demographic data were collected from each of the study participants, which were formally interviewed (see Appendix H). As the collection of this data proceeded, study participants were able to relax and begin to renew their relationships with me. Some of the information gathered during these conversations is included in the section presented later under the heading, 'Meet the Participants'.

Environment

Three individuals in the community volunteered to take part in prescheduled, unstructured interviews. These interviews were completed at the Health Centre during a time when the building was unoccupied by any other staff or clients. This decision was made in order to ensure the quality of the recordings. In Paulatuk, most homes are extremely overcrowded with people from a wide age range, often with nine to twelve

people in a two-bedroom home. Attempting to conduct an audio taped interview in such a setting would have been inappropriate for the following reasons:

1. Participants had been advised that the interviews would be confidential. With a large number of people in the home, confidentiality would be impossible to maintain.

2. A quiet environment is necessary to produce an acceptable quality of audiotape, and,

3. I felt it would be somewhat presumptuous, on my part, to expect that the day-to-day life activities would cease during the interview process if the interview were to be conducted in the home.

Interview process

Each interview was started with a brief explanatory introduction. The first interview began with, "I am trying to understand what it is like for you to be well/healthy/feeling good. Can you tell me what that is like for you?" The interview proceeded with an unstructured format through the use of open-ended questions that would help participants to express their meanings. The interviews resembled a casual social visit. This atmosphere was maintained to encourage dialogue and to allow participants to speak of their own personal experiences of the phenomenon of being well.

Additional Data Sources

Following each interview, memos were written to record my own thoughts about the information that had been shared by the participants. I also continued to explore my own assumptions about the Inuit experience of wellness. As interviews were completed, I

discussed my thoughts and considerations with the Research Assistant. As concepts emerged from the completed interviews, I also reviewed them with other community members. In this way I was able to ensure a sense of consistency with my assumptions.

Data Analysis

Data were collected, coded, and analysed simultaneously in this grounded theory study. The non-linear processes of constant comparison entailed somewhat of a holographic exercise in which I vacillated between inductive and deductive activities in order to explicate specific hypotheses based on conceptual meanings found within the raw data (Stern, 1985). As a result, many hypotheses were formulated, tested, approved, and dismissed and a parsimonious theory that fit the data was generated (Chinn & Kramer, 1995; Glazer, 1999).

Constant comparison began with the initial interview. Emerging hypotheses guided collection of additional data. Theoretical sampling was subsequently used to identify the additional formal and informal study participants. Data collection stopped when new concepts ceased to emerge. It was at this point that saturation had been achieved.

Open Coding

Interviews were transcribed and data closely examined. In order to establish initial conceptual codes, I began to identify various concepts that arose from the words of each interview. These concepts included specific words used by the participants to describe their experiences. Analysis continued as I categorized groups of concepts according to their dimensions and properties (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Conceptual groupings, or

substantive codes, were then identified under the headings of specific categories that described specific processes. For example, words and phrases such as, "together", "being with the others", and 'doing things together" were used to identify the category "connecting".

Theoretical Coding

Categorized concepts were further analysed through analytical processes, which involved asking questions about the data. The questioning process elicited causal conditions, context, intervening conditions, actions and interactions, and consequences. Subcategories and categories became hypothetically related. Resulting hypotheses were verified with actual data to further identify dimensional variation of the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Identification of the core variable

Throughout the processes of data analysis I kept journals that reflected my thought paths. As I reflected on the journals, I was able to identify categorical relationships or themes. Subsequently I identified one theme, which linked all of the categories and represented the core variable - *Living together in harmony with the Land.*

Identification of the overarching theme

The journaling process also led to the recognition of an overarching theme in this study. As in other grounded theory studies, the core variable represented a link between the categories. However, I also identified a theme that represented a tension between the categories and the core variable. The overarching theme, *Dancing on the rim between two worlds, the land and the settlement,* emerged throughout the conversations of the

interviews. It was also represented in subtler ways throughout some of the interviews where it was presented as a tension or a reality that served to interfere with the wellness experience for the people of Paulatuk.

Memos

Memo writing undertaken throughout the research provided a trail of the progressive nature of theory development. Memos written during the planning phases of the study were helpful in identifying pre-existing assumptions about the phenomenon. Further memoing provided an understanding of various study development processes, related to methodology, site selection, and inclusion data. Analytical ideas presented with memos also supported the researcher's final analysis of the data (Schreiber, 2001b).

I had the opportunity to spend time in several Canadian Aboriginal communities prior to the initiation of this study. These included First Nations communities as well as other Inuit communities of the Canadian Arctic. During these times, I wrote memos regarding the assumptions and knowledge I had gained from these experiences. Memos written during these visits became a source to identify variations within specific Inuit communities. They also provided depth and understanding to the specific categories that were identified. Throughout this study, I also wrote about my own experiences of wellness/being healthy/feeling good. In doing this I was able to identify how my own cultural values and beliefs had formed my understanding of this experience.

Memos provided a sense of flow for the methodological decisions regarding this study. I had originally intended to focus on the wellness experience of Inuit women. Paulatuk has a small population that tends to decrease the number of possible research

participants. Consequently, the study was designed to include both male and female participants to ensure an adequate representation of the population.

Further methodological changes were the result of language. For example, through memoing about common language used in other Inuit communities I had visited I began to realize that the term wellness was not part of the common dialogue within this population. As a result, the research question was reshaped to include wellness/being healthy/feeling good.

Scientific Rigour

Credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability are used to measure scientific rigor of studies, which incorporate qualitative designs (Streubert Speziale & Carpenter, 2003). Credibility, which refers to "...faithful depiction of the informant's lived experience" (p.200), was achieved through prolonged engagement with the residents of Paulatuk. I participated at feasts, other social activities, and had ongoing dialogue regarding findings with community residents. In addition, to ensure accurate representation of their experience, I undertook member checks in which I discussed my findings with two participants of the study.

"Dependability is achieved when a different researcher is able to reach similar conclusions using the researcher's perspective, raw data, and analytical documents" (Streubert Speziale & Carpenter, 2003, p.200). Members of the supervisory team familiar with grounded theory method reviewed the raw data. The similarity of their data analysis assured the dependability of the findings. Two members of the supervisory committee

were provided with the memos, and data analysis processes to determine the appropriateness of my findings.

Confirmability, which "...refers to the maintenance of neutrality and prevention of personal bias influence on the research" (Streubert Speziale & Carpenter, p. 200) was achieved through ongoing dialogue with the Research Assistant, residents of the community, and members of the supervisory team. As substantive codes were identified I discussed them with the Research Assistant. On several occasions I also discussed my findings with other members of the community who frequently were able to add greater clarity and dimension to my understanding. Literature sources also supported my findings.

"Transferability is the capacity to transfer the conclusions to another setting" (Streubert Speziale & Carpenter, p. 200). To ensure transferability of the study findings, verbatim quotations and rich descriptions of the data have been included. Furthermore, by not controlling the variables such as age, socio-economic status, and gender, and by adhering to the principals of theoretical sampling, the range in variation provides support to the transferability of the study findings. The inclusion of this data will allow other researchers to assess the appropriateness of the findings for other research settings.

CHAPTER 4

Meet the People

Here you will have the opportunity to meet some of the many residents of Paulatuk and the surrounding area, who provided data for this study. The individuals whom you are about to meet have requested to be identified in this study. They have also asked me to include their Inuvialuit names. There are other individuals who did not give their consent to be identified. This too was respected.

"The Inuit believed that each individual possessed two souls... a human soul and a name soul"(Minor, 1992, p.36). The human soul represents the tangible, physical attributes of the individual, who experiences life on earth. The name soul is viewed as a free-floating spirit-like entity, which bares the individual's personality and emotional ability. It also serves as the individual's guardian. Name souls are believed to carry specific human traits. All individuals bearing the name of a name soul are expected to be of similar character. An individual who bears the name of multiple name souls is believed to be gifted. Name soul names frequently represent individuals who have died (Minor, 1992). This name serves to connect the individual, and all other members of the group, with the departed ancestor (Inuuqatigiit, 2001).

Angusinauq, Edward Ruben

Let me introduce Angusinauq, Edward Ruben. Edward was born in 1917, which at the age of 85, makes him one of the oldest residents of the community of Paulatuk. He is the third child of 13. Edward is the father of 14 children, 5 from his first marriage, and 9 from the marriage to his present wife Mabel. Paulatuk and the area surrounding it, have

been Edward's lifetime home. Edward has never attended school. In his words, he has learned "...by being around adults where he could listen and learn from them." Edward was named Angusinaoq, after an Elder named Paliyak, who was the husband of Ikugana.

Edward and Mabel currently reside in the Senior's Housing Facility in Paulatuk. Many of their children and their families reside in the community. As a couple, Edward and Mabel continue to support their children and grandchildren by providing child care services as needed as well as providing family support. Edward is a respected elder in the community, as is his wife Mabel. They strive to encourage and support young people in their struggle to maintain traditional ways. Currently, Edward is attempting to share his stories in such as way as to preserve them for his grandchildren. He is incorporating the use of audiotapes to complete this project.

Uningoun, Celina Agnes Ruben

Next I would also like to introduce Uningoun, Celina Agnes Ruben. Agnes was named Celina after the death of her sister who had also been given the name Celina. Originally, Celina was the name of a very special friend of Agnes's parents. Agnes was given the name Uningoun after an elder who was believed to be a shaman. She will pass these names onto her grandchildren to make sure their memories and spirits live on. Agnes was born in 1957. She has 14 siblings. She and her partner Ruben Ruben have six children. At the time of the study, five of the six children lived in Paulatuk. Together, Agnes and her husband strive to provide traditional food for their family. Agnes enjoys the preparation of traditional foods such as dried meat. She is also an experienced artisan

in the craft of sewing. Many of her crafted items are sold to people who visit the community.

