

ÉTUDES Inuit STUDIES

Volume 48 (1-2), 2024

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Peinture réalisée en 2016 par Passa Mangiuk, artiste originaire d'Ivujivik, membre retraitée du groupe de gestion en partenariat université-communauté des activités de formation à l'enseignement de l'Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT) à Ivujivik et Puvirnituk, et autrice de l'article portant sur le développement collaboratif d'un lexique en éducation publié dans ce numéro thématique.

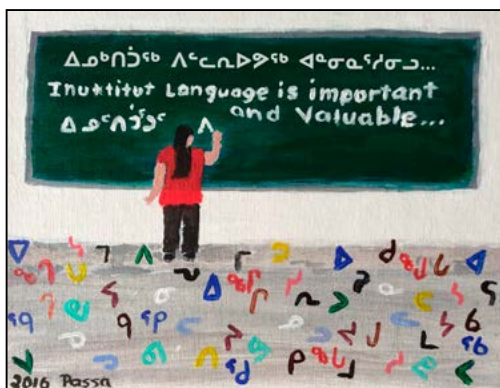
Painting created in 2016 by Passa Mangiuk, artist from Ivujivik, retired member of the university-community partnership management group for teacher training activities at the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT) in Ivujivik and Puvirnituk, and author of the article on the collaborative development of a lexicon in education published in this special issue.

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Éditorial

Homage à Bernard Saladin d'Anglure et aux Études inuit

Caroline Hervéⁱ

La revue *Études Inuit Studies* se trouve à un point tournant de son existence. Approchant d'un anniversaire significatif – elle aura 50 ans en 2027 – elle continue à publier des articles scientifiques, des notes de recherches et d'autres manuscrits dans un contexte de recherche connaissant un changement de paradigme majeur. La présence de plus en plus importante des Inuit dans le milieu académique, leurs critiques du mode de production des connaissances scientifiques et leur intérêt pour la production de nouvelles connaissances au sujet de leur propre société nécessite de repenser les façons de produire la recherche et les liens entre chercheurs et communautés, Inuit et non-Inuit. Dans ce contexte, la disparition de Bernard Saladin d'Anglure, l'un des fondateurs de la revue *Études Inuit Studies*, nous pousse à nous interroger sur les origines du réseau international des Études inuit et de ses possibles futurs. Sa disparition, le 13 février 2025, à Toulouse, en France, laisse un grand vide pour tous ses proches, sa famille, ses amis et ses collaborateurs. Mais elle révèle aussi autre chose : l'ampleur de son legs sur le plan académique.

Bernard Saladin d'Anglure, avec Louis-Jacques Dorais, est le père du réseau international des Études inuit. Au cours des années 1960, il rassembla autour de lui des étudiants et des collaborateurs, Inuit et non-Inuit, qui entreprirent des recherches dans l'Arctique canadien, tout particulièrement au Nunavik. Ce petit groupe, principalement rattaché à l'Université Laval (Québec), constitua le noyau de l'association Inuksiutiit Katimajit, créée en 1974, qui se donna pour mission à la fois d'entreprendre des recherches scientifiques sur la langue, la culture et les sociétés inuit, mais également de diffuser les connaissances produites au bénéfice de la communauté universitaire et des Inuit eux-mêmes. La production de la recherche était évidemment à la base de la mission de l'association, mais l'importance fut donnée dès le départ à la participation active des Inuit dans la production de ces données et à la diffusion de ces données auprès des Inuit, dans le but

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de «renforcer leur identité et d'appuyer leurs revendications économiques et territoriales»¹. La recherche participative, la co-construction des données et la diffusion des connaissances étaient ainsi, dès les années 1970, des pratiques ancrées dans les Études inuit.

L'association Inuksiutiit Katimajit organisa un certain nombre d'activités au cours des décennies suivantes, conduisant à la structuration progressive d'un réseau international de chercheurs s'intéressant aux sociétés inuit. Le premier numéro de la revue *Études Inuit Studies* fut publié en 1977 et la revue continua la publication de numéros contenant des articles en français, en anglais et en inuktitut depuis ce temps. Dès ses débuts, la revue avait à l'esprit «le souci de l'intérêt des Inuit eux-mêmes en mettant à leur disposition des matériaux qu'ils pourront utiliser en fonction de leurs propres préoccupations»². Ainsi, l'article que Bernard Saladin d'Anglure proposa pour le premier numéro de la revue intégrait une transcription en inuktitut des réminiscences intra-utérines d'Iqallijuq, une Aînée d'Igloodik, ainsi que plusieurs dessins de Leah Idlauq d'Argencourt.

Le premier Congrès des Études inuit fut, quant à lui, organisé à Québec en 1978 et réunit une soixantaine de participants provenant de plusieurs universités nord-américaines, des représentants d'organisations gouvernementales et inuit. Depuis, 22 congrès furent tenus principalement au Canada, mais aussi aux États-Unis, au Kalaallit Nunaat et en Europe. La nature même de ces congrès se transforma avec les décennies, passant de regroupements d'universitaires surtout nord-américains intéressés par les Études inuit dans les années 1980 à des rencontres scientifiques internationales dans les années 1990 et 2000, incluant de plus en plus d'Inuit qui s'approprièrent ces espaces d'échanges. Le dernier congrès qui eut lieu à Winnipeg en 2022 fut organisé par Heather Igloliorte, une chercheuse inuk du Labrador alors professeure d'histoire de l'art à l'Université Concordia³, et rassemblait pour la première fois plus d'Inuit que de chercheurs non-Inuit.

Le legs de Bernard Saladin d'Anglure est également ethnographique et anthropologique. Au cours de sa carrière, il mit en œuvre de nombreux projets qui laissèrent des traces importantes. En 1968-1969, il mena, avec Louis-Jacques Dorais, une enquête de toponymie au Nunavik, transmise par la suite à la Commission de géographie du Québec qui couvrit alors les

1. Dorais Louis-Jacques et Saladin d'Anglure Bernard, 2023. *Inuksiutiit. Un demi-siècle d'études inuit*, Montréal: Imaginaire Nord, Association Inuksiutiit Katimajit, p. 19.

2. *Études Inuit Studies*, 1977. «Éditorial», *Études Inuit Studies*, 1: 3-4, p. 3.

3. Heather Igloliorte est désormais professeure à l'Université de Victoria en Colombie Britannique où elle est titulaire de la Canada Excellence Chair in Decolonial and Transformational Indigenous Art Practices.

cartes des régions nordiques de 700 toponymes inuit⁴. Toujours avec Louis-Jacques Dorais, il mena en 1969 une enquête dans les villages du Nunavik afin d'y recueillir les généalogies des principales familles; ce matériel fut ensuite remis à l'Institut culturel Avataq. Par ailleurs, Bernard Saladin d'Anglure mit au point une méthode de collecte de données très originale en distribuant des cahiers vierges à des Inuit du Nunavik dans lesquels ces derniers pouvaient consigner des informations, en inuktitut, sur des sujets les intéressant. Les auteurs les envoyaient ensuite à Louis-Jacques Dorais qui les rémunérait. L'été suivant, Bernard Saladin d'Anglure retournait au Nunavik avec ces cahiers et enregistrait les auteurs lisant leur texte, facilitant ainsi le travail de transcription. Entre 1966 et 1970, près de 90 écrivains-informateurs ont ainsi produit quelque 4000 pages de textes. De jeunes Inuit furent alors invités à l'Université Laval pour transcrire et traduire une partie de ce matériel, qui fut transféré également à l'Institut culturel Avataq dans les années 1980⁵. Notons enfin son travail de collaboration auprès de Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk, une Aînée de Kangiqsujuaq au Nunavik, qui permit la publication de *Sanaaq*⁶, premier roman inuit écrit en inuktitut syllabique, publié en 1984, puis traduit pour la première fois en français et publié en 2002.

Bernard Saladin d'Anglure passa également de nombreux étés à Igloodik au Nunavut, où il noua des liens privilégiés avec plusieurs Aînés, dont Rose Iqallijuq, qui lui partagèrent des récits. Plusieurs de ses contributions théoriques les plus importantes sont le résultat du travail mené auprès de ces personnes. À partir de ces récits oraux et de recherches complémentaires menées dans les textes savants, il proposa des analyses approfondies au sujet de l'enfantement, des rituels de la première fois, des alliances, de l'adoption et des relations de genre chez les Inuit, notamment. Dès 1985, il conceptualisa le «troisième sexe social» dans un article paru dans la revue *Anthropologie et sociétés* et il continua de peaufiner ce concept tout au long de sa carrière, allant jusqu'à mener, avec son épouse Françoise Morin, des analyses comparatives en Amazonie péruvienne, complexifiant ainsi la lecture anthropologique des rapports de genre. Son travail sur le chamanisme chez les Inuit en fut ainsi enrichi⁷. S'il était un écrivain prolifique – 116 publications savantes, 21 rapports de recherche, 17 livres et numéros

4. Dorais Louis-Jacques et Saladin d'Anglure Bernard, 2023. *Inuksiutiit. Un demi-siècle d'études inuit*, Montréal: Imaginaire Nord, Association Inuksiutiit Katimajit, p.11.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

6. La première édition en français a été publiée aux éditions Stanké, en 2002: Nappaaluk Mitiarjuk, 2002. *Sanaaq*. Montréal: Stanké. Une seconde édition est parue aux éditions Dépaysage, en 2022.

7. Morin Françoise, 2025, «Une anthropologie décalée, multi-située et engagée», Conférence donnée lors de la Table-ronde organisée à la mémoire de Bernard Saladin d'Anglure, Université Laval, 3 juin 2025.

thématiques de revues⁸ – ses textes constituent des contributions ethnographiques et théoriques importantes, approfondies par une bonne maîtrise de l'inuktitut, une attention accrue aux paroles de ses informateurs et une excellente pratique de sa propre discipline, l'anthropologie.

Outre son envergure théorique importante, le travail de Bernard Saladin d'Anglure fut marqué par sa dimension engagée. La volonté de valoriser la langue et la culture des Inuit, tout en rendant accessibles aux Inuit les données collectées est, comme nous l'avons vu, présente dès le début de sa pratique. Mais il a également soutenu, à sa façon, la défense de leurs droits en s'impliquant, notamment au niveau international puisqu'il a participé à partir de 1988, aux côtés de Françoise Morin, aux sessions de l'Instance permanente des Nations Unies sur les questions autochtones qui mena à l'élaboration de la *Déclaration des Nations Unies sur les droits des peuples autochtones*⁹.

La disparition de Bernard Saladin d'Anglure nous pousse à nous interroger sur l'avenir de la revue *Études Inuit Studies* et du Congrès des études inuit, qui vivent chacun à leurs façons des turbulences, signe des temps qui changent. Alors, qu'ils sont à la veille de fêter leurs 50 ans, nous réalisons l'ampleur de ce qu'ils ont apporté à la vie scientifique et également aux Inuit. Ils ont été les vecteurs par lesquels le réseau international des Études inuit s'est constitué. Mais ils ont également toujours défendu une façon de faire de la recherche qui privilégie la mise en valeur des voix inuit, de leur langue et de leur culture. L'arrivée de nombreux chercheurs inuit dans le milieu académique transformera au cours des prochaines années et décennies les Études inuit. Il leur appartiendra de redéfinir les contours, la mission et les instruments de ce réseau.

8. <https://www.ulaval.ca/notre-universite/prix-et-distinctions/emeritat/bernard-saladin-danglure>, consulté le 27 juin 2025.

9. Morin Françoise, 2025, «Une anthropologie décalée, multi-située et engagée», Conférence donnée lors de la Table-ronde organisée à la mémoire de Bernard Saladin d'Anglure, Université Laval, 3 juin 2025.

Editorial

Tribute to Bernard Saladin d'Anglure and Inuit Studies

Caroline Hervéⁱ

The journal *Études Inuit Studies* is at a turning point in its existence. Approaching a significant anniversary—it will be 50 years old in 2027—it continues to publish scientific articles, research notes, and other texts in a research context undergoing a major paradigm shift. The growing presence of Inuit in academia, their perspective of the way scientific knowledge is produced, and their interest in producing new knowledge about their own society, means that we need to rethink the ways in which research is produced, and the links between researchers and communities, Inuit and non-Inuit. In this context, the death of Bernard Saladin d'Anglure, one of the founders of the journal *Études Inuit Studies*, prompts us to question the origins of the international Inuit Studies network and its possible future. His death on February 13, 2025, in Toulouse, France, leaves a great void for all those close to him, his family, friends, and collaborators. But it also reveals something else: the extent of his academic legacy.

Bernard Saladin d'Anglure (along with Louis-Jacques Dorais) is the father of the international Inuit Studies network. In the 1960s, he gathered around him students and collaborators, both Inuit and non-Inuit, who undertook research in the Canadian Arctic, particularly in Nunavik. This small group, mainly attached to Université Laval (Québec), formed the core of the Inuksiutiit Katimajit association, founded in 1974, whose mission was not only to undertake scientific research on Inuit language, culture, and societies, but also to disseminate the knowledge produced to the academic community and to Inuit themselves. Although research was obviously at the heart of the association's mission, importance was given from the outset to the active participation of Inuit in the production of knowledge, and to the active dissemination of this data to Inuit, with the aim of “reinforcing their

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identity and supporting their economic and territorial claims.”¹ Participatory research, the co-construction of data, and the dissemination of knowledge were thus, as early as the 1970s, practices rooted in Inuit Studies.

The Inuksiutiit Katimajit association organized a number of activities over the following decades, leading to the gradual structuring of an international network of researchers interested in Inuit societies. The first issue of *Études Inuit Studies* was published in 1977, and the journal has continued to publish issues containing articles in French, English, and Inuktitut ever since. From the beginning, the journal had in mind “the interest of the Inuit themselves, by providing them with material they can use according to their own preoccupations.”² Bernard Saladin d’Anglure’s article for the journal’s first issue, for example, included an Inuktitut transcription of the intrauterine reminiscences of Iqallijuq, an Igloodik Elder, as well as several drawings by Leah Idlauq d’Argencourt.

The first Inuit Studies Conference was held in Québec City in 1978, bringing together some 60 participants from several North American universities, as well as representatives of government and Inuit organizations. Since then, 22 congresses have been held, mainly in Canada, but also in the United States, Kalaallit Nunaat, and Europe. The very nature of these congresses has changed over the decades, evolving from gatherings of mostly North American academics interested in Inuit Studies in the 1980s to international scientific meetings in the 1990s and 2000s and including more and more Inuit who have appropriated these forums for exchange. The last conference, held in Winnipeg in 2022, was organized by Heather Igloliorte, an Inuk researcher from Labrador who was then a professor of art history at Concordia, and for the first time brought together more Inuit than non-Inuit researchers.

Bernard Saladin d’Anglure’s legacy is also ethnographic and anthropological. Over the course of his career, he carried out a number of projects that have left their mark. In 1968-69, together with Louis-Jacques Dorais, he conducted a toponymy survey in Nunavik, which was subsequently transmitted to the Commission de géographie du Québec, who then covered the maps of the northern regions with 700 Inuit toponyms.³ Also with Louis-Jacques Dorais, in 1969 he conducted a survey of Nunavik villages to gather genealogies of the main families, material that was later donated to the Avataq Cultural Institute. Bernard Saladin d’Anglure also developed a highly original method of data collection, distributing notebooks to Nunavik Inuit

1. Dorais Louis-Jacques and Bernard Saladin d’Anglure. 2023. *Inuksiutiit. Un demi-siècle d’études inuit*. Montréal: Imaginaire Nord, Association Inuksiutiit Katimajit, p. 19.

2. *Études Inuit Studies*. 1977. «Éditorial.» *Études Inuit Studies* 1 (3-4), p. 3.

3. Dorais Louis-Jacques and Bernard Saladin d’Anglure. 2023. *Inuksiutiit. Un demi-siècle d’études inuit*. Montréal: Imaginaire Nord, Association Inuksiutiit Katimajit, p. 10.

in which they could record information, in Inuktitut, on subjects of interest to them. The authors then sent these to Louis-Jacques Dorais, who paid them in return. The following summer, Bernard Saladin d'Anglure would return to Nunavik with these notebooks and record the authors reading their texts, thus facilitating the subsequent transcription work. Between 1966 and 1970, some ninety writer-informers produced close to 4,000 pages of text. Young Inuit were then invited to Université Laval to transcribe and translate some of this material, which was also transferred to the Avataq Cultural Institute in the 1980s.⁴ Finally, his work with Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk, an Elder from Kangiqsujuaq in Nunavik, led to the publication of *Sanaaq*,⁵ the first Inuit novel written in syllabic Inuktitut, published in 1984 and first translated into English in 2014.

Bernard Saladin d'Anglure also spent many summers in Igloolik, Nunavut, where he forged close ties with many Elders including Rose Iqallijuq, who shared stories with him. Many of his most important theoretical contributions are the result of working with these people. Based on these oral histories and complementary research in scholarly texts, he proposed in-depth analyses of childbirth, first-time rituals, alliances, adoption, and gender relations among Inuit. As early as 1985, he conceptualized the “third social sex” in an article published in the journal *Anthropologie et sociétés*, and he continued to refine this concept throughout his career, going so far as to conduct, with his wife Françoise Morin, comparative analyses in the Peruvian Amazon, thus complicating the anthropological reading of gender relations. This also enriched his work on Inuit shamanism.⁶ While he was a prolific write —116 scholarly publications, 21 research reports, 17 books and thematic issues of journals⁷—his texts are important ethnographic and theoretical contributions, enhanced by a good command of Inuktitut, a close attention to the words of his informants and an excellent knowledge of his own discipline, anthropology.

In addition to its broad theoretical scope, Bernard Saladin d'Anglure's work is marked by its engaged dimension. As we have seen, his desire to promote Inuit language and culture and to make the data he collected accessible to them was present from the very start of his practice. But he has also supported, in his own way, the defense of their rights through his

4. Ibid., p. 11.

5. The first English edition was published by University of Manitoba Press in 2014: Nappaaluk Mitiarjuk. 2014. *Sanaaq*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

6. Morin Françoise. 2025. «Une anthropologie décalée, multi-située et engagée.» Lecture given at the Table-ronde organized in memory of Bernard Saladin d'Anglure, Université Laval, June 3, 2025.

7. <https://www.ulaval.ca/notre-universite/prix-et-distinctions/emeritat/bernard-saladin-danglure>. Accessed June 27, 2025.

involvement, including an international level, since he participated from 1988 alongside Françoise Morin in the sessions of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which led to the drafting of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.⁸

The death of Bernard Saladin d'Anglure prompts us to wonder about the future of the journal *Études Inuit Studies* and the Inuit Studies Congress, both of which are experiencing turbulence in their own ways, a sign of changing times. Now, on the eve of their 50th anniversary, we realize just how much they have contributed to scientific life, and to Inuit. They were the vectors through which the international network of Inuit Studies was formed. But they have also always defended a research approach that emphasizes the importance of Inuit voices, language, and culture. The arrival of many Inuit researchers in the academic world will transform Inuit Studies over the coming years and decades. It will be up to them to redefine the contours, mission, and instruments of this growing network.

8. Morin Françoise. 2025. «Une anthropologie décalée, multi-située et engagée.» Lecture given at the Table-ronde organized in memory of Bernard Saladin d'Anglure, Université Laval, June 3, 2025.

Introduction

Inuit uqausingitta nalliutijuksauningat isumagilugu

Imaginer le futur des langues inuit

Jaypetee Arnakakⁱ, Louis-Jacques Doraisⁱⁱ et Alana Johnsⁱⁱⁱ

En 2020, l'assemblée générale des Nations Unies « a proclamé la période comprise entre 2022 et 2032 Décennie internationale des langues autochtones (IDIL 2022-2032), afin d'attirer l'attention du monde entier sur la situation critique de nombreuses langues autochtones et de mobiliser les parties prenantes et les ressources pour leur préservation, leur revitalisation et leur promotion » (<https://www.unesco.org/fr/decades/indigenous-languages>). Afin de souligner cette initiative, *Études Inuit Studies* nous a invités à diriger un numéro thématique sur les « langues inuit », une expression à comprendre ici comme incluant toutes les formes de langage ancestral propres aux populations inuit et yupik, qu'il s'agisse des dialectes kalaallisut du Groenland, des langues yupik d'Alaska du sud-ouest et de l'extrême nord-est de la Tchoukotka russe, ou encore des nombreuses variétés d'inuktitut canadien et d'iñupiatun alaskien¹.

Imaginer le futur

Nous avons décidé qu'au lieu de traiter de « préservation » et de « revitalisation », comme la proclamation des Nations unies semblait nous y inviter, il serait plus positif, et plus proche du point de vue des communautés inuit et yupik d'aujourd'hui, de demander à nos collaborateurs pressentis d'exposer des pistes de réflexion et de décrire des initiatives concrètes facilitant la compréhension et la consolidation des langues inuit dans le futur immédiat. Nous envisageons des articles et des notes de recherche traitant de la situation sociale et culturelle actuelle de ces langues, plutôt que de

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1. Nous étions aussi ouverts à des propositions portant sur l'unangam tunuu des îles Aléoutiennes, mais personne n'a soumis d'article concernant cette langue.

phonologie, de grammaire et de lexicologie structurales, ou de méthodologies très techniques. On pouvait accepter des textes portant sur le changement langagier, la sémantique et la linguistique historique, pourvu qu'ils contribuent à une meilleure compréhension de la manière dont les Inuit interagissent avec la société contemporaine, à travers leur vision du monde et l'utilisation qu'ils font de la langue.

Dans la mesure du possible, les sujets présentés devaient refléter le point de vue des communautés inuit locales, plutôt que d'adopter une optique académique sans rapport avec les préoccupations autochtones. Pour y arriver, nous avons encouragé les locuteurs natifs à contribuer au numéro en tant qu'auteurs ou co-auteurs. Qui plus est, ceux qui le désiraient pouvaient soumettre des documents sonores et visuels présentant des opinions et témoignages locaux sur divers aspects des langues inuit.

À travers différents canaux, nous avons fait circuler parmi les chercheurs, professionnels et activistes intéressés par les questions langagières dans l'Inuit Nunangat une liste de sujets que nous considérons pertinents pour notre thème. Cette liste comprenait les suggestions suivantes :

1. Que se passe-t-il avec les dialectes locaux? La préservation des dialectes contribue-t-elle à soutenir la langue?
2. L'enseignement de la langue, y compris la didactique et les adultes en immersion.
3. Les politiques langagières locales et nationales.
4. La langue et les communautés: pourquoi certaines communautés préservent-elles leur langue plus que d'autres?
5. L'évolution de la langue telle qu'observée au niveau communautaire.
6. La traduction: est-elle vraiment utile de nos jours? Comment les traducteurs s'arrangent-ils avec les différences morphologiques et sémantiques entre les langues inuit et l'anglais, le danois, le français ou le russe?
7. La situation langagière: combien de locuteurs parlent les différentes langues inuit? Quels sont les taux de rétention langagière dans les différentes régions et pourquoi varient-ils?
8. Les stratégies locales et régionales pour soutenir et renforcer la langue, en particulier les formes de langage qui ne sont plus transmises.
9. Les tendances courantes dans les arts en langues inuit (par exemple, la musique, le théâtre, le cinéma, la littérature).

Ces suggestions couvraient un territoire très large et, naturellement, seules certaines d'entre elles ont donné lieu à la soumission de textes. Toutefois, comme nous le verrons maintenant, les huit documents faisant partie de la section thématique de ce numéro traitent de plusieurs des points énumérés ci-dessus, et ceci selon différentes perspectives disciplinaires, géographiques et épistémiques.

Les contributions au thème

Nous avons choisi d'ouvrir la section thématique avec une contribution assez originale, le «Kontakion for Mick Departed» [Kontakion pour Mick trépassé] de Iain MacDhômhnaill de Chlann Raghnaill, aussi connu comme John MacDonald of Clanranald, coordonnateur à la retraite du Centre de recherche d'Igloolik au Nunavut. C'est un poème plein de respect, quoique parfois humoristique, en mémoire de S.T. Mick Mallon (1933-2023), qui a joué un rôle majeur durant les années 1970 et 1980 dans plusieurs initiatives visant à valoriser l'inuktitut et, ainsi, mettre la table pour l'avènement des réalisations sociales et éducatives contemporaines impliquant la langue inuit au Canada². Le poème mentionne le travail de la Commission sur la langue inuit pour la réforme de l'orthographe, le développement parallèle d'une sphère de caractères pour machine à écrire Selectric d'IBM, qui permettait l'usage d'une police syllabique révisée, ainsi qu'une série de colloques pour interprètes et traducteurs visant à créer des néologismes (mots désignant des réalités nouvelles) en inuktitut.

Le «Kontakion» de MacDhômhnaill est suivi par une analyse englobante de l'impact linguistique du colonialisme dans l'Arctique canadien: «Protecting Inuit Language and Culture in Inuit Nunangat: Taking Agency to Decolonize Education» («Protéger la langue et la culture inuit dans l'Inuit Nunangat: Agir pour décoloniser l'éducation»). L'autrice Natasha MacDonald, une scientifique inuk du Nunavik qui enseigne à l'Université McGill, montre qu'afin de bloquer le changement linguistique et d'assurer le futur de l'inuktitut, il faut décoloniser l'ensemble du système d'éducation, par le biais d'une pédagogie culturellement responsable faisant appel à l'intervention active des Aînés.

Dans le texte suivant, «Education of Avanersuarmitut, the Northernmost people in Qaanaaq» («L'éducation des Avanersuarmitut, les gens les plus au nord, à Qaanaaq»), Naja Blytman Trondhjem, une professeure kalaaliq à l'Université de Copenhague, présente un exemple très bien documenté de certains problèmes langagiers causés par des programmes scolaires qui ne sont pas entièrement en prise avec la culture locale. À Qaanaaq, l'ancien district de Thule du Kalaallit Nunaat, le parler local, l'avanersuarmitut, diffère de façon marquée du kalaallisut officiel, la principale langue d'enseignement. Par conséquent, même si les résultats des écoliers aux examens scolaires nationaux sont généralement comparables à ceux observés ailleurs au Groenland, les jeunes réussissent moins bien en danois et en anglais. Ceci est lié au fait que le kalaallisut est leur deuxième langue. Qui

2. Voir la notice nécrologique de Mallon par D. Wilman dans *Études Inuit Studies* 47 (1-2): 471-475 (<https://doi.org/10.7202/1113404ar>).

plus est, quand ils migrent dans des communautés en dehors de leur région, ils ont du mal à trouver un emploi et subissent souvent de la discrimination et de la stigmatisation de la part des Groenlandais majoritaires.

Camilla Kleemann-Andersen, une professeure inuk d'Ilisimatusarfik – Université du Groenland, analyse une situation parallèle de stigmatisation fondée sur la langue dans son article «From Research to Memes: The Enduring Stereotypes of the Upernavimmiutut» («De la recherche aux mèmes: Les stéréotypes persistants de l'upernavimmiutut»). En centrant son propos sur les locuteurs du dialecte d'Upernavik au nord-ouest du Groenland et en adoptant une perspective sociolinguistique, l'auteure explique comment l'usage du kalaallisut comme seule langue officielle parlée et écrite au Kalaallit Nunaat est devenu un outil servant à stigmatiser les locuteurs d'autres parlers inuit et à exercer de la discrimination envers eux, plus particulièrement dans les médias publics et sociaux. Kleemann-Andersen conclut que la «colonialité», sans être du colonialisme au sens strict, existe toujours au Groenland, où le fait de préserver les structures de pouvoir opérant dans l'arène linguistique continue à contribuer à la stigmatisation des groupes marginalisés.

De manière plus encourageante, les trois textes qui suivent l'article de Kleemann-Andersen présentent des initiatives très concrètes visant à renforcer les langues inuit et à garantir leur futur. Virginia de la Chevrotière (Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue) et les membres du Groupe de développement du lexique d'Ivujivik-Puvirnituq («Récit d'une expérience pratique de développement collaboratif d'un lexique en éducation en inuktitut pour la formation enseignante au Nunavik») soulignent l'importance d'avoir mis sur pied une équipe de formateurs inuit et qallunaat travaillant en collaboration au développement d'un lexique en inuktitut, dans le domaine de la pédagogie. Cette initiative facilite la formation des enseignants locaux. Des enregistrements de témoignages émanant de participants à ce projet donnent plus de profondeur à l'article.

«Recording Regional Dialects in Labrador Inuttitut» («Enregistrement des dialectes régionaux en inuttitut du Labrador»), par Christine Nochasak (Gouvernement du Nunatsiavut), Alana Johns et Susana Bejar (toutes deux de l'Université de Toronto), rapporte une initiative des Inuit du Nunatsiavut, la collecte de matériaux audio documentant le parler inuttitut du Labrador en tant que langue maternelle, afin de renforcer la facilité de parole des locuteurs de niveau intermédiaire et avancé, y compris celle de bilingues réceptifs.

Dans un autre domaine, «Place Names Documentation as Community-Based Language Conservation» («Documentation des noms de lieux pour préserver la langue locale»), par Francisca Mall'u Demoski (Bristol Bay Native Corporation) et McKinley Alden (Bristol Bay Foundation), décrit le Bristol Bay Native Place Names Project (Projet sur les noms de lieux autochtones

dans la baie de Bristol). Le texte explique comment on a colligé les toponymes en langues yugtun (yup'ik), sugt'stun (alutiiq) et dena'ina (dènè) dans la région de la baie de Bristol en Alaska du sud-ouest. Dès leur publication en ligne, ces noms ont provoqué une réponse enthousiaste de la communauté: on les utilise maintenant de façon croissante dans la vie quotidienne, comme aussi à l'école, dans un enseignement de la langue ancré dans le territoire. Cette initiative constitue un bon exemple de revitalisation des langues autochtones menée par les Premiers Peuples d'Alaska, dans le but d'en faire bénéficier leurs communautés d'origine et de favoriser chez les générations futures la compréhension de leurs terres ancestrales par le biais de la langue.

Finalement, le dernier article de la section, «Perpétuer le vrai: de l'importance de l'exactitude dans la culture inuit contemporaine», par Jaypetee Arnakak (Inhabit Education), Louis-Jacques Dorais (Université Laval) et Alana Johns (Université de Toronto), est une réflexion sur le concept de vérité dans la langue et la culture des Inuit. Cette réflexion repose sur l'analyse sémantique des mots inuktitut exprimant le vrai et le non-vrai, surtout à travers la définition qu'en donnent les lexicographes inuit. Elle se base aussi sur l'étude des récits traditionnels, des productions culturelles plus récentes et de la spiritualité autochtone. Les auteurs en concluent qu'il existerait en inuktitut une tradition selon laquelle on doit rapporter les choses de façon exacte, et que celle-ci est encore forte chez les locuteurs modernes. Par conséquent, il semble que la préservation de cette tradition dans un contexte de multilinguisme croissant doit être considérée comme une question importante, en relation avec le futur de l'inuktitut et, probablement, des autres langues inuit.

Dans l'ensemble, la section thématique de ce numéro offre un aperçu, restreint il est vrai, sur divers aspects de l'utilisation du langage, ainsi que des préoccupations de la population à propos de la langue, dans l'Inuit Nunangat contemporain. Malgré ses limites, elle montre que la situation actuellement vécue par les locuteurs inuit révèle des aspects à la fois négatifs et positifs. Du côté négatif, des attitudes discriminatoires de type colonial envers les locuteurs de variétés minoritaires des langues inuit survivent dans certaines régions. Il faut espérer que ces attitudes s'amélioreront dès que la valeur intrinsèque de chaque forme de parler autochtone sera plus largement comprise. De façon plus positive cependant, des initiatives concrètes dans des domaines tels que l'éducation, la documentation ethnolinguistique (celle des noms de lieux par exemple) ou d'autres champs d'activité, comme aussi une compréhension croissante des causes du changement langagier, contribuent à réconcilier les gens avec leur parler ancestral. Tout ceci semble de bon augure pour un futur meilleur que celui auquel on aurait pu s'attendre il n'y a pas si longtemps encore.

En dernier lieu, mentionnons ici qu'on trouvera dans ce numéro deux autres articles portant sur la langue: «The Computerized Database of Labrador Inuttut: A Language Revitalization Technology Component», par Lawrence Smith, et «Classes verbales et changements de valence en inuktitut (Nunavik)», par Marc-Antoine Mahieu. Comme le contenu de ces articles ne correspond pas exactement à notre thème, ils ne sont pas inclus dans cette partie du numéro. Cependant, ils complètent agréablement ce que les textes de notre section ont à dire au sujet des langues inuit et de leur futur éventuel.