Agnes has lived in Paulatuk most of her life. She left the community briefly at which time she received formal training as a Community Health Representative; the position in which she is currently employed. Agnes is a respected member of the community. She encourages and supports the maintenance of traditional practices. In particular, Agnes works collaboratively with the Community Health Nurses to bring health related messages to the students of Angik School, as well as to the community at large. Agnes has also begun to pursue a study of the Inuktitut language. She is hoping to have the opportunity to teach the language to the young people of the community as she becomes increasingly fluent.

Ayouniq Kisoutak, Andrew Paul

Finally, the third resident I am introducing is, Ayouniq Kisoutak, Andrew Paul. Ayouniq, which means 'old bone' was Andrew's great grandfather's name. Kisoutak was Andrew's father's family name. It means 'anchor'. Andrew was born in 1947, in the community to Aklavik in the Northwest Territories. He moved to Paulatuk in 1975 and has been a resident of the community since. He and his wife Marilyn, have four children, all of whom reside in Paulatuk. Andrew received much of his formal education in a boarding school.

Andrew is an elder in the community, as is his wife Marilyn. Together, they provide family support to their children and other members of the community. Andrew actively hunts and fishes to support his family's needs. When possible, he encourages

members of the community to learn more about their history and traditional ways. Andrew speaks both Inuktitut and English fluently.

You will get to know these individuals better throughout the remainder the discussion of this project. Unfortunately, I was unable to provide the names of all of the other members of the community, who provided information for this project. Although the consent form for those who participated in formal interviews guaranteed anonymity, the individuals have been identified at their request. Edward's statements capture this request. He stated, "I want people to know this is my story. I want my story to be told." Individuals who did not take part in formal interviews did not provide demographic data. However, they too have been identified in this study at their request.

CHAPTER 5

Analysis of Findings

The purpose of this study was to advance the understanding of the phenomenon of wellness as experienced by the Inuit of Paulatuk. Interviews with three residents of the community represent a portion of the data collected for this study. Additional data were collected in the form of field notes and informal conversations with other members of the community in various settings throughout the settlement. Several individuals who shared their stories with me did so on the banks of Darnley Bay, as they awaited a change in the weather to ensure their safe passage back out onto the sea to collect much needed food supplies in the form of fish. Data were also collected during previous visits to the community, in the form of field notes based on personal communications with residents of Paulatuk and other Arctic Communities.

Analysis of the data produced the core variable, **Living together in harmony with the Land**. Five categories and one overarching theme emerged. The categories were identified as **(a) Connecting; (b) Sharing; (c) Being Proud; (d) Believing;** and **(e) Striving to maintain.** Each category, although conceptually unique, occurs simultaneously with each other category in a continuously interactive pattern. The overarching theme was identified as; **Dancing on the rim between two worlds - the land and the settlement.**

A discussion of the findings will be presented as follows. A discussion of the core variable **Living Together in Harmony with the Land**, and the overarching theme, **Dancing on the rim between two worlds - the land and the settlement**, will be

presented, followed by a discussion of the five categories, which emerged from the data, **Connecting, Sharing, Being Proud, Believing,** and **Striving to maintain**.

Core Variable: Living together in harmony with the Land

The narratives of the residents in the community of Paulatuk revealed that their wellness is grounded in the integrated processes of living together in harmony with the land. This process involves: (a) connecting with the family and others, connecting with the ancestors and, connecting with the land; (b) sharing; (c) being proud, being proud of self, being proud of the people, being proud of the culture; (d) believing; and, (e) striving to maintain, striving to maintain self, striving to maintain the people, striving to maintain the Culture. This is best presented in Andrew's comments addressing his experiences of personal well being;

> A lot of being well is being with the country. It's like this land is our Mother, and we have to look after it. For the land to look after us, we have to look after it first. When I see the [land] with a lot of animals, I know I am doing well, because the animals were there because we protected them. We used them, and we didn't do bad things with them. We always know that if we look after them, they are going to look after us. We can't abuse it.

Andrew, Agnes, and Edward, as well as various other members of the community, through their non-verbal communications of facial expressions and body movements, present an air of great joy and emotional attachment to the realities of living in harmony with the land. Edward speaks of the land as the central source of all life, food, and

shelter. Being able to feel good, for him, is being able to connect to this life-giving source. This, he states, "Makes me happy. Makes me have a big smile!"

Living together in harmony with the land is a common thread that is woven through most stories. The land, with its multi-faceted dimensions, is depicted as the force, which brings people together, encourages them to live a healthy life, and supports the group with traditional food supplies. Evidence of this thread will be presented in the discussions of the categories that emerged from the study data.

Overarching theme; *Dancing on the Rim between Two Worlds - the land and the settlement*

As residents of Paulatuk shared their stories, they frequently addressed their position as it related to existing within the realities of their two worlds - the settlement and the Land. Their presentations indicated an ever-present tension in their lives created by living with the modern realities of a technologically advanced society while at the same time attempting to incorporate the more tradition modes of existence necessary for all aspects of life.

Times have changed rapidly for the people of Paulatuk over the past 50 years, in terms of technology, spirituality and cultural adaptations. These changes have resulted in their being positioned in a lifestyle that creates a chasm between them and their traditional connections to the land. Today, they are the permanent residents of a semi-modern, Arctic community that is not connected to the outside world by roads or waterways. Outside influences, such as television via satellite transmission, present what some community members recognized to be a somewhat unrealistic global community.

For the community members, the rate of technological changes and advances has exceeded the rate of cultural adaptations. Their existence in this somewhat confusing world requires a clear understanding and delineation of the realities, limitations, and fantasies of the world outside of the community of Paulatuk. It also requires an understanding of which realities presented by the media, can be successfully adopted in their unique world.

Within the settlement, gaps in knowledge occur when educators from the outside world attempt to prepare school children to meet the educational standards necessary for the world of advanced education. Generally, community residents place limited emphasis on the value of education for purposes of higher learning. Some parents believe their children would be more suitably prepared for life if their studies focussed exclusively on issues related to their future existence in the community of Paulatuk and surrounding region. For many of the young people of this community life in the outside world, as presented by television media, is unrealistic. They experience debilitating states of anxiety when considering travel outside of the community of Paulatuk. They also relate that their anxieties prevent them from considering the possibility of attending educational facilities outside of their home community (Personal communications, D. Wolki, K. Green, & A. Ruben, Summer 2001).

However, the outside world is also introduced to the community at the local Northern Store. Here one can find a variety of non-traditional foods, clothing, and entertainment items, many of which appeal to the adventurous youths and adults alike. These costly alternatives to traditional selections have positioned community members at

risk for decreased levels of physical and mental health. Both Andrew and Agnes recognize, for example, that as members of the community begin to rely more heavily on prepared foods, they also begin to loose their attachments to the world in which they live. With decreased efforts being placed on the traditional values of the past such as hunting and fishing, and general connections with the land, they feel that the people are unable to understand their positions in the society in which they live.

People of the community who have witnessed the progression to a more technologically advanced lifestyle identify possible challenges of the future. Edward is concerned about the lives of the young people who will be staying in the community as adults. He feels their survival will be dependant on their ability to maintain the traditional practices of hunting and being on the land.

Edward, who has resided in the Paulatuk region for his entire life, is aware of the need for collaborative efforts on the part of all people, to ensure a peaceful and healthy existence. He comments;

> You know, when you talk to other people, you don't always have the same idea. If you talk about something bad, NO! I would say I don't want to get involved. When I hear good things, I want to learn good things. It doesn't matter who we are, when we help each other. We are in a strange world, you know? Today look at even white people, Eskimoes, Indians, anybody. We together in the whole world. It doesn't matter who we are - what we are, you know? I say colour means nothing. Always you can find a way to put a good mind together in the whole

> world - good work together - get together like this, and work together. To me, if we can fully understand, I think it would be helpful for the world.

Andrew, who, like some other members of the community has had experiences that have served to broaden his view of the world. As a child, Andrew attended a boarding school in Inuvik. This experience has made him keenly aware of the dichotomy in which he lives. For him, the dance on the rim between two worlds is very real. He comments;

> We can get along in both worlds if we have to, but we like it best in our own as long as we are healthy. The biggest issue with me is keeping my brain healthy, keeping thinking of the past and the future at the same time - balancing everything out.

Andrew's words provide a broad perspective on the Inuit experience of wellness, the thread of which is apparent in the narratives of others. He states, "Yes, your spirit part and your mental part - you know, you have to balance them to survive.

Analysis of Categories

Connecting

The people of Paulatuk speak of their wellness in terms of connecting to the world around them. They addressed their connections to their families, other members of the group, their ancestors, and to the land. These connections play an integral part in their world. They extend beyond mere relationships or contacts. Instead they form the basis of day- to-day existence giving rise to the meaning of life and the purpose for existence, as well as providing an explanation for life.

Connecting with family and others

Strong family connections fulfil one aspect of feeling good. Andrew speaks of his family as "a part of town". When they move out to the land, they experience a valued sense of closeness and understanding, which they are less likely to achieve in the settlement. He also addresses family support.

> [When I go out on the land] I bring my family and it's like a part of town without all the distractions. On the land, you spend more time with each other, you learn each other's problems and you talk it out.... Families are the biggest thing... If anybody is sick, you help them. You are always there for the kids, anytime, day or night.

Andrew also describes the importance of meeting with other members of the group, while they are out on the land.

> "You know, [when you are out on the land] you get to mingle more with other people because they gather in a fishing spot or a hunting spot. You get to renew with them again. It's like a big meeting that took place years ago. You connect. We get all together and you get to know who's doing what, what's going on, a lot of things.

Edward speaks of connecting with his family throughout his life and his experience of feeling good. "When you are born, you are not alone. You are always right amongst your family. You know, uncles, aunties, grandparents...". On numerous occasions throughout his interview, Edward also spoke of his connections to his children and grandchildren, and how these relationships make him smile, or make him happy.

"You know, like when I see today, my grandchildren, when they start to play, smiling and happy. It makes me happy."

In response to the question, "What would you do to make yourself feel good?" Edward speaks of feeling good through connecting with other members of the group in such as way as to make them feel good, or be happy. He states,

> Well, you know, you got to look at yourself, and look at the people. What kind of world you can give to make people happy and smile. Sometimes it's hard when you come do it, but [it makes me feel good] to make the people happy and smile."

Family connections were also evident within the Health Care setting, during times of crisis. Grandparents, parents, siblings, and extended family members frequently arrived at the Health Centre to support each other. Such support was offered in terms of organizing child care if a parent was required to leave the community for medical treatment, or if the parent was required to escort a child or elder to a medical treatment facility. Other areas of support included providing meals and companionship for an ailing individual who stayed in the community but required assistance at home. On some occasions, elder family members rallied around an individual offering prayers for spiritual and emotional support.

Connecting with other members of the group is also identified as a significant factor in the wellness experience. Agnes speaks of her social connections with others in particular her connection with other members of the group while they are out on the land. At the same time she also indicates the differences in relationships in the settlement setting in comparison to relationships while out on the land.

> It's really different when you are out there. In the morning, you make your pot of coffee, and breakfast, and you holler COFFEE!!! or they go to each other's tents and have coffee, breakfast. And even when it's time to eat in the daytime, anyone's welcome into anyone's tent. It's really different out there. Here [in the settlement] people hardly visit. Mainly, we don't visit just to visit, or even just to play cards. Mostly you visit just to gamble. Out there [on the land] you visit just to visit. You are able to sit and have tea.

Another member of the community grounded a portion of her experience of wellness in the drum dance ceremony. Dancers participating in the ceremony strive to " transpose themselves to another life" and in the process, they seek to " make another person smile". Bringing joy to others is only one way of connecting through the drum dance ceremony. Other connections become significant during the preparations for the accompanying feast and celebrations. At this time individuals have the opportunity to renew all-important connections between friends, and relatives who gather to share the food and dance. Such gatherings, which usually take place during the darkness of winter, provide the opportunity to be with others, another significant aspect of feeling good. Connections to family and other members of the group will be maintained in this individual's family as she provides the opportunity for her children and other youths of the community to become familiar with the traditional aspects of the drum dance ceremony (personal communications, D. Gordon-Ruben, August, 2002).

Connecting to Ancestors

Connections with family go beyond the present. The people of Paulatuk also rely on the spiritual nature of their ancestral relationships to guide their lives. Valued ancestors are honoured in the naming of newborns. It is believed that through this process, ancestral connections never cease. Andrew explained, "Deep-rooted families are always connected in one way or another." He goes on to explain how such relationships provide spiritual aspects of wellness as well as being vital to survival.

> When you connect with your ancestors, you know what they did and what they are going to do for you. You get that feeling all the time. You want to go somewhere, or do something. There's a lot of beliefs that go way back, not to my dad's family, but the family before him. You know, its passed on generation to generation. It's not only me that gets that, it's lots of people. As you get older, you start to feel more in tune with nature and your ancestors, and you know what's going to happen, how you gonna eat when you're hungry, and stuff like that.

Andrew also goes on to explain that ancestral relationships are highly respected.

> Your loved ones have departed and they always know, it seems like, when you are hungry and when you need something from the land. You always give a little thanks to your people when you bring down an animal to feed the family. After every meal too, we thank them for providing for us, that meal we have today. - the meat, the fish. It's not like Christian. It just comes automatic. It's just in your mind that they helped you and you have to thank them for it.

Strong ancestral ties begin with relationships to elder family members while they are still alive. Agnes has recently lost her mother. Throughout her interview, she related the importance of this relationship, particularly how she had learned to survive. Agnes's father is still alive and lives in Paulatuk. He is a respected Elder who is able to "...tell [the men] where to hunt, and how to hunt, and to provide the animals." She relates, "...by providing the animals, they show that they care."

Connecting to the Land

For the people of Paulatuk, as with other Inuit, the land is more than the sum of its parts. It is central to all life. Connections to the land are viewed as physical, as well as spiritual in nature. Physical connections to the land address some of the occupational dimensions of life for the Inuit. For them these connections provide resources necessary for the maintenance of life by providing the basic human needs of food, and to a lesser degree, clothing and shelter.

In his lifetime of 85 years, Edward has come to view the land as the source of comfort, as well as a source of food and shelter. He speaks of struggling to survive the cold but being happy in the process. He states, "I wish I could go back to that time in my life, you know!" Edward now depends largely on assistance from his children and grandchildren. He relates,

> If I could walk around in this world, on the land, I could see something I want to see - it would make me open in a big smile. So it would go to my heart. You know, when you see something so wonderful, or when you get something from the land, you smile.

Edward recalls a time when he used anything from the land or sea as food to feed his family. He also reminds me that in the absence of lumber to build a home, animals from the land provided hides that were used for tent construction. During the winter, temporary shelters were built of snow and ice.

Indigenous animals are also conceptualised as part of the land. The people of Paulatuk speak of their connections to the animals as another source of feeling good. These connections are borne out of respect for animals that provide all important food resources. Agnes speaks with compassion as she states,

> The poor geese…They end up getting shot. Some of them get wounded. They still come back. [I think] it is because they know they are needed, in some way. They could stay in Florida, but they just come here. It's just like we need them so they are here.

Andrew's words also address a certain connection with the animals. He states that, out of respect he has been taught not to overkill or to take more than he needs. He too believes the animal-human connection is vital to survival.

> When you go out on the land, you know where the animals are going to be. Yesterday, when I was out on the ocean, looking at the net, I brought the rifle along. Then we went to the mainland, and sure enough, we ran into some caribou. Just like we knew beforehand that they are going to be there. You know. You just connect with the animals. When you are hungry, you're just going to run into something to eat. They're there! Just like they know they are needed. In the back of your mind you know they are going to be there!

Pelly, (2001) writes of spiritual connections between the Inuit and seals, which are an important food sources. Agnes speaks briefly of this important connection when she speaks of "fleshing out a seal" and subsequently using the seal oil "as a tasty garnish for dried (caribou) meat and dried fish. She also uses sealskin in the production of mittens and mukluks (winter footwear).

Caribou, wolf, fox, and wolverine pelts are also used in clothing production. Wolverine pelts are especially valued as trim for parka hoods. As one resident of Paulatuk explains, she likes to use this fur because, in her opinion, the natural properties of this pelt are such that it does not collect frost when worn next to the face as do other animal pelts (personal communication, H. Nakimayak, August, 2002).

Sharing

Although grounded in the concept of connecting with others, sharing emerged as another category of Inuit wellness. The people of Paulatuk identify sharing as a multi-faceted reality that encourages an internal sense of well-being. The act of sharing occurs through various aspects of Inuit life. They speak of feeling good related to personal sharing of food, sharing of knowledge, and sharing of laughter and joy.

Andrew proudly advised me at the time of his interview his wife was preparing to take some fresh caribou meat to Elders in the community. Andrew went on to present sharing as way of finding peace.

> You're always giving things away. If others are short of meat, and that, you give it away to them too. You don't hunt for yourself - you're hunting for [them] too. When you can give it away, and have a little for yourself, you're at peace again.

> You know you aren't going to starve 'cause you gave it away. You know you gonna get some more.

Agnes also speaks of sharing as a source of "feeling good". She addresses issues such as sharing food with others, but she also speaks of sharing her knowledge with the children at Angik School. Agnes identifies that she felt the children of Paulatuk were losing the ability to speak Inuktitut. She explains that she had begun a course to become more fluent in the language herself, which would enable her to share her knowledge with people of the community. Sharing her language skills, she presents, would serve to ensure the maintenance of the traditional language, a vital part of Inuit culture in Paulatuk.

Agnes also relates that sharing serves to strengthen connections with others. She presents that being out on the land supports sharing. "You are more closer to the people when you are out on the land, because you all want to help each other - share. ...You share company, you share food, you share coffee. You're helping each other".

Edward presents another aspect of sharing. As an Elder in the community (meaning that he has reached the age of at least 50 years and has therefore gained valuable knowledge about life,) he shares his knowledge with adults and children alike. He enjoys teaching the children through stories of the past. He also relates that such teaching ensures that young people will be able to survive as adults in an isolated Arctic community. Sharing stories is not a task for Edward. He shares stories to "feel good". In remembering and subsequently relating stories, he feels happy. He states,

> Well you know, you got to look at yourself., and look at the people. What kind of world you can give to make people happy and smile. Sometimes it's hard. When

> you come to do it, it makes people happy and smile. For example when I come to think of our school children today... I always hope they'll grow like me.... I always try to pass the good thing that I learned from my parents, from my grandparents and from other grandparents. Our job is to pass it to our children. That is what we try to do."

The actions of a husband and wife team, both Elders, also displayed the importance of sharing as a concept of wellness within the group. In this case, a young mother who was facing difficulties in adapting to the role of parenthood displayed limited understanding of childcare. Her challenges had become apparent to several members of the community. The Elders volunteered to share their time with the young woman and her partner to help them understand the realities of rearing a child in this community. As they reflected on their advisory role, they spoke of the importance of feeling good in themselves knowing that they could offer some resources of knowledge. Their statements alluded to what may best be described as a sense of self-efficacy. They had fulfilled the cultural roles of Elders in Paulatuk.