Introduction

Inuit uqausingitta nalliutijuksauningat isumagilugu Imagining the Future of Inuit Languages

Jaypetee Arnakakⁱ, Louis-Jacques Dorais,ⁱⁱ and Alana Johnsⁱⁱⁱ

In 2020, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the period between 2022 and 2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022-2032) to “draw global attention to the critical situation of many Indigenous languages and to mobilize stakeholders and resources for their preservation, revitalization, and promotion” (<https://www.unesco.org/en/decades/indigenous-languages>). To celebrate this initiative, *Études Inuit Studies* invited us to guest-edit a thematic issue on “the Inuit languages,” a topic to be understood here as including all forms of speech ancestral to the Inuit and Yupik peoples, from the Kalaallisut dialects of Greenland to the numerous varieties of Canadian Inuktut and Alaskan Iñupiatun, as well as to the Yupik languages of southwestern Alaska and easternmost Russian Chukotka.¹

Imagining the Future

We decided that instead of discussing issues of “preservation” and “revitalization,” as the UN proclamation appeared to suggest, it would be more positive and nearer to the current views of a majority of Inuit and Yupik communities to ask would-be contributors to relate concrete reflections and initiatives that pertain to understanding and strengthening the immediate future of the Inuit languages. We envisioned articles and research notes that would deal with topics relevant to current developments in the social and cultural status of these languages, rather than with structural phonology,

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1. Although Aleutian Unangam Tunuu was included in this topic, no paper related to that language was submitted.

grammar, and lexicology, or highly technical methodologies. Papers on language change, semantics, and historical linguistics could be included, provided that they contributed to a better understanding of how Inuit interact with contemporary society through their worldview and/or their use of language.

As much as possible, the topics submitted for discussion were to be presented from the perspective of local Inuit communities, rather than reflecting scholarly viewpoints detached from Indigenous concerns. To achieve this, native speakers were encouraged to contribute to the issue as authors or co-authors and, if the authors wished to do so, to provide recorded audio/video materials conveying local opinions and testimonies on various aspects of the Inuit languages.

A list of topics we considered relevant to our theme was thus circulated through various channels, among researchers, professionals, and activists concerned about language questions in Inuit Nunangat. The list included the following suggestions:

1. What is going on with local dialects? Does the preservation of dialects help support the language?
2. Language education, including teaching methods and adult immersion
3. Local and national language policies
4. Language and communities: Why is language preserved more in some communities and less in others?
5. Language evolution as observed at the community level
6. Translation: Is it really needed today? How do translators cope with the morphological and semantic differences between the Inuit languages and English, Danish, French, or Russian?
7. Status: How many people use the various Inuit languages? What are the rates of language preservation in different regions, and why do they vary?
8. Local and regional strategies to support and strengthen the language, in particular those forms of speech that are no longer transmitted
9. Current trends in Inuit-language arts (e.g., music, theatre, cinema, literature)

These suggestions covered a very wide range and of course, only some of them have made their way into the papers actually submitted. However, as we shall see, the eight texts appearing in the thematic section of this issue address several points enumerated above, and this from different disciplinary, geographical, and epistemic perspectives.

The Contributions

We chose to open the thematic section with a rather unusual contribution: “Kontaktion for Mick Departed” by Iain MacDhômhnaill de Chlann Raghnaill, a.k.a. John MacDonald of Clanranald, retired coordinator of the Igloodik (Nunavut) Research Centre. It is a respectful, though sometimes humorous poem in memory of S. T. Mick Mallon (1933–2023), who played a leading role in the 1970s and 1980s in several initiatives aimed at enhancing Inuktitut, thus setting the scene for contemporary social and educational efforts involving the Inuit language in Canada.² The poem mentions the work of the Inuit Language Commission on orthographic reform, the concurrent development of the IBM Selectric typewriter element to accommodate a revised syllabic font, and a series of interpreter-translator colloquia to devise Inuktitut neologisms (words for newly-introduced objects and concepts).

MacDhômhnaill’s “Kontaktion” is followed by a comprehensive analysis of the linguistic impact of colonialism in the Canadian Arctic: “Protecting Inuit Language and Culture in Inuit Nunangat: Taking Agency to Decolonize Education.” Author Natasha MacDonald, a Nunavik Inuk scholar teaching at McGill University, shows that in order to reverse language shift and ensure the future of Inuktitut, the entire education system needs to be decolonized by way of a culturally responsible pedagogy involving the active intervention of Elders.

In the following paper, “Education of Avangersuarmit, the Northernmost people in Qaanaaq,” Naja Blytman Trondhjem, a Kalaaliq professor at the University of Copenhagen, presents a well-documented example of some language problems caused by school curricula not entirely engaging with local culture. In Qaanaaq (the former Thule District of Kalaallit Nunaat), the local form of speech, Avangersuarmit, differs markedly from official Kalaallisut, the principal teaching medium. As a consequence, even if students achieve national exam scores that are generally comparable to those achieved elsewhere in Greenland, their exam results are lower in both Danish and English. This is related to the fact that Kalaallisut is their second language. In addition, when they move to communities outside their region, they have difficulty finding a job and are often discriminated against and stigmatized by majority Greenlanders.

A parallel situation of language-based stigmatization is discussed by Camilla Kleemann-Andersen, an Inuk teacher at Ilisimatusarfik University of Greenland, in her article entitled “From Research to Memes: The Enduring Stereotypes of the Upernavimmiut.” Focusing on the speakers of the Upernavik dialect of northwest Greenland and adopting a sociolinguistic perspective, she explains how the use of Kalaallisut as the only official spoken

2. See Mallon’s obituary by D. Wilman in *Études Inuit Studies* 47 (1-2): 471–475. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1113404ar>.

and written language in Kalaallit Nunaat becomes a tool to stigmatize speakers of other Inuit forms of speech and discriminate against them, particularly in public and social media. She concludes that coloniality, if not colonialism *stricto sensu*, still persists in Greenland, where maintaining the power structures in the linguistic arena continues to stigmatize marginalized groups.

On a more encouraging note, the three papers that follow Kleemann-Andersen's article present very concrete initiatives to strengthen Inuit languages and ensuring their future. Virginie de la Chevrotière (Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue) and the members of the Ivujivik-Puvirnituuq Lexicon Group ("Récit d'une expérience pratique de développement collaboratif d'un lexique en éducation en inuktitut pour la formation enseignante au Nunavik" [Narrative of a Practical Experience in the Collaborative Development of an Inuktitut Educational Lexicon for Teacher Training in Nunavik]) explain the importance of building a collaborative team of Inuit and Qallunaat instructors to develop an Inuktitut lexicon in the field of pedagogy. This facilitates the training of local teachers. Recordings of testimonies by participants in this initiative add depth to the article.

"Recording Regional Dialects in Labrador Inuttitut," by Christine Nochasak (Nunatsiavut Government), Alana Johns, and Susana Bejar (both, University of Toronto), tells about an initiative of the Nunatsiavut Inuit that led to the collection of audio materials documenting first language speech in Labrador Inuttitut to support the intermediate and advanced fluency of speakers, including that of receptive bilinguals.

In another domain, "Place Names Documentation as Community-Based Language Conservation," by Francisca Mall'u Demoski (Bristol Bay Native Corporation) and McKinley Alden (Bristol Bay Foundation), documents the Bristol Bay Native Place Names Project. The paper explains how place names in the Yugtun (Yup'ik), Sugt'stun (Alutiiq), and Dena'ina (Dene) languages were collected around the Bristol Bay area in southwestern Alaska. Once published online, these names received a remarkable response from the community, with their growing use in daily life and in land-based language education in schools. This initiative is presented as an example of Indigenous language revitalization that is driven by Alaska Native people for the benefit of their home communities and for fostering future generations' understanding of their ancestral lands through language.

Finally, the last article in the section, "Perpétuer le vrai: de l'importance de l'exactitude dans la culture inuit contemporaine" [Continuing truth: On the importance of oral accuracy in contemporary Inuit culture], by Jaypetee Arnakak (Inhabit Education), Louis-Jacques Dorais (Université Laval), and Alana Johns (University of Toronto), is a reflection on the concept of truth in Inuit language and culture. Based on the semantic analysis of Inuktitut words dealing with truth and lying, mostly through their definition by Inuit

lexicographers, as well as on an examination of traditional tales, newer cultural products, and native spirituality, this paper concludes that there exists in Inuktitut a tradition of accurate report, still strong among modern speakers. Therefore, preserving this tradition in the midst of ever-growing multilingualism appears to be an important issue to discuss regarding the future of Inuktitut—and probably that of the other Inuit languages.

Overall, the thematic section of the present issue offers a glimpse, admittedly limited, of various aspects of language use and concerns about language in contemporary Inuit Nunangat. Despite its limitations, it shows that the present situation of Inuit speakers discloses both negative and positive aspects. On the negative side, colonial-type discriminating attitudes toward speakers of minority varieties of Inuit languages are still evidenced in some areas. It is hoped that these attitudes will improve as soon as the intrinsic value of each and every form of Indigenous speech becomes more widely understood. More positively, however, concrete initiatives in the fields of education and ethnolinguistic documentation (e.g., that of place names), as well as a growing understanding of the causes of language shift, help contribute to reconcile people with their ancestral speech. This augurs well for a better future than what could have been expected not so long ago.

Finally, readers will also find in this issue two more articles dealing with language: “The Computerized Database of Labrador Inuttut: A Language Revitalization Technology Component,” by Lawrence Smith, and “Classes verbales et changements de valence en inuktitut (Nunavik),” [Verb Class and Valency Change in Inuktitut (Nunavik)] by Marc-Antoine Mahieu. As these texts did not exactly fit with our proposed theme, they were not included in the present section, however, they do complement nicely what contributors to the section have to say about the Inuit languages and their possible future.

Kontakion for Mick Departed¹

Iain MacDhômhnaiill de Chlann Raghnaillⁱ

In this piece, John MacDonald offers humorous reflections on his long-time friend and colleague, S.T. “Mick” Mallon, evoking, in particular, their first meeting, and their subsequent shared involvement in several initiatives in the 1970s and ‘80s aimed at enhancing Inuktitut. The projects touched on here include the work of the Inuit Language Commission on orthographic reform, the concurrent development of the IBM “Selectric” typewriter element to accommodate a revised syllabic font (Figures 1 and 2); and finally—in response to the needs of translators—a series of colloquia to devise Inuktitut neologisms for English terms in medicine, law, non-renewable resource development, and weights and measures. For more information on Mick Mallon, the reader is directed to his obituary published in a previous issue of *Études Inuit Studies*.²

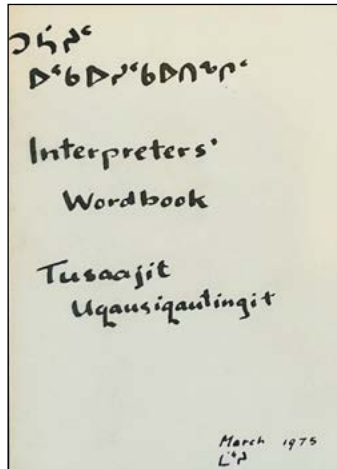


Figure 1. A hand-written interpreter's manual by Mick Mallon.

i. Author of *The Arctic Sky—Exploring the Inuit Universe*. jrmd1822@gmail.com

1. A *Kontakion* is a lengthy hymn in the Byzantine liturgical tradition. I drew the title of this faux-elegy from the South African writer and anti-apartheid activist Alan Paton's 1969 book *Kontakion for You Departed*, a poetic prose work written on the death of his wife.

2. Wilman, D., 2023. "Mick Mallon (1933–2023)," *Études Inuit Studies*, 47(1-2) : 471–475. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1113404ar>.

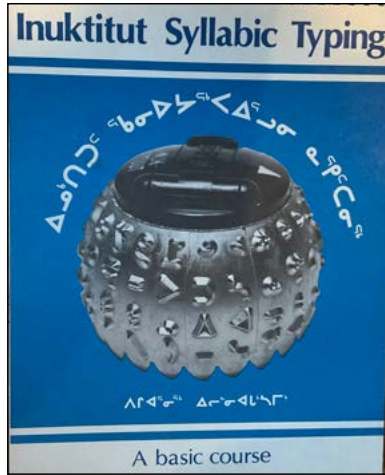


Figure 2. Selectric’ sphere typewriter in standardized syllabic characters (soon replaced by the first desktop computers).

Ah, Ittukuluk!³
 Were you with us still
 Some pages of this Journal
 would you fill
 with discourse lively—
 Something, say, on Inuktitut’s exclamatory?
 Or discourse wise on differing phonology?
 But no, alas—Aitaaq!⁴
 You left a void impossible to supplant
 Your brogue-tongued voice as silent now
 as the voiceless consonant!

While memory of you still lingers bright
 My pen to paper I’ll bring to write
 Some annals of your time (and mine)
 an elegy of sorts, poor heartfelt lays,
 not like the *Lycidas* of your Cambridge days.⁵
 (Do I sense John Milton, that poet sage
 spinning astonished in his grave?)
 No matter: I’ll give it of my best

3. Ittukuluk, meaning “little old man”, in this case an endearing nickname applied to Mick in his later years. He was also known as *Pisusuuq*, a reference to his love of walking.

4. An exclamatory expression of regret.

5. *Lycidas*: an elegy written in 1637 by the English poet John Milton, in memory of his friend, Edward King. Mick, having studied English literature at Cambridge University would certainly have known this poem.

I write this, at the Editors' kind behest!
These memories of you,
bright—though some
time-faded with a settled hue.

But first, dear reader, abide a while,
I beg a caveat on form and style
(of which I harbour no pretense)
There'll be rhyming couplets everywhere
Accidental pentameters here and there,
Iambic, trochaic, or otherwise,
all construed to interest or surprise
and yet inform,
singing Mick as we move along.

A word 'o the auld Scot's dialect
I'll now and then employ for reasons wholly rhythmic—
a tongue well known in Ireland and tae Mick.
Besides, us Scots and Irish are a' the same
Celts alike with but a different name,
Our fleeting joys sustained by tragedy
as William Butler Yeats was sadly
wont to say.⁶
But that's a story for another day.

So, where to begin?
I can't recall what happenstance
first brought me to your door.
'Tis five long decades past, or more,
since "*we were first acquaint
when your locks were like the raven's
and your bonnie brow was brent*"⁷

It was for sure in greater Montréal,
some suburb green and fair,
Lachine, I know it wasn't,
so it must have been Pointe Claire.
What brought me there I now know not
A mutual friend's suggestion, I should've thought.
For after all, your legend went before you, did it not?

6. "Being Irish, he had an abiding sense of tragedy which sustained him through temporary periods of joy". A quote which is widely, perhaps erroneously, attributed to the poet William Butler Yeats.

7. From the Robert Burns poem *John Anderson my Joe*.

Odd, is it not
how lifelong friendships oft begin?
Some seared in memory, others vague and dim.
Though 'tis not their beginning
nor their end, that matters keen
But the years of joy and pleasure in between,
re-kindled bright again at every meeting
though the time prescribed may well be fleeting.

But back to Pointe Claire, to begin anew.
There you languished with Cynthia,
and Matthew too,
in limbo,
all just back from Borneo⁸,
leaving Sarawak's ex-pat set
to its tropical climes, steaming and wet.
Readying yourselves for another posting:
North-bound to Kangiq&iniq
(Of climes antithetical to Borneo's roasting!)

And that's the only detail that comes tae mind—
At least nae ither canna find o'oor first meeting.
Except to say we hit it off in style
Twa carefree Celts in happy exile,
casting our lots—and so much more—
on Canada's wide and promising shore.
Frae shamrocked-Ireland you, and me frae Scotland,
purple-heathered,
promptly by kindred-bond, fast-tethered.
Sharing our share o' the gift o' the gab
A lively discourse we surely had!

Vividly I recall that ready smile of yours,
as we yarned away for hours and hours
that interjectory beat of yours
(I'm sure we all recall):
the exclamatory "Yes!", "Yes!", "Yes!"
regular, rhythmic as a song,
urging your interlocutor along.

8. At the time I first met him in 1968, Mick, with his first wife Cynthia and their young son, Matthew, had recently returned from Sarawak, where Mick had taught at a teacher's college.

You'll remember well the Language Commission?⁹
 Jose Kusugak's great driving ambition
 When written Inuktitut then all askew
 he sought reforms, both bold and new,
 and you with colleagues, ably bright
 went to work with deep insight,
 brought skills linguistic to the task.
 But what did it all achieve, one well may ask?
 "Much" should the honest answer be:
 For one, a sensible standard orthography for all to see,
 joining scrips Roman and syllabic
 in elegant equivalency,
 if not in holy matrimony!

Your fellow linguists thought- and fought—
 in equal measure, all masked as pleasure,
 disputing this and that
 arguing points arcane like hell:
 an "H" for borrowings, like (*H*)arry or (*H*)otel?
 The errant "R", the geminate "L"
 But none so fiercely fought (and that's indicative)
 as the glorious voiceless lateral fricative—
 which the Welsh and Irish utter well—
 the Scots, too – they have the knack,
 to get their agile, ropey tongues
 around the euphonious *Ak&unnaaq*.¹⁰

Wistfully, poignantly, looking back
 great years they were — too few —
 of learning from the stalwarts,
 (all of them now, alas, with you!):
 Mark Kalluak mild, sagacious.

9. On the initiative of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC), the Inuit Language Commission was established in 1973 to address a number of issues pertaining to the future of Inuktitut, in particular orthography. Jose Kusugak was the Commission's director. Six commissioners were appointed, collectively representing the major Inuktitut "dialect regions" across the North. In 1976 a standardized orthography was ratified, bringing orthographic order to written Inuktitut and establishing equivalency between the syllabic and Roman forms. In 1978 the Inuit Cultural Institute published a summary report on the Commission's work (*Ajurnarmat*, Summer 1978).

10. Inuktitut for "thong, rope." It harbours the voiceless lateral fricative that can be rendered either by an ampersand or a stroked L.

Robert Petersen,
Diffident, perspicacious
Abe Okpik, playful, full of fun,
And the gentle-spoken Rose Jeddore
from ‘Q’-less Labrador.^{11, 12}

Jose’s Commission had progeny a-few;
for the record here I’ll name but two:
The first, the IBM “Selectric Ball”
(Is it even remembered these days at all?)
‘Twas a state-of-the-art invention,
heralded wide abroad by hype,
to give syllabics a thoroughly modern type
on a typewriter fit for purpose.

IBM to the occasion rose
The “Ball” delivered in (late) due course,
(its bright sphere duly encrusted
with syllabics new and trusted).
‘twas promptly dubbed by Inuit “*IIT*”,
because it resembled an eye, you see.
Welcomed by typists far and wide
Olivetti and Remington it pushed aside:¹³
with technical skills and fancy play.
IBM had slyly won the day.

But a victory short-lived it was,
simply because,
computers came along:
with better fonts to flaunt
and poof!
the Selectric
“Ball” was gone!

-
11. Mark Kalluak, teacher, author, and journalist from Arviat, though not formally part of the Commission, thought deeply about orthography and contributed much to the Commission’s deliberations. Abe Okpik, Robert Petersen, and Rose Jeddore were members of the Commission’s Technical Orthography Committee. Other members included Jose Kusugak, Aipili Qumaluk, S. T. (Mick) Mallon, and Louis-Jacques Dorais.
 12. A reference to the Labrador’s orthography lacking a “q” to represent the voiceless uvular stop, using instead the upper case “k” (after Theodor Bourquin).
 13. Until the advent of the IBM Selectric, earlier syllabic typewriters had been made by Remington and Olivetti.

“Yes!”, Yes!”
I hear you say
“but don’t forget these conferences,
about words, back in the day,
the pains we took to render in Inuktitut
these English terms obscure”.
Of course, I recall them well,
and now will something of them tell.

They were an initiative brave — indeed a vision
to hammer out neologism after neologism
for any deserving English-ism:
Medicine, Mining and *Measures* come to mind.
Equivalents a-plenty we had to find.
In truth, an over-abundance on our plate.
And let’s not forget the *Law*
awash with terms, all Latinate:
mens rea, habeas corpus, actus reus —
etcetera, etcetera
too many to enumerate!

These wordy meetings, many come to mind, indeed,
When Bernie Imaruittuq took the lead,¹⁴
chairing most - a congenial unobtrusive host,
she was, weighing thoughtfully each suggestion,
though most were purely speculation.

One such conference stands out much:
Canada’s Metric Commission¹⁵
forking out some twenty-thousand bucks
gathering us all in Ottawa, our heads together put
to render measures metric in Inuktitut.
A day, or was it more, we struggled, strived
to reach a solution brilliant, nicely devised:
a metre would be a “*mita*”,
“*mitaralaaq*” a centimetre
Our heads got giddy, light with all the fun
disposing of the metrics thus,
even the metric tonne!

14. Bernadette Imaruittuq, an experienced translator from Iglulik, served as chairperson for the periodical “word conferences” sponsored by the then Department of Indian and Northern affairs.

15. The Metric Commission (1971–1985) was established to oversee Canada’s move from the Imperial system of weights and measures to the metric standard.

And all of benefit scant to the great white North
Where distance back and forth upon the land
in restful *siniks* measured
and shorter lengths the splaying of a hand.¹⁶

Ah, Mick, how the memories inundate the mind!
But fifty years o' recollection
cannot be confined in these few stanzas questionable,
of which I'm barely able,

And so, to my last remembrance of you,
I recollect with poignancy sincere:
'Twas in Victoria in the fall, fittingly autumnal,
With an old friend in trawl.
A care home bright, and well-appointed
the staff devoted, completely in your thrall.
They came from foreign climes,
they did, mostly young and feminine,
each with a different language
which you eagerly engaged, learning a phrase —
a word, or two— to send
them laughing happily on their way.
Your love of language fast-lasting to the end.

Happy enough you seemed
to treat encroaching dementia
as merely inconvenient
something to cleverly circumvent
when blocking recollection
of a word, or name.
It was a challenge all the same
which you endured with humour and with grace —
no matter the odd word or name displaced!

Three days full we had of reminiscing
swapping yarns oft told before
of colleagues and of friends, some sadly missing,
and others who we'd see no more.
No words of rancour were ever spoken:
a token certain of your gentle soul.

16. A reference to Inuit traditional conventions of measuring. Journeys were reckoned in terms of the number of “sleeps” taken; and lengths used in sewing garments, for instance, were measured by various combinations of the fingers and hand.

So, Mick, my fiere
in gratitude deep
for friendship long and dear,
this sma' kontakion for you I've sung,
from strands of memory fondly sprung
that the whole wide world might know and hear:
Like Milton's *Lycidas*,
you left no peer!

Protecting Inuit Language and Culture in Inuit Nunangat: Taking Agency to Decolonize Education

Natasha Ita MacDonaldⁱ

ABSTRACT

Decolonizing education is crucial for Inuit communities, given the enduring impact of Canadian government policies on our language and culture through colonization. In a globalized world, Inuit must take action to reverse language loss and language shift. This examination provides Inuit insights of Inuit colonization context for education leaders in Inuit Nunangat and beyond. It underscores the far-reaching effects of colonialism on education and the urgent need to address resulting educational and socioeconomic disparities. This commentary outlines strategies for decolonizing education systems, focuses on revitalizing and preserving language and culture, and shares examples of how some communities have already begun the process. Inuit language and culture can achieve vitality when interwoven with Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (traditional Inuit knowledge), traditional activities, and land-based practices. Schools can facilitate this by implementing culturally responsive pedagogy and the inclusion of Elders, ensuring a holistic approach to education.

KEYWORDS

Culture, decolonization, Inuit Nunangat, Inuit, language maintenance, language revitalization

RÉSUMÉ

**Protéger la langue et la culture inuit dans l'Inuit Nunangat:
Agir pour décoloniser l'éducation**

La décolonisation de l'éducation est cruciale pour les communautés inuit, compte tenu de l'impact durable des politiques du gouvernement canadien sur notre langue et notre culture par le biais de la colonisation. Dans un monde globalisé, les Inuit doivent prendre des mesures pour inverser la disparition et les changements de leur langue. Cette étude présente le contexte de la colonisation inuit aux responsables de l'éducation de l'Inuit Nunangat et d'ailleurs. Elle souligne les effets considérables du colonialisme sur l'éducation et la nécessité urgente de remédier aux disparités éducatives et socio-économiques qui en résultent. Cet article propose des stratégies de décolonisation des systèmes éducatifs, en mettant l'accent sur la revitalisation et la préservation de la langue et de la culture, et donne des exemples de la manière

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dont certaines communautés ont déjà entamé ce processus. La langue et la culture inuit peuvent retrouver leur vitalité lorsqu'elles sont imbriquées dans l'Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (savoirs traditionnels inuit), les activités traditionnelles et les pratiques liées au territoire. Les écoles peuvent faciliter ce processus en mettant en œuvre une pédagogie adaptée à la culture et en intégrant les Aînés, afin de garantir une approche holistique de l'éducation.

MOTS-CLÉS

Culture, décolonisation, Inuit Nunangat, Inuit, préservation de la langue, revitalisation de la langue

Inuit in Canada have experienced an intensive societal shift in less than a century due to colonialistic undertakings by provincial, territorial, and federal governments, under the guise of modernization and assimilation. However, as Inuit have done for thousands of years, we have survived by adapting to any new situation. In Canada, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada calls for Indigenous communities to have agency over the protection of their languages and cultures.

Inuit need to decolonize education today because the attempts by the Canadian government to erase Inuit language and culture through colonial policies and practices like the residential schools can still be felt today. In a globalized world, where there is digital access to just about anything—and often in English—Inuit are increasingly concerned about language loss and shift and are working to change the tides.

As an Inuit researcher, having grown up in both my mother's Inuit world and my father's European-Canadian world, my research focuses on measures to decolonize language learning in Inuit communities. In this commentary, as part of Indigenous research methodology as outlined by Kovach (2016) and Wilson (2008), due to my relational accountability as an Inuk, I present my perspectives as I examine the colonial subjugation that plagued my northern homeland and how Inuit can decolonize the education systems brought into our regions.

In this paper, the terms “Qallunaat” and “Southern” (as opposed to the more commonly used term Western in academia) will refer to non-Inuit, usually white, people and their worldviews coming from outside of Inuit Nunangat. Inuit frequently use these terms to situate our worldview and geolocation.

Context

Inuit Nunangat: Geographic and Linguistic Diversity

There are four Inuit regions across the vast expanse of Inuit Nunangat, and our culture and language vary across a spectrum. Nunatsiavut is located in northern Labrador, Nunavik in northern Québec, Nunavut in the centre, and Inuvialuit in western Canada. Inuktitut is the umbrella term used to denote the different dialects of the language spoken by Inuit (Figure 1), which are not necessarily mutually intelligible. Across our communities and regions, the number of mother-tongue speakers also differs for reasons I later outline in this commentary. The two central regions, Nunavik and Nunavut, have a higher percentage of Inuktitut speakers, with about 90% and 99%, respectively, while Nunatsiavut and the Inuvialuit region on the two coasts have approximately 21% to 22% mother-tongue speakers (Statistics Canada 2017). Despite the differences, the fact remains that colonialism in the form of governmental policies and practices has impacted all Inuit in Canada.



Figure 1. Dialects of Inuktitut spoken in Inuit Nunangat. Source: From What is Inuktitut? by Inuktitut Tusaalanga, n.d. (<https://tusaalanga.ca/about-Inuktitut>)

Global Indigenous Language Crisis

The United Nations declared 2022–2032 the International Decade of Indigenous Languages as a measure to bring attention to the plight of language loss incurred in Indigenous communities worldwide. They estimate that half of the world's oral languages will die off or be in danger by the end

of this century and that most of these are Indigenous languages (United Nations, n.d.). The import of this is daunting, considering language reflects one's culture, identity, and worldview (Özdemir 2017; United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) n.d.).

Colonial Interference in Traditional Learning

Indigenous languages worldwide have oral systems that echo traditional knowledge to pass down to the next generations (Wilson 2018). This is also true for Inuit. Annahatak and Koperqualuk, Inuit researchers from Nunavik, have written about language and culture preservation. In Annahatak (2014), the author describes, through her own experiences, how Inuit were traditionally raised prior to the interference of colonizers. She shares that Inuit “were raised, cared for, guided, and coached not just by our parents but also by our whole extended families and our camp Elders. We learned by participating in the daily activities of our families” (p. 25). Inuit knowledge had been delivered through traditional storytelling and singing, making language a matter of survival in the Arctic (Alexander 2011). Annahatak (2014) explains that once colonizers established schools and other systems, disruption began in the very fabric of Inuit society.

Lisa Koperqualuk, former president of the Canadian chapter of the International Circumpolar Conference, interviewed Elders on the inter-generational transmission of Inuit culture. One of the Elders expressed his concern that future generations would not perform traditional Inuit activities (Koperqualuk 2009). This reality would be concerning, as Inuit have survived millennia by adapting and incorporating Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit (IQ), Inuit traditional knowledge (Alexander 2009) that embodies principles of inclusivity, service, consensus building, skills through practice, collaboration, and resourcefulness (ITK 2011; McGregor 2012).

Though colonialism first arrived in Nunavik in the late 1800s, rapid changes to Inuit life occurred during the span of the last 70 years. Inuit have gone from an independent society with a solid foundation of our own language and culture to living in a world with Southern modernity while endeavouring to maintain who we have always been.

Inuit-Led Decolonial Measures

According to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, “Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their languages, oral traditions, writing systems and literatures” (UNPFII, n.d.). Meanwhile, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) more succinctly delineated this right under Call 14 section four, stating that “the preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities” (TRC 2015a, 2). Changing the course

of the loss or shift of language and culture then necessitates that Inuit come together to decolonize the systems of Southern modernity in our communities (Motha 2006), which includes the school system. Inuit can achieve this by taking measures into our own hands, that is, redesigning the systems to meet our needs: Inuit can protect and revitalize the tradition of handing down language, culture, and IQ in our communities (Wilson 2018).

The aim of this study is to provide leaders at all levels in education in Inuit and other Indigenous communities with an overview of the impacts of colonialism on education. To understand why these efforts are necessary, I outline the historical and current impacts of Canadian government policies and practices on Inuit language and culture.

Moving forward, it is essential to understand the temporal and geographical contexts of the four Inuit regions in Inuit Nunangat. The current Nunavut region was part of the Northwest Territories until 1999, when it separated and became a self-governed territory. This geographical change is important to note when the literature refers to Inuit in the Northwest Territories before 1999. The Inuvialuit Settlement Region, which will be referred to as the Inuvialuit Region for simplicity, currently covers the northern tip of the Yukon Territory and the entirety of the Northwest Territories; however, all current Inuit settlements are in the current Northwest Territories. Nunavik is in northern Québec but is currently not self-governed. Nunatsiavut is in northern Newfoundland and Labrador, a British colony until 1949 when it joined Canada.

Methodology

For this study, I adopted the Indigenous Literature Re-view Methodology (ILRM) as outlined by Rogers (2023) to guide this examination. Grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, ILRM prioritizes relevance to community, relational accountability, and the respectful treatment of knowledge. Rather than relying on rigid inclusion criteria or privileging peer-reviewed sources, I included literature—both academic and grey—speaking directly to Inuit perspectives and realities. Given the limited scholarly work on my topic, I turned to reports, position papers, and policy documents produced by Inuit and other Indigenous organizations. Literature was excluded if it lacked cultural relevance, misrepresented Inuit and other Indigenous voices, presented colonial points of view, or approached the topic through a deficit lens.

To reflect the relational and cyclical nature of this methodology, I adapted a flexible structure in this article. The review findings are therefore presented thematically rather than chronologically or by frequency, and the discussion weaves these themes together with my own reflexive insights and standpoint as an Inuk. The conclusion returns to the key ideas that emerge and reflects on the responsibilities that come with engaging Inuit knowledge.

The following findings outline the themes that have tangibly impacted language and culture, specifically according to Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK 2014), Canada's national Inuit representative organization. They include colonialism (presented here as the early policies and practices), the institution of residential schools, the forced relocations of thousands of Inuit, and the Inuit dog slaughters (ITK 2016; Morgan 2017). These acts of colonialism have inflicted traumas on Inuit across our regions and are also linked as risk factors for suicide today in Inuit Nunangat.

Thematic Findings

Impacts of Early Colonial Policies and Practices

Each of the four regions in Inuit Nunangat has had varying histories with colonialism and governmental interventions. Since the late 1700s, the Moravians, Protestant missionaries from eastern Europe, settled eight missions in Nunatsiavut and were given de facto power over Inuit, their land, and any fur trading activity, even after Newfoundland and Labrador became a province. The Moravians taught in Inuktitut using Roman orthography but permitted no reflections of Inuit culture in their mission schools.

In the Inuvialuit region, the federal interest in the land primarily emerged during the Yukon gold rush in the late 1800s and the discovery of oil at Norman Wells around 1920. However, any interest generally excluded the Inuit population (TRC 2015b). Alongside the Inuit communities in Nunavik and Nunavut, Inuvialuit (people of the Inuvialuit region) have a history shaped by colonialism with the arrival of Christian missionaries and the fur trade through the British-owned Hudson Bay Company (HBC). Given the lack of interest from the Canadian federal, territorial, and provincial governments in the North, they relied on the missionaries and the HBC for any information concerning Inuit (Vick-Westgate 2002). Alexander (2009) illustrated that missionaries disallowed Inuit from writing or speaking the name Kiviuq, who was an Inuit shaman. It was not until after the Second World War and the onset of the Cold War that the Canadian government shifted its attention to the North (TRC 2015b; Vick-Westgate 2002), resulting in disastrous effects, as we will see in the following.

Impacts of Residential Schools on Language and Culture

In Inuit Nunangat, colonial education aimed at assimilating Inuit was carried out through a collaboration between Christian missionaries and the Canadian federal government. Their roles were intertwined and complicit in pursuing this shared objective, as shown in Figure 2 (ITK 2016; TRC 2015b). Before government-funded residential schools, the TRC (2015b) reports that a few church-funded residential schools run by missionaries were already

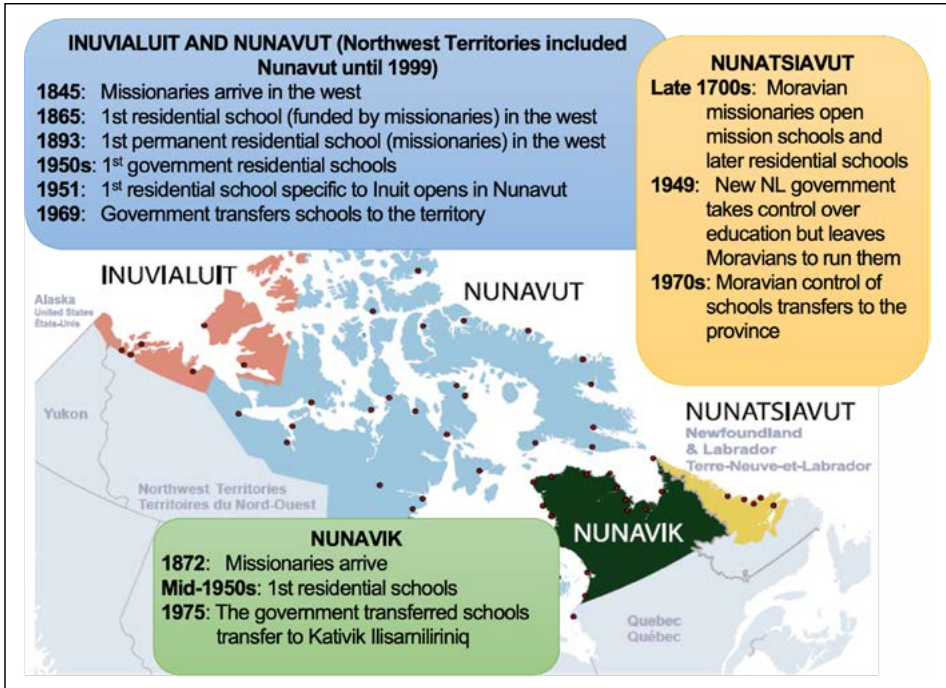


Figure 2. History of Missionary and Residential Schools in Canada's North.

operating. The first opened in 1865 in the southern part of the Northwest Territories, which is not part of Inuit Nunangat. Similarly, the Moravians in Labrador (which included Nunatsiavut) also operated residential schools in a few communities. These church-funded residential schools targeted the Indigenous populations, including Inuit, in surrounding areas of their schools.

The 1950s were tumultuous in Inuit Nunangat, and when residential schools were at the beginning of their end in First Nation and Métis communities in other parts of Canada, the federal government began its push in the North. According to ITK (2016), the first federally funded residential school specifically targeting Inuit opened in 1951 in Chesterfield Inlet, Nunavut (part of the Northwest Territories at the time), where some of my relatives from Nunavik were sent. The federal government used the same school model as they did in the South—despite being aware of the atrocities occurring in their other residential schools (TRC 2015b).

The federal government designed genocidal education policies and practices to erase Inuit culture and ways of being through colonization and assimilation (Lopez-Gopar 2007; McGregor 2018; Pirbhai-Illich and Martin 2019; Smith 1999). As more Inuit residential schools opened across Inuit Nunangat, children were taken from their families and homes and sent away to the schools at distances of sometimes thousands of kilometres (Grenoble 2018).

By 2001, approximately 25% of Inuit aged 35 or older had been sent to residential schools, meaning that a quarter of that population was likely harmed by physical and sexual abuse (ITK 2016). In these residential schools, Inuit were taught that our language, culture, and entire way of being were inferior to that of the Qallunaat who ran the schools (Grenoble 2018). This colonial differencing (Lopez-Gopar 2014) was a direct attempt to obliterate Inuit culture, language, and IQ (Pirbhai-Illich and Martin 2019).

The effects of these traumas inflicted on residential school survivors have continued from one generation to the next. As residential schools began much earlier in the western Arctic and Nunatsiavut, in some cases, there was more than one generation in a family who attended residential school (TRC 2015b).

Impacts of the Forced Relocations on Language and Culture

At the same time when residential schools were opening in the 1950s, the missionaries and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) forced Inuit to live in settlements using coercive pressure tactics as a measure of assimilation. For example, by this time, Inuit had begun to rely on federal Family Allowance cheques to purchase non-traditional food for their families; the missionaries and the RCMP threatened to withhold the Allowances if Inuit did not settle down (ITK 2016). Similarly, in Nunatsiavut in 1956 and 1959, the Moravians and provincial government ejected Inuit from two traditional communities without notice, forcing them into settlements and speeding up the assimilation process (ITK 2016).

Many Inuit were put into substandard housing, commonly known as matchbox houses in our communities, which were often overcrowded. Conditions in these houses led to the transmission of diseases and massive tuberculosis (TB) outbreaks that plagued the North. Into the 1960s, nearly half of all Inuit were sent to TB hospitals in the South, many of whom were children. The TB patients were separated from their families sometimes for years, and some never returned; their families were never informed why (ITK 2016).

A more widely known example of forced relocation occurred at the beginning of the 1950s when Inuit from a Nunavik community (some of whom were my relatives) and another from Nunavut were relocated much further north to the High Arctic and were left to fend for themselves. What was tragic about this situation was the assumption that Inuit could survive in any Arctic landscape. The land was harsher than any they had ever experienced, and hunting and gathering for food were a challenge as the animals and plant life were unfamiliar, thus requiring new skills they did not have. The federal government later issued an apology in Nunavik in 2010 for these forced High Arctic relocations, acknowledging the privation and anguish it caused. Inuit were viewed as one entity without diversity and individual human rights.

Impacts of the Dog Slaughters and Intergenerational Trauma on Language and Culture

Alongside the forced relocations and the residential schools in the 1950s, another form of colonial policy involved the RCMP, who slaughtered hundreds of Inuit sled dogs, including my grandfather's. These dogs were integral in Inuit families as they provided the fundamental means of transportation across thousands of kilometres during community migrations. They were an Inuit hunter's point of pride in being able to provide for their family and their community. Inuit were being forced into settlements through the murder of Inuit sled dogs to hasten assimilation—forever altering a traditional way of life. Though the RCMP claimed the killings were meant to prevent disease, the presiding judge in a 2010 Québec inquiry into the Nunavik dog slaughter reproached the federal and provincial governments for their heinous colonial actions (Brennan 2012).

The policies and practices of the federal government, through the residential schools, forced relocations, and dog slaughters, have thus destructively impacted the lives of Inuit for generations. The colonial view of Indigenous peoples, including Inuit, was often that of subhuman, uncivilized, and unworthy of concern (Smith 1999). Through colonial differentiation, Inuit were subjugated into adapting to living the Qallunaat way (Morgan 2017) at a very high cost to Inuit society. Consequently, in the first generation of Inuit in the 1970s who grew up in the settlements, suicide rates increased to levels that had not been seen before—and have continued to rise through subsequent generations (ITK 2016).

In ITK's 2016 National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy, they attribute current social and economic inequities to many of the federal policies and practices described in this commentary. As a result of years of intergenerational trauma (Alexander 2009), Inuit have been disproportionately disadvantaged compared to the rest of Canadians (Table 1). Social issues such as violence and substance abuse are plagues in our communities. Living in overcrowded housing results in disease and academic challenges due to a lack of space. Indeed, by 2016, Inuit fared far below the national average in educational attainment, food security, income, access to healthcare, life expectancy, and adequate housing.

We have seen that we cannot paint each region in Inuit Nunangat with the same brush, as each has had its own timeline of colonialism; however, despite the differences, the results are unfortunately similar. When it comes to language loss or language shift, there is a notable difference between the two coastal regions and the two central regions for reasons we have notified. Inuit in the Inuvialuit and Nunatsiavut regions were exposed to residential schools for much longer, thus language loss is currently more evident (Baker and Wigglesworth 2017), and language revitalization is needed.

Table 1. Social and Economic Inequality in Inuit Nunangat. Adapted with permission from the National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy

Social/Economic Inequality	Inuit Nunangat	All Canadians
Overcrowded homes	39%	4%
High school diploma	29%	85%
Do not have enough to eat	70%	8.3%
Median Income	\$17,778	\$77,683
Doctors per 100,000 people	30	119
Employed	45.6%	60.9%
Life expectancy	70.8	80.6

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For Nunavut and Nunavik, where most of their populations still speak Inuktitut, there is a genuine concern about a language shift toward English. The study by Tulloch and her colleagues (2009) on bilingualism in Nunavut clearly articulates the concern with language shift: “The economic and political weight of English combined with years of deliberate assimilation have led to a language shift whereby bilingual individuals and communities are gradually adopting the colonially imposed language (English) for more and more of their communication” (p. 135). Despite the social, economic, and linguistic impacts, many in Nunavik and Nunavut have survived while maintaining language, culture, and IQ.

Decolonizing Education to Protect Language and Culture

Until now, I have provided a detailed account of the colonial history and the adverse effects of government policies and practices in Inuit Nunangat on language and culture. Moving forward, I will outline the decolonial measures that Inuit are currently engaged in within each of the four regions in Inuit Nunangat. For Inuit, I propose a four-pronged process of decolonization (MacDonald 2023):

- Agency
- Resistance
- Re-appropriation
- Provincializing

By taking agency, Inuit are no longer objects of policies and practices but take their place as leaders in their own education programs and schools. Resistance involves questioning the status quo to know what requires redesigning in our schools and programs. Re-appropriation involves taking what is necessary to meet our educational needs instead of being subject to

external policies and practices. Finally, we need to provincialize the Southern worldview by repatriating it back to where it originates and recognize that it is just one of many worldviews. Provincializing, a term for recontextualizing coined by DeSouza (2006) downgrades the Southern worldview from a supposed universal truth and decentralizes it from our framework. By doing this, we can re-centralize our epistemology into education.

This examination is framed by the TRC's Calls to Action on language and education priorities which are:

1. Improving educational success
2. Reflecting culture in education
3. Protecting Inuktitut through revitalization and maintenance
4. Enabling Inuit to address our own needs

Through these four demands, Inuit communities are exercising their right to choose and define their own path forward—on their own terms. This approach is crucial, as solutions imposed from external sources seldom prove effective when addressing our unique challenges (ITK 2016).

When it comes to Inuit taking agency over the education provided in our communities, it can be a challenging process requiring a shift in our education programs. It involves rebalancing the power dynamics between Inuit and Qallunaat in our communities (Dunn and Gross 2016). Indeed, both Inuit and Qallunaat working in education in our communities may find the process of decolonization uncomfortable (Cupples and Glynn 2014), as it puts Inuit in the position of having to demand change and Qallunaat in the position of having to acknowledge that change is needed.

Decolonizing the Southern education system also involves ensuring that language and culture are centralized as the main goals of education, and the subjects are the conduit to achieving them. In our small, isolated communities with limited infrastructure, the school is often the central community meeting place where people gather for traditional feasts, play sports, and participate in other events. The school should be where community values and traditions are visibly reflected (Usborne et al. 2009). The community should feel that the school prioritizes Inuit culture and language.

Decolonizing education also involves redesigning the system to meet the needs of Inuit and other Indigenous peoples rather than forcing us to meet the needs of an education system (Smith 1999). It requires critical reflexivity on the part of Qallunaat educators to understand how they may be perpetuating coloniality through any potential biases that they may have and to recognize the imbalance of power that exists in Inuit communities (Stoffer 2017).

Improving Educational Success

To frame the four guiding Inuit priorities, it is important to note that different systems govern the education programs in each region in Inuit Nunangat (ITK 2011). The Northwest Territories manage education in the Inuvialuit region, while Nunavut has its own education department. In Nunavik, the Québec Province outlines the curriculum, but the Kativik Iisarniliriniq (KI; school board) has the authority to adapt it to the Inuit context. Then, in Nunatsiavut, which has been self-governed since 2005, their education falls under the NL province but through consultation with the Nunatsiavut Government (NG). Consequently, the level of action for cultural and linguistic maintenance and revitalization should be proportionally based on the level of need expressed by each region.

As an Inuk researcher, I propose that improving educational success for Inuit youth must start with Inuit reclaiming authority over our education systems and curricula. We cannot meaningfully discuss success without first defining it through an Inuit lens. In my view, academic success must reflect the holistic well-being of our youth, grounded in language, culture, and connection to land and community.

To achieve the four key priorities in the National Strategy on Education, Inuit must take agency over education to achieve better educational outcomes by focusing on culture and language in our education programs. Through culturally relevant pedagogy, land-based activities, and instruction in Inuktitut in our schools, we can increase the education attainment goals of our youth (ITK 2011; 2017). The idea of academic success is not to prepare Inuit to move outside their community but to prepare them for any opportunity we may choose, whether North or South (Alexander 2011).

Inuit students understand the value of our language and culture while recognizing the need for the Southern academic subjects taught in our schools to be able to maneuver between both worlds (Garakani 2016). With the increased challenges of financial, educational, social, and health success in Inuit Nunangat today, there is a need to raise the low educational success rates. This would enable Inuit students to be better prepared for post-secondary education (ITK 2011) while preserving and revitalizing their language and culture. These are challenges that most non-Indigenous students never face, and it becomes evident why significant disparities exist in terms of social and economic inequalities between Inuit Nunangat and the rest of Canada (see Appendix, Table 1).

Reflecting Culture in Education

Nearly 30 years ago, Betsy Annahatak, a retired educator from Nunavik, described the challenges Inuit face in the modern world to maintain the integrity of Inuit culture. Her narrative on the duality of worldviews in our communities still holds today: “There are the tensions related to Inuit values

versus institutional values, traditional activities versus current activities, obedience versus originality, Inuit worldview versus mainstream worldview, and modern cultural tools versus traditional knowledge” (Annahatak 1994, 13). Each of the four Inuit regions has prioritized the need for Inuit-run schools where culture, language, and IQ are integrated (ITK 2017). When Inuit lead the school boards, schools, and classrooms, we substantiate the credibility and value of education in our communities. Parents become more committed, which in turn contributes to better student engagement (Tulloch et al. 2016). Through greater Inuit leadership and knowledge integrated into curriculum and school policy development, IQ becomes vital to moving beyond colonial frameworks (McMillan 2015; Tester and Irniq 2008).

Originating from Nunavut, the principles of IQ, in simple terms, encompass inclusivity, service, consensus building, skills through practice, collaboration, and resourcefulness (ITK 2011; McGregor 2012). These cultural values provincialize the Southern worldview by centralizing our own traditional knowledge. IQ is fully integrated within the Government of Nunavut, which has guiding principles used in education across much of Inuit Nunangat (Igloliorte 2017; Stevenson 2014). The objective is to preserve and revitalize our culture, traditional values, ways of being, worldview, traditions, and language so that they may carry on intergenerationally (Koperqualuk 2009).

In Nunavut and Nunavik, school boards led by Inuit have incorporated the principles of IQ into some of their frameworks (Government of Nunavut 2007; Inspire Nunavik 2025). Parents in the Inuvialuit region and Nunatsiavut have expressed the need for a greater integration of Inuit culture in their schools; this, however, can be challenging since the province and territory oversee their education systems (Berger, Johnston, and Oskineegish 2016). Nonetheless, through the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and Nunatsiavut Government, the regional land-claim agreement holders, Inuktut language instruction and traditional activities are offered within their schools and communities (National Centre for Collaboration in Indigenous Education [NCCIE] 2020).

In all four regions, Inuit have consistently emphasized the importance of incorporating IQ into their education frameworks. No matter the level of integration, Inuit recognize that it is critical to resisting colonial systems and asserting agency. Educators can incorporate IQ into education by utilizing culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) to integrate culture into the curriculum. By adapting Southern educational content through CRP, educators can build on students’ existing knowledge and backgrounds while centring their worldviews (Morgan 2017; Wilson et al. 2018). The integration of CRP contributes to creating a culturally safe school environment where Inuit students are respected while equipping non-Inuit teachers with the necessary tools to support cultural revitalization (Stoffer 2017).

The inclusion of CRP supports one of the key priorities identified by Inuit in the National Strategy on Education, which is to have Inuit-centred and Inuit-developed teaching materials. Many textbooks in our schools are produced outside Inuit Nunangat; therefore, they often reflect the Southern world rather than Inuit reality. Students must see themselves represented in their education to establish authentic connections to their world. However, there are challenges associated with developing Inuit-specific teaching materials and pedagogy. This includes high costs, time-consuming processes, and the need for curriculum development expertise (ITK 2011; 2017).

Additionally, much of the existing material developed by Inuit extends only to the mid-elementary school levels (ITK 2011). We must make further progress in this area within schools in Inuit Nunangat. The work has already begun, and the materials that have been developed can be shared with schools across all regions.

One principle of IQ involves using land-based activities to teach Inuit traditions and immerse in Inuit culture. Across Inuit Nunangat, Inuit, to varying degrees, continue to practise traditional land-based activities such as hunting, fishing, and berry picking. In the Nunatsiavut and Inuvialuit regions, cultural revitalization is a priority. Efforts to bring youth out onto the land to revitalize culture have regenerated interest and pride in traditional land-based activities (Berger, Johnston, and Oskineegish 2016; Sawatsky et al. 2019). Culture is elevated when students can go out onto the land and learn from Elders and Inuit teachers. It thus becomes an integral part of education and enables students to make healthy connections to their community (Garakani 2016; Sawatsky et al. 2019; Stevenson 2014). Due to the isolation of our communities, the exorbitant cost of food often requires substance hunting and fishing to provide food for one's family. Unfortunately, many Inuit did not inherit these traditions because of the traumas caused by the residential schools, dog killings, and forced relocations. Re-introducing land-based traditional knowledge into education can bridge some communities' gaps while offering authentic opportunities for other communities to continue preserving their culture (Savard, Manuel, and Lin 2014).

Whether land-based activities or developing Inuit-centred curriculum and teaching materials, Inuit have continually identified the need to incorporate knowledge from our Elders. For millennia, Inuit have received their knowledge and skills from Elders through observation and practice—a fundamental principle of IQ. In a series of interviews on culture, Koperqualuk clearly illustrates the unmistakable value of incorporating Elders:

Traditional practices [...] such as storytelling, shamanism, respecting others, doing the right thing, dogsledding, seal hunting, Inuit travelling, survival skills, and the Inuktitut language [...] were central to the type of knowledge that Inuit elders wished to have passed on as common Inuit knowledge to the youth and future generations. For them, it could be a way of retaining Inuit culture and identity. (Koperqualuk 2009, 17)

As in many Indigenous communities, Elders are revered in Inuit culture as they are our traditional knowledge keepers. Integrating their teachings into education, whether in the classrooms or out on the land, Elders provide vital IQ. This integration inherently provincializes Southern education systems (Morgan 2017) by centralizing Inuit knowledge and traditions. Through Elders' teachings, young students make deep cultural connections by learning about their history and bringing it into their present lives. Passing down traditional knowledge places a value on culture worth revitalizing, preserving, and sustaining for future generations of strong and successful Inuit (Stevenson 2014).

Protecting Inuktut through Revitalization and Maintenance

In education, where Inuit are the leaders, a decolonial approach incorporates IQ to elevate Inuit language, culture, and worldviews (Tulloch et al. 2016; Wilson et al. 2018). In ITK's 2017 report on achieving educational success in Inuit Nunangat, Kativik Ilisarniliriniq is exemplified as the roadmap to follow. Under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement, Kativik can customize its programs, subjects, teaching materials, curriculum, school calendars, and courses to be grounded in culture and language (Corneau 2018). To address Inuit teacher capacity, they have an in-house Inuit teacher training program that partners with universities to provide accredited courses for teaching certificates and degrees. Inuit comprise the local education committees, the governing council of commissioners and the school board executive leadership, ensuring the presence of IQ and Inuktut.

As an Inuk researcher, I propose that protecting Inuktut requires that Inuit values and knowledge systems be not only included in education, but also made foundational. The integrity of our language is essential to our survival as a people.

Language Policies in the Regions

As we have seen, the utilization of Inuktut varies across the four Inuit regions, with Nunavik having 99% of its population speaking Inuktut, followed by 90% in Nunavut, 22% in the Inuvialuit region, and 21% in Nunatsiavut. Different provincial or territorial language policies govern each region. In Nunavut's 24 Inuit communities, Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun (both Inuktut dialects) are official languages alongside English and French. Prioritizing revitalization is crucial to preventing language loss and shift. Inuit have expressed the need to increase the usage of Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun throughout the territory, with IQ as the guiding framework (Tulloch et al. 2009).

In Nunavik's fourteen communities, the linguistic reality is complicated. The province's official language is French, and Inuit in Nunavik must maneuver through various services such as healthcare in their second or

third languages, French or English. Though Inuktitut is still a vital language in the region and spoken by most of the Inuit population, language shift is a concern as English or French is often the workplace language (Usborne et al. 2009). In some communities, it is now used more often in the home.

Three dialects of Inuktitut are recognized under the Northwest Territories Official Languages Act for the six communities in the Inuvialuit region. This Act acknowledges the significance of Indigenous languages within the territory (Grenoble 2018), including Inuktitut. The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation actively advocates preserving Inuktitut to prevent its loss. In the five communities of Nunatsiavut, English is the province's official language. Nevertheless, the Nunatsiavut government is committed to revitalizing Inuktitut.

Language in regional education

To stave off the language shift in Nunavik, Kativik Iisarniliriniq incorporates IQ as a framework, while language learning is provided through a modified form of bilingual education. Students are taught entirely in Inuktitut from kindergarten to grade three and gradually shift into the English or French second-language program (Taylor and Wright 2003). To keep Inuktitut strong, students continue to have certain classes in Inuktitut throughout the rest of their schooling. In a study conducted in Nunavik on the impact of this modified bilingual education program, Usborne et al. (2009) found that a stronger level of Inuktitut used in the early primary years predicts strong second language uptake, while Inuktitut continues to be maintained. When bilingual schools provide a culturally safe environment and foster the mother tongue, second-language learning is thus facilitated, and both languages are strengthened (Aylward 2009b; Canagarajah, 1999; Hill 2016; Usborne et al. 2009). However, we must be cautious and acknowledge that students are not simply learning a second or third language but also acquiring academic knowledge through these additional languages. This places additional burdens on their cognitive load, which has resulted in lags in academic achievement for many Inuit students (Corneau 2018).

Similarly, Nunavut offers bilingual education in Inuktitut and English. In 2007, the Department of Education mandated the inclusion of IQ within the curriculum for all school levels to strengthen bilingualism in both languages (Aylward 2009a; McGregor & McGregor 2016; McMillan 2015). Both Nunavik and Nunavut aim to achieve additive bilingualism, strengthening skills in both Inuktitut and the second language (Abele and Graham et al. 2011). Language revitalization and maintenance are therefore supported through IQ at all levels in Nunavut, from the parents to their government.

The linguistic situation is different in Nunatsiavut, where Inuktitut drastically shifted toward the colonizer's language—English, after the province mandated in 1949 that education be provided only in English—which is a

form of linguistic genocide. Inuktitut began to weaken as each generation had fewer and fewer Inuktitut speakers (Andersen 2011). To revitalize the language, the Department of Language, Culture and Tourism of the Nunatsiavut Government developed a five-year Inuktitut language strategy, which began in 2021. This strategy aims to create a separate division within the Inuit-led government, focusing on Inuktitut. To begin the journey toward increasing the use of Inuktitut among community members in a wider variety of contexts, the strategy calls for creating an Inuit teacher training program and more land-based activities (Nunatsiavut Government, n.d.). Schools in the five Inuit communities in Nunatsiavut currently engage in cultural and language revitalization activities. They offer Inuktitut language classes, cultural crafts and skills programs, land-based activities, and the inclusion of Elders to transmit knowledge (Snow and Ochlaski 2018; Wyatt 2021).

In the Inuvialuit region, parents and students have called for more land-based activities and the systematic incorporation of culture and language in their community schools (Berger, Johnston, and Oskineegish 2016). In 1998, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation created the Inuvialuit Cultural Centre to preserve and revitalize Inuvialuktun. They develop cultural and linguistic resources and curricula for schools with the guidance of Elders and support language teachers in the region (Arctic Council, n.d.). The Northwest Territories government has also developed an action plan for 2018–2025 to revitalize and increase access to services in Indigenous languages throughout the territory. Moreover, they have created an Indigenous language and education secretariat to support the nine officially recognized Indigenous languages (Government of Northwest Territories, n.d.-a; n.d.-b), including Inuktitut. Language revitalization in the Inuvialuit region is a priority at the territory level; however, concrete actions and follow-through would be crucial to supporting Inuit priorities.

Enabling Inuit to address our own needs

Through education, Inuit are working toward ensuring that our programs are community-led and support healing and community well-being. Education is more than just school—it is also about our rights, our governance, and our health. Inuit educational initiatives across all regions are working toward empowering communities to develop their own priorities, leadership, and healing (Berger, Johnston, and Oskineegish 2016; Tulloch et al. 2016). For this reason, Inuit governments and school boards emphasize the importance of Inuit taking greater authority in education and incorporating IQ into learning, governance, and healing frameworks. These initiatives are designed to not only enable student success in school, but also build self-determination in all aspects of Inuit life.

As an Inuk researcher, I propose that enabling Inuit to address our own needs means re-appropriating the purpose and scope of education so that it becomes a tool for community empowerment and intergenerational healing, not simply individual achievement. And as Inuit, we must reframe the role of education for it to become one that revitalizes, restores, and reconnects us to our knowledge—and to one another.

Each of these regional approaches demonstrates how Inuit are using education as a form of healing and a way to assert control over our futures. These efforts center on culturally grounded approaches that allow for community-led governance in both curricula and services. They resist the idea that education is solely about employment or credentials. Instead, they reflect the Inuit worldview that education is about living well with others, practising responsibility to community, and passing on knowledge.

For these initiatives to be sustainable and meaningful, Inuit voices must continue to lead decision-making. Funding and policy support from provincial and territorial governments must listen to and follow the leadership of Inuit communities and governments. More importantly, the cultural frameworks that guide these educational practices—IQ—must not be symbolic: They must be lived, practiced, and embedded across all levels of educational institutions and systems.

Inuit must define what success looks like and how it is achieved. This means reimagining what our education systems do— and who they are for. Through IQ, education becomes more than an institution. It becomes a pathway to meaningful cultural, emotional, and spiritual resurgence.

Conclusion

The devastating impact of colonialism in Inuit Nunangat is evidenced in the deliberate attempts by missionaries and the federal government to design and implement genocidal policies and practices to forcibly assimilate Inuit by disconnecting education from our culture and language. This rupture resulted in elevated suicide rates in our communities as well as lower socioeconomic conditions, such as overcrowded homes, food insecurity, and lower life expectancy. These intergenerational impacts of Canada's cultural genocidal policies and practices are a crime against humanity and are not acceptable. The colonial practices and policies that Inuit endured in such a condensed period threatened the integrity and livelihood of our culture, our IQ, and our language in all four regions, to varying degrees. Despite the progress made toward healing from the traumatic colonial practices we have examined with the residential schools, forced relocations, and dog slaughters, Inuit communities must remain vigilant in safeguarding our culture and IQ. Inuit are advocating for change in the National Strategy on Inuit Education

(ITK 2011). ITK developed this strategy through a consultation process that involved Inuit from all regions. The demands aim to raise the level of educational success of our youth to ensure that they are at least comparable with students in the South. The concern with this comparison is that the definition of success is equated with colonial measures rather than by Inuit definitions. The goal of attaining higher academic outcomes first requires reevaluating the parameters around what is being taught and how it ought to be measured within an Inuit epistemological framework. This would represent taking agency in education and focusing on preserving and revitalizing our language and culture.

To achieve the four Inuit priorities—improving educational success, reflecting culture in education, protecting Inuktut, and enabling Inuit to address our own needs—we must therefore decolonize our education systems and combat the lingering vestiges of coloniality. We can succeed by asserting agency over our programs, resisting colonial norms, appropriating the useful elements of Southern systems, and provincializing dominant worldviews through the centralization of Inuit knowledge, language, and culture. I applied this four-pronged framework in this review to better understand how Inuit across Inuit Nunangat are decolonizing education to protect our language and culture.

This literature review has not followed a linear or systematic model, but a thematic one that reflects the relational and cyclical nature of Indigenous knowledge. Rather than synthesizing data by frequency or academic hierarchy, I have centred culturally grounded efforts that speak to Inuit priorities. The result is not only a synthesis of what Inuit are doing in education, but also a call to action. These examples show that education is already being reshaped by Inuit to reflect who we are and who we are becoming.

For the initiatives presented here to be sustainable, Inuit must lead. Provincial and territorial governments must align with—rather than direct—Inuit-led education strategies and initiatives. This includes a genuine and ongoing commitment to funding, policy autonomy, and the long-term embedding of Inuit-led frameworks like IQ at all institutional levels.

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Education of Avanersuarmit, the Northernmost People in Qaanaaq

Naja Blytman Trondhjemⁱ

ABSTRACT

This paper describes how the concept of centre-periphery is linked to modernity, and thus to colonialism and coloniality, by examining the education of non-Kalaallisut-speaking Avanersuarmit children in Qaanaaq through teaching materials, national tests, and final exams in Kalaallisut, Danish, and English. Within coloniality, the multidialectal perspective is not considered relevant, and the emphasis on the standard language marginalizes local dialects to near extinction. Despite linguistic challenges at the start of schooling, children in Qaanaaq eventually achieve scores comparable to those of Kalaallisut-speaking children. However, due to limited exposure to Danish and English, they obtain low scores in these subjects. When they move to other parts of Greenland for further education, they struggle not only with Danish and English but also with Kalaallisut, facing stigma because of their accent. Despite these challenges, many persevere, supported by second-chance programs that help them eventually complete their education.

KEYWORDS

Centre-periphery, coloniality, education, final exams, ideologies, Kalaallisut, Greenland

RÉSUMÉ

L'éducation des Avanersuarmit, le peuple le plus septentrional, à Qaanaaq

Cet article décrit la manière dont le concept de *centre-périphérie* est lié à la modernité, et donc au colonialisme et à la colonialité, en examinant l'éducation des enfants Avanersuarmit à Qaanaaq qui ne parlent pas kalaallisut, par l'intermédiaire du matériel pédagogique, des tests nationaux et des examens finaux en kalaallisut, en danois et en anglais. Dans le cadre de la colonisation, la perspective multidialectale n'est pas considérée comme pertinente et l'accent mis sur la langue standard marginalise les dialectes locaux au point de les faire disparaître. Malgré les difficultés linguistiques rencontrées au début de leur scolarité, les enfants de Qaanaaq finissent par obtenir des résultats comparables à ceux des enfants parlant le kalaallisut. Cependant, en raison d'une exposition limitée au danois et à l'anglais, ils obtiennent de faibles résultats dans ces matières. Lorsqu'ils se déplacent dans d'autres régions du Groenland pour poursuivre leurs études, ils se confrontent non seulement au danois et à l'anglais, mais aussi au kalaallisut, et sont stigmatisés

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en raison de leur accent. Malgré ces difficultés, nombre d'entre eux persévèrent, soutenus par des programmes de deuxième chance qui les aident à terminer leurs études.

MOTS-CLÉS

Centre-périphérie, colonialité, éducation, examens finaux, idéologies, kalaallisut, Groenland

Greenland assumed control of education administration from Denmark when Home Rule granting increased political autonomy within the Danish Realm was established in 1979 (Jensen 2017). After 1979, the focus in public schools was to move away from the Danish education model, adopted since 1953, by making Greenlandic the official language of instruction (Olsen 2024).

The aim of using Greenlandic as the language of instruction in public schools is achieved today, and most teachers at the public school level are Greenlandic-speaking teachers. According to a 2023 report, only eight percent of the teachers in Greenland speak another language that is not Greenlandic (Uddannelsesstyrelsen 2022-2023).

When Greenland took over the administration of education, the level of education was low, primarily due to the effects of Danization after Greenland became a county in Denmark in 1953. During the Danization period, the Danish education model was introduced, in contrast to the education methods during colonial times, when Greenlandic was the only instructional language. Thus, one of the aims of the new Self-government was to improve the educational level.

Although there were efforts to enhance academic achievement through different reforms during the 1970s, 1990s, and the beginning of the 2000s (Wyatt 2011), the goal of raising the educational level of the Greenlandic population ultimately failed, as close to half of the students leaving public school do not pursue further education (Brockmann 2024), with approximately 60% of 20- to 25-year-olds not having started upper secondary education, and about half of the 25- to 64-year-old population lacking any formal qualifications.