To give freely of oneself, creates a sense of personal fulfilment for the people of Paulatuk. It creates a position where one can feel proud of having done what was needed to alleviate the suffering of an 'other'.

Being Proud

Conversations with various members of the Paulatuk community revealed that inner pride also contributed to the experience of "feeling good". The people speak of being proud of themselves. Agnes speaks of a sense of pride, which she shared with her

partner when they were able to survive a hunting ordeal that required vast amounts of mental and physical strength. Andrew speaks of being proud of the people, the Inuit culture, and the ability to maintain many traditional ways. He speaks of the fortunate position the Inuit people of the Arctic are able to maintain, in comparison to his perception of the positions of other Aboriginal people of Canada. The experiences they described were related to living together in harmony with the land.

The people of Paulatuk are not boastful. Pride in oneself or in one's accomplishments is not expressed openly. Instead, being proud is viewed as a personal experience that contributes to the individual sense of inner strength. Being proud is also to be viewed as source of resiliency that encourages one to face the challenges of any given situation. Agnes presents, experiences which have made her feel proud, help her to recognize her personal abilities to achieve. In recalling these experiences, she finds encouragement in challenging times.

Being Proud of Self

Within the context of being proud, one individual related feelings of personal satisfaction upon completing a 10 kilometre per day hike through the rugged terrain of a local National Park. As she reflected on the events of the journey, she frequently made reference to "feeling so good about [herself]" and about her accomplishments. She also presented a strong correlation between the sense of inner pride and her realization of issues for personal changes she felt she incorporated when considering health lifestyle choices (personal communications, S. Lester, August 2001).

The people of Paulatuk present being proud as an internalised conceptualisation. They speak of a personal sense of being proud, as being firmly grounded in competition with one's self and one's previous personal best. Edward clearly presents this reality in his comments. "I am going to tell you the truth. It doesn't matter what I do. I won't say I am a good man, I am a good worker, [or] I am a strong guy. I don't use that kind of words. All I say is "I try my best".

Agnes also speaks of "being proud" of her own achievements during a crisis situation. She addresses how her recognition of her own personal strengths encouraged her to feel good about herself and her capabilities. Agnes's story recounts a situation where she and her husband, while out on a hunting trip, found themselves stuck in slush (a mixture of snow, ice and water) with their sled, and snow machine. Through extensive personal effort she was able to turn the sled, unassisted. She reflected, "I knew I was strong, but I didn't know I was strong enough to turn the sled! Boy, it felt good!". Agnes recognizes that her feelings of personal pride led her to reflect on her strengths in other areas of her life.

Being Proud of the People

Pride in others is reflected throughout the community in reactions toward those who experienced success at a time of challenge. Agnes speaks of understanding and recognizing the sense of pride related to a successful hunt, which may have taken place on the land or on the sea. When hunting for animals on the land, Agnes states that, "The men are glad they are good shots. They are glad they got the animal. They really feel good about that." She goes on to state that male hunting activities are driven by the need

for food. Eagerness to undertake this physically challenging task is supported by the internalised sense of pride on the part of the hunter. In recounting the story of one of her father's whale hunting experiences, Agnes reveals that whale hunts also require a strong internalised sense of pride. "I think the men really like [the whale hunt] too because they like the chase... Oh, they are so proud when they get whales!" She goes on to explain that part of the men's pride is related to their ability to "be a good shot", knowing how to harpoon the animal and then having the physical endurance to bring the large animal ashore, without the assistance of mechanical devices. Following a successful whale hunt, the hunters return to a hero's welcome in the community.

Hunters also experience pride following a whale hunt. They have the pleasure of providing the community with 'muktuk', a much sought after delicacy amongst the Inuit. Muktuk, or whale skin, is usually eaten raw but is occasionally prepared by boiling (Personal communications, A. Ruben, July 2001).

Community members reflect their sense of pride for other members of the group by openly discussing the hunt. Each hunter is given recognition for his achievements and for the effort that he has put forth. During our visit to the community in the winter of 2002/2003, I came to recognize the sense of community pride following a polar bear hunt. Members of the community repeatedly praised the hunter. Later, as we spoke with the hunter, he shared in a humble manner, that his success fuelled his desire to continue to undertake hunting activities. He, too, was only in competition with his own past efforts (personal Communication, R. Green, Winter, 2002). Pride in other members of the group is also evident in discussions that focus on the role of Elders. Community

members display a general sense of pride in becoming an Elder, at the age of 50 years. They are also proud of others who have reached this point in their lives.

The role of an Elder is not taken lightly. Both Edward and Andrew referred to the sense of responsibility that accompanies the role. They also spoke of the relationship between the community and Elders, and how the relationship is supported by a sense of respect for Elders as the bearers of wisdom and knowledge.

Being Proud of the Culture

The people of Paulatuk have begun to focus more intently on their cultural heritage. Although the need to adopt such a focus has been enhanced by the realities of a rapidly changing world, the residents of this community recognize that their continued existence may hinge on their ability to remain firmly grounded in the ways of the past.

Edward believes that many of today's school-aged children will be faced with hardships should they lose the ability to survive off the land. He speaks of understanding the difficulties related to such a demanding lifestyle but he also understands that it has served the purpose of sustaining life of the Inuit for centuries. Throughout the context of his interview, Edward expresses a sense of being proud that he is an Inuit and that the cultural practices which have been such a large part of his life, are still in existence today.

Andrew speaks of his pride in knowing that he is able to continue in the ways of the past. He is proud to be able to eat the best foods for him, which come off the land. He states, "Nutritionists, they always say, any fat you can't see through - don't eat it! Like fish [fat] is clear, seal and whale [fat] is clear. You can see through it!...You start doing the things on the land, and you get healthy right away!"

The people of Paulatuk are proud of their Inuit ancestry. Andrew proudly states, "We have to always remember who we are and where we have come from. This is our life, the life of our ancestors." For the people of Paulatuk, their existence in their world today requires a well-balanced dance on the rim between two worlds - the settlement and the land.

Believing

In this study, the category of believing represents a combination of faith, respect, and knowing; all of which support the Inuit experience of feeling good. The people of Paulatuk demonstrate in their conversations that believing provides them with a sense of emotional calmness. Although they may have grave concerns for their welfare at times, such concerns are gradually eased as they approach their trusted sources of knowledge.

The people of Paulatuk continue to maintain an esoteric faith in their ancestors. They speak of them as guides with past life experiences whose knowledge impacts many of their daily decisions. Edward is constantly reminded of the teachings from his grandparents and the grandparents before them. He speaks of lessons they have imparted to him and how his daily life continues to be guided, as a result.

> I stayed with [my grandfather]. He used to tell me, "Grandson, someday you'll be a man." Half the time I don't understand. He used to tell me, "Grandson, when you become a man, don't be a real bright light! You've got to respect people - be so kind to people." So when I come to think of it, I always thank my grandfather for my heart. I really think he gave me something.

Andrew also relates to his belief in the power of the ancestors. He speaks of their understanding based on their own life experiences. He believes that the ancestors guide him to find food sources such as fish and caribou. He is also reminded, through his faith, that the ancestors will provide personal understanding in a time of crisis. He states, " [When you are out on the land] you're with them all the time. You feel peaceful. No stress involved. Quiet.... It draws you back to where you were from."

Andrew's faith in his ancestors is renewed each time he goes back out on the land. When speaking of his hunt for animals, he discusses, that through following the direction of the ancestors his success is assured.

> My grandpa said, "If you go to that one spot, you'll have caribou if you are hungry. Sure enough, every time I went there, there was always caribou there. Never missed! It's like your departed family is helping you by bringing the animals there. You don't go there by chance. You go there because you know they are going to be there!... Your departed loved ones always know - it seems... You always give a little thanks to your people when you bring down an animal to feed the family.

Travel on the land and sea requires that the people of Paulatuk have a keen understanding, knowledge, and respect for the environment. The majority of adults undertake frequent studies of wind patterns and cloud formations to determine if they will be granted safe passage on land or sea. On many occasions, during my visits to the community, I received ongoing, and amazingly accurate weather predictions. These predictions ranged from sunshine or rain showers in the summer months, to snow, wind,

or blizzard conditions during the winter months. On one occasion, I was informed that the Health Center would be closed the next day due to extreme winds and blowing snow. This prediction was provided in the absence of outside communication sources. At approximately 10:00 a. m. the next day, Paulatuk experienced winds in excess of 120 kilometres per hour resulting in severe blizzard conditions. I was later advised that the hunters of Paulatuk find comfort in understanding environmental phenomenon. This understanding leads them to respect the land, and guides them in making safer travel choices (personal communications, N. Kudlak, Winter 2002).

The community members' individual relationships with Elders also present a powerful example of believing. They have faith in their wisdom. They respect their position and they rely heavily on the Elders' inherent knowledge of life. Elders play a significant role in the maintenance of cultural mores. They also serve as mentors and advisors at the personal as well as community level.

Elders understand the significance of their council. Edward speaks of his responsibility to educate children and youths to ensure that they have an understanding of the land - something he feels they do not receive in the school classroom. A portion of his personal wellness comes from the peace he feels within knowing he is fulfilling his role.

Andrew also has faith in the wisdom of the Elders. He speaks of his respect for his Elders when he states that' "Approaching an Elder is like going to see somebody you believe in, like your higher power." Throughout his interview, Andrew clearly outlines specific, ritualistic preparatory stages which are undertaken prior to consulting an Elder.