In 2009, educational leaders from the Educational Board of Greenland invented and developed a level test (referred to as “trintest”) for all pupils in Greenland to evaluate their learning levels. The tests are a Greenlandic adaptation of equivalent Danish tests. Before transitioning to a higher level, these tests are taken in the third and seventh grades and are used as a guide for future teachers, not as high-stakes tests. In addition to these tests, the children are administered a final exam in the tenth grade.

Even though the tests aim to determine the academic performance of individual children in the third and seventh grades, authorities and politicians have used them to assess the educational standards of children in different local communities. By comparing the results between West Greenland and the periphery areas such as North Greenland, Qaanaaq, East Greenland, Ittoqqortoormiit, and Tasiilaq, a pattern emerges showing that children in periphery areas achieve lower academic outcomes. This is unsurprising from a dialectal view, which considers the linguistic diversity within a language, because the teaching materials and most school instructions are in Kalaallisut, the standard language of Greenland, rather than in the local dialects. Indeed, the Secretariat of Greenland and the educational publisher Ilinnisiorfik from the Educational Board of Greenland operate solely in Kalaallisut. Consequently, all school materials, online education tools, tests, and exams used to evaluate public school education are in Kalaallisut, and children are expected to learn written expression in this language. This situation has created specific challenges in regions where Avangersuarmissut in Qaanaaq and Tunumiisut in East Greenland are spoken, as these two dialects differ significantly from Kalaallisut.

This paper focuses on exploring the impact of using Kalaallisut teaching materials and tests on the education of Avangersuarmit children in Qaanaaq. Hence, the aim of this paper is to discuss the educational outcome level in Qaanaaq from a language perspective.

Methodology

Qaanaaq is located in the far north of Greenland, geographically very distant from the educational centre in Nuuk, West Greenland, and close to 1,000 km from Ilulissat, the administration centre. This distance complicates access to courses and innovations that could benefit the school. Of the 12 teachers in Qaanaaq with degrees from Ilinniarfissuaq, all but one—a Dane—are local. Most children speak the local dialect, Avangersuarmissut, as their mother tongue, while the language of instruction in most subjects, including Kalaallisut lessons, is Avangersuarmissut. Few Danes and others from different parts of Greenland learn to use the local dialect. Thus, Avangersuarmissut is used daily at school and in the community, while Kalaallisut is mainly heard through media and a few speakers. Although the children learn Kalaallisut, all of the oral class discussions and general learning occur in Avangersuarmissut.

Today, UNESCO considers this dialect to be in danger of extinction, which is a serious issue, if we look at Fishman's language vitality scale (Fishman 1991; Niia 2022). Therefore, documenting and describing the dialect thoroughly and making teaching materials for it are urgent matters.

To discuss the distance, I use centre-periphery theories, following Pietikainen and Kelly-Holmes (2013) from the perspective of decolonial dialectology following Maegaard (2023), who discusses the language colonialism of the Sami and Kalaallit peoples.

The data was collected in Qanaaq in 2023, in connection with the dialect project with Marie Maegaard, *VAKANU Variation in Kalaallit Nunaat*¹. These recordings formed the basis for the dialectal analysis. A local conducted the interviews to prevent the informants from switching to my dialect (Kalaallisut), which locals often do when speaking with West Greenlanders.

A total of 24 individuals—4 women and 4 men from each of the following age groups: 15–30, 40–50, and 60+ were recorded. In addition to these data, I conducted interviews with six teachers of Greenlandic as well as the headmaster of the school in Qaanaaq on how they handle dialectal differences, teaching methods, professional development courses for teachers, and cooperation with parents. In addition, educational consultants from Inerisaavik (the Board of Education in Nuuk) were interviewed regarding grade level testing and school administration. All interviewees participated voluntarily and gave their informed consent. Ethical standards were adhered to, and the participants were assured anonymity and the right to withdraw at any time. To examine the results from the Trintests and the public school final exams, data from the publicly available Statistics Greenland was used.

Centre-Periphery Framework

From a global perspective, centre-periphery research examines the unequal distribution of society, economy, and polity. The centre-periphery concept metaphorically divides the world into nation-states, as well as into Western versus Indigenous cultures, colonizer versus colonized, etc., and is widely used in political geography, political sociology, and labour market studies to explain economic activities, as well as in history, cultural studies, and education to explain uneven development (Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2013). The centre is viewed as being more civilized—culturally, economically, and educationally—while the periphery is seen as being less or not civilized, with low educational levels and traditional lifestyles regarded as less profitable in modern society.

Traditionally, innovations, decisions, and norms originate in the centre and are expected to be adopted in the peripheries, as seen in language policy and planning. This seemingly fixed centre-periphery structure is challenged by Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes, who investigate multilingualism in peripheral contexts (Pietikäinen & Kelly-Holmes 2013). According to them,

1. <https://uk.uni.gl/research/centre-for-language-research/#Projects>.

the centre-periphery concept is not fixed: “There is an ongoing dynamic between what is perceived as a periphery and what is perceived as a centre” (Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2013, 5).

The concept of centre-periphery is linked to modernity and consequently also to colonialism. Alongside European colonialism from the 1500s, modernity emerged, and according to Maegaard (2023), modernity can be understood as a consequence of colonialism. In decolonial research, modernity and coloniality are interconnected (Quijano 2007), meaning that although colonialism has formally ended, the colonial system continues to exist within national institutional structures and the imagined realities of the dominated (Quijano 2007).

Thus, inherent in colonialism were differing ideologies between cultures—that is, between colonizer and colonized. These ideologies shaped colonial domination, whether to exploit, protect, civilize, or to save the colonized, as Europeans believed themselves culturally and civilizationally superior (Maegaard 2023).

The long-standing power structures established during colonialism continue through coloniality, shaping culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production. Through this process, colonialism is sustained within coloniality “(...) in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience” (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 243).

Therefore, one of the ideologies embedded in coloniality is the set of linguistic ideologies within colonized countries. According to Irvine and Gal (2000), key aspects of linguistic differentiation are “(...) the ideas with which participants and observers frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them” (Irvine and Gal 2000, 35).

Within this theory there are three semiotic processes. The first is *Iconization*, which is “(..) a transformation of the sign relationship between linguistic features (or varieties) and the social image with which they are linked” (Irvine and Gal 2000, 37). Here, the linguistic features used by specific social groups become indexes of these groups and serve as iconic representations of them. These features are thus perceived as reflecting the groups’ inherent nature or essence. Iconization often occurs in ideologies shaped by centre-periphery dynamics, where peripheral linguistic features become symbols of cultural difference between centre and periphery.

The second, *Fractal Recursivity*, “involves the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level” (Irvine and Gal 2000, 36). Thus, it is understood as a projection of patterns, reproduced from one level—such as the colonizer—to another—such as the colonized. This is seen in the One-Nation-One-Language ideology in

nation-building theories, where language standardization was used to unify the nation, and the standard language governed all national institutional communication (Haugen 1966; Wright 2004; Edwards 2009). In coloniality, language standardization remains a powerful tool for national unification.

The third, *Erasure*, is “the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible” (Irvine and Gal 2000, 38). Thus, the idea of a homogeneous language overlooks the internal variations within it. Consequently, dialects in the periphery may be ignored or altered to conform more closely to the standard language.

Linking the theoretical framework of colonialism and coloniality in Greenland, the centre-periphery image was established both geographically and mentally among the colonized by the onset of colonization. The colonized areas were classified as far north—*Avani* “in the north” and *Tunu* “the backside”—in the periphery. These regions were distant from the Christianization centre, Nuuk, and the first baptized assistants viewed their more peripheral compatriots as uncivilized and unintelligent.

Ideologies about people from the periphery were expressed through customs and language or dialect, and as awareness of dialect differences grew, these differences became icons of those dialects, namely, the iconization of peripheral people.

When the educational system was formalized in 1845 with the establishment of the first educational centre, Ilinnarfissuaq, “the place where you learn a lot,” in Nuuk, the Danish educational system was adapted to the Greenlandic community. Instruction was in Greenlandic, but the subjects—such as the Greenlandic language viewed from a European perspective—and the educational practices both came from Denmark. Thus, the Danish system was adopted from the start, exemplifying fractal recursivity where only parts were adjusted to Greenlandic conditions, becoming even clearer during the Danization period. Consequently, although Greenlanders were educated within the Danish system, they did not become “proper” Danes.

From the beginning of the standardization process, Kalaallisut became the standard language, especially after Kleinschmidt published his grammar in 1851; instruction was in Kalaallisut, regardless of local dialect. Since then, dialects have never been a focus in the educational system, despite a curriculum paragraph stating that children should be aware of dialect differences. To my knowledge, no educational materials on the dialects have been produced until now—which effectively erases the dialects of the periphery. This situation worsened when larger municipalities were established, integrating peripheral communities into bigger towns in West Greenland. Qaanaaq became a small community within Avannaata Kommunia, “The Municipality of North Greenland,” where the administrative centre is Ilulissat, overseeing smaller towns such as Uummannaq, Upernavik, and Qaanaaq.

The narrative of Qaanaaq’s educational development begins with an account of the dialect’s origins and how it differs from Kalaallisut.

Avanersuarminusut: History and Dialect Description

Qaanaaq is a relatively new town located in the northernmost part of Greenland. It was established in 1953 following the relocation of the inhabitants of the Uummannaq settlement due to the construction of a U.S. military base.

Between 1902 and 1904, polar explorers from the Literary Expedition led by ethnologist Ludvig Mylius-Erichsen established contact with the northernmost inhabitants of Greenland. Later, in 1910, anthropologist Knud Rasmussen and his team founded a trading post in the area. At that time, Uummannaq remained largely isolated, with only sporadic contact with people from the northern part of Upernavik and visiting polar explorers, such as Robert Peary in 1889 (Leonard 2015).

The missionary and priest Gustav Olsen arrived in Uummannaq in 1909 with the purpose of Christianizing the last people unfamiliar with God, referred to as *Guutimik nalusut* “those with no knowledge about God” and began instructing both adults and children in the Christian faith (Olsen 1921). In his diary, Olsen describes the first encounter with Inughuit as *inoqatikkulunnguagut nalusuugallartut*—“our poor fellows, who are still ignorant”—and notes that it was impossible to understand their language because it had very different sounds and tones. “It was as if the individual’s tongue lacked the energy to pronounce the words,” Olsen wrote (Olsen 1921, 10).

Olsen, from Sisimiut, spoke Kalaallisut and held services in a Danish wooden house he built upon arrival, while the Inughuit people still lived in traditional peat houses.

This encounter illustrates the differences between Greenland’s three main mutually unintelligible dialects: Kalaallisut, East Greenlandic or Tunumiisut, and North Greenlandic or Avanersuarminusut.

These dialects developed during different migration periods. The first migration occurred in the early 1200s, when people with Thule Culture entered North Greenland via Canada from North Alaska (Gulløv 2012; Dorais 2010) and moved toward Central West Greenland, mostly settling around Nuuk. Some continued as far as Southeast Greenland. These migrants generally spoke Kalaallisut. The second migration took place around the year 1300, when the remaining people of the Thule Culture lived side by side with people from the Dorset Culture, and some of them migrated across Northeast Greenland and arrived in Tasiilaq. It is assumed that the *i*-dialect was formed in North Greenland as a result of this encounter. Today, the *i*-dialect is used in East Greenlandic (Tunumiisut).

Later, Tunumiisut speakers met South Greenlanders with a Kalaallisut dialect and formed South Greenlandic, and the Upernavik dialect, which originated in North Greenland and spread to the Upernavik area (for more details, see Rischel 1975, Fortescue 1986, 1997; Dorais 1981, Trondhjem 2024). The last family migration occurred around 1700, when Inughuit moved from Canada to an uninhabited North Greenland and settled there. They maintained contact with Canadian Inuit, with the last migration said to have happened around 1860 (Leonard 2015). Avannersuarmiusut (Inuktun) is a dialect intermediate between Canadian Inuktitut and Kalaallisut and has only been described by a few researchers, including Holtved (1951), Fortescue (1991), Jacobsen (1991), and Leonard (2015).

The Dialect of Avannersuarmiusut (Inuktun)

The Avannersuarmiusut dialect differs from Kalaallisut lexically, phonologically, and grammatically. All informants in our study referred to their dialect as Avannersuarmiusut when asked. They also mentioned that the term Inuktun is now used only by older generations and is not in current use. However, some individuals also refer to the dialect as Qaanaarmiusut, as seen on social media. Despite not having an official written form, the Avannersuarmiusut community actively uses their dialect on social media platforms. Notably, researchers Fortescue (1991) and Leonard (2015) have documented Avannersuarmiusut words in their original dialect, with the latter even proposing an orthography.

The main phonological differences include the use of /h/ instead of the Kalaallisut /s/, as seen in Western Inuktitut; for example, *hila* for WG *sila* “weather” (Lowe 1985, 276). Consonant clusters with C+s also differ, as shown in the following example (see Table 1). The parenthesized form (*agssorsuak*) reflects the older Kalaallisut spelling before the *gs* cluster assimilated to *ss*.

Table 1. Consonant combinations with C+s.

C+s	change to	Avannersuarmiusut	Kalaallisut	English
rs and gs	rr [χ:] and gg [x:]	<i>Aiggorruaq</i>	<i>Assorsuaq</i> (<i>agsorsuak</i>)	so much

Other examples show differences such as the use of a glottal sign (◌̚) in consonant clusters to indicate either a glottalized consonant or a glottal stop. No systematic glottalization is found in Kalaallisut, except in lexicalized words like *na'aa* “ouch! It hurts.”

Table 2. The glottal stops within consonants clusters.

Consonant cluster	Change to	Avanersuarmiusut	Kalaallisut	English
gg [x:]	[ˈg]	<i>a'gkertoq</i>	<i>aggertoq</i>	the one who comes
rr [χ:]	[ˈr]	<i>e(r)'qortoq</i>	<i>eqqortoq</i>	what is right
vv/ff [v:]	[ˈv]	<i>adda'vik</i>	<i>Allaffik</i>	office
ll [l:]	[ˈl] [dd]	<i>i'dlu</i> <i>adda'vik</i>	<i>illu,</i> <i>allaffik</i>	house office

The consonant clusters that remain unassimilated in Avanersuarmiusut—such as [kt], [gl], [ŋm], and [qt]—correspond to /tt/, /t:/, /mm/, and /rt/ in Kalaallisut, as illustrated in Table 3:

Table 3. The unassimilated consonant clusters.

Kalaallisut	Avanersuarmiusut	English
<i>tuttu</i> [tut:u]	<i>tuktu</i>	reindeer
<i>nualluut</i> [nuat:u:t]	<i>nuagluut</i>	influenza
<i>imminik</i> [im:inik]	<i>ingminik</i>	by itself
<i>isussuartoq</i>	<i>ibussuaqtuq</i>	whisper

The final consonants of a word *t*, *k*, *q* are nasalized into *n*, *ng* [ŋ], and *rng* [ŋ], as shown in Table 4:

Table 4. Final consonant change of *t*, *k*, *q* to *n*, *ng* [ŋ], *rng* [ŋ].

Final consonant	Change to	Avanersuarmiusut	Kalaallisut	English
<i>t</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Hibaman</i>	<i>Sisamat</i>	four
<i>k</i>	<i>ng</i> [ŋ]	<i>assiginnngissutiling</i>	<i>Assiginnngissutilik</i>	the one, which has a difference
<i>q</i>	<i>rng</i> [ŋ]	<i>Peroriartornerng</i>	<i>Peroriartorneq</i>	upbringing

Some vowel combinations, like *ai*, remain unassimilated, as in the adverb *taija* (“it is like this, and then, stop”), compared to the Kalaallisut *tassa*. In other cases, vowels assimilate, e.g., *ua* becomes *aa* as in *makkaa* (“those”), *makkua* in Kalaallisut. Another difference with long vowels is *uu* becoming *ii*, as in *-nabiigaa* (“think that”), cf. *-nasuigaa* in Kalaallisut, and *iu* as in *biordlu* (“like that”), *soorlu* in Kalaallisut. The main difference in

grammar is that participial mood is used in declarative sentences, instead of indicative in Kalaallisut, i.e., *neriboq* for WG *nerivoq* “he eats.” There are also differences in the use of affixes, which are not yet investigated.

Differences in the lexicon between Kalaallisut and Avanersuarminusut are shown with a few examples in Table 5:

Table 5. The differing lexicon in Avanersuarminusut.

Kalaallisut	Avanersuarminusut	English
<i>Iput</i>	<i>Paut</i>	Oar
<i>Meeraq</i>	<i>Peraaq</i>	Child
<i>Aqerluusaaq</i>	<i>Tittaut</i>	Pencil
<i>Pakkaluaq</i>	<i>Taqulikibaaq</i>	Butterfly
<i>Siggartaat</i>	<i>Uinggiartaat</i>	Whistle
<i>Agiut</i>	<i>Hibak</i>	File
<i>Erfalasoq</i>	<i>Aappalaartoq</i>	Flag

The word *peraaq* (“child”) derives from the proto-Inuit *piaraq* (“young animal”) (Fortescue et al. 2010, 258), and *tittaut* comes from *tittaaq* (“write”), which in turn originates from *tətəraq* (“draw or write”), a proto-Inuit root (Fortescue et al. 2010, 344). The remaining lexemes are local innovations from Kalaallisut. Additionally, words like *hibak* (“file”) and *paut* (“oar”) are also found in Kalaallisut. In contrast, words such as *taqaleqisaaq* (“butterfly”) and *aappalaartoq* (“flag”) are exclusive to Northwest Greenland, while *uinggiartaat* (“whistle”) is likely a local innovation. Although most lexical items are shared with Kalaallisut, their pronunciation differs in Avanersuarminusut. Thus, Avanersuarminusut differs considerably from Kalaallisut, yet when children start school, all the materials used are in Kalaallisut. The children are expected to write using only Kalaallisut. The educational situation in Greenland and Qaanaaq is described in the following section.

Public School in Greenland

The centre-periphery image aptly illustrates both the geographic and metaphorical aspects of education in Greenland. From a global perspective, or more specifically within the Danish Realm (Rigsfællesskabet), Denmark has been and remains the centre where the epistemology and ontology of knowledge are administered and taught to Greenland, as inspiration is still drawn from, for example, the annual Danish learning festival, pedagogical experts from the Danish School of Education, and the translation and adaptation of Danish textbooks to equivalent grade levels and Greenlandic contexts.

Since Greenland's colonization in 1721, when the Danish-Norwegian priest Hans Egede first arrived, Denmark has governed its administration. In 1979, with the establishment of Greenland's Home Rule, the administration of education and other areas were transferred from Denmark to Greenland (Jensen 2017).

At the start of colonialism, Greenland was geographically peripheral, and its people were considered to be heathens who had to be educated in Christianity before baptism. During the 1700s and the Christianization of Greenlanders, missionaries trained locals to educate others in Christianity, thereby teaching Greenlanders to work in a European manner—through exhortation, control, humiliation, and so forth (Thuesen, 1988). Thus, the Danes avoided force or coercion, as “(..) dominating groups create subjects who become willingly subservient” (Wyatt 2011, 822). These Christianization efforts shaped a new Greenlandic identity, creating an elite group within the community who saw themselves as superior to the uneducated, some marrying Danish men in high positions (Wyatt 2011).

From 1845, education for *ajogit*, i.e., catechists, was established in Nuuk and Ilulissat. The catechists were to conduct church services and teach children reading, writing in Greenlandic, Christianity, arithmetic, and a few other subjects. They were sent to colonial settlements across Greenland and established educational centres in each location (Thuesen 1988). At the same time, Samuel Kleinschmidt published *Grammatik der grönländischen Sprache* in 1851, forming the foundation for Kalaallisut, which became the standard language and language of instruction in all colonial settlements (Trondhjem 2024).

From 1925, it was compulsory for all children to attend school from age seven to fourteen (Rud 2017). In 1953, when Greenland's colonial status officially ended and modernization began, public schools existed in all communities and towns, with smaller schools in settlements governed by the town's public schools, while all town schools were managed by the school administration in Nuuk.

In 1997, municipalities took over school management within their regions. Today, the Board of Education in Nuuk governs all municipalities, with the Greenlandic government at the top, setting education laws. Until 2009, Greenland had 18 municipalities, which were then consolidated into four large ones. In 2018, Avannaata Kommunia split into Avannaata and Qeqertalik (Statbank Greenland 2024). This reform reduced school administration to just five locations, consequently leaving schools in peripheral areas like Qaanaaq in North Greenland and Tasiilaq and Ittoqqortoormiit in East Greenland as very far away from their administration. Hence, the public school in Qaanaaq is governed from Ilulissat, where the municipality's town hall is located. Qaanaaq lies on the periphery, about 1,000 kilometres from Ilulissat. This distance is even greater regarding teacher education courses

offered by the Board of Education in Nuuk. The school's headmaster decides which courses teachers need. Due to budget constraints, group courses are often chosen over individual ones. Consultants from the Board of Education are frequently invited to provide courses for all teachers in Qaanaaq. Online courses are also available. As an educational centre, Qaanaaq oversees the two settlement schools in Siorapaluk and Qeqertaq, which have few pupils. Qaanaaq itself has about 120 pupils. There is also a school called *Majoriaq*, "a slope one wishes to climb," for those public school students needing to improve their grades.

Language of Instruction and Classes in Public School

Until 1953, Kalaallisut was the primary language of instruction in nearly all schools, though Danish was taught as a foreign language in some places from 1925 if a teacher or catechist had Danish skills (Thuesen 1995). After 1953, during the Danization period, language instruction shifted to Danish, as the school system closely mirrored that of Denmark. Greenland faced a teacher shortage, leading the Danish administration to employ many Danish teachers. Consequently, Danish became the language of instruction for most subjects. The educational system sought to instill Danish culture and language in Greenlandic children. When Home Rule was established in Greenland in 1979—granting the island partial self-government from Denmark, including control over education—emphasis on the Danish language was significantly reduced, and there was pressure to change the language of instruction in all subjects to Greenlandic. By 2022, this goal had nearly been achieved, as instruction in public schools is now primarily in Greenlandic, and only 8 percent of teachers in Greenland are non-Greenlandic speakers. That said, there remains a growing need for qualified teachers, as 16 percent of all teachers lack formal teacher training (Uddannelsesstyrelsen 2022-2023).

In almost every town, there are students from 1st to 10th grade. Depending on the size of the town or settlement, schools may only offer grades 1 through 7, and students must attend school in a larger town or city from 8th grade onward, where a student residence is available. The curriculum is divided into three levels: Level 1 includes grades 1 to 3, Level 2 grades 4 to 7, and Level 3 grades 8 to 10. The following section describes the Trintest ("level test") and the final exams administered by Greenland Statistics.

The Evaluation System in Public Schools

Several tests are used to evaluate the educational proficiency of public school children, with standardized tests called Trintests administered in the 3rd and 7th grades and final exams in 10th grade. The Trintests are standardized assessments developed following the last major school reform and the introduction of new pedagogical principles called *Atuarfitsialak*,

“the good school,” which began in the early 2000s (personal communication with two administrators at the Board of Education in Nuuk). The tests align with curriculum objectives for Level 1 (grades 1 to 3) and Level 2 (grades 4 to 7). Trintests use methods from Educational Psychological Counseling in Denmark and include multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Only testable and comparable subjects are included to enable national-level comparisons. The subjects tested are Greenlandic, Danish, and mathematics in 3rd grade, with English added in 7th grade, but only Greenlandic is addressed here. Greenlandic teachers developed the Greenlandic test questions, which were modeled after similar Danish tests.

The 45-minute-long tests began in 2009 and are administered annually and simultaneously in all schools in Greenland to ensure comparability across all schools. Board of Education consultants may change only 10 percent of the test items to maintain comparability, and only if the average score for an item is too high.

The tests are taken when students move from one level to the next. Test results guide the incoming teacher and enable the previous teacher to evaluate and improve teaching methods used before the test (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut 2015). According to the interviewees, each Trintest should provide a snapshot of each child’s educational proficiency according to the curriculum, which can be used as a point of departure for further teaching. Over the last decades, the results of the tests have been used to assess the overall educational proficiency in Greenland, which is of particular interest to politicians. In this paper, the results are used to compare outcomes within and between municipalities.

Thus, in the 3rd grade Greenlandic tests, students are assessed on letter recognition—including initial, medial, and final letters—recognition of misspellings, word semantics such as polysemy, antonymy, and synonymy, reading comprehension, and identification of word classes. There are 46 questions to complete within 45 minutes, and no assistance is permitted. The phrasing of instructions can be challenging for slower readers or dialect speakers such as Avanersuarmit, as some are complex both in formulation and in length. For example, this instruction:

Oqaatsip aallaqqaateqataa toqqaruk

“Choose (the sound) similar to the initial sound” (literally, “choose the one with the same start as the word’s start”).

This wording is used in a task where the word to be compared with is *siku* “ice.” The child must choose between *umiaq*, *sava*, *isi*, and *aput* (women’s boat, sheep, eye, snow). Even though the tasks are straightforward, some of the instruction wording is highly complex, as the word *aallaqqaateqataa* means “the same start as (the word’s) start” from the example.

In addition, this word is linked to the possessor *oqaatsip*, meaning “the word’s.” Therefore, the child is being tested not only on their knowledge of the alphabet and how letters combine to form words, but also on their ability to read complex instructions or reading comprehension, which is another task later.

The reading comprehension test consists of three short sections forming one continuous story. The first two sections contain four and three sentences respectively, each followed by a question about the text with four possible answers. The third section includes only three longer sentences and a question about the content with four possible answers. Within the three sentences there are three very long verbs containing 8 to 12 syllables. The longest verb is *ilimagisimanngingaaramitigut*—“because they did not expect us at all”—and is taken from standard Greenlandic written or oral language. This can be particularly challenging for slow readers or speakers of other dialects, as teachers often report that many children do not fully master reading until around fifth grade.

Trintest 2 in the 7th grade contains 61 questions and must be completed within 45 minutes. By 7th grade, the student is expected to be a proficient reader capable of understanding complex texts. All tasks are multiple-choice questions. The first question consists of a 115-word text followed by four comprehension questions, each with four possible answers. Other questions involve information retrieval and ordering words alphabetically in a dictionary. Some tasks address polysemy, antonymy, and synonymy. Additional questions test vocabulary understanding and punctuation knowledge. Twelve questions focus on grammar, such as identifying the head verb, the subject, the object, and the base form of a word. The final question evaluates overall text comprehension. Thus, Trintest 2 assesses both reading comprehension and linguistic knowledge.

The final exam consists of two parts. The first is a standardized proficiency test (multiple-choice) administered annually. Like the Trintests, only up to 10 percent of the questions may be changed if a question receives an average score that is too high. The test includes 90 questions on grammar and reading comprehension, to be completed within one hour. The second part is an on-site group exam where students have one hour to discuss essay topics related to the subject and exchange ideas on how to approach the chosen question. Afterwards, they proceed to individual exams to write their essays.

The two Trintests and the final exam results are registered in Statbank Greenland and can be accessed online.

Having outlined the educational testing procedures, I will now discuss the results of students who speak the Avannersuarminusut dialect. Before doing so, I will briefly present a few examples that illustrate differences between this dialect and the standard language used in teaching materials and examinations.

School Materials

Today, there are many Greenlandic novels written for children at all grade levels, and each school can order educational materials from the school publisher, Inerisaavik. Materials for the Greenlandic language are produced as a series spanning grades 1 to 10. As these series were in need of updates, and in response to new initiatives aimed at strengthening Greenlandic language education, Inerisaavik published a new series called *Tumi* in 2022. This series, designed for Level 1 pupils, introduces the alphabet and supports the development of early reading skills. The first two books, *Tumi 1* and *Tumi 2*, focus on teaching the Greenlandic alphabet. They are colourful, well-structured, and pedagogically sound, making them particularly suitable for young learners. The books have become very popular and have received highly positive evaluations.

However, in *Avanersuarminusut*, the alphabet used in the books is difficult to learn because, as shown above, *Avanersuarminusut* has different phonemes. Consequently, many words are written differently than in *Kalaallisut*. *Tumi 2* includes some examples that are either pronounced very differently or are entirely different words, as illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1. The medial consonants to be learned are different from the medial consonants in *Avanersuarminusut*.

In *Tumi 2*, children must learn the consonant differences between “g” [ɣ] and “gg” [x:], as well as “rf” and “ff.” Children learn best by associating an image with the letter, which is the intended method in this example. However, as shown in the description of the phonological differences, the sounds “gg,” “rf,” and “ff” are different in *Avanersuarminusut*. The first problem is that the image often has a different term in *Avanersuarminusut*, as seen in the examples in Figure 1: *hibak* for *agiut* (“file”) and *aappalaartoq* for *erfalasoq* (“flag”), which confuses the learner. For example, there is no letter *g* in the *Avanersuarminusut* word *hibak* for *agiut* “file.” The second issue is that “rf” and “ff” do not occur in the word *aappalaartoq*, where the standard language uses *erfalasoq*.

Thus, even though Avannersuarmiusut today is much closer to Kalaallisut than to Inuktitut, the difference is big enough that the pupils must basically learn a different language to learn to read.

Trintest 2 in 7th grade is more appropriate for this grade because by then they have learned more Kalaallisut and can be expected to read complex words.

In the following sections, results from the Trintest for Levels 1 and 2 are presented, followed by results from the final exams to show how the children are managing the language.

Academic Performance

Across Greenland, all children are tested by Trintest 1 after 3rd grade and Trintest 2 after 7th grade. The Trintests are administered on the same day and last 45 minutes.

In 2024, a total of 16 students were tested in Qaanaaq: 9 in 3rd grade and 7 in 7th grade. The results indicated problem-solving proficiency, were recorded as percentages of correct answers, and were subsequently published by Statistics Greenland². Scores were categorized as follows: below 10% unsatisfactory, 10–25% inadequate, 25–50% satisfactory, 50–75% good, and 75–90% very good.

The following results are based solely on town schools, as settlement schools do not participate in the Trintest every year, as reflected in data from Statistics Greenland.

Table 6 shows the Trintest 1 and 2 results for grades 3 and 7 in Kalaallisut and Danish from 2023 and 2024 in the Qaanaaq school (Avannersuup Atuarfia). As can be seen, the 3rd grade scores were 28% in 2023, increasing to 39% in 2024. The 7th grade scores were above 43% in 2023 and improved to 60% in 2024.

Table 6. Percentage of correct answers to 46 questions in 3rd grade and 61 questions in 7th grade.

Qaanaaq – Avannersuup Atuarfia Problem-solving Proficiency	2023	2024
Greenlandic		
3rd grade	28%	39%
7th grade	43%	60%
Danish		
3rd grade	38%	34%
7th grade	40%	38%

2. https://bank.stat.gl/pxweb/en/Greenland/Greenland__UD__UD45__UD4530/UDXTDS.px/.

In Danish, the scores were close to 40% for both grades in 2023, decreasing slightly in 2024 to 34% for the 3rd grade and 38% for the 7th grade. In both subjects, the results fall within the satisfactory range.

When comparing local Trin 1 results in Kalaallisut within Avannaata Kommunia (see Table 7), the 3rd grade score at Avanersuup Atuarfia in Qaanaaq was 39% in 2024, which is lower than that recorded in other towns in the municipality, with the exception of Uummannaq, which also recorded a score of 39%. The average for Avannaata Kommunia was 48% in 2024, while the national average across all municipalities was 43%. Thus the 3rd grade scores were slightly below the average of all municipalities and 10% below the average in Avannaata Kommunia.

Table 7. Proficiency test scores for 3rd grade in towns in Avannaata Kommunia and all municipalities.

Third Grade Problem-solving Proficiency (pct. correct)	2024
Ilulissat – Atuarfik Mathias Storch	41%
Ilulissat – Atuarfik Jørgen Brønlund	64%
Uummannaq – Atuarfik Edvard Kruse	39%
Upernavik – Prinsesse Margrethe Skolen	54%
Qaanaaq – Avanersuup Atuarfia	39%
Average of all town schools IN Avannaata Kommunia	48%
Average of all municipalities	43%

Similarly, an improvement is evident in the Trintest 2 scores for 7th grade compared to the above-mentioned 2023 results. At Avanersuup Atuarfia, the score increased from 43% in 2023 to 60% in 2024, representing a rise of approximately 18%. This indicates that the children in Qaanaaq are learning to read and write in Kalaallisut. Table 7 shows that Qaanaaq is on par with other towns in Avannaata Kommunia, where the average is 59%, while the national average across all municipalities is slightly lower, at 55% in 2024.

Table 8. Proficiency test scores for 7th grade in towns in Avannaata Kommunia and all municipalities.

Seventh Grade Problem-solving Proficiency (pct. correct)	2024
Ilulissat - Atuarfik Mathias Storch	56%
Ilulissat - Atuarfik Jørgen Brønlund	52%
Uummannaq - Atuarfik Edvard Kruse	59%
Upernavik - Prinsesse Margrethe Skolen	62%
Qaanaaq - Avanersuup Atuarfia	60%
Average of all town schools of Avannaata kommunia	59%
Average of all Municipalities	55%

According to the teachers and headmaster, one likely reason for the improvement in both Trintests at Avanersuup Atuarfia is that all Greenlandic teachers are local and can explain differences in words, letters, and grammatical structures of Kalaallisut, along with several initiatives undertaken by the headmaster.

This tendency is reflected in both public school graduation exams in written Kalaallisut, as illustrated in Table 9. A total of 6 students were tested in Qaanaaq in 2024. The oral exam is not included as it is not conducted every year. The 7-scale characters are used.

In 2023, the average score in written Greenlandic was approximately 3, specifically 2.85 on the free written exam and 3.0 on the proficiency test. In 2024, both averages increased to 8.33 in the written exam and 6.83 in the proficiency test, respectively. Compared to the scores in Avannaata Kommunia, which were around 6 on average, and the national average across all municipalities around 5, the 2024 results for Avanersuup Atuarfia were higher on both exams.

Thus, by the 7th grade, the children in Qaanaaq are on par with those in other municipalities and are even above the average grade of all municipalities. This improvement is the result of initiatives where teachers, as much as possible, teach within their subject areas and are motivated to develop their teaching methods and improve the subject. Among other initiatives is the use of a learning circle, where short-term learning goals are set, and parents are involved in achieving these goals. These goals include learning specific letters over three months in 1st grade or having 7th grade pupils learn to write an essay within three months. The headmaster has also created a dictionary on an iPad from Avanersuarmiutut to Kalaallisut, which is used in Kalaallisut lessons and other subjects. In addition, parents receive SMS messages informing them about their child's homework. Finally, the children read for 15 to 20 minutes every day.

Table 9. Grade point average for Qaanaaq, Avannaata Kommunia and for all municipalities.

School Leavers – Lower Secondary Education Grade Point Average	2023	2024
Qanaaq Avanersuup Atuarfia		
Mark - written	2.85	8.33
Mark - proficiency test	3.00	6.83
Average for Avannaata Kommunia		
Mark - written	5.88	6.10
Mark - proficiency test	4.66	5.79
Average for all municipalities		
Mark - written	4.75	5.30
Mark - proficiency test	3.99	4.86

Learning to read quickly has a positive impact on learning in other subjects, such as mathematics, physics, natural science, and history (personal communication with headmaster). Parental cooperation has improved in recent years, and for parents who face challenges, support is provided by resourceful parents and in collaboration with the town’s social authorities. These initiatives have improved the learning environment within just a few years, leading to better outcomes even though the children must learn Kalaallisut as their second language.

Further Education Pathways

As shown in the previous section, the children achieved good average scores in written Greenlandic and the proficiency test in the public school graduation exams, providing a foundation for further education. However, good results in Danish and English are generally also required to progress in the educational system. Learning Danish is particularly challenging, partly because few non-local residents live in the area. The children do, however, learn American English through the school’s collaboration with Pituffik, the American base at the former settlement of Uummanaq. As part of this collaboration, they receive gifts such as computers, tablets, books in English, and audiobooks through a Santa Claus project. This has made it somewhat easier for them to learn English more than Danish, though both languages remain difficult due to limited daily exposure.

Table 10. Grade point average in Kalaallisut, Danish, and English.

School Leavers - Lower Secondary Education Qaanaaq - Avanersuup Atuarfia	2023	2024
Greenlandic		
Mark – written	2.85	8.33
Mark – oral	–	–
Mark – proficiency test	3.00	6.83
Danish		
Mark – written	1.69	1.00
Mark – oral	–	5.20
Mark – proficiency test	1.92	2.00
English		
Mark – written	0.67	1.67
Mark – oral	4.69	–
Mark – proficiency test	1.92	2.83

Table 10 shows that the English results were slightly better than those in Danish at Avanersuup Atuarfia. Nevertheless, the scores remain too low to be of significant value for higher education, with English proficiency tests averaging just above 2 and written English slightly below 2. The results for Danish were around 2 on the proficiency tests and approximately 1 in written Danish. Thus, on average, the children failed the written exams in both Danish and English.

Difficulties begin in high school and secondary education, where students, in addition to Kalaallisut, must learn through both Danish and English. They are often stigmatized because their Kalaallisut differs from that of the local Greenlandic youth, and they struggle with Danish and English. As a result, these young people are often sent home because they do not meet the academic requirements, either from high school or other educational institutions. When they return to Qaanaaq, they can attend Majoriaq, a school for those who have left elementary school, where they can improve their skills in Kalaallisut, Danish, English, and other subjects. In this way, although their educational period is much longer than that of Kalaallisut-speaking children, most eventually succeed in completing their education.

Ideologies in Periphery Languages

Ideologies about peripheral languages emerged during Greenland's Christianization and colonization. This distinction between centre and periphery still exists in Greenland. In the continued coloniality, despite Home Rule and Self-Government, strict policies maintain Kalaallisut as the

standard language, along with political decisions requiring that all school materials be in Kalaallisut. Although the new curriculum promotes awareness of dialects, no teaching materials are yet available, effectively erasing specific dialects. As a legacy of Danish colonialism, the central one-nation-one-language policy entails both erasure and fractal recursivity, making multilingual Greenland increasingly invisible as dialects gradually disappear, surviving only in remote and isolated areas, such as Qaanaaq and East Greenland—for as long as people continue to live there.

At the same time, people from the periphery are subject to iconization, as West Greenlanders perceive them as indexed groups with distinct traits, where peripheral linguistic features symbolize cultural differences shaped by centre-periphery dynamics. People from Qaanaaq are identified by their dialect features, such as using *b* instead of *s*, or by their accent from the dialect. When young people pursue further education, they must leave Qaanaaq and live among students from West Greenland. They usually go to Aasiaat if they wish to attend GUX (high school) or one of the other four towns with a high school. In high school, students take subjects such as Danish, English, mathematics, biology, and others, often taught by Danish teachers. Although Danish is taught as a foreign language, the curriculum largely follows that of Danish high schools, where it is a first language (pers. communication with Danish teachers). Thus, even though students from Qaanaaq do not speak Danish well, they must still read advanced texts in Danish and study Danish literary novels and history in high school.

Although people from Qaanaaq are viewed in West Greenland as *Inughuit*, with authentic cultural roots from Canada and Alaska, their children are often stigmatized elsewhere for their “incorrect” Kalaallisut. I have heard of pupils receiving lower evaluations upon starting school in West Greenland and being stigmatized by classmates. The stigmatization of students from Qaanaaq and East Greenland calls for further research. Many students return to Qaanaaq to improve their marks at Majoriaq after struggling with language barriers and stigmatization. Despite these challenges, most eventually succeed, supported by the dedicated efforts of Avangersuup Atuarfia’s almost entirely local-speaking teaching staff.

Conclusion

The Greenlandic school system, established during colonialism to mirror the Danish system, still reflects Danish educational practices in both primary and secondary education. Efforts to adapt it to Greenlandic needs have largely failed, as pedagogical approaches, curricula, and textbooks remain heavily influenced by Denmark. Assessments such as Trintests and final exams follow Danish models, making them unsuitable for Greenlandic children, especially those from remote areas where even tests in Kalaallisut

often result in lower national scores. This approach perpetuates coloniality—despite the formal end of colonialism. Centralized governance leads to linguistic erasure and fractal recursivity by enforcing a one-language-one-nation ideology inherited from Denmark that marginalizes the many dialects—particularly in peripheral regions—as evidenced by the lack of textbooks in those dialects.

The Qaanaaq dialect is both distinct and geographically distant from Greenland’s educational centres, creating challenges in both primary school and youth education, particularly in achieving strong results in foreign languages, even though outcomes in Kalaallisut are generally good. While local teachers in Qaanaaq teach using the dialect, which helps students achieve relatively good results in Greenlandic, the latter continue to struggle with Danish and English due to limited exposure. And when moving to other towns for further education, many students fall behind and often return home, although many do eventually come back with qualifications.

Greater integration of the local dialect into education—for example, through the creation of dictionaries from Avernarsuarmiusut to Kalaallisut—could support both language acquisition and dialect preservation. Such initiatives align with the headmaster’s ongoing efforts to document and preserve the dialect, which is increasingly assimilating into Kalaallisut. While the erosion of local dialects, as seen in Denmark, might be progressing more slowly in Greenland, it remains a pressing concern, especially with the formation of larger municipalities that risk depopulating isolated communities.

Acknowledgements

I am most grateful for the constructive suggestions and insights provided by the anonymous reviewers.

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From Research to Memes: The Enduring Stereotypes of Upernavimmiutut

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ABSTRACT

Kalaallit Nunaat has a tradition of broadcasting a New Year's show on KNR-TV to mock the past year and the national political scandals. The show often parodies people from different towns, imitating their dialect. Irvine and Gal's (2000) concept of processes of language ideologies (iconization, erasure, and fractal recursivity,) alongside Agha's enregisterment (2003) shows how a dialect can become more marginalized by using features with negative connotations. The article analyses how the media is a tool to reproduce stereotypes and contribute to maintaining the power structures in society by using normalized humour that mocks dialects. The Upernavimmiutut dialect is used as a case study. Coloniality is still visible in today's Kalaallit Nunaat, and it affects marginalized groups. Standardization and mediatization (Androutsopoulos 2014) also play a significant role in maintaining the power structures in the linguistic arena. The article looks at how people in power have reproduced language ideologies over the decades and how democratized new media maintain them by distributing them through research, TV, and memes in social media.

KEYWORDS

Coloniality, Upernavik, satire, standardization, language ideologies, mediatization, Kalaallisut

RÉSUMÉ

De la recherche aux mèmes : les stéréotypes persistants de l'upernavimmiutut

Kalaallit Nunaat a pour tradition de diffuser une émission de Nouvel An sur KNR-TV pour se moquer de l'année écoulée et des scandales politiques nationaux. L'émission parodie souvent les habitants de différentes villes en imitant leur dialecte. L'utilisation du concept d'Irvine et Gal (2000) sur les processus des idéologies linguistiques (iconisation, effacement et récursivité fractale) ainsi que l'enregistrement d'Agha (2003) montrent comment un dialecte peut devenir plus marginalisé en utilisant des caractéristiques qui connotent ses caractéristiques négatives. L'article analyse comment les médias sont utilisés pour reproduire les stéréotypes et contribuer au maintien des structures de pouvoir dans la société en utilisant un humour normalisé qui se moque des dialectes. L'upernavimmiutut est utilisé comme une étude de cas. La colonialité est toujours visible dans le Kalaallit

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Nunaat d'aujourd'hui, et elle affecte les groupes marginalisés. La normalisation et la médiatisation (Androutsopoulos 2014) jouent également un rôle important dans le maintien des structures de pouvoir dans l'arène linguistique. L'article examine comment les personnes au pouvoir ont reproduit les idéologies linguistiques au fil des décennies et comment les nouveaux médias démocratisés les maintiennent en les diffusant par le biais de la recherche, de la télévision et des mêmes dans les médias sociaux.

MOTS-CLÉS

Colonialité, Upernavik, satire, normalisation, idéologies linguistiques, médiatisation, Kalaallisut

*Mikillungali sungiisimaruttorakkitt sumeerpaliitingut
quiasaaritingineqartardit ila soorlu jokeliarineqartangaarmata... soorlu
ila aamma fjernsynikkulluallaat upernavimmiutut (imitating the sound)
quiasaaritiniisanngavaq aamma takisarnikuungakkit*

*(Since I was little, I have been so used to hearing people joke
about our (Upernavik) dialects and I have even seen it on television,
where they make fun of it in some satirical shows)*

The quote above is from an interview in February 2024 with a 23-year-old woman from Upernavik about her experiences with her Upernavimmiutut. In it, she refers to the parodies of her dialect on satirical shows on national television.

In her introduction to language ideologies, Kathryn A. Woolard writes, “Linguistic variability is socially patterned and related to the distribution of power and resources at both interpersonal and institutional scales” (Woolard 2020, 1). In this article, I demonstrate how these power structures are distributed through time, and how Upernavimmiutut comes to be enregistered as a specific type of language—so-called “kutattut.” I discuss how the satirical shows by some Kalaallit actors shown on the national broadcasting network, Kalaallit Nunaata Radioa (KNR), are reproducing the stereotypes of certain dialects, specifically Upernavimmiutut.

Kalaallit Nunaat has a tradition of broadcasting a televised New Year's show to make fun of the past year and the national political scandals. Often, there are also parodies of people from different towns, imitating their dialect. This article argues that marginalization of Upernavimmiutut speakers is taking place and shows how dialects are stigmatized in popular media.

I show how the ideological processes are acted out using Irvine and Gal's (2000) concepts of the semiotic processes of *language ideologies*. The semiotic processes are *iconization*, *fractal recursivity*, and *erasure*. Related to this, I use the concept of "enregisterment" (Agha 2003) to account for the processes by which Upernavimmiutut comes to be associated with specific indexicalities (Eckert 2008). I use Mignolo and Walsh's (2018) and other postcolonialist concepts of *coloniality* for context. To show how the ideologies are distributed and produced, I also refer to the concept of *mediatization* to demonstrate how the ideologies are distributed and reproduced in the media. I begin by presenting the place, Upernavik, and the dialect. I then account for my theoretical approach to the study and present the data. This is followed by analyses of satirical shows, where I focus mainly on one particular show. After this, I offer a brief account of the term "kutattut" and follow the process of its enregisterment as connected closely to Upernavimmiutut. Finally, my findings are summarized.

Upernavik: The Place and the Language

Upernavik is a small town in the northernmost municipality of Avannaata Kommunia, in Kalaallit Nunaat. Upernavimmiutut, the dialect spoken in Upernavik, is considered part of the dialects spoken in Kitaa (West Greenland). Kalaallit orthography is based on the language spoken around Sisimiut, Maniitsoq, and Nuuk. Upernavimmiutut has some traits similar to Central-western Kalaallisut, but other characteristics are identical to Tunumiisut, Eastern Kalaallisut (Petersen 2003). Tunumiisut has been a very stigmatized language (Petersen 1977). Still, due to some initiatives and public awareness, this has been addressed and criticized, so more people are aware of this. However, there is still evidence that these stereotypes continue to be distributed. Upernavimmiutut is positioned between these two dialects, namely, Tunumiisut and Central-western Kalaallisut. Phonetically, there are some significant similarities between Tunumiisut and Upernavimmiutut. On the other hand, Upernavimmiutut is syntactically more similar to Central-western Kalaallisut than to Tunumiisut (Petersen 2003). The Central-western dialect is the dialect on which all official Kalaallisut is based. In other words, this is considered to be the standard norm for both written and spoken language, and in everyday speech it is often referred to as West Greenlandic, as Kitaamiusut.

Terminology

The terms *kutattoq/kutanneq/kutattut* are used in the article as one meaning, as the different forms only vary in endings. The verbal base *kutag-* of the three forms means child-language/childish language or someone who speaks indistinctly.

In this article, I use the term Upernavimmiutut to refer to the Upernavik dialect, which is spoken in the Upernavik district (spanning from Kullorsuaq in the north to Upernavik Kujalleq in the south).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this article is based on Irvine and Gal's understanding of *language ideologies*, which they describe as the ideological aspects of linguistic variations and how language users and observers assign values to them (Irvine and Gal 2000). *Language ideologies* are the beliefs that language users and observers use to connect and frame linguistic features and elements to specific social positions, activities, and events, linking particular values and interpretations to distinct linguistic variants or registers. Language users are those who actively employ the language, while language observers receive the language without being its users. *Ideologies* are frameworks shaped by the moral and political concerns of both observers and users (ibid.). Linguistic elements can indicate aspects of social identity (for example, the geographical location of a current or former residence). However, they are often perceived as being directly associated with much more, such as cultural values and personality traits. In Irvine and Gal's words: "But speakers (and hearers) often notice, rationalize, and justify such linguistic indices, thereby creating linguistic ideologies that purport to explain the source and meaning of the linguistic differences" (Irvine and Gal 2000, 37).

Irvine and Gal utilize three semiotic processes to explain how people construct ideological links between language and groups of people—*iconization*, *fractal recursivity*, and *erasure*. *Iconization* occurs when a linguistic feature or entity becomes associated with a specific group, suggesting that a characteristic is a natural or innate part of that group's identity. *Fractal recursivity* arises when distinctions are made between groups, thereby creating an "other." A key aspect of fractal recursivity is that the criteria used to differentiate one group from another can also be identified in larger contexts. This allows for the continued division of groups into subgroups using the same principles (Andronis 2004). Finally, there is *erasure*, which refers to the process by which certain elements or properties of groups are removed or dismissed. Typically, these features do not align with existing ideological frameworks regarding certain languages or groups (Irvine and Gal 2000).

In this article, I also employ *indexicality* to analyze how satirical television shows stigmatize Upernavimmiutut. Indexicality is used to conceptualize how social meaning is linked to the different linguistic elements. I am particularly interested in using Eckert's use of indexicality. According to Eckert, meanings are not fixed or locked. Still, the potential meanings are connected and constitute a constellation of ideologically related meanings,

which she calls “the indexical field” (Eckert 2008, 454). An indexical field can thus show how a variable can affect some chains of ideologies on which they are built. The field is fluid and therefore can constantly change.

Enregisterment refers to the cultural process by which certain semiotic signs, such as clusters of linguistic features (registers), are perceived as belonging to the same group and are linked to specific social practices and the people engaged in those practices (Agha 2003). In this paper, I focus on how Upernavimmiutut came to be associated with specific meanings, resulting in a strong stereotypical relationship between this *register* and the people living in the Upernavik district; a relationship that emerged through the process of enregisterment. Among other things, I trace this process of enregisterment back to early linguistic descriptions of the dialect. In cultural processes explicitly concerned with media and media consumption, the term “mediatization” describes how media influence different aspects of society, both culturally and politically. Jaffe defines mediatization as a process that “includes all the representational choices involved in the production and editing of text, image, and talk in the creation of media products” (Jaffe 2009, 571). Both terms show how language ideologies are closely tied to Eckert’s notion of indexicality and the indexical field. I thus use this framework to show how stereotypes about Upernavimmiutut are distributed and reproduced in different media, how it is ridiculed in satirical programs on national television, and how this ridicule is not only reproduced in memes appearing several years later on social media but shared by users too young to have watched these satirical shows.

Michael Billig’s approach to humour and ridicule is presented in this analysis. According to Billig, humour and ridicule are social practices and tools that contribute to maintaining social order. He distinguishes between *disciplinary* and *rebellious* humour; both are forms of ridicule. Ridicule is a necessary practice in society because otherwise, social behavior can become impossibly rigid (Billig 2005). Rebellious humour is ridicule that challenges the social rules by mocking the authorities and those in power, an approach from the bottom up. Disciplinary humour, however, has a more maintaining function as it ridicules those stepping outside the norm (ibid.).

Kalaallit Nunaat is a former colony, and some ideologies and social and power structures can be traced back to colonial influences. Coloniality refers to the societal aspects still affected by colonialism, although colonialism has formally ended. Power structures can remain, however, usually benefitting those in power, the (former) colonizers. Postcolonialists argue that Western society as we know it today is the result of colonialism. According to Mignolo and Walsh, modernity and colonialism are two inseparable entities because modernity is the outcome of colonialism (Mignolo and Walsh 2018). Although Kalaallit Nunaat has achieved Self-Government and therefore can no longer be seen as a colony, coloniality is still visible in many areas of society (Kleemann-Andersen and Maegaard, forthcoming; Maegaard 2023).

Standardization and Its Complexities in Minoritized Languages

Alongside colonialism, coloniality has influenced language ideologies and promoted a strong standard language at the expense of linguistic variations that deviate from it. Gal discusses “standardizing regimes” and considers them closely linked to modernity—a connection that favors the standard variety over other varieties (Gal 2018, 223–224). Standard ideologies can be traced back to Herder’s ideological understanding of a nation and language in the 1770s. This understanding views language and nation as one coherent unit that creates a strong nation (Herder 1772), a unit Pujolar refers to as the “one language/one culture/one nation paradigm” (Pujolar 2007). Accordingly, the European origins of standard language ideologies can be regarded as an example of coloniality.

A standard language ideology has often been regarded as necessary to either revitalize Indigenous languages or save them from disappearing (Woolard 1998; Lane, Costa, and De Korne 2018; Deumert and Mabandla 2018). However, it is essential to remember that a standard language ideology “leads to an intolerance towards linguistic variation and non-standard varieties are regarded as ‘undesirable’ and ‘deviant’” (Swann et al. 2004, 296). As Deumert and Mabandla note, decolonial thinking is a direct opposition to the concept of standardizing ideologies: “A core aspect of decolonial thinking is its focus on diversity—and as such, decolonial thinking stands in direct opposition to the very notion of a standard language, as a uniform and prescriptive norm” (Deumert and Mabandla 2018, 200).

Schieffelin and her colleagues note that such attempts to save minority languages are often rooted in the language ideology of the oppressors (Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998). In the context of Kalaallit Nunaat, this is also the case (Maegaard 2023). As such, it can be regarded as an instance of coloniality. Kalaallisut is far from being a minority language in Kalaallit Nunaat, but is rather a *minoritized* language. The language is minoritized because there are still many areas in society where the Danish language, the colonial language, is dominant. Most speakers have Kalaallisut as their mother language. As Trondheim suggests, Greenland has an “upside-down” minority-majority relationship in terms of language (Trondheim 2002, 190). Due to these factors, standard ideologies dominate society (Maegaard 2023). The language situation of the standard language and several dialects in Kalaallisut is modeled after the Danish language situation, in which a strong standard ideology prevails (Kleemann-Andersen and Maegaard, forthcoming).

According to Edwards, standard ideologies lead to purism, as one begins to standardize something that is otherwise naturally diverse. With purism, one begins to prefer certain aspects of the language while excluding others (Edwards 2009). Purism is a common ideology, particularly in post-colonial

contexts. In Kalaallit Nunaat, purism is linked to a post-colonial discourse, and the language is used as an “antidote” to the Danish colonial influence (Kleemann-Andersen and Maegaard, f/c).

According to the 2010 Language Act, Kalaallit Nunaat has three main dialects: Avanersuaq (North), Tunu (East), and Kitaa (Central West). Kalaallisut (Central Western Greenlandic) became the official language in 2009, when the country gained self-government. This language has sparked heated debates because it is seen as a key part of the identity tied to Kalaallit Nunaat’s colonial history. Furthermore, there are extreme standard ideologies (Kleemann-Andersen 2021) that tend to erase, suppress, and ridicule dialects other than those close to the standard language, in this case, Central West Greenlandic, Kitaamiusut, on which the written language is based.

Methods

I used discourse analysis to examine two satirical television programs—the first from 2002 and the second from 2018 (called *Kiillillit*)—mainly focusing on the 2002 program. The first program, “Mikialai Utizai Kutsun Zun 2,” was performed and produced in 2002. It was shown during a tour in larger towns with a predecessor of the same title, so it reached many viewers at that time and was broadcast on national TV after the tour. The second program consists of a series of short sketches performed in 2018 by students from the national theater’s training college (Nunatta Isiginnaartitsinermik Ilinniarfia), as their final exam. I also looked at memes from various Facebook pages in Kalaallisut and compared them from a historical viewpoint. Furthermore, I reviewed previous descriptions of Upernavimmiutut and was able to trace some related ideologies seen in the media.

Satire Show Analysis

As mentioned earlier, Kalaallit Nunaat has a tradition of putting on a satirical New Year’s show on national television (KNR) parodying and making fun of the scandals that happened during the past year. It is normal to make fun of dialects, and they usually play a large role in the shows as they include parodies of people speaking various dialects, such as Nanortalik, Tasiilaq, Ittoqqortoormiit, Qaanaaq, and Inuktitut (from the Canadian Arctic). The Upernavimmiutut dialect I use here as a case study is no exception.

In this scene from *Mikialai Utizai Kutsun Zun 2*¹ (2002), three people perform and parody the Upernavimmiutut dialect, with caricatured characters (See Figure 1).

1. One of the actors said that the title was invented by the director and the organizers at Katuaq (The Cultural Centre of Greenland). It’s a play on words referring to *mikiarsiat* (fermented foods), *utinikoq* (when the hair comes off the skin), and *kutsussunnittoq*

Mikialai Utizai Kutsun Zun 2

At the beginning of the performance, a woman comes in with a slight limp, smiling, giggling, and waving to the audience. The audience starts laughing. She sits on a chair and takes a letter from her pocket. She reads the letter aloud and says her name and place of residence, and as soon as she says the word “Upernavik,” the live audience starts laughing even louder. Even though the audience started laughing when the woman came in, they laughed even more once they got confirmation that she was imitating the dialect.

Woman: bulatta kristiansen matthæusseni (points at herself and laughs)

Audience: (laughs)

Woman: upernavik (laughs)

Audience: (laughs even louder)

The woman keeps reading the letter and speaking in Upernavimmiutut. She says she got the letter from the health care system, and that it states that her hip replacement will be delayed for three years due to a shortage of doctors. The woman becomes upset and says she cannot walk or attend bingo events without that much-needed surgery.

She then talks about her role in society, saying that she has a lot of *atsiat* and *qujagisat*. In Kalaallit Nunaat and other Inuit communities, traditionally, people would have *atsiat*—being a person named after their loved ones who have passed away. The families of the deceased would then favor the person named after their loved one and treat this person with special attention and care. *Qujagisat* is a similar traditional Inuit concept. The woman states that because she has a lot of *qujagisat* and *atsiat*, people depend on her to celebrate them (with alcohol, as she shows with a hand gesture by pretending to have a bottle of alcohol and moving it towards her mouth as if she is drinking).

After this sequence, her grown-up son comes on stage, supposedly with a bag of seal meat, wearing orange overalls associated with hunters' clothing. He gives the bag to his mother, and she starts to do an *aqaat*, a petting song usually performed for children. The son dances to the *aqaat* very childishly, making the audience laugh. After some time, a third person comes on stage. This man is wearing only sealskin shorts and boots and has long hair that connotes “the Mother of the sea,” an important figure in traditional Inuit mythology. He conducts a healing session with the woman and explains that demons have possessed her due to her habit of celebrating

(something that smells like resin), which probably refers to a children's song that people sing incorrectly by singing that “the monkey's butt smells like vagina,” as the two words sound very similar.

everything with alcohol. The “healer” casts out some alcohol and weeds by pulling out the items from the woman’s back, gesturing, and making sounds, and the woman reacts to it by making sounds every time he pulls things out; at the end of the session, the woman shouts: “Bingo!”, as if she is freed from her demons. The entire session is a parody of some evangelical Christian events in one of the settlements near Upernavik in 2002, where a revival preacher visited the settlement to make the locals convert and join his church. The events caused much conflict in the settlement and received a lot of attention in the media (Pedersen 2002), in which the local inhabitants were described by experts as being particularly susceptible to this kind of influence due to their supposedly peripheral existence, living on the edge of society (Korsholm 2004).



Figure 1. The woman is getting a séance with the so-called healer in sealskin shorts, with her son on the right.

The woman imitates both the words and the intonation of the dialect. She reads the letter in Upernavimmiutut, which is unexpected because Kalaallisut (the standard language in Greenlandic) is always written in Kitaamiusut (Central-western dialect). Here are some examples of the differences between what she is saying (imitating Upernavimmiutut), the local Upernavimmiutut, and Standard Kalaallisut:

Sippissatit taarsertinniar**lingit** qinnuteqaatit misissorneqar**ng**eerlini
aaliangi**ipp**ineqarpoq (the woman)

Sippitsatit taarsertinniar**lingit** qinniteqaatit misitserneqar**ng**eerlini
aaliangi**ipp**ineqarpoq (Upernavik-dialect)

Siffissatit taarsertinniar**lugit** qinnuteqaatit misissorneqar**e**erluni
aalajangi**iff**ineqarpoq (Standard Kalaallisut)

In Upernavimmiutut, the most common phonological features are those used in sketch shows (Table 1). This table is only for demonstration. For a more detailed description of dialect, see Fortescue (1986) and Petersen (1986).

Table 1. Most Common Phonological Features in Upernavimmiutut

Upernavimmiutut	Standard Kalaallisut
/pp/	/ff/
/ts/	/ss/
/rng/	/r/
/ivi/	/ui/
/ava/	/ua/
/i/	/u/

The actors change their vowels; sometimes, they are exaggerated, so it is easy to hear that they are unfamiliar with the dialect, and so you know it is a parody. Even though the words indicate the dialect, it is also obvious that there is a parody in the intonation, and the actors also use it as an instrument in their performance. Some of the intonations are also exaggerated.

In the events in this scene, the inhabitants of Upernavik are portrayed in a particular way, drawing on various stereotypes. The woman says, very shocked, that she will be prevented from attending bingo events if she waits several more years and that she is one of the best at celebrating her *atsiat* and *qujagisat* when they have accomplished something. Addiction to alcohol and lottomania are some of the things that people are struggling with in Kalaallit Nunaat in general, as you also see in other colonized communities. Here, it is used to present the woman from Upernavik as both ridiculous (are bingo events really that important?) and having problems with gambling and alcohol. Furthermore, the specific reference to the citizens of Upernavik in both the woman’s explicit statement that she is from Upernavik and the use of particular dialect features further reinforces the stereotypes associated with these people. In the sketch, the people of Upernavik are portrayed as a fisher/hunter society. For example, this is seen in the son’s appearance, as he wears overalls and carries a bag of seal meat in his hand. The man is also presented as a mother’s boy who behaves like a child and dances to his mother’s nursing songs (*aqaat*). This contributes to the construction of the Upernavik people as being childish and even simple, which is further expressed in the ascription of the term “kutattoq” to their language.

Thus, in the first TV sketch, the people of Upernavik are portrayed as traditional, childish, and alcoholic. The reference to the previous religious events further contributes to the stereotype of peripheral, ignorant people

who can be led to believe anything. The letter from the health care system informing the woman about a delayed hip surgery can be seen as a reference to the general challenges in health care in Kalaallit Nunaat, which are further problematic in the smaller towns. However, the way the woman describes the problem—now she cannot go to the bingo evenings or drink alcohol to celebrate her *atsiat* and *qujagisat*—makes it sound less important and instead ridicules the lifestyle she portrays.

In this case, both Upernavimmiutut and the Upernavik culture deviate from the norm and the standard dialect. Sketches like these keep the Upernavimmiutut dialect and its speakers stigmatized, as they present the people speaking as simple, childish, pleasure-driven, and unable to think critically. Also clear is a hierarchical difference between hunter society (lower), which is a vital part of Kalaallit society, and more modern society (higher), as the more simple ones wear the clothes that the hunters usually wear. It can also be noted that the actors avoided making fun of the Danes who came to the Upernavik district to organize the evangelical meetings. Instead, these characters are replaced with pre-colonial references regarding religion (the “Mother of the Sea” reference). This means that they are also ridiculing Kalaallit culture, not Danish culture, even though the original event included Danish evangelic missionaries, not Inuit mythology. The actors make fun of being a hunter and wearing sealskin pants, which can be seen as the opposite of the perception of being a Dane in this context. Being a hunter and believing in mythological stories is thus portrayed as being “uncool” within this discourse. It shows that coloniality (Mignolo and Walsh 2018) is still evident in society, which also characterizes the dominant Kalaallit public discourse at that time.

Although language hierarchies and stigmatizations exist in other parts of the world where there has not been colonization and therefore can exist outside of colonized language societies, I argue that the colonization of the country has much impacted the hierarchies in Kalaallit language societies.

***Kiillilit* (2018) and Memes**

From the stereotypes presented in one sketch show (Mikialai Utizai Kutsun Zun 2), a few years later, we see them again in some entertainment programs and memes on social media. *Kiillilit* (2018), the second show analyzed here, was a series consisting of 15 ten-minute-long sketch shows, and although other dialects were used, the actor speaking Upernavimmiutut is the only one not using her dialect, thus imitating the dialect. Besides this, she is the only one using a wig, thus reinforcing the comic effect. The series is a parody of the Kalaallit healthcare system, with the four actors pretending to be in hospital (See Figure 2). Although the Upernavik character in the sketch shows is supposed to be a highly educated doctor, she is portrayed



Figure 2. Kiillillit means “those with medical scrubs.” The woman on the right is parodying the Upernavik speakers. She portrays a very exaggerated character.

as a naive, strict, and unpopular woman. There is also a connotation of something sexual, again drawing in a pleasure-driven and, therefore, impulsive character. This character also sometimes makes statements that refer to things said in the satire show from 2002, so there is also an intertextuality that shows a connection between these two shows.

In recent years, there have also been more memes on Facebook pages making fun of Upernavik speakers. Here, the focus is more on language, on how the speakers are “incomprehensible,” and several of them draw on “kutanneq” childish speech (see the section Kutanneq). However, some are more about how people from Upernavik district are perceived from an outside perspective. For example, a meme expressing enthusiasm for the heavy metal band Pukuut from Kangarsuatsiaq (a settlement near Upernavik), roughly translates as: “Pukuut—you are very enthusiastic about them—until you find out they are from Upernavik.”