> You have to approach them in a certain way, or, like, ask them. You can't just go and blurt it out. You have to bring the story out so they can listen. You can't just ask them to do something right away... We always have to be respectful and don't be so straightforward.

Andrew goes on to explain that respected Elders become ancestors when they pass on. He presents, "Yes, it has always been that way." For Andrew, believing in the cycle of life - that being the progression of an individual to Elder and then to an ancestor, brings him peace, thereby "keeping [his] brain healthy."

Striving to maintain

The category of striving to maintain as identified in this study, encompasses the meeting of physical, social, and spiritual needs. Striving to maintain, in the context of feeling good for the people of Paulatuk, includes striving to maintain self, striving to maintain the family, the people, and, striving to maintain the culture. Through the use of stories and life related examples, the participants are striving to maintain a continued harmony with the land. Edward discusses the need to tell the stories to his grandchildren and to all others who choose to listen. He believes that in sharing the stories, the people will be able to maintain their supportive relationships to the world around them. These relationships he feels have been the basis for the continued existence of his people.

Striving to maintain self

For some individuals whose financial or physical activities may be restricted, maintaining oneself becomes a daily struggle. These individuals rely on the assistance of others at the local and territorial level. Many members of the community, including the

elderly, rely heavily on external financial resources such as Social Assistance or Canada Pension. Individuals who find themselves in such positions frequently rely on their faith in the generosity of others to ensure their supplies of traditional foods.

Striving to maintain self goes beyond the meeting of one's basic physical needs. However, being assured that one has the next meal, a warm place to rest, and adequate water supply does ensure physical wellness. Issues of personal maintenance are also apparent in the safety behaviours of individuals who travel out on the sea. Many families have adopted the use of personal floatation devices to ensure their safety while out on the water. Such devices, coupled with the wisdom of weather and wind patterns, serve to provide a sense of well-being in the form of emotional wellness.

As adolescents in the community begin to mature, many of them begin to become increasingly aware of their personal existence. Young men, for example, may begin to participate in hunting and fishing activities. These behaviours ensure that they, too, will be able to maintain themselves. There is some concern, amongst the people of the community, however, that youths have begun to adopt a more non-traditional attitude toward the incorporation of traditional practices. Edward believes that attitudinal changes are somewhat related to significant role changes which have resulted in decreased individual responsibility or the need to take an active role in personal survival. He identifies that the youth of the community frequently speak of "being bored". This attitude, he believes is related to the lack of active participation in activities such as hunting and fishing by male youths and decreased involvement in domestic duties, such as sewing and food preparation by female youths of the community. These activities he

believes not only serve to ensure maintenance of the individual, the group, and the culture, but they also serve to create a sense of connecting and being proud.

Striving to maintain the people

Members of the community of Paulatuk represent a group of individuals who share common needs. Through this commonality, they are positioned to provide social support where it is needed. Agnes, Andrew, and other members of the community feel that the people are more supportive of each other when they are away from the settlement out on the land. Andrew speaks of the "distractions" faced while in the community. He feels that these outside influences serve to hinder interpersonal relationships. In his opinion, being away from the settlement as a family group encourages dialogue and discussions, thereby supporting "brain health".

Agnes finds that her family experiences a sense of freedom to be who they are, when they are out on the land. She also speaks of feeling more in control of issues related to maintaining her family, such as ensuring their food supply while their group are away from the settlement. In her opinion, maintaining the group, through both crisis and non-crisis situations, encourages a sense of self-efficacy and thereby supports aspects of emotional and physical well-being.

Paulatuk is a coastal community. As such residents are conscious that during the summer months, the waters of the bay become an ever-present, possible source for water accidents. Adults and adolescents take an active role to ensure that young children do not drown. In times of acute crisis, such as accidents, trauma or sudden illnesses, community members take an active role in providing the needs of the victim and the family.

Community members feel secure in knowing these supports exist should a situation arise wherein they may need support and assistance (personal communications, M. Ruben, Summer, 2001).

The changing global environment, in terms of weather patterns, has become a cause for concern for the members of this community. They have become particularly concerned with the effects of such changes on the migratory patterns of the caribou which travel within 30 kilometres of the community on two occasions each year, and the Arctic Char, a fish, which migrates from the sea, during the summer months to inland spawning grounds. Both the caribou and the Arctic Char are rich sources of Inuit staple food supply.

As weather patterns change, the people of Paulatuk are concerned about their future abilities to meet their food supplies in a timely fashion. Even slight alterations to current migratory patterns of the caribou and the Arctic Char can have far reaching implications due to the relatively short seasons of spring, summer, and fall in the region. Should weather and migratory patterns become altered, the ability to access these rich food sources would be greatly diminished. Travel across the tundra to the feeding grounds of the caribou is only possible during the short periods of spring when the land remains frozen or during the short summer when the land is relatively dry. Outside of this period of time, the caribou are situated in areas that are inaccessible by current means of transportation.

Agnes notes that over the past several years, spring has come later and fall freeze up has also been delayed. She states that since they rely heavily on the resources from the

land such as the caribou, even slight changes to the migratory patterns of such animals would impact their availability, thereby affecting the survival of the people.

Striving to maintain the culture

The presence of satellite receiver dishes on most houses in the community is evidence of one connection between this isolated settlement and the global community. Through this means of communication, the residents are introduced to various ways of life much different than their own. Outside communications such as this, have some members of the community concerned. They feel that their adolescent populations' attachment to the unrealistic world of television media is having serious effects on the future direction and maintenance of the culture.

Agnes and Andrew both address their concerns in this area. Agnes states that she has noted some her children's decreasing desire to spend time on the land because they wish to be in the settlement to watch television. Her concerns centre on her perceived need for adolescents to be in tune with the realities of the world in which they live, as a source of feeling good. She speaks of some youths "being lost" in terms of understanding their world, the world of Paulatuk. Andrew's comments centre on what he calls "the distractions of the settlement". Although he understands the benefits of gaining knowledge from outside sources, he too feels that cultural practices are difficult to maintain when people are too distracted to listen and learn about the life they will live if they stay in the community of Paulatuk.

Andrew also identifies that many cultural practices were lost during his boarding school experiences. He talks of the changing in naming practices, for example, which

resulted from children being given Christian names to replace their Inuvialuit names given to them at birth by their parents. He finds comfort in feeling connected to the ancestors through the traditional naming practices. He also finds he feels good knowing that throughout the community children are still being given ancestral names. This connection he believes will give them a firm membership in the group, thereby providing them with a much-needed sense of belonging.

Community members of all ages feel good to witness events that renew their cultural traditions. Each summer, the community organizes an annual Jamboree that is recognized as a social and cultural event. Younger men take part in game activities, which display strength, stamina, perseverance, and pride. Other community members participate in events such as goose plucking and tea making contests. Humour and excitement prevail throughout this one-week event. "People feel good to be together again" (personal communications, D. Gordon-Ruben, Summer, 2001).

Revival of the traditional Drum Dance Ceremony within the community, has also encouraged a sense of cultural maintenance for the people of Paulatuk. The organizer of this activity ensures that all young people are given an opportunity to become involved. She feels that their involvement encourages a sense of belonging and provides them with the opportunity to understand their cultural roots. She also feels that through the involvement of the youth, the cultural practice of drum dancing will survive. Youth who take part in this ceremony are seriously committed to their role. They are able to take on the responsibility of bringing their performance to the community, all the while sharing

the joy and laughter of the stories the dances represent (personal communications, D. Gordon-Ruben, Summer 2002).

CHAPTER 6

Discussion of the findings

The conclusions for this study emerged from data presented in a single, Inuit community - Paulatuk. Findings support that for some Inuit, the experience of wellness is grounded in an individual's being able to live together in harmony with the Land. Subsequently, achieving a sense of well-being requires that the individual enter a 'dance on the rim between two worlds - the land and the settlement'.

The participants' data support the first conclusion that cultural mores influence the experience of wellness. Conversely, the loss of cultural identity decreases the subjective experience of well being. As a group, the people of Paulatuk experience interactions in both the physical as well as metaphysical/spiritual realm. As individuals, they recognize their membership in the group and accept the responsibilities and privileges synonymous with the membership. Symbolic interactions within the group or society produce a way of life, or a culture (Perry & Perry, 1974).

Perry and Perry (1974) present that culture may be viewed as "a product of social interaction" (p.46). It includes "all accumulated knowledge, ideas, values, goals and material objects of society [which are] shared by [its] members and have been passed down from one generation to the next" (p.47). Such norms are learned socialization of symbolic interactions (i.e. communication styles, gestures, etc.). They provide society members with approved organized patterns of behaviour necessary to fill both biological and emotional needs. Societal adaptations to cultural change are occurring continuously,

as cultural patterns become altered to various degrees. Although each society develops a distinct culture, various cultures may share specific attributes.

Symbolic interactions that form the core of culture and cultural norms represent interactions between the people of a given society. It is believed "... that people behave and interact based on how they interpret or give meaning to specific symbols in their life" (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999, p. 103). Interpretation and meaning of language also represent symbolic interactions.

The symbolic interaction of language is evident within Paulatuk society member's specific interpretation of the term, *the land*, and the concepts it represents. For these people, *the land* represents all elements of the environment such as the sun, moon, earth, sea, wind, sky, animals, and birds. It also represents "the ancestors" (Andrew), "the source of food and shelter" (Edward), "a source of freedom" (Agnes), and, "a source of happiness" (Edward). The term "Mother" (Andrew) is also used to represent the nurturing aspects of *the land*. Members of this society present their connections to *the land* as central to their lives. These connections represent physical, spiritual and intellectual aspects of their well being.