Overall, the various media and texts express negative attitudes toward the speakers and the language, which are reproduced in different media and reach several generations in this way. Thus, the process of *mediatization* (Androutsopoulos 2014) contributes to sustaining the stereotypes associated with Upernavimmiutut. Figure 3 shows an example of one of the memes making fun of the Upernavimmiutut dialect associated with the childish language discussed in the next section.



Figure 3. The meme shows how the woman eagerly says it's called Upernavik, while the cat confidently replies that it's Kutannavik. The word refers to *kutanneq*, a word used to describe childish language, thereby stigmatizing Upernavik speakers. Credit: Kannaalissuaq.²

Upernavik Dialect

Kutanneq

When reading about Upernavimmiutut, you will encounter the word *kutanneq*, a derogatory term if it is used to refer to an adult way of speaking. Defined in Greenlandic-Danish and Inuit dictionaries as child's language or indistinct speech, the word *kutanneq* is still used to describe children or grown-ups who are not speaking correctly, usually in a non-derogatory way. However, when used regarding the speech of a fluent adult who has no speech deficits, it is very derogatory. The earliest historical document I found where *kutanneq* was linked to Upernavimmiutut speakers was from 1904 when Thalbitzer spent ten days in Upernavik and Kangersuatsiaq (Prøven). He interviewed four adults in and near Upernavik while traveling across the Disko Bay through Ummannaq and Upernavik (Thalbitzer 1904). He writes that he has heard of some people who speak a "child language" in Kalaallit Nunaat. He believes that it is widespread among women and that it is particularly prevalent in Upernavik. While staying there, he had not met anyone speaking in this "childish" way, except for one old lady with whom he spoke. He made a list based on his conversation with her. Here, he is slightly wavering in his description of the dialect. First he says that Upernavimmiutut may or may not be influenced by the *kutattoq* phenomenon. In contrast, in his later description

2. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1009669986048203&set=a.815246818823855>, accessed June 3, 2025.

of the differences between North Greenlandic and Upernavimmiutut, he writes: “These peculiarities of the Upernavik dialect present themselves in a strange light on account of the fact that the kutattut phenomenon is especially common in this part of Greenland. The organs of speech here seem to have a special tendency to a childish pronunciation of the words” (Thalbitzer 1904, 200).

Thalbitzer appears to be stating that the Upernavik speakers were biologically designed to pronounce the words childishly. While this is an apparent ideological opinion because stating that something is childish is a value-loaded statement (Thalbitzer 1904), it is a common trait in colonial contexts, as colonial subjects are often seen as primitive or childish, i.e., not very smart. At the same time, colonial understandings of Indigenous peoples often involve accounting for their practices by referring to biological explanation (e.g. “the organs of speech,” as seen above). In this manner, Indigenous peoples are presented as being less cultivated and more primitive than are representatives of the European colonial power.

Despite attempting to give a neutral description of the properties of language, Thalbitzer’s choice of words clearly shows that he believes the dialect is aberrant or incorrect. This can be seen in his glossary where, on one hand, he uses the heading “Normal North Greenlandic,” while on the other, he uses “kutättoq Greenlandic at Upernavik.”

This discussion and labelling appear to have had an unfortunate influence on the dialectological tradition in Kalaallit Nunaat, as the term *kutattoq* was adopted by both Robert Petersen (e.g., 1967, 2003) and Michael Fortescue (1986) in their work on the language use of the region. Unfortunately, the label with a derogatory meaning has become the norm, as has its association with Upernavik. In other words, dialectologists have themselves contributed to the stereotype of the Upernavik way of speaking as being “childish.”

In his brief description, Robert Petersen writes that Upernavimmiutut is the only ‘kutattoq’ dialect in Kalaallit Nunaat. He mentions that the myths tell the story of the *Tunersuit*, the Dorset people, how they were kutattut, and that their speech in the myths, as represented, is similar to the previously registered words from Upernavik:

One feature that the Upernavik dialect had earlier was that it was a so-called “kutattoq-dialect,” incidentally the only one in Greenland... Similar developments have only been recorded from Labrador in Canada; but the legends speak of tornit or Dorset people as kutattut, and the reproduction of the tornit’s speech in the legends actually sounds a lot like the early registrations of words from Upernavik. (Petersen 2003, 30)

As there is no reference to the registered words of Upernavik dialect that Petersen referred to in his descriptions, it is not easy to know exactly which ones he means. When I went through his references in the book, I found that the earliest link between Upernavimmiutut and the kutattut dialect was from Thalbitzer. I therefore assume that this is the document he refers (indirectly) to.

Meanwhile, Petersen also refers to a story in the descriptions of the Upernavimmiutut dialect (Petersen 2003), which includes Tunersuit. Although no direct linguistic connection between Upernavik speakers and Tunersuit can be proven, the word kutanneq itself is still associated with these stories. Because this particular story tells that Tunersuit are not very smart and speak a childish language, it is easy to connect Upernavik speakers in that ideological field, or in Eckert's terms, *the indexical field*. This is also evident in Petersen's description of Upernavimmiutut when he associates the dialect with the Tunersuit language (ibid.). Concerning Fortescue's work, he emphasizes that calling a language "kutattoq" is derogatory and should not be used when discussing a language. He then proceeds to describe why people consider the dialect a "kutattoq" dialect (Fortescue 1986).

A more recent discussion of the topic is from well-known Kalaaleq content creator and social media influencer Qupanuk Olsen from *Q's Greenland*.³ She asked world-renowned biologist and DNA researcher Eske Willerslev whether the Tunersuit actually existed. He confirmed that DNA studies showed that Kalaallit ancestors (Inuit) and Dorset (Tunersuit) culture lived side by side at one time and that due to severe inbreeding, as a result, they were not very clever and were linguistically challenged ("poor speakers," *Arctic Hub*, 00:58-01:00), as the myths say (*Arctic Hub* Facebook page, see link below). However, inbred or not, the accounts of Tunersuit being linguistically challenged stem from the oral tradition of a people different from them, known as the Thule culture. This means that this must be regarded from a very critical perspective. Intergroup processes will automatically lead to stereotyping and belittling another group (Abrams and Hogg 1990).

In his dialectological work, Rischel points out that although Tunersuit may have lived alongside the Thule culture, we need to know more about their language use (Rischel 1986), so that attempts to describe their language are not just hypothetical.

Eske Willerslev's comments on Tunersuit language use are not only assumptions, linguistically speaking, but they also contribute to the enregisterment of the Upernavik way of speaking as being childish. As shown earlier, the term kutanneq has been associated with both Tunersuit and Upernavik speakers, and the video reproduces and reinforces this

3. <https://www.facebook.com/InternationalArcticHub/videos/1170053193970285/?fs=e&rdid=ei1llSFaXaCSYLLt>, accessed June 3, 2025.

stereotype. This video does not connect Upernavik speakers with Tunersuit. However, the enregisterment that has been going on for years gets reinforced with such stories and the reproduced stereotypes.

Hans Lynge, author, artist, and public intellectual, is the best-known of those who have worked with the Upernavimmiutut dialect. He collected stories and myths from Upernavik and the surrounding area and made complete transcriptions of the recordings in Upernavimmiutut for the Danish audience (Lynge 1955). He writes about the sounds that distinguish the Upernavik and West Greenlandic dialects (Kitaamiusut). He writes: “Endnu er Upernavik-sproget ikke modent til f og r, de finere konsonanter, som vi har fået fra Europa.... Mine afvigelser fra det anerkendte statssprog er ikke forsøg på at lave om på vor retskrivning, men må anses som hæderlige forsøg på at meddele og bevare den uforfalskede grønlandske udtale” (Lynge 1955, 7-8).⁴

Although Lynge does not directly refer to *kutanneq* (as have the descriptions mentioned above), he indicates that the dialect is not yet mature for the fine European consonants, indicating that the dialect still has deficits and is inferior compared to European, or those with /f/ and /r/ sounds. So while he does not directly say that the dialect is a “kutattoq” dialect, he does indicate that it is underdeveloped and thus ideologically aligns with the view that Upernavimmiutut is childish. It therefore falls in the indexical field of *kutattoq* (Eckert 2008). In his introduction to the book in *Kitaamiusut*, he writes that the dialect in Upernavik and the surrounding places is a peculiar language (Lynge [1967], 1991).

Such attitudes toward the dialect speak to the prevailing ideology that Upernavimmiutut is a childish version of *Kitaamiusut*. Again, we observe a colonial point of view that considers colonial subjects to be immature and underdeveloped. This view has been transferred to the language. It is important to mention that Lynge talks about the so-called *i-dialect* as “the real Greenlandic *i*,” which according to him had been replaced with a *u*; it is the one that is now called *u-dialect* (Lynge 1955, 7–8; see also Table 1). In his introduction to his revised book, *Inuppaat*, he writes that he had tried to be loyal to that peculiar dialect of Upernavik speakers (Lynge [1967], 1991).

Both Fortescue and Petersen use the term *kutanneq* in their descriptions, stating that it is called a “kutattut-dialect” because the speakers change the uvular consonants to velar ones (Fortescue 1986; Petersen 2003).

4. The Upernavik language is not yet matured for f and r, the finer consonants we have received from Europe... My deviations from the recognized state language are not attempts to change our orthography but must be regarded as honest attempts to communicate and preserve the unadulterated Greenlandic pronunciation (my translation).

The uvular /q/ is among the latest sounds children learn to pronounce, and they use /k/ instead. According to Fortescue, this is why Upernavimmiutut is considered to be a childish language (kutattut) (Fortescue 1986).

To summarize how researchers have reproduced the stereotypes over time, we observe two ideological positions regarding Upernavimmiutut: (1) The dialect is a kutattut dialect following Thalbitzer, Petersen, and Fortescue. In this, we can include Lynge, who claims that the dialect is still immature, thus subscribing to that ideology; and (2) The dialect is different from Kitaamiusut due to physiological deficits of the speakers, resulting in the language being underdeveloped and childish. We observe this view when Petersen links Upernavimmiutut to the Dorset people who, according to Willerslev, were bad at speaking and were stupid as a result of inbreeding.

When the most prominent researchers and opinion leaders in Kalaallit Nunaat express negative opinions about the dialect and its speakers, it is no wonder that the stigma persists today.

Iconization, Fractal Recursivity, and Erasure

As mentioned, Irvine and Gal describe three semiotic processes (iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure) related to how language ideologies are created. In the context of Kalaallit Nunaat, we can see clear examples of these processes. Here, iconization is understood as an ideological one-to-one relationship between being Kalaallit and speaking Kalaallisut. This way, citizens who do not speak Kalaallisut are ideologically erased, and there is a further erasure connected to the highly normative standard ideology in the country, where variation within Kalaallisut is also denied or ignored. The Danish-Kalaallit relationship is evidently influenced by coloniality. For example, this is observed in how certain ideologies are based on a dichotomy between primitive/civilized and modern/old-fashioned, tied to the Danish language versus Kalaallisut. While Indigenous people have been seen by their colonizers throughout history with negative stereotypes (Smith 2021), these ideologies are, in the case of Kalaallit Nunaat, passed on internally in the country so that people speaking non-standard Kalaallisut are viewed as being underdeveloped, primitive, unintelligent, etc. This is an example of fractal recursivity where differences made on one level (between Danes and Kalaallit) are transferred onto another level (between standard Kalaallit speakers and Upernavimmiutut speakers), resisting domination on one level but reproducing it on another (see also Kleemann-Andersen and Maegaard *fc.*).

Conclusion

I began this article with Woolard's words that linguistic variations are socially patterned and related to how power structures and resources are distributed on a personal and an institutional level. The article has reviewed the power structures, the language ideologies and how they can persist in traditional media and social media, and the research in Kalaallit Nunaat on the Upernavik dialect and the views expressed in different media. Indeed, there is a common thread between the early descriptions of the Upernavimmiutut dialect in research, its associated ideologies, and the social media memes of recent years. Although around 120 years have gone by since the earlier descriptions of Upernavimmiutut, the stereotypes regarding Upernavik speakers continue to be reproduced today by the people in power, whether in research or in entertainment distribution, i.e., satirical shows. With easier access to social media, the stereotypes get distributed faster and more easily among ordinary people, not only those in power.

There is a sense of coloniality in the production of knowledge in research, where various researchers have helped to conventionalize the harmful ideologies and stereotypes that have been circulated. Coloniality exists because of views expressing negative opinions of the more traditional ways of living, such as a hunter society. In other words, some statements show that modern life is better and more developed. Thus, there is also an expression of attitudes that represent a person as being more intelligent if they live a certain way or, in this case, also talk in a certain way.

Standard ideologies play a considerable role in maintaining the marginalized position of dialects that differ from the standard language. In this context, Kitaamiusut, the western Kalaallisut language, is favored. Humour and ridicule normalize the mobilized views and maintain stereotypes of certain groups. In this regard, as the only public service media provider, KNR plays a massive role. Using humour and ridicule to hold people in power accountable is nothing new, but kicking downward and making fun of marginalized groups, especially in such a small country, is not only harmful but dividing, affecting both groups and individuals.

Agha's enregisterment refers to developing an understanding of a particular group using different signs and registers to form a whole—a relationship that is often stereotypical. In the satire shows, you can see how Upernavimmiutut is enregistered using exaggerated attributes. Stereotypes about this dialect are reproduced by presenting language with caricatures that appear unintelligent and old-fashioned. These ideologies can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century, and enregisterment has been ongoing for decades, as these ideologies do not emerge overnight.

One of the questions in this theme issue was: "What is going on with local dialects? Does the preservation of dialects help support the language?" The short answer is yes. Although public debates often state that you need

to concentrate on a standard language to protect the language, several factors suggest that strengthening and empowering local dialects will help strengthen the national language and create a more diverse and inclusive language view. This will empower both individuals and groups. First, it is crucial—particularly in a postcolonial context—to acknowledge people’s identity and their right to speak their language. Using a European language ideology based on the notion of a standard language existing alongside several dialects can be considered to be an instance of coloniality.

As shown in this article, standardization and intolerance toward other varieties create stereotypes and further marginalize certain groups. This echoes the phenomenon of a colonial language suppressing the language of the colonized. Therefore, policies that strengthen local dialects must be inclusive, empowering marginalized groups and ultimately strengthening the overall community.

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Récit d'une expérience pratique de développement collaboratif d'un lexique en éducation en inuktitut pour la formation enseignante au Nunavik

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RÉSUMÉ

Au Nunavik, comme dans les autres territoires autochtones, l'école a été implantée à des fins d'assimilation par les gouvernements néocoloniaux. Cet article relate un projet de recherche-action collaborative exploratoire soutenant la formation professionnelle à l'enseignement en inuktitut dans deux communautés inuit du Nunavik : Ivujivik et Puvirnituk. Il est une composante d'un projet global de développement éducatif dans ces communautés, à leur initiative, en collaboration avec des professionnelles de la formation et de la recherche universitaires. Les enseignantes en formation, membres de la communauté, n'avaient jamais eu accès à une formation formelle à l'enseignement, donc à la transmission de l'inuktitut dans le contexte scolaire. Dans ce contexte, le développement d'un lexique en inuktitut au début des années 1990, en tant que référence destinée à faciliter le travail de transmission s'est imposé. Guidé par le paradigme de recherche autochtone, le groupe de développement du lexique adopte des processus itératifs de co-construction de la connaissance fondés sur les besoins des membres des deux communautés. L'objectif global du groupe est de contribuer au développement d'un

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discours professionnel en enseignement en inuktitut par les acteurs concernés. Parallèlement, il vise l'atteinte d'une autodétermination éducative, permettant à l'inuktitut de maintenir sa place dans la société contemporaine, en cohérence avec les aspirations éducatives et culturelles des communautés du Nunavik.

MOTS-CLÉS

Lexique, éducation, Nunavik, partenariat université-communauté, recherche-action collaborative

ABSTRACT

Narrative of a Practical Experience in the Collaborative Development of an Inuktitut Educational Lexicon for Teacher Training in Nunavik

In Nunavik, as in other indigenous territories, schools were established as instruments of assimilation by neocolonial governments. This article presents an exploratory collaborative action-research project aimed at supporting professional teacher training in Inuktitut within two Inuit communities in Nunavik: Ivujivik et Puvirnituk. The initiative is part of a broader educational development project undertaken at the request of these communities, in collaboration with university professionals in education and research. Teachers in training, members of their respective communities, had never had access to formal initial teacher education program, education, particularly concerning the transmission of Inuktitut in the school context. In response, the development of a lexicon in Inuktitut, at the beginning of 1990, conceived as a reference tool to facilitate educational transmission, became necessary. According to the Indigenous research paradigm, the lexicon development group adopts iterative processes of co-constructing knowledge based on the needs expressed by members of both communities. The group's overarching objective is to contribute to the emergence of a professional teaching discourse in Inuktitut, developed by those directly involved. At the same time, it aims to support educational self-determination, enabling Inuktitut to maintain a meaningful place in contemporary society, in alignment with the cultural and educational aspirations of Nunavik's communities.

KEYWORDS

Lexicon, education, Nunavik, university–community partnership, collaborative action research

*Nous exprimons notre reconnaissance à Tiili Alasuak
qui inspire ce projet depuis ses débuts.*

Depuis 1984, au Nunavik, l'Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT) offre et élabore des programmes de formation à l'enseignement et des curriculums scolaires (Maheux 2013), selon une entente de cogestion avec les comités d'école d'Ivujivik et de Puvirnituk (Puvirnituk et Ivujivik 1995). Ce partenariat, établi à la demande des communautés, repose sur des principes de réciprocité, de reconnaissance de l'équité entre les cultures et du droit des peuples à l'autodétermination. La priorité de ces partenaires consiste à former des enseignantes inuit aptes à œuvrer professionnellement au sein des écoles de leurs communautés pour transmettre leur héritage culturel et linguistique dans le contexte complexe de l'éducation au Nunavik.

Les programmes de formation à l'enseignement ont été développés et mis à jour progressivement, au fil de l'identification des besoins de formation à travers les activités de chaque cours, eu égard aux standards de compétences du ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ), tout en s'assurant que le contenu soit en adéquation avec la culture et la langue inuit. La prestation de chaque cours s'organise et se réalise conjointement par deux personnes ressources¹ : l'une, étant chargée de l'enseignement disciplinaire académique, est généralement qallunaaq (allochtone), et inuk lorsque disponible ; l'autre étant en charge de l'adaptation et de la traduction et de la communication en inuktitut du contenu de formation. En tant que *co-enseignante* inuk, elle veille à ce que le contenu de cours accorde une place centrale à la culture et la langue inuit.

Dès les premières offres de cours, il y a plus de 40 ans, les co-enseignantes inuit ont rapidement été confrontées à l'absence de termes en inuktitut pour exprimer des concepts éducatifs clés. Cette limite terminologique a mis en évidence la nécessité de rendre disponible un vocabulaire adapté en appui à la formation des enseignantes, afin d'assurer une éducation culturellement pertinente. Les personnes engagées dans les programmes de formation ; des enseignantes, conseillères pédagogiques, retraitées, et chercheuses associées inuit et qallunaaq, ont entrepris volontairement un projet de développement lexical, selon leur compréhension et les ressources disponibles. La création, en 1990, d'un Groupe de développement d'un lexique dans le domaine de l'éducation en inuktitut s'est imposée comme une solution pertinente pour répondre à cet enjeu. Les activités de ce groupe interculturel se sont poursuivies jusqu'en 2019,

1. La ressource académique désigne la personne engagée par l'université (professeur ou chargé de cours) pour dispenser un cours. La ressource co-enseignante inuit fait référence à l'expert de la langue et de la culture inuit. Les personnes étudiantes-enseignantes sont des étudiantes universitaires qui suivent la formation en enseignement tout en continuant à exercer comme enseignantes dans les écoles.

année de publication d'une première version, avant d'être mis sur pause jusqu'en 2023. Cette interruption a ouvert un espace de réflexion sur les façons de réactiver et de renouveler cette démarche, toujours essentielle dans le contexte actuel de la formation enseignante.

Ce projet s'inscrit précisément dans le contexte spécifique du projet des écoles d'Ivujivik et de Puvirnituk². Il s'appuie sur une expérience de terrain de longue durée, vécue collectivement par des partenaires d'Ivujivik et de Puvirnituk et de l'UQAT engagées dans la formation des enseignantes inuit. Les concepts présentés plus bas et leur mise en réseau formalisent la dynamique déjà existante, à la lumière d'approches contemporaines, en éducation. À travers une démarche inductive (Kovak 2010), où les savoirs se construisent en interaction avec la pratique, cet article vise à rendre compte d'un récit co-construit de savoirs professionnels menés sur plusieurs décennies. Ce texte propose un récit rétrospectif d'une recherche-action collaborative, articulée autour d'un processus de travail consacré au développement d'une terminologie en éducation en inuktitut³. Suivant la contextualisation du projet, nous explorerons les concepts qui guident l'action du groupe afin de présenter la mise en œuvre du processus et quelques interprétations de l'analyse réflexive exploratoire menée par les membres de ce groupe interculturel.

Mise en contexte

La colonisation a perturbé les pratiques linguistiques de l'ensemble des populations qui l'ont subie. Avant la sédentarisation forcée des Inuit, la transmission de l'inuktitut s'effectuait oralement et naturellement, à travers les activités quotidiennes du mode de vie nomade, par la famille élargie et la communauté, selon une dynamique collective et intergénérationnelle (Qumaq 2020). La scolarisation a joué un rôle central dans le processus de colonisation, notamment par l'imposition de pensionnats autochtones et par l'implantation d'écoles dans les communautés vers le milieu du XX^e siècle. Le projet colonial, ayant pour but l'assimilation des Inuit à la société majoritaire juridiquement en charge de la gouvernance du territoire qu'ils occupent, c'est-à-dire la société canadienne et la société québécoise,

2. Pour en savoir plus sur l'historique de ce projet, vous pouvez consulter : Paul 2023 b; Paul *et al.* 2023a; Pellerin *et al.* 2020; Maheux *et al.* 1996, Bergeron *et al.* 2001, Puvirnituk et Ivujivik 1995.

3. La terminologie développée à ce jour est accessible sur le site : <https://lexique.uqat.ca/index.php/fr/>.

comporte deux étapes au Nunavik⁴. D'abord, dans les années 1950, le gouvernement fédéral canadien a imposé des politiques visant à regrouper et à sédentariser les familles inuit. Le plan de sédentarisation incluait l'accès aux allocations familiales, conditionnelles à la fréquentation des « écoles fédérales » de langue anglaise (Paul 2023b). Par la suite, à partir des années 1970, le gouvernement du Québec crée la Direction générale du Nouveau-Québec responsable de l'éducation sur le territoire du Nunavik, elle implante une école de langue française dans chaque communauté (*Ibid.*) Cette double colonisation a profondément affecté les communautés inuit (CVR 2015; Qumaq 2020). Les tentatives de substitution des patrimoines culturels et linguistiques autochtones par des systèmes issus des modèles eurocentrés, fondés sur l'écrit, ont eu des impacts significatifs et durables sur le mode de vie des Inuit, en particulier sur la transmission de leur langue, des savoirs et des connaissances fondatrices de leur identité culturelle (Dorais et Krupnik 2005; MacDonald 2023).

Les Inuit ont rejeté l'assimilation et les approches dominantes de l'ère coloniale (Nungak 2019; Paul *et al.* 2023). En ce qui concerne l'éducation scolaire, au moins depuis les années 1970, les intervenants inuit en éducation du Nunavik souhaitent que la transmission des connaissances aux élèves leur permette de développer les compétences nécessaires à la vie dans la société contemporaine tout en préservant et en maintenant leur langue et leur culture (Inuit Tunngavingat Nunamini 1983; Kativik Ilisarniliriniq 2025a; Pellerin *et al.* 2016).

Afin d'atteindre ces objectifs éducatifs, l'enseignement de l'inuktitut a commencé à être intégré dans les écoles provinciales au Nunavik au début des années 1970. Cependant, la standardisation de l'éducation en inuktitut dans les écoles pose des défis particuliers, puisque, contrairement aux langues européennes, l'inuktitut, transmis oralement, n'avait jamais eu à être enseigné dans de tels cadres formels auparavant. La distance culturelle entre les cadres formels d'enseignement euro-occidentaux, d'une part, et les cadres éducatifs enracinés dans les savoirs inuit, d'autre part, caractérise le processus éducatif auquel les élèves inuit doivent s'adapter (Bertrand 2016).

La formation professionnelle des enseignantes inuit s'est également avérée essentielle pour faire face à ce contexte éducatif issu de la colonisation. Son fondement réside dans le soutien à l'éducation inuit par et pour les Inuit et repose sur la préservation et la réappropriation des savoirs et de

4. En 1912, le gouvernement du Canada transfère l'ensemble du district de l'Ungava à la province du Québec par l'intermédiaire de la *Loi de l'extension des frontières du Québec*. Ces transferts territoriaux se font sans le consentement des Inuit, sans qu'ils en soient informés. Ce n'est qu'en 1963, lorsque René Lévesque, alors ministre des Ressources naturelles, établit la Direction générale du Nouveau-Québec pour administrer et développer le Nord, que l'information selon laquelle les Inuit font partie de la province du Québec leur est communiquée (Rivet 2020).

la langue inuit, avec ses variantes dialectales, dans les espaces éducatifs formels (Pellerin *et al.* 2016). À travers cette formation, le développement d'une terminologie professionnelle dans la langue des Inuit, en harmonie avec leur vision du monde, constitue une action concrète pour que l'inuktitut maintienne son statut et soit préservé.

Selon le chapitre I-13.3 de la *Loi sur l'instruction publique du Québec* (Gouvernement du Québec 2025), la Convention de la Baie-James et du Nord québécois (CBJNQ) (Gouvernement du Québec 1998) formalise et confie la responsabilité administrative de l'enseignement de la culture et de la langue inuit aux écoles des communautés administrées par la Commission scolaire Kativik, désormais renommée Kativik Ilisarniliriniq (Kativik Ilisarniliriniq 2025a). Cette gouvernance institutionnelle de l'éducation s'inscrit dans un contexte linguistique et culturel complexe qui caractérise la réalité du Nunavik. En effet, selon le Recensement de 2021, sur les 12 595 personnes s'identifiant comme Inuit au Nunavik, 12 245 ont déclaré l'inuktitut comme langue maternelle, représentant ainsi 97,2% de la population inuit de la région (Fernandes *et al.* 2021). L'anglais est la langue la plus utilisée dans les services publics et interinstitutionnels en raison du contexte fédéral, tandis que le français est utilisé à l'école, selon les exigences du Québec. Ces trois langues coexistent dans les communautés, mais selon des statuts inégaux. L'anglais et le français, en tant que langues officielles du Canada, exercent une pression importante sur l'inuktitut. Cette situation asymétrique crée un contexte de triglossie (Da Silveira 2009; Dorais 2024) dans lequel l'inuktitut demeure vulnérable en raison du manque de reconnaissance formelle et de vocabulaire (MacDonald 2023).

Dans un contexte multilingue marqué par des dynamiques asymétriques entre l'inuktitut, l'anglais et le français, l'organisation linguistique actuelle de l'enseignement au Nunavik se structure comme suit : les enfants sont scolarisés en inuktitut de la maternelle à la deuxième année du primaire ; la troisième année constitue une période de transition durant laquelle les élèves amorcent l'apprentissage des matières scolaires dans l'une des deux langues officielles, en anglais ou en français (Kativik Ilisarniliriniq 2025b), selon le choix des parents. Par la suite, l'enseignement scolaire s'effectue principalement dans cette langue seconde (Da Silveira 2013). La présence d'enseignantes inuit en inuktitut est ainsi concentrée dans les premières années de scolarisation au Nunavik. Pour le reste de leur scolarisation, les élèves sont généralement encadrés par des enseignantes non-inuit (qallunaat) qui dispensent leur enseignement en français ou en anglais.

Le régime pédagogique inclut des cours de langue et de culture inuit, dispensés en inuktitut par des enseignantes inuit de la quatrième année du primaire jusqu'à la fin de la scolarité obligatoire (Kativik Ilisarniliriniq 2025b), soit en secondaire 5 (environ 16 ans d'âge), selon le système scolaire québécois. La présence des enseignantes inuit dès les premières années de

scolarité permet d'établir un lien et une transition entre la première socialisation au sein de la communauté et le contexte scolaire (Pellerin *et al.* 2025). Ces enseignantes, formées directement dans leurs communautés tout en enseignant, incarnent le processus de transmission de la langue et de la culture dans le cadre de l'institution scolaire. Cela favorise une continuité culturelle dans un contexte marqué par l'héritage de la sédentarisation et des déplacements forcés.

Le développement terminologique dans les langues autochtones locales est fondamental pour permettre aux enseignantes d'exprimer et de transmettre, en inuktitut, les connaissances théoriques et pratiques enracinées dans leur culture, soutenant ainsi l'objectif plus large d'une souveraineté éducative (McCarty et Nicholas 2014). De nombreuses communautés autochtones à travers le monde ont d'ailleurs initié des projets visant le développement de lexiques, afin de renforcer la préservation de leurs langues et de favoriser le partage intergénérationnel des savoirs. Ce projet s'inscrit dans un ensemble d'initiatives similaires menées au Nunavik telles que celles portées par l'Institut culturel Avataq (s.d.) ou encore les travaux lexicographiques de Louis-Jacques Dorais (1978). À ces efforts s'ajoute le soutien offert par la Société Makivvik à travers le programme Inuit Language Component (ILC), qui encourage le développement local de projets liés à la revitalisation linguistique et culturelle (Makivvik 2025). Plus particulièrement, le projet du Conseil national de recherche du Canada (CRNC), en collaboration avec le *Pirurvik Centre* et le gouvernement du Nunavut, travaille au développement de nouvelles technologies pour les apprenants de l'inuktitut (Kuhn *et al.* 2020). Ces projets lexicaux ont en commun qu'ils ne se concentrent pas uniquement sur la création de dictionnaires mais s'inscrivent dans une stratégie communautaire de préservation des langues visant non seulement à documenter les langues, mais aussi à les rendre applicables à des fins éducatives. Le projet de néologie inuit destiné à la formation des enseignantes au Nunavik, dont il est question dans cet article, poursuit des objectifs similaires en visant l'amélioration des actions didactiques pour une meilleure réussite éducative et scolaire.

Conceptualisation exploratoire de l'approche interculturelle

Cette section propose une conceptualisation exploratoire d'une approche interculturelle du développement d'un lexique pédagogique en inuktitut. celui-ci vise à soutenir la réussite des enseignantes inuit en tant que professionnelles de l'enseignement ainsi que la réussite éducative de leurs élèves. L'approche de travail repose sur le principe de la reconnaissance mutuelle de l'équité des cultures en interaction et s'actualise dans un processus dialogique (Quintriqueo *et al.* 2015). Une telle approche s'avère essentielle

dans les relations professionnelles entre les acteurs institutionnels et étatiques, d'une part; et les acteurs sociaux communautaires, d'autre part (HCDH 2007). Pour comprendre le contexte de développement et l'évolution du projet à ce jour, nous nous appuyons sur le paradigme de recherche autochtone (Battiste 2008, 2015; Kovach 2021; Smith 2012, 2018), sur la méthodologie des systèmes souples de Checkland (1981) et sur le concept de *communauté de pratique* (Lave et Wenger 1991), définis ci-après. La mise en relation de ces trois éléments structure le processus de recherche-action collaborative.

Le paradigme de recherche autochtone

Le paradigme de recherche autochtone propose une définition des paramètres qui fondent notre démarche holistique (Colomb 2012). Il repose sur une relation éthique avec les savoirs et les détenteurs de ces savoirs, incluant notamment la réciprocité, la responsabilité, la pertinence contextuelle et le respect des perspectives autochtones (Battiste 2008, 2015; Kovach 2021; Smith 2012, 2018). La réalisation du processus dépend donc de l'implication des détenteurs des savoirs et des savoir-faire inuit, ainsi que de l'intégration respectueuse des valeurs culturelles. Ainsi, le processus en action dépasse l'exercice académique et s'inscrit dans une visée de transmission culturelle réelle. L'approche relationnelle vise à ancrer les processus de création des définitions et des termes dans les expériences vécues, ainsi que dans les pratiques culturelles et éducatives constitutives du projet éducatif sociocommunautaire. Le lexique devient dès lors le résultat d'un effort de collaboration alliant les savoirs académiques propres à l'enseignement, tant aux fins des activités de formation professionnelle des enseignantes que de l'apprentissage des élèves. Tout au long du processus, l'expertise linguistique et culturelle des partenaires inuit s'avère essentielle à l'atteinte des objectifs du projet. En créant un outil qui facilite la préservation et la transmission de l'inuktitut à travers les pratiques scolaires, ce projet s'inscrit dans la mouvance globale de conservation des langues et de la transmission culturelle des peuples autochtones (Battiste 2015). Selon le paradigme de recherche autochtone, le processus est ancré dans les interactions sociales d'une situation vécue (Maheux 2021; Maheux *et al.* 2020; Smith 2012).