Suh and Oishi, (2002) suggest that a measurement of the subjective experience of well being requires an individual to cognitively evaluate their entire life, and in so doing, the individual will reflect on both positive and negative reflections of emotional experiences. The authors also present that in collectivist cultures, such as the culture of Paulatuk, the presence of strong social support may serve to decrease the effects of events related to a less than optimum experience of well-being.

Culturally specific symbols and rituals support the experience of well-being of individuals in Paulatuk society. Positive emotional experiences are produced through experiences of connecting to family and others. Members of Paulatuk society attach a specific symbolic meaning to family, as well as to other members of the group. As in other Inuit societies, "there remains a very strong family orientation ... Family loyalties outweigh any other obligations a person may have"(Pauktuutit, 1991, p.13). Groups, such as the Paulatuk group, represent kinships, which have developed over time. The bonds of such kinships have arisen as the result of births, marriages, adoptions or name sharing practices (Pauktuutit, 1991). The population of Paulatuk represents approximately five families. An intricate balance based on obligatory reciprocity and responsibility serves to maintain a portion of the social structure of the community. Familial and group related relationships provide a significant source of emotional well-being.

Symbolic interactions are also evident in animal to human connections that also produce a sense of well being for the people of Paulatuk. For them, the relationships they share with the animals are built on respect and appreciation. They believe that through the respectful use of each animal and all of its parts their continuation is ensured. They are comforted to know that by assuming the responsibility for such relationships they are assured successful hunts in the future, ensuring their survival.

The people of Paulatuk have concerns for their future as the youth of the group place decreasing significance on their cultural identity, values, and mores. Andrew speaks of concerns related to decreased incorporation of traditional communication with other group members as a way of dealing with personal problems. He presents that,

traditionally, inter-group relationships provided a form of discipline within the group. Inter-group relationships also encouraged the development of coping skills necessary to support members of the group as they progressed through the challenges of the maturing process. Additional concern is presented by Edward who feels that children who are no longer required to adopt the activities aimed at group survival are at risk for higher incidence of socially deviant behaviour. Other adults are also concerned about the future of the young people as they attempt to adopt the more southern lifestyles in a geographic and economic culture that is not able to support such activities. Minor's (1992) writings coincide with the thinking of the Paulatuk Elders and other concerned members of the community. She presents that "emphasis is no longer placed upon self-exploration and group consciousness... This challenge has given way to a vague sense of direction ... [and youths have become] objects of control rather than responsible participating members" (p. 81). The people of Paulatuk present a significant belief that cultural mores influence their experience of wellness. Those who have chosen to adopt a more traditional cultural way of life are able to identify the benefits they appreciate from the efforts. They also have begun to recognize the altered experiences of wellness in individuals who are unable or unwilling to adopt the more traditional ways of their past.

The second conclusion that emerged from the data is that for the people of Paulatuk the experience of well-being is supported by strong spiritual health. Hawks (1994) writes that individuals who experience strong spiritual health experience a "belief system that provides purpose, meaning and motivation to life. [They display] selflessness, connectedness with and concern for others, and [they have] high levels of faith and

commitment in relation to [the] worldview and belief system" (p.3). He also presents that the belief system of spiritually well individuals must provide a means from which the individual can attain personal fulfilment.

The people of Paulatuk are committed to the worldview of their cultural background, to their spiritual connections with the land, as well as to their spiritual connections with their ancestors. They exercise a selfless connection and concern for their family and other members of the group. This is evident in the sharing practices; "You are always giving things away" (Andrew); "You share company, you share food, you share coffee" (Agnes). Sharing practices support the spiritual dimension of wellness.

Spiritual connections to the land are also evident in the reflections of the participants. Edward views the land as his source of peace and happiness. Andrew and Agnes also present the land as their source of peace. Members of the community collectively address their connections to the land as a source of peace and healing. They explain their summer joyousness as grounded in the opportunity to renew their connections with the uplifting resources of the land.

Paulatuk community members recognize the need for themselves and other members of the community to reconnect with the healing properties of the Land. Individuals who lapse into a state of weakened spiritual health are recognized as being out of balance. Community members recognize that such individuals show an improved state of being following a trip out to the land.

The third conclusion that emerged from the study data is that the personal ability to adapt to cultural change, while continuing to maintain cultural beliefs and values,

enhances a sense of well-being. Study participants reflected on the reality of their changing cultural realities. They also recognized that although they longed for the more supportive mores of their traditional past, they also had no desire to return to the stringent requirements of traditional life experienced during that part of their history. Members of the group reflect on the benefits of modernization, such as being able to access food sources at times when their traditional food supplies are less than optimal. They also feel fortunate to have access to health services at a time of need. Agnes speaks of a dichotomous situation in her life. She understands that her employment fulfills her family's need for financial resources throughout the year. Whereas the ability and opportunity to experience trips out on the land, as often as possible, also provides her with the opportunity to maintain her cultural ways. Agnes identifies that the trips out on the land provide her with the opportunity to connect with a part of her life that she is somewhat unable to access while in the community. She particularly enjoys the opportunities to "be free".

Concern is raised by members of the community for those individuals who do not exercise the opportunity to spend time outside the boundaries of the settlement. Although they do not interfere with the life style choices of such individuals, they identify that remaining in the settlement encourages a general loss of traditional values, thereby affecting the wellness experience. Some members of the community experience decreased rates of anxiety and stress related illnesses, following trips out onto the land.

The fourth conclusion is that the relationship with the land is the source of holistic health. Being on the land provides an opportunity for individuals of the community to

experience an increased level of mental health. "Attachments" (Agnes) and "distractions" (Andrew) of the settlement, produce various amounts of stress and anxiety, leading to mental illness, such as depression and addictions. Spending time on the land provides individuals the opportunity to gain mental clarity thereby relieving many stresses and anxieties, related to life in the settlement. Evidence of stress amongst community members is presented in the form of alcohol abuse, violence, and various other "deviant" behaviours. Stresses related to the realities of overcrowded housing are also eased when individuals spend time on the land, where "children are free to play and enjoy each other's company" (Agnes).

The resources and activities of the land also support physical wellness. Agnes reflects that she experiences increased physical activity while she is on the land. This activity provides her with the opportunity to "move around a lot", but it also provides her with and opportunity to "... relieve all stress. When you go to bed at night you sleep really good, because you worked hard and because you feel good about how much you did." Andrew also addresses the physical rigours of life on the land. He too experiences a sense of physical and mental well being related to the work of hunting, fishing, and other related duties such as handling of supplies and goods.

The people of Paulatuk are supported in their belief that their traditional foods are a healthy dietary resource. Traditional food supplies, such as caribou, arctic char, geese, and seals, provide rich sources of vitamins, protein, iron, and Omega-3 fats believed to support and maintain cardiac health (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998; Indian and Northern Affairs, 2003). Andrew recognizes the value of the traditional food sources and how his

attempt to adopt more non-traditional foods resulted in increased body weight. Non-traditional food sources are viewed as generally inappropriate choices for a number of reasons. Firstly, such food sources are available solely from the local Northern Store, which makes them costly. Secondly, these foods generally lack the nutritional quality of traditional foods. Foods that are identified as health food choices are frequently more costly. For example, canned fruits, with decreased sugar content, are generally 15-20% more costly than the sugar-laden varieties (personal observations, Summer, 2002). Thirdly, reliance on non-traditional foods serves to diminish the cultural values, beliefs, and rituals attached to the animals, to the land, and to the group processes related to living on the land (Edward), (Andrew) and (Agnes).

Nalukatak – A metaphor of Inuit Wellness

Nalukatak,or the Blanket Toss, serves as a metaphor for an Inuit experience of wellness. Traditionally, the Inupiak, the Inuit people of Alaska, performed the Blanket Toss to honor the spirit of a captured whale and to ensure future hunting success. The Blanket Toss was also used as a means to scan the area for the possible presence of caribou and whales. Today, the Blanket Toss has become an official Northern Olympic Sport (Bragg, 2002; Kureluk, 1976)

To prepare for the game, skins of whales or bearded seals are sewn together to form the Nalukatak "blanket". Once stitched together, the skins produce a blanket, approximately 50 feet in diameter which is strong enough to accommodate the pressure of the jumper's weight repeatedly striking the surface. Rope, or rope-like material,

attached to the outer circumference of the blanket, provides stability for the blanket as well as providing a sturdy handle for the tossers.

The game begins when members of the community adopt a position around the circumference of the blanket, becoming the tossers, or the "springs of the centuries old trampoline" (Bragg, 2002, p.1). The jumper who enters the blanket is lifted into the air by the coordinated efforts of the tossers, sometimes to a height in access of 40 feet. This activity requires extreme coordination and cooperation on the part of the tossers who ultimately become responsible for the safety of the jumper. Any loss of rhythm might result in injury to the person being tossed skyward. The goal for the jumper is to maintain his/her balance upon landing on the blanket (personal communication A. Ruben Feb, 2003; Bragg, 2002).

The incorporation of Nalukatak as a sport of the Northern Olympic Games is representative of the changing role of traditional practices of Inuit society. Although the Inuit have been presented with modern technological advances, they continue to honour various cultural practices in an attempt to maintain their cultural identity (Bjerregaard, 1998). The research assistant and I both believe that Nalukatak represents the theory, which has emerged from this study (Fig. 1, p. 87)

Metaphorically, Nalukatak provides a symbolic presentation of the Inuit experience of wellness. An explanation of the metaphor involves consideration of each aspect of the Blanket Toss game; the game, the blanket, the tossers, the jumper and the existing force of gravity.