La méthodologie des systèmes souples

La «méthodologie des systèmes souples» ou *Soft Systems Methodology* (Checkland 1981) offre une approche pertinente à l'amélioration de situation d'activités humaines. Elle est fondée sur la prise en compte des représentations des acteurs concernés. Ces derniers sont impliqués dans un processus itératif collaboratif de définition et d'amélioration d'une situation problématique, soit, dans le cas présent, l'absence d'une terminologie spécifique de la formation à l'enseignement en inuktitut. La méthodologie des systèmes souples permet ainsi de prendre en compte la complexité des représentations

d'une même situation selon les points de vue, et les perspectives constitutifs des représentations des divers acteurs dans la définition et la mise en œuvre de stratégies d'action. Les hypothèses d'actions sont négociées, analysées, mises en pratique et ajustées en continu. La dynamique du processus repose sur l'engagement réciproque des professionnelles inuit œuvrant dans les écoles et des membres travaillant dans un contexte universitaire, qui unissent leur expertise pour documenter et soutenir la transmission culturelle et éducative de l'inuktitut à la fois pour la formation des ressources enseignantes et pour les actions liées au développement de curriculum scolaire (Maheux 2009; Maheux *et al.* 1995). L'implication d'une diversité d'acteurs inuit et qallunaat, notamment les Aînés, les enseignantes, les linguistes, les professionnelles universitaires de l'enseignement et de la recherche, permet de recueillir la diversité des perspectives en présence. Dans ce cadre, les termes ou expressions, développés en inuktitut résultent ainsi des interactions entre les membres du groupe de travail sur le lexique. Cet engagement s'actualise dans la dynamique d'une communauté de pratique où les échanges entre les membres visent le développement concerté d'un lexique en éducation en inuktitut.

Une communauté de pratique pour le développement d'un lexique en inuktitut

Une communauté de pratique se définit comme un groupe d'individus partageant une préoccupation ou une passion pour une activité; ils apprennent à mieux la maîtriser grâce à des interactions régulières (Lave et Wenger 1991; Wenger-Trayner et Wenger-Trayner 2015). Conceptualisés ainsi, les connaissances et les savoirs d'expérience des membres de la communauté contextualisent le développement lexical. Créer des termes significatifs en inuktitut pour exprimer et communiquer les contenus de cours de programmes de formation à l'enseignement constitue une préoccupation commune des participantes. L'existence de cette communauté de pratique étant cohérente avec la perspective interculturelle adoptée historiquement dans ce projet éducatif en justifie naturellement le choix comme mécanisme de développement d'une terminologie en inuktitut. Les membres de la communauté de pratique élaborent une représentation et une compréhension commune des dynamiques éducatives et sociales à l'œuvre dans ce travail de développement terminologique. La langue constitue l'outil principal avec lequel les membres négocient le sens des expériences et des pratiques (Lave and Wenger 1991). Elle exprime les expériences vécues et les savoirs collectifs des locuteurs, incarnant à la fois un usage actuel et une compréhension plus profonde (Robson *et al.* 2009).

Au fil de la progression de la démarche, des termes en usage dans le contexte culturel immédiat sont intégrés, incluant des termes spécifiques à la communauté (Sarpong 2009). Ces termes sont ensuite incorporés dans la

dans lequel cette démarche s'inscrit. L'approche de recherche-action collaborative a été privilégiée dans le contexte (Bousquet 2019; Hervé 2024; Lefrançois 1997; Maheux *et al.* 2020; Maheux 2021; Smith 2012).

Les indicateurs servant à l'identification, à l'organisation et à une analyse préliminaire des points de vue des membres du groupe lexicographique ont été identifiés, rassemblés et collectés lors de discussions, de rencontres et d'entrevues exploratoires, entre juin 2023 et juin 2025. La collecte de données s'est ainsi déroulée lors de sessions de travail planifiées et d'événements organisés à des étapes clés du processus global de formation des ressources enseignantes. Ces événements incluent notamment des rencontres de préparation et de dispensation de cours en communauté entre co-enseignantes inuit et professeur, des réunions de travail en présentiel ou à distance, des échanges sur les réseaux sociaux, ainsi que des communications téléphoniques. Ces interactions ont principalement porté sur la volonté exprimée par les étudiantes et enseignantes inuit de relancer le travail de développement d'un lexique en éducation en inuktitut pour leur formation. Elles ont également permis d'aborder l'historique et le contexte de création du groupe, les méthodes utilisées, l'observation des aînées dans la mise en œuvre de la démarche de travail, les orientations souhaitées pour la reprise des activités, ainsi que les priorités à envisager. Les données ont été recueillies par observation participante et prise de notes ethnographiques en cohérence avec la démarche qualitative décrite par Van Campenhoudt et ses collègues (2022).

Une analyse thématique exploratoire et collaborative des propos tenus relatifs aux items mentionnés ci-dessus lors des groupes de discussion et des entrevues a été réalisée dans le cadre de cette publication. Cette démarche s'inspire des approches proposées par Miles et Huberman (2003) ainsi que Paillé et Mucchielli (2021), et vise à formuler une compréhension commune du processus de développement lexical en inuktitut, construite au fil du dialogue entre les participants autour de ces objets.

L'analyse thématique a permis d'induire des indicateurs du processus de définition et de traduction. Les cadres d'analyse mobilisés, qu'ils soient enracinés dans des savoirs autochtones, universitaires ou à leur croisée, mettent en dialogue des points de vue diversifiés dont l'explicitation et la négociation font ressortir les convergences fondamentales de la création d'un nouveau terme. Par exemple, dans le cas du terme *enseignante associée*, mentionné plus haut, le dialogue entre praticiennes inuit et formatrices universitaires, a mis au jour une convergence autour de l'idée que cette personne accompagne l'étudiante, l'observe, la soutient dans ses apprentissages professionnels, et partage son expérience. Ce consensus permet de guider la recherche d'un terme en inuktitut qui reflète cette posture relationnelle de soutien. De plus, l'analyse a aussi permis d'identifier des priorités d'actions en vue de la poursuite des activités du groupe de développement d'un lexique en éducation en Inuktitut.

Résultats préliminaires d'une analyse exploratoire

Les résultats préliminaires identifiés à ce stade du développement d'une terminologie en inuktitut mettent au jour divers indicateurs du processus de co-construction de termes constitutifs de contenus de formation à l'enseignement en inuktitut, initialement communiqués en langue seconde. La présentation de ces indicateurs documente la description de la démarche de travail adoptée par le groupe de développement du lexique depuis sa création en 1990. On observera que la définition et l'expression de signification en inuktitut sont liées à la démarche de co-construction. Cette section inclut également les priorités d'action identifiées par la communauté de pratique pour la poursuite des activités.

Documenter la méthode de travail historique et son évolution (1990-2019)

La méthode de travail du groupe, depuis sa création, s'est développée à travers un processus de co-construction, qui comporte des moments-clés significatifs. Ceux-ci consistent en à l'ajustement de termes existants et à la création de nouveaux mots en inuktitut. Ces moments sont d'abord présentés dans le texte et complétés par des extraits audios issus des collectes de données. Ces deux façons de présenter les moments clés (textuellement et auditivement) permettent d'illustrer partiellement l'approche méthodologique présentée plus haut et la réalité vécue lors des échanges entre les membres de la communauté de pratique. Les extraits audios présentés illustrent aussi l'usage de l'inuktitut, de l'anglais et du français dans les échanges. Nous avons fait le choix de ne pas les traduire afin de donner accès à une expression directe des pratiques des membres du groupe lexical, que nous expliquons dans le paragraphe suivant.

Le développement de la terminologie éducative en inuktitut se réfère au contenu des activités de formation. Cette démarche est conditionnée par le contenu spécifique de la programmation des cours offerts aux enseignantes pendant une année académique. Dans le cadre d'un cours universitaire, l'équipe de formateurs prévoit la participation de deux ressources : d'une part, les personnes ressources académiques allochtones ; et d'autre part, les personnes ressources co-enseignantes inuit. Ces dernières sont impliquées dans la phase de préparation du contenu d'un cours qu'elles dispensent aux étudiantes inuit. Le processus débute par la transmission de la documentation écrite, en anglais ou en français, selon la situation, d'une première planification du contenu de cours à la co-enseignante inuk par la ressource académique responsable du cours. La co-enseignante inuk s'approprie, traduit et communique le contenu en inuktitut pour en faciliter la compréhension par les étudiantes. En cours d'activité, le contenu est d'abord communiqué oralement

en anglais (parfois en français) et suivi d'une conversation en inuktitut. Les mots jugés inexistantes en inuktitut sont identifiés à travers ces échanges puis examinés collectivement lors des séances de travail du groupe du lexique en éducation. Les moments clés du processus sont identifiés comme suit :

1. Identification des termes à créer : les termes du contenu spécifique des cours de formation, qui n'ont pas d'équivalent en inuktitut, sont identifiés par les ressources co-enseignantes. Un mot à la fois est discuté.
2. Consultation de références : les membres du groupe consultent les définitions formelles du mot dans des ouvrages de référence en anglais, français ou inuktitut⁶ (dictionnaires, documents historiques ou scientifiques, etc.) et elles recourent aux aînées comme expertes langagières pour valider ou approfondir la signification des termes.
3. Apport des ressources éducatives : explication et illustration de chaque terme en fournissant des exemples de son utilisation dans différents contextes.
4. Communication dialogique : favoriser les échanges d'idées entre les partenaires inuit en inuktitut et entre les universitaires en anglais et en français, puis tous ensemble.
5. Identification d'un terme en inuktitut : suggérer un mot en inuktitut par analogie avec un terme existant ou créer un terme complètement nouveau.
6. Précision de la traduction : le processus, étant dynamique, les termes en inuktitut font l'objet d'ajustements afin d'affiner et de maintenir une traduction optimale en inuktitut. Pour ce faire, une conversation s'engage entre les partenaires inuit en inuktitut jusqu'à l'obtention d'un consensus sur la terminologie.

Pour témoigner de cette pratique, le premier extrait audio (Extrait 1 : récit de pratique)⁷ propose une explication de la démarche décrite ci-haut. Trois membres pionnières du groupe, Gisèle Maheux, professeure associée de l'UQAT, Siaja Mangiuk, enseignante d'inuktitut à l'école Nuvviti et Elisapi

6. Bien que d'autres ressources lexicographiques en inuktitut existent, nous avons choisi de ne mentionner ici que les documents qui ont été effectivement consultés et mobilisés par les membres du groupe dans le cadre de leur démarche :

Qumaq, Taamusi. 1991. *Inuit uqausillaringit: Ulirnaigutiit*. Québec : Association Inuikiutiit Katimajit et Institut culturel Avataq.

Schneider, Lucien. *Ulirnaigutiit: dictionnaire inuktitut-anglais du Nord du Québec, du Labrador et des dialectes de l'Arctique oriental (avec un index anglais-inuktitut)*. Traduit par Dermot Ronan F. Collis. Québec : Presses de l'Université Laval, 1985.

7. Maheux *et al.*, «Récit de pratique de la démarche lexicale en éducation en Inuktitut», enregistré en 2024, audio, <https://lexique.uqat.ca/Article/01-RecitPratique.mp3>.

Uitangak, conseillère pédagogique à l'école Ikaarvik de Puvirnituk expliquent les moments clés de la démarche⁸.

Afin d'illustrer concrètement les propos précédents, deux types de d'opérations sont présentées: la première concerne l'ajustement d'un concept déjà présent dans le document lexical avant 2019, tandis que le second porte sur la création d'un nouveau terme en réponse à un besoin émergent. Dans le premier cas, un exemple concret d'ajustement terminologique concerne le mot *habileté*, utilisé fréquemment dans les documents de formation. Dans l'extrait audio (Extrait 2: habileté)⁹, les participantes expliquent les nuances importantes entre différents types d'habiletés et la nécessité d'en distinguer les applications selon les contextes scolaires. Elles insistent sur l'importance de choisir un terme qui reflète à la fois les compétences physiques, mentales et relationnelles nécessaires au travail éducatif. Après plusieurs échanges, les membres du groupe ont retenu un ensemble de termes en inuktitut qui traduisent de manière nuancée la notion d'habileté selon ses usages: *pigunnatalik/-pijunnatalik/-runnatuq sunatuq sunatinnamik pigunnatalik* (ΛJ^aαC^c/-ΛJ^aαC^c/-P^aαD^b r^aαD^aαΓ^b ΛJ^aαC^c). Dans le deuxième cas, il s'agit de la création d'un mot qui n'apparaît pas dans la version existante du document, développé avant 2019. Le terme «atome» est issu d'un cours de la formation enseignante, offert à Puvirnituk durant l'hiver 2023: DID1641 *Teaching and Learning Sciences and Technology in Nunavik Kindergarten and Elementary School I*. Les co-enseignantes inuit ont fait le constat de l'absence de nombreux mots en inuktitut dans le domaine des sciences lors de la dispensation de ce cours. Le terme développé collectivement est: *atausikallak* (<C>r^bc^b), qui signifie littéralement «ce qui est très petit, indivisible», ce qui correspond à la définition scientifique de l'atome. Les échanges ayant mené à ce choix sont accessibles sous l'extrait 3 (Extrait 3: atome)¹⁰. Elisapie Lamoureux, enseignante à l'école Nuvviti et nouvelle membre du groupe, a souligné, lors d'une discussion tenue le 30 juin 2025, que le travail de développement du lexique ne consiste pas à créer des termes de manière arbitraire. Comme le terme créé en inuktitut pour définir atome, chaque mot doit, selon elle, porter une signification claire et ancrée dans la langue, afin de permettre une véritable appropriation des concepts par les enseignantes et les apprenantes inuit en inuktitut.

8. Les noms des participantes apparaissent dans le texte puisqu'elles ont pris part à la rédaction en tant que co-auteurs. Leur identification reflète leur rôle actif dans le projet ainsi que dans la production des savoirs présentés, notamment à travers les extraits audios.

9. Groupe de développement du lexique en éducation en inuktitut, «Discussions sur l'ajustement du terme habileté», enregistré en 2024, <https://lexique.uqat.ca/Article/02-Habilete.mp3>.

10. Groupe de développement du lexique en éducation en inuktitut, «Extrait de la discussion sur la création du terme atome», enregistré en 2024, https://lexique.uqat.ca/Article/03-Atome_01.mp3.

Priorités identifiées pour la poursuite de la démarche

Les activités du groupe ayant cessé après le lancement d'une version papier et du site web en 2019, l'analyse du contenu met en lumière la volonté de reprendre et de poursuivre le développement du lexique en inuktitut. Les membres ont constaté la nécessité de reprendre et de poursuivre le développement et la mise à jour de la terminologie en inuktitut aux fins de la formation des enseignantes. De nouvelles priorités, dont la présentation suit, ont alors été identifiées.

Réviser le lexique en inuktitut défini avant 2019

Étant donné que la compréhension et la signification des termes évoluent, les participants du groupe ont souligné la nécessité de revisiter et valider le travail accompli entre 1990 et 2019. Il s'agit de compléter les définitions manquantes, de valider les termes existants et d'adapter l'orthographe au système d'écriture standardisé, *Qaliujaaqpait*, recommandé par la Stratégie nationale sur l'éducation inuit (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami 2011). Les participants ont également exploré des outils potentiels pour appuyer leur travail, comme des moteurs de recherche et des formations en lexicographie, afin de rationaliser le processus de néologie.

Augmenter la fréquence des rencontres

Le développement du lexique en inuktitut nécessite un long processus de réflexion. Pour actualiser ce travail, les partenaires inuit et allochtones universitaires proposent d'augmenter la fréquence des rencontres. Pour garantir l'efficacité du travail, le calendrier des rencontres devrait inclure au moins deux rencontres en personne par an, complétées par des rencontres à distance. D'une part, les rencontres régulières (en personne ou à distance) permettent au groupe d'optimiser son fonctionnement en tant que communauté de pratique, où les membres apprennent par l'interaction et l'effort collectif. D'autre part, cette initiative répond aux besoins du programme de formation des enseignantes. Les co-enseignantes inuit et les ressources enseignantes allochtones universitaires du programme ont exprimé le besoin de se réunir tout au long du processus d'élaboration des cours.

Impliquer d'autres instances et d'autres ressources

Les partenaires inuit soulignent l'importance de maintenir l'implication des Aînés dans les activités de développement du lexique. Elles reconnaissent également la nécessité de collaborer avec d'autres institutions afin d'assurer une cohérence avec les initiatives en cours en faveur d'une uniformisation linguistique au Nunavik (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami 2011). Enfin, suite à leur expérience d'un cours universitaire portant sur la structure de l'inuktitut: LIN1341 *Structure de l'inuktitut*, dispensé par un linguiste qallunaaq

spécialiste de la langue, des membres, engagées dans leur programme de formation à l'enseignement, ont invité le professeur à intégrer la communauté de pratique. Cette initiative vise à enrichir les discussions terminologiques et à appuyer théoriquement le développement de nouveaux termes.

Inclure la création d'un outil qui faciliterait la prise en compte des dialectes inuit

Selon les membres inuit du groupe lexicographique, il est essentiel que le document lexical reste également une ressource vivante et adaptable répondant aux besoins éducatifs et culturels des communautés inuit du Nunavik. Une grande valeur est accordée à l'adaptation de la terminologie aux dialectes présents au Nunavik. Plusieurs termes (comme « enseignante associée » mentionné précédemment) présentent des variations selon les dialectes des différentes communautés. Ainsi, les partenaires insistent sur la nécessité de développer un outil lexical qui puisse être utile à l'ensemble du Nunavik, tout en tenant compte des spécificités dialectales. Ils souhaitent également que ce travail s'inscrive en complémentarité avec les documents de référence existants, dont certains ont été mentionnés plus tôt.

Les observations actuelles relatives aux priorités mettent en évidence la nature dynamique et évolutive du travail du groupe de développement du lexique en inuktitut, guidé par le paradigme de recherche autochtone. Dans l'extrait audio 4 (Extrait 4: Elisapi Uitangak)¹¹, Elisapi Uitangak, une Aînée de Puvirnituk et conseillère pédagogique à l'école Ikaarvik, témoigne et reprend dans ses mots les priorités susmentionnées. Elle exprime sa grande fierté de collaborer avec les partenaires universitaires, soulignant que cette collaboration se déroule de manière professionnelle et respectueuse. Elle déplore toutefois l'impossibilité de travailler de façon régulière au développement du lexique, malgré l'importance qu'elle y accorde. Elle partage également sa satisfaction de collaborer avec les jeunes générations. Elle reconnaît que les débuts de cette démarche ont été difficiles, notamment en raison des barrières linguistiques entre les aînés, qui ne parlaient pas anglais, et les plus jeunes, qui ne parlaient pas français. L'anglais s'est donc imposé comme langue commune de communication. Elle observe que les jeunes sont désormais habitués à travailler avec l'école et possèdent une vision plus moderne, qu'elle apprécie. Concernant le travail lexicographique, elle exprime sa joie d'y participer, tout en reconnaissant les défis liés à la terminologie à développer, en insistant sur l'effort collectif pour trouver les mots les plus justes et les plus pertinents. En tant qu'aînée, elle admet que sa maîtrise de la langue inuktitut n'est pas aussi forte que celle des générations précédentes, mais elle met tout en œuvre pour aider les plus jeunes à mieux comprendre,

11. Uitangak, Elisapi., « Conclusion », enregistré en 2024, https://lexique.uqat.ca/Article/04-ConclusionElisapiUitangak_01.mp3.

selon ses connaissances. Elle souligne enfin que la démarche est exigeante, d'autant plus que plusieurs aînés ne sont plus présents pour guider le travail, mais que le groupe peut encore compter sur certaines ressources. Pour elle, il est essentiel de poursuivre cette démarche et de continuer à faire avancer le projet.

Ces priorités et ce témoignage démontrent l'engagement du groupe à maintenir et à faire évoluer sa communauté de pratique.

En guise de conclusion

En guise de conclusion, nous proposons quelques réflexions sur le processus de co-construction et la démarche collective ayant guidé le développement du lexique inuktitut pour la formation des enseignantes. Ce processus même inclut une activité réflexive de la démarche ainsi que de son objet, c'est-à-dire le développement lexical aux fins de la formation professionnelle à la pratique enseignante en inuktitut. Les membres participants s'accordent sur l'importance de maintenir la démarche itérative du développement du lexique, en veillant à ce que les nouveaux termes ajoutés au lexique soient continuellement révisés et affinés en fonction de leur utilisation concrète. Cette réflexion met l'accent sur les limites rencontrées qui ont affecté la continuité de la démarche de développement du lexique inuit. Par ailleurs, en intégrant une nouvelle expertise linguistique, en engageant activement la communauté et en explorant de nouvelles solutions technologiques, la communauté de pratique vise à maximiser l'impact positif du projet de lexique inuit. L'analyse des priorités formulées par les membres du groupe révèle, entre autres, une volonté croissante de partager cette passion et cette expertise à une plus grande échelle. Ce positionnement témoigne d'une évolution de la vision collective du travail lexicographique, qui, tout en répondant aux besoins concrets du projet local, s'inscrit désormais dans une dynamique élargie de revitalisation linguistique.

Dans cette optique, nous nous tournons vers les paroles de Siaja Mangiuk, aînée d'Ivujivik, membre du groupe lexical depuis plus de 20 ans et enseignante d'inuktitut à l'école Nuvviti, pour conclure ce texte. Dans les extraits audio 5 et 6 (Extrait 5 : Siaja Mangiuk¹² et Extrait 6 : Siaja Mangiuk)¹³ Siaja Mangiuk, exprime, en inuktitut, sa vision de la transmission, à la prochaine génération, de concepts en inuktitut dans le cadre de la formation des enseignantes. Elle y déplore les changements qui affectent la vitalité de la langue tout en exprimant l'espoir que ses petits-enfants puissent bénéficier d'une transmission linguistique effective. Elle réaffirme l'importance de

12. Mangiuk, Siaja., « Conclusion en inuktitut partie 1 », enregistré en 2024, https://lexique.uqat.ca/Article/05-Inuktitut_01.mp3.

13. Mangiuk, Siaja., « Conclusion en inuktitut partie 2 », enregistré en 2024, https://lexique.uqat.ca/Article/06-Inuktitut_01.mp3.

poursuivre le développement de cet outil de référence, qui facilite grandement la compréhension et la traduction du vocabulaire utilisé dans les activités de formation à l'enseignement, et exprime clairement son désir de continuer à y contribuer. Selon le principe de souveraineté éducative, cette voix issue de la communauté de pratique, réaffirme avec fierté sa contribution, depuis plus de trois décennies, à l'élaboration d'une terminologie en inuktitut.

Dans cette perspective, les membres du groupe du lexique en éducation en inuktitut aspirent à participer activement à l'essor d'une nouvelle ère de renforcement des langues autochtones, telle que décrite par Dorais (2024), en contribuant au maintien d'un statut significatif de l'inuktitut dans la société contemporaine et en réaffirmant sa place centrale au sein de l'Inuit Nunangat. Ce projet de développement d'un lexique en inuktitut s'inscrit donc dans un contexte plus large de mobilisation en faveur des langues autochtones à l'échelle internationale. À cet égard, l'UNESCO a proclamé la période 2022–2032 comme la *Décennie internationale des langues autochtones*, soulignant l'urgence de revitaliser et de promouvoir ces langues dans le monde entier (UNESCO 2022). De plus, ce numéro thématique de la revue *Études Inuit Studies* consacré à l'avenir des langues inuit, participe à cette dynamique de reconnaissance et de valorisation des langues autochtones. Ces initiatives contribuent à reconnaître les activités du groupe du lexique dans un mouvement global de revitalisation linguistique, ancré dans les réalités et les aspirations des communautés.

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Recording Regional Dialects in Labrador Inuttitut (Research Note)

Susana Bejarⁱ, Alana Johnsⁱⁱ, and Christine Nochasakⁱⁱⁱ

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the Elder's Stories Project, an initiative to document regional dialects of Labrador Inuttitut across Nunatsiavut. The goal of this project is twofold: to preserve linguistic and cultural knowledge, with a focus on regional variation, and to create accessible spoken language resources for intermediate and advanced learners. The Elder's Stories Project will pair audio recordings with time-aligned transcriptions using ELAN software. This method results in archival resources which enable learners and researchers to access and search oral texts linked directly to audio. The paper documents how the Elder's Stories Project led to a series of ELAN transcription training workshops which in turn is becoming a catalyst for an interest in learning transcription skills among language specialists in Nunatsiavut.

KEYWORDS

Inuit languages, Labrador Inuttitut, Nunatsiavut, recordings, transcription, Inuttitut language teaching

RÉSUMÉ

Enregistrement des dialectes régionaux en inuttitut du Labrador (Note de recherche)

Cette note de recherche présente le projet Elder's Stories, une initiative visant à documenter les dialectes régionaux de l'inuttitut du Labrador au Nunatsiavut. L'objectif de ce projet est double : préserver les connaissances linguistiques et culturelles, en mettant l'accent sur les variations régionales, et créer des ressources accessibles en langue parlée pour les apprenants de niveau intermédiaire et avancé. Le projet Elder's Stories associe des enregistrements audios à des transcriptions inscrites dans le temps grâce au logiciel ELAN. Cette méthode offre des ressources d'archives qui permettent aux apprenants et aux chercheurs d'accéder et de rechercher des textes oraux liés directement à l'audio. Le texte montre comment le projet Elder's Stories a débouché sur une série d'ateliers de formation à la transcription ELAN qui, à son tour, devient un catalyseur de l'intérêt pour l'apprentissage des compétences de transcription parmi les spécialistes des langues au Nunatsiavut.

MOTS-CLÉS

Langues inuit, inuttitut du Labrador, Nunatsiavut, enregistrements, transcription, enseignement de l'inuttitut du Labrador

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This paper describes a recent project that aims to document regional dialects of Labrador Inuttitut by recording speakers across Nunatsiavut and pairing the recordings with time-aligned transcription. First, we review the dialect situation in Nunatsiavut. Next, we describe the recording initiative, the Elder's Stories Project, which was introduced by one of the authors (Nochasak), and its goals. We compare these to past recording projects undertaken for other Inuit language communities. Whereas past recording projects have focused on collecting cultural data that might be lost to future generations, all of whom speak Inuktitut, the project described here combines documentation of local cultural perspectives and dialects with the need for intermediate and advanced language materials in a community where most fluent speakers are over the age of 61. We then discuss how the project fits into a broader initiative to develop spoken-Inuttitut resources through training for language specialists in Nunatsiavut in the use of software tools for time-aligned transcription. We conclude by situating these undertakings within the context of other recent language mobilization initiatives in Nunatsiavut.

The dialect situation in Nunatsiavut

Nunatsiavut is a self-governmental body within Canada and within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It has its own constitution, established in 2005, as well as a Land Claims Agreement signed with both the federal government of Canada and the province. Although it has the power to self-govern in the areas of culture, education, and health, full use of some powers is not yet in place, due to the time required to develop financial and administrative means. The administrative capital of Nunatsiavut is Nain, and Hopedale is the seat of the legislative assembly of the Nunatsiavut Government, when in session.

Labrador Inuttitut (Inuttut¹) is a regional dialect² of Inuktitut, spoken in Nunatsiavut, Labrador.³ Within the regional dialect there are varieties based on different areas of Nunatsiavut and some that come from Inuit who were relocated to communities against their will. There are four settled communities within Nunatsiavut, where Inuttitut has been a significant language: Nain, Makkovik, Hopedale, and Rigolet. Each of these communities

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1. This is the term used when speaking the language.
 2. We use the term regional dialect to avoid the terms dialect and sub-dialects, which are unsatisfactory.
 3. This is its official homeland but many speakers live in nearby Happy-Valley/Goose Bay and North West River. They also live in St. John's and elsewhere.

has its own variety of Inuttitut, with Rigolet being the most distinctive. All varieties are mixed to some degree through intermarriage. The Rigolet dialect is no longer spoken fluently in the community, as the small number of fluent speakers have passed on and the following generation does not use it as much. A number of dialects were introduced into the settled communities through relocation from Hebron, Okak, and Nutak, which are areas north of Nain where people no longer live.

Inuit living in those northern areas had a very traditional lifestyle. In the mid 1900s, politicians based in St. John's and the Moravians in charge of the trading missions decided that these Inuit would be better served (and it would cost less) if they were moved into settlements where healthcare, formal education, etc. were more available (see Brice-Bennett 2023). The politicians had little knowledge or appreciation of Inuit traditional lifestyle and cultural practices. Those living in Hebron and Nutak were either not consulted or did not agree to the move. Nevertheless, everyone was moved into the existing communities of Nain, Hopedale, Makkovik, and North West River. This move was traumatic and created social issues for decades, as the relocatees had to struggle for resources and to gain a place on the economic and social ladders with respect to both existing Inuit and settler residents.

In terms of speakers today, the majority are in Nain, but there are also significant numbers of speakers in Hopedale, as well as Happy Valley-Goose Bay which is located just south of Nunatsiavut. Makkovik also has a few speakers. Statistics Canada's (2023) report of the 2021 census shows that Inuktitut is selected as the mother tongue for 130 individuals in Nain, 25 in Hopedale, 25 in Happy Valley Goose Bay, and 15 in Makkovik.

A survey of language use in Nunatsiavut between 2020 and 2022 (Murasugi 2025) provides additional valuable insights into the status of Inuttitut. Out of 394 respondents, 85% indicated that English was their first language. Inuttitut was the first language for 16% of respondents, the second language for 52% and the third or fourth language for 4%. The survey also shows that fluent speakers are getting older, with the highest proficiency reported for respondents aged 61 and over. For this age group, 34% self-identified as understanding, reading, writing, and speaking Inuttitut "very well." By comparison, this number is 12% for 41–60-year-olds and 7% for 25–40 years. Interestingly, the number increases to 12% for under 24-year-olds; it should be noted, however, that these are raw percentages and the sample size was small, thus some irregularity in the data is expected.

While the survey results show that Inuttitut proficiency is lower for younger people, they also suggest that the desire to learn Inuttitut is strong. Almost three quarters of the respondents judged the "importance of speaking and understanding Inuttitut" as being "very important." Of 369 participants who responded to a question about whether they were currently learning Inuttitut, 53% said that they were. However, the survey also gives some

indication of the challenges that learners face with respect to having opportunities to interact with Inuttit speakers. Over 50% of respondents reported that they currently “almost never” hear Inuttit spoken while just under 40% reported hearing Inuttit “sometimes” and just under 10% “almost never.” Fewer than 5% reported hearing Inuttit “almost always.” These findings suggest that the need for spoken language resources like recordings is high.

The survey does not correlate interest in learning Inuttit with age, but it is known that quite a few young Nunatsiavut adults have a strong interest in learning their language. Indeed, some have travelled to Iqaluit (Baffin Island, Nunavut) to study Inuktit through Pirurvik.⁴ This is being facilitated in part by new financial support from the Nunatsiavut Government to cover the associated expenses. Labrador dialect is closely related to the Inuktit dialects spoken in Nunavik and Baffin Island, but it has a different writing system. These other dialects use syllabics, while Labrador Inuttit uses a roman system that originates from the old Moravian writing system (no longer used) developed for Kalaallisut (West Greenlandic). Although both Kalaallisut and Inuttit have since updated their writing systems, they still use roman orthography.

Connections between Labrador and Nunavut are also growing with respect to language resources. In particular, the Nunatsiavut Government and Pirurvik have collaborated to make a version of Pirurvik’s well-known and popular online Tusaalanga language lessons in the Labrador dialect (Tusállanga). These online modules include 24 lessons, a glossary, grammatical descriptions, and 47 short dialogues with accompanying audio. They have been available to learners since 2023 (<https://nunatsiavut.tusaalanga.ca/>). A further development is that Pirurvik has been hiring staff in Nunatsiavut, and future expansion of language programming tailored to Labrador Inuttit learners is expected.

Connectivity between speakers of Labrador Inuttit and other varieties also includes current dialect connections with Kangiqsualujjuaq in Nunavik (northern Québec). A number of Labrador families have relatives there and visit back and forth regularly, as planes permit (only a few times a year). There are a few younger speakers (under 40 years of age) who can speak both Labrador and Nunavik dialects.

4. Based in Iqaluit, Pirurvik is an Inuit-owned non-governmental company with Inuit-specific education as its focus.

The Elder's Stories Project

The Elder's Stories Project is an initiative to record the speech of Elders across regional dialects of Nunatsiavut. It was started by Christine Nochasak in her role as Inuktitut Consultant to the Nunatsiavut Government Department of Education and Economic Development (DEED), which funded two summer students to launch the project in summer 2024—one from Hopedale and one from Postville—to interview Elders and community members. So far, the recordings have been audio only, but video may be used in future.