Nalukatak is not traditionally recognized as an activity performed by the Inuvialuit people. It is however, an activity, which is recognized by one group of Inuit people, the Inupiak of Alaska. Incorporation of Nalukatak as a representation of an Inuit experience of wellness serves to suggest a sense of unity amongst all Inuit people of the world. In identifying a traditional activity of one group, other groups may also be guided to understand the realities of their diversities and the bonds that bind them together as a people.

Symbolically, the blanket may be seen to represent the unity of the people of the community as well as the unity of the Inuit people of the world. Various shapes and sizes of the hides used to produce the blanket become symbolic of their individual uniqueness as people, groups, and communities. In terms of the core variable of this study, the blanket represents the variable, which unites the categories that emerged from the data, *Living together in harmony with the land.*

The tossers who take part in the Nalukatak game may be seen to represent the Inuit people individually or collectively as groups or communities. As participants in the game, the tossers each recognize a sense of responsibility to the jumper. This sense of responsibility may be seen to represent the responsibility that each Inuk has to the continued existence of the people, the culture and the way of life. In terms of the study, the tossers may be seen to represent the categories that emerged from the data. Each category represents a specific aspect of the wellness experience. This representation supports the inter-relatedness of each category. As well, in keeping with Nalukatak, no

category can be represented as a single entity. Instead, the categories are viewed as more than the sum of their parts, the context of which supports the core variable.

The jumper, or the individual who assumes the central position in the game, may be seen to represent the individual Inuk, the group, or the community. In this context, the jumper may be seen to represent their reliance on others in terms of the categories. In view of the study, the jumper may be seen to represent the individual or group who is striving to attain a sense of wellness. To achieve this state requires reliance on the categories and the support of the core variable.

The force of gravity may be seen to represent the overarching theme. In this study, Dancing on the rim between two worlds – the land and the settlement, was identified as a tension, which was evident throughout the data analysis. Metaphorically, the act of finding the balance between life in the settlement and life on the land may be viewed as a force that serves to curtail the wellness activities of the people of Paulatuk. In recognizing the existence of this 'force', the Inuit people are able to address the challenges it represents, such as the balance, which they seek between their traditional ways and the ways of a more technologically advanced way of life.

The Nalukatak metaphor may also be incorporated in future studies of Inuit wellness. In particular, as additional categories are defined, they too may be added to the outer circumference of the blanket. Additional supporting categories would symbolically present the knowledge of an enhanced understanding of the Inuit experience of wellness.

Figure 1

Nalukataq:
A Metaphor of Inuit Wellness
Dancing on the rim between two worlds - the land and the settlement
Believing
Being Proud
Connecting
Living in Harmony with the Land
Striving to Maintain
Sharing

Conclusion

Published literature addressing the subject of health and wellness from the perspective of the Canadian Aboriginal people fails to incorporate the specific view of the Inuit who represent approximately 4.7% of the total group. Like other members of this sector of the population, the Canadian Inuit experience a health status, which falls well below the normal national average (Bjerregaard & Young, 1998; Manzer, 2000). Similarly, nationwide programs designed to address the health promotion of Canadian Aboriginal people tend to overlook the needs of the Inuit sector of the population (Manzer, 2000).

The experience of wellness, or well-being, has been viewed as a culturally specific phenomenon (Fahlberg & Fahlberg, 1997). Recognizing significant differences in the world views of Inuit and Non-Inuit peoples, this study was undertaken to gain an expanded understanding of the experience of wellness/being healthy/feeling good in the Inuit population of Paulatuk in the Northwest Territories of Canada.

Research guided by the grounded theory method produced a core variable, **Living Together in Harmony with the Land**. Five categories, which supported the experience of wellness/being health/feeling good, also emerged. They were; a) **Connecting**; b) **Sharing**; c) **Being Proud**; d) **Believing**; and, e) **Striving to maintain**. One overarching theme emerged from the data; **Dancing on the rim between two worlds - the land and the settlement.**

Data, from the study, supported the emergence of four conclusions;

1. Cultural mores influence the experience of wellness. Conversely, the loss of cultural identity decreases the subjective experience of well-being.

2. An Inuit experience of well-being is supported by strong spiritual health. Conversely, loss of spiritual health leads to destructive behaviour.

3. The personal ability to adapt to cultural change while continuing to maintain cultural beliefs and values enhances a sense of well-being. Conversely the lack of adaptation to change lessens the sense of feeling good.

4. Relationship with the Land is the source of holistic health. Conversely, disruptions in the individual's relationship with the Land lead to incongruence and upset in holistic balance.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further research is necessary to explicate the meaning of the experience of wellness amongst other groups within the Canadian Inuit population. Over the course of history, technological advances meant to improve the health status of the Inuit population have served to alter their traditional lifestyles. However, cultural adaptations to these changes have not kept up with the rate of change. As non-Inuit health care providers become more familiar with culturally specific Inuit views of wellness, they may become increasingly more sensitive to the specific needs of this population. Research programs developed in collaboration with Inuit community members could result in new understanding regarding program and community development.

Nursing Implications

Nurses currently provide the majority of health care services to the Inuit people of Canada. As Community Health Nurses and members of other health care disciplines, such as health care providers in regional facilities, become increasingly familiar with the culturally specific views of this population, the possibility exists to enhance the effectiveness of programs aimed at improving the health status of all Canadian Aboriginal people. The possibility also exists to expand the scope of programs that target health promotion of all population groups as the understanding of the magnitude of cultural influences on the experience of wellness become increasingly evident.

Healthcare providers who address the needs of culturally specific groups need to focus on the life views of the population. In recognizing the relationship between the Inuit and the land, healthcare professionals may become sensitised to the realities of life on the land and the benefits attained by incorporation of these practices into the lives of the community. Understanding the importance of this relationship may also guide individuals to find meaningful solutions to healthcare challenges that may arise when community members take part in such activities. Healthcare providers may focus on the development of community-based activities that target healthy outcomes in relation activities that support living in harmony with the land.

Additional sensitivity to the needs of the Inuit people may also guide health care providers to begin to understand the significance of individual, family, and ancestral relationships. As understanding expands, the possibility exists to incorporate forms of traditional practices such as the sanaji, or midwife. Government policies have changed

the role of the sanji during the birth process. However, understanding the importance of this practice in the maintenance of cultural mores may lead to creative solutions which could possibly support an experience of wellness amongst the Inuit people.

Concluding Summary

The holistic nature of nursing provides a fertile ground for the recognition of the cultural influences on the wellness experience. Conclusions arising from this study present a strong relationship between personal beliefs and values and the meaning of such an experience. As presented in the First Nations and Inuit Regional Health Survey (1999), First Nations and Inuit people are seeking health care approaches, which value their specific worldviews. The possibility therefore exists that in placing greater emphasis on the development of culturally specific health program, the health status of an ailing population may improve.

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Appendix A

Letter to Paulatuk Community Council

Council Members
Hamlet of Paulatuk
January 17, 2002

Members of the Community of Paulaltuk:

My name is Madelene Heffel Ponting. I am currently in a job share position at the Paulatuk Health Center, in the capacity of Nurse in Charge. I am also a Graduate Student in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary. As part of my course work, I am required to design and complete a research project in a subject pertaining to health. I have selected to do my research project around understanding the meaning of wellness in a specific cultural group.

With this in mind, I would like to request permission to design my project in such a way that I would be able to complete it in your community of Paulatuk. Because I am planning to use a qualitative design for the project, it would mean that I would be speaking to volunteers in the community to get a better understanding of the meaning of wellness to the people of Paulatuk. I will also be attending various community functions to meet with the people.

Guidelines set out by the University of Calgary, the Aurora Research Institute, the Inuit Tapirisat, and the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Research, pertaining to topics such as ethics, confidentiality and anonymity will be followed..

The information gathered from this research project is intended to be used to advance the understanding of Inuit culture in such a way as to improve the provision of Health Care service.

The first step in planning this project is gaining your approval. If you have further questions, I will make every possible effort to provide you with the answers.

I thank you for your consideration.

Madelene Heffel Ponting

Appendix B

Letter of Approval from Paulatuk Hamlet Council

Hamlet of Paulatuk
P.O. Box 98
Paulatuk, NT X0E 1N0
Ph. # (867) 580- 3531
Fax # (867) 580- 3703

January 28, 2002

Madelene Heffel Ponting RN, BN MN (candidate)
Paulatuk Health Centre
Paulatuk, NT X0E 1N0
Ph. # (867) 580- 3231
Fax # (867) 580- 3300

Re: Letter of support for your Wellness Project.

This is a letter of support for you to conduct your research project on "Wellness in a specific Cultural group" here at Paulatuk, specific to such topics as ethics, confidentiality and anonymity within the Inuvialuit Culture. The Hamlet Council has given it's approval at Hamlet Meeting #2002- 02, dated January 17, 2002, by Motion # 2002- 17. Good luck on your project.

Thank you for your attention to this letter of support for your project.

Signed,

Albert Ruben Sr., S.A.O.
Hamlet of Paulatuk

Appendix C

Ethical Approval from University of Calgary

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

FACULTY OF MEDICINE

Office of Medical Bioethics
Heritage Medical Research Building/Rm 93
Telephone: (403) 220-7990
Fax: (403) 283-8524

2002-06-18

Dr. E. Thomlinson
Faculty of Nursing
University of Calgary
PF 2276
Calgary, Alberta

Dear Dr. Thomlinson:

RE: The Experience of Wellness/Being Health/Feeling Good in the Inuit Commmunity of Paulatuk
Student: Ms. Madelene Heffel Ponting Degree: MScN

Grant-ID: 16583

The above-noted thesis proposal and the consent form have been submitted for Committee review and found to be ethically acceptable. Please note that this approval is subject to the following conditions:

(1) a copy of the informed consent form must have been given to each research subject, if required for this study;
(2) a Progress Report must be submitted by 2003-06-18, containing the following information:
    (i) the number of subjects recruited;
    (ii) a description of any protocol modification;
    (iii) any unusual and/or severe complications, adverse events or unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others, withdrawal of subjects from the research, or complaints about the research;
    (iv) a summary of any recent literature, finding, or other relevant information, especially information about risks associated with the research;
    (v) a copy of the current informed consent form;
    (vi) the expected date of termination of this project;
(3) a Final Report must be submitted at the termination of the project.

Please note that you have been named as a principal collaborator on this study because students are not permitted to serve as principal investigators. Please accept the Board's best wishes for success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher J. Doig, MD, MSc, FRCPC
Chair, Conjoint Health Research Ethics Board

c.c. Dr. M. Reimer (information)
Ms. Madelene Heffel Ponting

Appendix D

Aurora Research Licence

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH LICENCE

Licence # 13345N

File # 12 408 124

ISSUED BY: **Aurora Research Institute - Aurora College**
Inuvik, Northwest Territories

ISSUED TO: Ms Madelene Heffel Ponting
Box 237
Prelate, SK S0N 2B0
306-673-2235

ON: 09-Jul-02

TEAM MEMBERS: Agnes Ruben - research assistant

AFFILIATION: University of Calgary, Faculty of Nursing

FUNDING: self

TITLE: The experience of wellness/being healthy/feeling good in the Inuit Community of Paulatuk, NWT

OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH:
Plans to transfer the responsibility of health services to Aboriginal peoples are well underway. It is intended that this transfer process will reflect the principles of primary health care, increased public participation and responsibility, community based programming, as well as more effective management of the health care systems. Success in the assumption of these new responsibilities will be enhanced as members of the Inuit population begin to assume greater responsibility for their personal and community health outcomes. Nurses, the providers of the majority of existing health care services to the Inuit population, assume an ideal position in terms of their opportunities to influence health promotion activities and programs. The current state of nursing knowledge does not support the provision of culturally appropriate health care to the Inuit population, as reflected in the lack of supporting literature. Epidemiological data, which reveal a high rate of illness and disease among the Canadian Inuit people, may provide further evidence for the need for valid knowledge. Expanded understanding of the meaning of the wellness experience, as perceived by the Inuit, may encourage the development of culturally specific health programs that could lead to an overall improvement to the health of this population.

DATA COLLECTION IN THE NWT:
DATE(S): July 7 - October 7, 2002
LOCATION: Paulatuk

Licence# 13345 expires on December 31, 2002.
Issued at the Town of Inuvik on Tuesday, July 9, 2002

Valoree Walker, Ph.D.
Science Administration Officer

Appendix E

Letter of Approval from Inuvik Regional Health and Social Services Board

Inuvik Regional Health and Social Services Authority
Bag Service # 2 Inuvik, NT X0E 0T0 Canada
Telephone (867) 777 – 8146 ~ Facsimile (867) 777 – 8062

August 14, 2002

Ms. Madelene Heffel-Ponting
P.O. Box 237
Prelate, Saskatchewan
SON 2BO

Dear Ms. Heffel-Ponting:

Re: Research Project in Paulatuk, NT

Nellie Cournoyea, the Board Chair of the Inuvik Regional Health and Social Services Authrority, has approved your research project based on the premise the community of Paulatuk has sanctioned the project.

Board members and the IRHSSA Directors look forward to seeing your research results.

Sincerely,

Deborah Tynes
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Cc – Aurora Research Institute, Box 1450 Inuvik

Appendix F

Ethical principles for the Conduct of Research in the North

1. Researchers should abide by any local laws, regulations or protocols that may be in place in the region(s) in which they work.

2. There should be appropriate community consultation at all stages of research, including its design and practice. In determining the extent of appropriate consultation, researchers and communities should consider the relevant cross-cultural contexts, if any , and the type of research involved. However, incorporation of local research needs into research projects is encouraged.

3.Mutual respect is important for successful partnerships. In the case of northern research, there should be respect for the language, traditions and standards of the community and respect for the standards of scholarly research

4. The research must respect privacy and dignity of the people. Researchers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the cultures and traditions of local communities.

5. The research should take into account the knowledge and experience of the people, and respect that knowledge and experiences in the research process. The incorporation of relevant traditional knowledge into all stages of research is encouraged.

6. For all parties to benefit fully from research, efforts should be made, where practical, to enhance local benefits that could result from research

7. The person in charge of the research is accountable for all decisions on the project, including the decisions of subordinates.

8. No research involving living people or extant environments should begin before obtaining the informed consent of those who might be unreasonably affected or of their legal guardian.

9. In seeking informed consent, researchers should clearly identify sponsors, purposes of the research, sources of financial support, and investigators responsible for the research.

10. In seeking informed consent, researchers should explain the potential beneficial and harmful effects of the research on individuals, on the community and/or the environment.

11. The informed consent of participants in research involving human subjects should be obtained for any information gathering techniques to be used (tape and video recordings, photographs, physiological measures, etc.) for the uses of information gathered from participants, and for the format in which that information will be displayed or made accessible.

12. The informed consent of participants should be obtained if they are going to be identified; if confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, the subject must be informed of the possible consequences of these before becoming involved in the research.

13. No undue pressure should be applied to obtain consent for participation in a research project.

14. A community or an individual has the right to withdraw from the research at any point.

15. On-going explanation of research objectives, methods, findings and their interpretation should be made available to the community.

16. Subject to the requirements for confidentiality, descriptions of the data should be left on file in the communities from which it was gathered, along with descriptions of the methods used and the place of data storage. Local data storage is encouraged.

17. Research summaries in the local language and research reports should be made available to the communities involved. Consideration also should be given to providing reports in the language of the community and to otherwise enhance access.

18. All research publications should refer to informed consent and community participation, where applicable.

19. Subject to requirements for confidentiality, publications should give appropriate credit to everyone who contributes to research.

20. Greater consideration should be placed on the risks to physical, psychological, humane, proprietary, and cultural values than to potential contribution of the research to knowledge. (Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies, 1998)

Appendix G

Consent Form

Faculty of Nursing
Telephone: (403) 220-7893
Fax: (403) 284-4803
Email: mareimer@ucalgary.ca

Research Project Title: The experience of wellness/being healthy/feeling good in Paulatuk

Investigator(s): Dr.E.Thomlinson, Assistant Professor
Faculty of Nursing, University of Calgary

Madelene Heffel Ponting, Masters of Nursing student
Faculty of Nursing, University of Calgary

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Madelene Heffel Ponting is a Graduate Student in the Master's Program of the Faculty of Nursing, at the University of Calgary. As part of her course work, she is doing a study that will help her to understand what it means to be well in Paulatuk. To do this, she would like to hear some of your stories about the things you know. If you decide to talk to her about your stories, Madelene will spend as much time with you as you need to comfortably tell her all the things you want to share with her.

In order to understand everything you have told her, Madelene will need to go over it many times. To do this, she will be writing down some this you say. Madelene will also be using a tape recorder to record your information. The recorded tapes will be kept in a secure locked location until three years after the study, at which time they will be destroyed.

If you do not want Madelene to use the tape recorder let her know, and she will not use it. Please let Madelene know if you don't feel like talking to her anymore. It is okay to that at any time.

We do not know of any risks to you from taking part in the study. If telling your stories makes you feel sad in any way, the Social Worker, of the Mental Health Worker will be able to help you by talking to you when you are ready.

In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participating in this research, no compensation will be provided to you by the University of Calgary or by the researcher. You still have all your legal rights. Nothing said here about treatment or compensation in any way alters your right to recover damages.

When the study is finished, a copy of the report will be put into Angik School Library. A copy will also be sent to the Aurora Research Institute and another copy will be given to Dr. E. Thomlinson who is Madelene's supervisor at the University of Calgary. Other nurses and some doctors will also be reading it to help them understand your people better.

Some people who read the final report, especially those who know the people of Paulatuk, may be able to recognize which stories you told. Madelene will not use your name in the report unless you want her to. If you do not want other people to know what you have told her, please let Madelene know. She will ask you a few times if it is okay to keep writing down your stories.

This study has been explained to me by Madelene Heffel Ponting, and I have had the opportunity to ask any questions. In consenting to participate in this study, I understand the following:

1). I can choose to withdraw from the study at any time.
2). I may request not have my stories recorded.
3). Should I require the services of the Social Worker, or the Mental Health Worker, as the result of my participation in the study, these services will be made available to me.
4). My identity will remain confidential as will the information I have shared, unless prior consent to use the words of my stories has bee obtained.
5). People who read the final reports may be able to know who I am because they know my story.
6). The purpose of this research project is to increase nursing knowledge about my people.

Your signature on this form indicates, that you understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in this research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardizing your health care. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or

new information throughout your participation. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact:

Madelene Heffel Ponting at x-xxx-xxx-xxxx
or Dr. Betty Thomlinson at x-xxx-xxx-xxxx

If you have any further questions concerning your rights as a possible participant in this research, please contact Pat Evans, Associate Director, Internal Awards, Research Services, University of Calgary, at 220-3782.

_____ _____

Participant Signature **Date**

_____ _____

Investigator and/or Delegate's Signature **Date**

_____ _____

Witness' Signature **Date**

A copy of the consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Appendix H

Demographic Information Form

Study Identification: _____ Gender: _____

Age:_____

Relationship Status: __ Single ___ Married ____ Other

Siblings: _____ Children: _____

Length of Time in the Community of Paulatuk: _____

Have you ever lived in any other Community? In NWT: _____
Where?_____

Outside NWT: ___ Where? _____

How long did you live outside of Paulatuk? _____ How old were you then?_____