Before joining the Nunatsiavut Government, Nochasak had a long career as an educator in Nunatsiavut. She grew up in Makkovik, and has spoken Inuktitut her whole life. In 2004, she finished her B.Ed at Memorial University of Labrador in the Native and Northern Education program. She was an Inuktitut teacher and later Inuktitut Program Specialist at the Ilisautiliuvik Curriculum Centre in Nain. She has published papers, given many presentations, and has participated in policy groups such as the Atausiq Inuktitut Titirauisq Task Group, an initiative by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) to unite language specialists from each Inuit region, with a mandate to research and make recommendations on a unified orthography for Inuit languages (<https://www.itk.ca/unification-writing-system/>). In Nunatsiavut, Nochasak was part of the Labrador Inuktitut Training Program, which created 38 Language Training Modules. She is also a member of Isumatat, a committee of Inuktitut language experts in Nunatsiavut.

The idea for the Elder's Stories regional recording project emerged from Nochasak's work at DEED. This work involves support for Inuktitut language curricula in schools, which in Nunatsiavut are currently part of the Newfoundland and Labrador Schools (NLS) provincial school board. She has observed growing interest from Inuktitut teachers in documenting how the language is used in everyday life, either in story-telling or in the description of traditional practices. She is also addressing the need for intermediate and advanced materials (Nochasak et al. 2024). Existing classroom resources consist of translated texts or beginner-friendly materials (Dicker, Dunbar, and Johns 2009). Another more recent issue is the difficulty finding fully fluent speakers as Inuktitut teachers. Most Inuktitut teachers today are not fully fluent speakers and it is difficult to arrange for L1 speakers without training to come into the classroom to enrich the class. The combined result is that students of Inuktitut are not being exposed enough to spoken Inuktitut, either through interactions with L1 speakers or access to spoken-language resources. These circumstances have thus inspired the plan to use language recordings to simultaneously support the creation of materials that are suitable for intermediate and advanced learners, while giving students access to the language of fluent speakers and also satisfying the growing interest in documenting and preserving ways of speaking as well as stories for communities to engage with.

The goal of documenting ways of speaking, as well as stories, is multi-faceted and is being satisfied in two ways. One is to ask for stories about how people would do things, in particular relating to land-based learning situations—anything from how to skin a seal to how to cook. Another is to seek out speakers from all of the coastal communities in Nunatsiavut, with the goal of recording regional varieties to document and preserve variations in language use among Inuttit speakers across the region. Two audio recordings have been made thus far (in Hopedale and Postville (English)) and more are planned. Nochasak hopes to also record people in Rigolet, Makkovik, and Nain. The project is recording both fluent and non-fluent speakers. Non-fluent speakers are asked about what they remember of the language. Nochasak notes that many of the remaining speakers in Nunatsiavut are originally from Hebron, Nutak, and Killinik. Creating a record of these histories and how they connect to regional dialects is a further goal of the project. The recording done in Hopedale is with the late Amos Onalik who was relocated from Hebron. In his recording, Onalik tells the story of being relocated in 1959 at the age of 5, including memories of arriving in Hopedale and of life before relocation.

Nochasak has observed that certain words and phrases are changing and that Inuit often have multiple ways of saying the same thing. The Elder's Stories Project seeks to capture these differences, particularly focusing on older or less commonly heard expressions that are fading from everyday use. Among the features of pronunciation that Nochasak is interested in documenting are shortening patterns, as some speakers skip the medial parts of certain words, resulting in shortening (Dresher and Johns 2024 discuss a certain type of medial shortening). In Amos Onalik's recording, Nochasak notes multiple examples of other types of shortening. For example, Onalik gives *isumâ[aa]Kattagivunga* 'I often wonder...' where Nochasak expected *isumajâ[jaa]Kattagivunga*. Onalik's version lengthens the [â] in the root *isuma* 'think'. Nochalik's version adds [jâ].

- (1) IsumâKattagivunga Kanuk kiatsaKattasimalinnimangâta
 "I often wonder how they did for stove heat." [03:18.4]

Previous Collections of Inuktitut Stories

A number of cultural centres across the North have collected oral versions of Inuktitut stories over the years. One such example is the Avataq Cultural Institute/Institut culturel Avataq of Nunavik, Québec (<https://www.avataq.qc.ca/en/Home>). Within the documentary archives of this organization can be found photographs, as well as textual and audio documents. These archives are intended for the use of Nunavimmiut. They are also available to

others, such as researchers. In particular, they have audio recordings of oral histories. Another location of audio recordings is Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet, <https://nunavutlibraryassociation.wordpress.com/about/our-libraries/pond-inlet-library-and-archives-society/>), where the audio recordings are housed along with the community library. The purpose in collecting these recordings can vary. In the case of the Pond Inlet audio archives, Carrier (2021) was told that the earlier recordings in the 1970s were made by family members who wanted to keep records of their dialect—an objective similar to that of Nochasak's project—while a later set of recordings in the early 1990s was the product of a high school assignment in which each student was asked to record an Elder from the community. The recordings are of people speaking uninterrupted for an extended period of time, which is very traditional, usually speaking about their experiences of traditional life (see Arnakak, Dorais, and Johns, in this volume, who propose that personal experiences are essentially the only genre of stories acceptable due to a high requirement for factual accuracy), or notable events, e.g., first contact with non-Inuit Qallunaat or the tuberculosis crises.

In addition to community archives, there have been projects whose explicit goal was to collect oral Inuktitut and to both transcribe and translate it. Prominent among such projects is the project *Interviewing Inuit Elders*, edited by Jarich B. Oosten and Frédéric B. Laugrand. The project arose from two courses taught at Arctic College in Nunavut that involved interviews conducted by students who were fluent in Inuktitut. This produced a series of five volumes published in 1999 (with subeditors), based on oral interviews in Inuktitut. They were also translated into English. The volumes include Introduction, Childrearing Practices, Perspectives on Traditional Law, Cosmology and Shamanism, and Perspectives on Traditional Health. The purpose of the series was to collect authoritative recollections from Inuit Elders who were considered to be knowledgeable in cultural matters. These volumes used to be available online in both English and Inuktitut versions but now appear to be online only in English through university libraries, possibly because the Inuktitut titles are in syllabics. This is unfortunate. The interview form entailed that a general topic be chosen in advance. Multiple Elders were present at an interview with multiple students. Questions were initiated by the students but then follow-up questions would emerge after a discourse from an Elder. In some volumes, the text would be a frame written by the students, with lengthy quotes from the Elders. As a result of the product coming from both students' questions and Elders' answers, the Inuktitut presented in these volumes is more fragmented than a typical traditional Inuktitut account.

The Elder's Stories Project described here is multi-faceted and has similar purposes to these previously mentioned projects, with some notable additional elements. First, along with seeking to record stories of cultural

interest, the language of the personal account is central and the goal of using such records to support Inuttit language teaching curriculum is salient. Another difference is that Nochasak’s project focuses on creating a vital link between recordings and transcriptions. Written transcription of the Inuttit is paired with the oral audio through the use of time-aligned transcription software.⁵ This is discussed in greater detail in the next section. This approach contrasts with the previous format of materials, as schematized in Figure 1. For example, the Mittimatalik archive made transcription and translation available separate from the audio. The Interviewing Elders series produced two distinct text publications for each volume, one in Inuktitut and one in English. In Nochasak’s project, a single document is produced with text and audio interfaces for Inuttit, along with an English translation.

Table 1. *Nuances Between the Different Projects*

Elder’s Stories	Mittimatalik	Interviewing Inuit Elders
Audio with accompanying Inuttit transcription and English translation	Audio	Audio
	Separate Inuttit transcription and English translation	Separate Inuktitut transcription
		Separate English translation

Pairing the audio with the Inuttit transcription and its English translation provides maximum usefulness for the intermediate Inuktitut second language learners, as help through English translation is practically at their fingertips. Audio recordings of Inuktitut in archives are sometimes accompanied by translations in English, and sometimes they are not. What is at times missing is a written record in Inuktitut of a recording in Inuktitut, such as a transcription of the spoken words. Written Inuktitut materials that come directly from the speaker’s audio are frequently not present in community archives, even though it is clear that the community highly values the speech of the speakers. Such transcriptions to written page are referred to by Dicker, Dunbar, and Johns (2009) as Direct Inuktitut. The label Direct Inuktitut was invented to differentiate it from written Inuktitut that resulted from translation from another source language, usually English. The reasons why these transcriptions are often not available is that they involve quite a bit of detailed work, having to play back the audio to capture what was said. Transcription work is expensive and is often left out in favour of just a translation.

5. Another recent project involving time-aligned transcription for Inuit languages is described in Bergeron et al. (2025) for Inuinnaqtun (spoken in Iqaluktuuttiaq and Qurluqtuq (Nunavut), as well as in Ulukhaktok (N.W.T.)).

Time-Aligned Transcription Using ELAN

The use of time-aligned transcription is a notable feature of the Elder's Stories Project, as discussed above. Audio (and in future perhaps video) is paired with transcriptions and accompanying translations, all within a single digital document, using the software tool ELAN (EUDICO Linguistic Annotator), which is widely used for language documentation purposes (Sloetjes and Wittenburg 2008).⁶ This powerful multimedia annotation tool, developed by the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, enables users to create, edit, and search annotations on audio and video recordings, and it supports multiple tiers of time-aligned annotations. The multiple tiers of annotation supported by ELAN can be used for annotations beyond transcription and translation, including morpheme breakdowns, alternate orthographic choices, and additional notes. This makes ELAN particularly valuable for language documentation and revitalization, as it enables the precise linking of spoken language data to textual annotations customized for different purposes. Using ELAN for time-aligned transcription has become standard practice in documentary linguistics and endangered language archiving (Austin 2016, Seifart et al. 2018) because it facilitates detailed annotation of spoken language data and also enhances the usability of archived materials for a wide range of tasks.⁷

For the Elder's Stories Project, the use of ELAN maintains the centrality of the recordings, which makes it possible for listeners to hear speakers' voices, intonation, pronunciation, and rate of speech, all of which factor into the differences between regional dialects that Nochasak aims to capture, as well as helping intermediate and advanced learners with oral proficiency. The tier structure within ELAN thus provides Nochasak with a straightforward way to annotate and therefore track regional dialect features of interest. At the same time, the format greatly increases the accessibility of the recording for non-fluent users, giving them the option of seeing the transcribed Inuttitut and/or its accompanying translation—as they listen. Furthermore, the transcribed recordings fill the gap in Direct Inuttitut resources identified in Dicker, Dunbar, and Johns (2009).

Time-aligned transcription and translation makes the recordings searchable in powerful ways, further increasing their usefulness. One attractive feature of ELAN is its ability to support large file sizes and searchability across multiple files to create corpora (Nagy and Meyerhoff 2015, Berez-Kroeker, Gabber, and Slayton 2023). Thus, whereas traditional audio

6. EUDICO is an acronym for European Distributed Corpora Project.

7. One indicator of the growing methodological importance of time-aligned transcription is that the 2025 Annual Conference of the Canadian Linguistic Association at McGill University included a special session on transcription challenges for Indigenous languages (<https://cla-acl.ca/programmes/congres-de-2025-meeting.html#programme>).

resources are hard to work with because they are not annotated and therefore not searchable (Gatbonton et al. 2020), ELAN files can form the basis of a searchable corpus. Another important feature of ELAN is that it is open-source software, which means that data is not ceded to third-party entities. Moreover, annotations created in ELAN are exportable as text files, which makes it robust against the problem of software obsolescence over time.

Nochasak's goal of using ELAN for the Elder's Stories Project prompted the organization of a small workshop at the University of Toronto in October 2024 for training purposes. This workshop took place over four days and included Nochasak, co-instigators Bejar and Johns, and Suzanna Jararuse, an Inuttit curriculum expert from the Ilisautiliuvik Curriculum Centre, plus five graduate students from the University of Toronto. The training included a general introduction to ELAN and to transcription as well as an introduction to Audacity (<https://www.audacityteam.org/>), an open-source digital recording tool, and a special session on the use of transcription for language teaching and learning.⁸ A substantial amount of time was given to practice and discussion. Participants practiced using ELAN with materials that were contributed by Nochasak and Jararuse, including a recording from Nochasak's project which, over the course of the workshop, was fully transcribed and translated using ELAN. The ELAN annotations for Nochasak's recording have since been converted into printable text with time stamps for following along with the recording. The recording and annotations have also been configured so that they can be displayed in a web browser using LingView (<https://github.com/BrownCLPS/LingView>), a web interface created at Brown University that displays ELAN files in a user-friendly and accessible manner (Pride, Tomlin, and AnderBois 2020).

The success of the first ELAN workshop led to subsequent discussion and consultation with other staff from the Nunatsiavut Government Department of Language, Culture and Tourism (LCT), the Ilisautiliuvik Curriculum Centre, and the OKâlaKatiget Society (the radio and television broadcaster for Nunatsiavut that houses an important archive of recordings spanning over 40 years of broadcast history), as to whether there was interest in organizing similar training for a broader set of Inuttit language specialists in Nunatsiavut. This launched the development of a larger outreach project, *Inuttit tusannitutsiat* "Inuttit out loud" with the goal of building capacity in Nunatsiavut for the rich annotation of spoken-Inuttit resources using ELAN. Funding for this outreach project was

8. ELAN and Audacity training was led by Laura Griffin, a University of Toronto PhD student with extensive experience using ELAN for language documentation purposes. Tahohtharatye Joe Brant (University of Toronto) was invited to lead a special session on transcription for language learning. Brant leads a project that uses ELAN for Kanien'kéha documentation in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory.

obtained from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (in partnership with the Nunatsiavut Government LCT), the Nunatsiavut Government LCT, the University of Toronto Faculty of Arts and Science, and the Canadian Linguistic Association.

The Inuttitit tusannitutsiat project resulted in a second, expanded ELAN workshop in Nain in May 2025. Participants included Inuttitit specialists from across multiple sectors: staff in the Nunatsiavut Government LCT and DEED, including translators/interpreters; language program coordinators, a curriculum consultant (Nochasak), and an archivist; staff from the OKâlaKatiget Society; Inuttitit teachers from the provincial school board (Newfoundland Labrador Schools); staff from the Ilisautiliuvik Curriculum Centre; and one of the founders of Inotsiavik Language and Culture, a youth-led centre dedicated to language and culture revitalization. In total, over 20 participants attended, plus six facilitators from the University of Toronto (five graduate students and one of the authors (Bejar). Most of the participants were from Nain, but participants also traveled from Hopedale, Makkovik, Postville, and Goose Bay.

Similar to the pilot workshop, the training was structured across four days. The first day introduced ELAN with a focus on transcription work, using recordings provided by the Nunatsiavut Government LCT and the OKâlaKatiget Society for illustration and practice. The second day focused on possible outputs from ELAN files, including exported texts, subtitled videos, and web interfaces using LingView. The second day also covered the use of ELAN's search tools, including searches across multiple ELAN files. The third and fourth days covered skills for starting recording projects from scratch, recording and editing using Audacity, creating new ELAN files, linking audio and video files to ELAN, and preparing ELAN tier structures for transcription and other annotation. Extensive time for practice and discussion was built into each day.

Language Revitalization Goals

Nochasak sees the Elder's Stories Project as part of a larger effort to save the language and preserve it for future use. Inuttitit language use has been declining for more than fifty years, precipitated by Newfoundland and Labrador's entry into Canadian Confederation and the accompanying rise of English usage. For example, instruction in schools has been primarily in English since 1949 (Dorais 1990). The earlier spread of English in the region has also played a significant role in this decline, as English has been present in northern Labrador since at least the 1800s, introduced by settler populations or *Kallunângajuit* (Dicker, Dunbar, and Johns 2009). Today, English is spoken by nearly all residents of Nunatsiavut. Twenty years ago, there was still a small group of elderly monolingual speakers (Johns and Mazurkewich 2001), but there are almost no monolingual Inuttitit speakers left. Inuttitit, however,

continues to be used by a number of middle-aged bilinguals, and to a lesser extent by younger generations, as noted above. There is also a significant group of receptive bilinguals who understand Inuttitut but do not fluently speak it (Sherkina-Lieber, Pérez-Leroux, and Johns 2011).

Initiatives to revitalize Inuttitut have featured prominently in the Nunatsiavut Government's language policy since 2005 (Andersen and Johns 2005), and there is a growing demand for learning. One challenge in meeting this demand is targeting and satisfying the needs of motivated learners. Ongoing initiatives from the Nunatsiavut Government include Master-Apprentice programs in multiple communities since 2016; language nest programs in Nain and Hopedale; community language lessons; and the development of resources like the online Tusállanga language lessons in the Labrador dialect noted above, which was launched in 2023. The language nests and Master-Apprentice programs (Hinton, Vera, and Steele 2002) do a good job of targeting motivated learners, because participants self-select. Another strength of the Master-Apprentice program is that the masters do not have to have a teaching degree. The Nunatsiavut Government LCT hosts a Language Summit every five years (most recently in May 2025) and produces a Five-Year Language Strategy after each summit that establishes a framework for prioritizing language revitalization projects (Nunatsiavut Government 2021).

One major development has been the establishment in 2024 of Inotsiavik in Hopedale (<https://www.inotsiavik.com/>). The language and culture centre (also mentioned above) is funded by a \$1 million Arctic Inspiration Prize that was awarded to a group of Hopedale youth, with further support from the Nunatsiavut Government. The centre offers language classes and other cultural programming.

The documentation of spoken Inuttitut in the Elder's Stories Project adds to these efforts and responds to challenges faced specifically by Inuttitut language teachers in K-12 schools who not only lack resources for intermediate and advanced learners but are also struggling to include spoken-Inuttitut resources in their curriculum due to lack of fluency in many cases (Nochasak et al. 2024).

Conclusion

The Elder's Stories Project, led by Christine Nochasak, represents a vital step in documenting, preserving, and revitalizing Labrador Inuttitut. By capturing the regional dialects and speech patterns of Elders from across Nunatsiavut, the project not only safeguards linguistic heritage but also provides much-needed spoken language resources for the future. This initiative feeds into a broader collaborative effort to increase the practice of transcribing Inuttitut recordings to develop Direct Inuttitut resources in the

sense of Dicker, Dunbar, and Johns (2009), beginning with training in the use of effective tools for working with spoken language recordings. Transcription of Inuttitut recordings can support language instruction, independent learning, and language documentation, and its impact is enhanced by the use of advanced tools like ELAN that can enable time-aligned annotation, making recordings into rich resources that can be both accessible and searchable. The hope is that the resources created by the Elder's Stories Project, and similar initiatives going forward, will be preserved in ways that make them meaningful and useful to language learners, educators, and community members for diverse purposes and for many years to come, through documenting language and culture.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful that the late Amos Onalik made a recording available. We are also grateful to many who made the ELAN training in Nain in May 2025 possible. In Nunatsiavut, this includes Cherlyn Allen, Peggy Andersen, Brenda Jararuse, Shirley Jararuse, Suzanna Jararuse, Robyn Martin, and Silpa Suarak. At the University of Toronto this includes Greg Antono, Angelika Kiss, Lucy Meanwell, Calvin Quick, and especially Laura Griffin. This work was funded in part by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Nunatsiavut Government Department of Language, Culture, and Tourism, the University of Toronto Faculty of Arts and Science, and the Canadian Linguistics Association.

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Place Names Documentation as Community-Based Language Conservation

Francisca Mall'u Demoskiⁱ and McKinley Aldenⁱⁱ

ABSTRACT

Bristol Bay Native Corporation's (BBNC) Bristol Bay Native Place Names Project is a 20-year initiative dedicated to celebrating the Sugpiaq/Alutiiq, Dena'ina, and Yup'ik Native place names in the Bristol Bay region of Southwest Alaska. Through this project, BBNC is committed to honoring the land-centered knowledge and environment that has long defined Alaska Native cultures. As traditional place names are increasingly replaced by English equivalents, this project serves to revitalize cultural and linguistic knowledge that connects our communities to the land. The Bristol Bay Native Place Names Project highlights the contributions of Alaska Native cultural workers, educators, community members, and knowledge bearers. It documents approximately 1,500 place names across three Alaska Native languages in the Bristol Bay region. The online publication of these names has received a remarkable response from the community, with growing use of traditional place names in daily life, navigation, search-and-rescue operations, oral histories, and land-based language education in schools. Overall, this initiative represents a form of Indigenous language revitalization driven by Alaska Native people for the benefit of their home communities, ensuring the continued connection to cultural heritage and fostering future generations' understanding of their ancestral lands.

KEYWORDS

Alaskan languages, community-driven documentation, place names, toponymy, cultural heritage preservation, Yupik languages

RÉSUMÉ

Documentation des noms de lieux pour préserver la langue locale

Le Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC) Bristol Bay Native Place Names Project est une initiative sur 20 ans visant à célébrer les noms de lieux Sugpiaq/Alutiiq, Dena'ina et Yup'ik dans la région de Bristol Bay, dans le sud-ouest de l'Alaska. Grâce à ce projet, BBNC s'engage à honorer les connaissances et l'environnement centrés sur les terres qui définissent depuis longtemps les cultures autochtones de l'Alaska. Alors que les noms de lieux traditionnels sont de plus en plus remplacés par des équivalents anglais, ce projet sert à revitaliser les connaissances culturelles et linguistiques qui relient nos communautés à la terre. Le projet sur les noms de

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lieux autochtones de la baie de Bristol met en lumière les contributions des travailleurs culturels, des éducateurs, des membres des communautés et des détenteurs de savoirs autochtones de l'Alaska. Il documente environ 1 500 noms de lieux dans trois langues autochtones de l'Alaska dans la région de la baie de Bristol. La publication en ligne de ces noms a reçu un accueil remarquable de la part de la communauté, qui utilise de plus en plus les noms de lieux traditionnels dans la vie quotidienne, la navigation, les opérations de recherche et de sauvetage, les récits oraux et l'enseignement des langues autochtones dans les écoles. Dans l'ensemble, cette initiative représente une forme de revitalisation des langues indigènes menée par les Autochtones de l'Alaska au profit de leurs communautés d'origine, garantissant le maintien du lien avec le patrimoine culturel en favorisant la compréhension de leurs terres ancestrales par les générations futures.

MOTS-CLÉS

Langues alaskiennes, documentation communautaire, noms de lieux, toponymie, préservation du patrimoine culturel, langues yupik

The Bristol Bay region of Alaska is home to the traditional territories of three Indigenous cultures: Sugpiaq/Alutiiq, Dena'ina, and Yup'ik. Covering approximately 116,000 km², the region is ecologically, geographically, and culturally diverse, ranging from expansive tundra to the volcanic peaks and glaciers of Katmai and Veniaminof and encompassing a complex network of rivers and waterways, including Lake Iliamna and Bristol Bay itself. The region has 31 communities, each represented by federally recognized tribes.

This region also exists at the intersection of two large language families. Of the three languages spoken here, two—Sugt'stun/Alutiiq and Yup'ik—are sister languages in the Inuit-Yupik-Unangan family, and one, Dena'ina, is part of the Dene family. Note that, in this article, whenever words in-language are used, abbreviations in superscript specify the language: YUG for Yugtun/Yup'ik, SUG for Alutiiq, and DEN for Dena'ina.¹

1. For the sake of brevity, this article uses the terms *Yup'ik* to refer to the Yugtun/Yup'ik language and *Alutiiq* to refer to the Sugt'stun/Alutiiq language. Although these terms are among the most widely recognized in English-language discussions, we acknowledge that language names—and the ways communities and individuals identify with them—are deeply personal and context-specific. Preferences may vary across regions, communities, and individuals, and there are important historical and political reasons why some may choose alternative terms or reject externally imposed labels. In particular, the naming of the Alutiiq language has shifted significantly over time, with terms such as *Pacific Yupik*, *Aleut*, *Alutiiq*, and *Sugt'stun* each reflecting different periods and perspectives. Our use of *Yup'ik* and *Alutiiq* is not intended to diminish this complexity, but rather to provide consistency and accessibility.

However, the number of speakers of the region’s three language varieties—each containing distinct minority dialects—has dwindled. For example, Lake Iliamna Yup’ik has only 21 speakers, Alaska Peninsula Alutiiq has just 15, and Lake Iliamna Dena’ina is spoken by a mere 5 individuals. All of these remaining speakers are Elders aged 65 or older. Although recent efforts by schools, tribal colleges, and village councils have led to notable progress in educational initiatives aimed at language preservation, these languages are still classified as critically endangered.

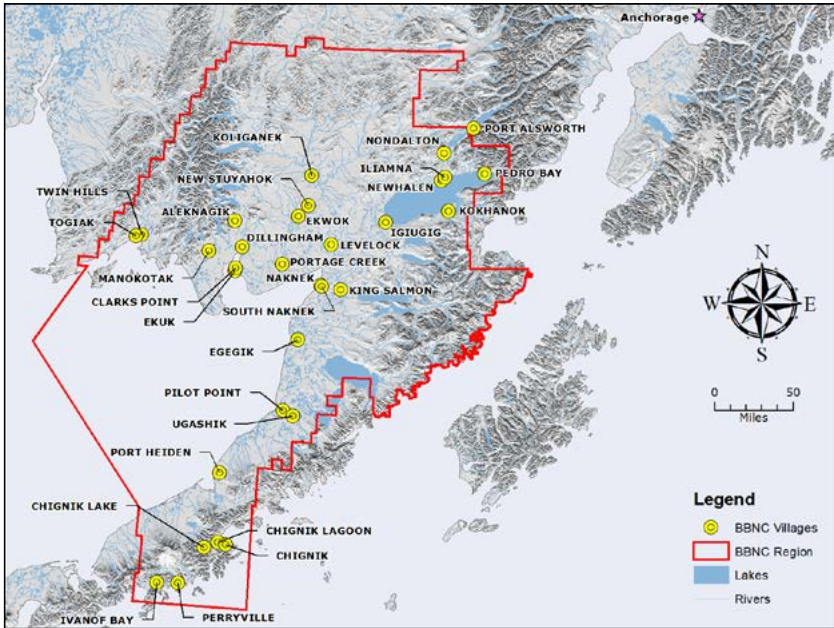


Figure 1. A map (sourced from the GIS map at <https://bbonline.bbnc.net/>) of the Bristol Bay region, outlined in red. The region includes the Bay itself, the Katmai region, Lake Iliamna, and a swatch of the Alaska Peninsula. There are four national parks in the area and 31 Alaska Native communities.

Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC) is a for-profit Alaska Native Corporation (ANC) established in 1972 under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). ANCSA was enacted by the U.S. Congress in 1971 to resolve land claims by Alaska Natives, leading to the creation of regional corporations like BBNC to manage settlement funds and economic development on behalf of Alaska Native shareholders. Its funding initially came from the \$962.5 million ANCSA settlement distributed among the regional and village corporations. Since then, BBNC has grown into a diversified corporation with business operations in Industrial Services, Government Services, Construction, Tourism, Seafood, and Natural Resources. As a for-profit ANC, BBNC generates revenue through its subsidiaries and

investments, distributing dividends and other benefits to shareholders and their families while also supporting cultural, educational, and economic programs in the region.

Many Bristol Bay communities still depend on traditional subsistence practices, including gathering greens and *atsat*^{YUG}/*alagnat*^{SUG}/*giga*^{DEN} (fruit/berries); hunting for *tuntuq*^{YUG/SUG}/*vejex*^{DEN} (caribou), *tuntwak*^{YUG}/*tunturpak*^{SUG}/*k'ubda*^{iDEN} (moose), and many other animals; and fishing for *neqet*^{YUG}/*iqallut*^{SUG}/*tiq'a*^{DEN} (fish/salmon), especially the many kinds of salmon which run annually through the region. Given the inseparable relationship between the land and the people, one of BBNC's longest running and most transformative endeavors is the Place Names Project. This is an ongoing 20-year effort to document, conserve, and encourage reclamation of traditional names in the Bristol Bay region of southwestern Alaska.

Today, the Place Names Project staff work closely with communities in the Bristol Bay region, perform analyses of public and private documents, and continue to undertake ongoing research. Our scope has expanded from documenting place names in isolation to conserving the *language of place*, including oral histories and recorded pronunciations to expand the cultural context and educational priorities of the Project. In this paper, we present the Place Names Project and provide an overview of research methods for land-based community research. We also showcase testimonies from participants and beneficiaries, and discuss outcomes and applications.

Project Origins

The Bristol Bay Native Place Names Project originated in 2003 as the vision of the late Harvey Samuelsen, a visionary member of the BBNC Board who first started discussions around the importance of preserving local place names and Elder knowledge. By 2004, BBNC and its partner Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA) began funding initial research into readily available names and created the first iteration of our online platform, today called *Bristol Bay Online!* (bristolbayonline.com). In 2012, BBNC's land department, which administered the project, partnered with the Bristol Bay Foundation, its primary education and culture grant administering body, to offer support for place names preservation projects in regional communities. These grants have since been awarded to village and tribal councils in Igiugig, Manokotak, Newhalen, Iliamna, Togiak, Chignik Lagoon, Port Heiden, Ivanof Bay, and Nondalton (see Methods section). In 2021, BBNC published *Before Bristol Bay*, a storybook describing the history and importance of place names (Demoski 2022).

As of 2022, the Place Names Project has made 1,385 names publicly available via its website and mobile app, 785 of which are connected to audio recordings. This number has since grown, with over a hundred more

names currently being researched (see Section 2). Altogether, the collection contains names in five languages—Alutiq, Dena’ina, Yup’ik, Russian, and English—and represents 20 communities in Bristol Bay. This work is the result of the considerable efforts of community members, Elders, knowledge bearers, researchers, and land conservators: It is through their collective effort that the valuable cultural knowledge about land in our communities continues to be passed on to future generations.

Credit and Partners

The Bristol Bay Native Place Names Project is a community-based, collective endeavor. While the project staff compile place names and geographical information and conduct contemporary research to document new names and oral histories, the foundations of our records originate in the long-standing efforts of many organizations and individuals. Today, the project staff partners with the Alaska Native Language Archive (ANLA) at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, which contains an impressive collection of multimedia materials related to the 20 Indigenous languages of Alaska. Many of the place names identified throughout the course of the project are sourced from materials stewarded by ANLA, including community language documentation materials, Russian and early colonial maps, and audio interviews, among others. The project also partners with the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve to mutually share knowledge and promote the representation of Alaska Native knowledge and land traditions in Bristol Bay’s federal preserves. Most recently, the project has partnered with the National Park Service to document place names within the Katmai area and with Aleknagik Natives Limited (an in-region village corporation) to document and promote Yup’ik place names, language, and culture.

The major funders for the Place Names Project are BBNC and Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA). Additional funding comes from the Alaska Cadastral Project, a joint effort of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources to create systems for sharing land parcel information between federal, state, local, and Native organizations and to broaden access to land and property information. We are grateful for their continued support.

The Bristol Bay Borough, the Lake and Peninsula Borough, and BBNA community organizations have provided profile maps and data for the Place Names Project. The orthophoto imagery and community profile linework used in our online platform is used with permission from the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, the Bristol Bay Borough, the Lake and Peninsula Borough, and BBNA.

The Place Names Project has identified names from a diverse variety of sources, including the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and

Economic Development, the Lake and Peninsula Borough, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Denali Commission Alaska, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, the Division of Governmental Coordination, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Many of our names were documented by the late Irene Reed, former director of the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and Robert Drozda, director of the ANCSA Project at the Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks, who compiled place names at an Elder conference.

Project Contributors

The current team collaborating on the Alaska Native Place Names Project includes Francisca Mall'u Demoski, Mischa Ellanna, and McKinley Alden.

Francisca Demoski, Vice President of Shareholder and Corporate Relations at BBNC, has been an integral part of the Alaska Native Place Names Project since its inception. She began her career at BBNC in 2002 with the Bristol Engineering Services Corporation, where she was first introduced to the project. Over the years, Francisca has contributed to the project's growth and its alignment with BBNC's mission, *pinircarluku yuuyaraput*^{YUG} /piniɪɾʃaɾluku ju:jaɾaput/ (meaning "Enriching Our Native Way of Life"). This mission reflects the corporation's dedication to preserving and celebrating Native culture while fostering community engagement for the benefit of future generations.

Mischa Ellanna is a geologist with BBNC's Land Department, bringing over 20 years of experience in land management and natural resource development. He has been involved in the Place Names Project since its early stages, playing a crucial role in the creation and management of the project's database. Mischa was also responsible for integrating the data into the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and designing the framework that today allows for the efficient organization and visualization of Native place names. In addition, he has overseen the development of several generations of webmaps, which host the place names data online, making it accessible to the public and researchers alike.

McKinley Alden is a linguist with the Bristol Bay Foundation and has been contributing to the Alaska Native Place Names Project since 2022. After completing a Ph.D. in linguistics, they shifted focus to community language documentation and cultural knowledge preservation, playing a key role in conducting place names workshops across various communities and helping to collect, document, and preserve Native place names and their associated histories. A key focus of McKinley's work has been to increase the representation of Alutiiq names, particularly those from the under-documented dialect

of the Alaska Peninsula. In addition to their efforts in place names documentation, they have worked to expand the project by incorporating oral histories and narratives tied to place names, thus enriching the cultural significance of the project's archive.

Methods

The names gathered for the Bristol Bay Native Place Names Project come from a variety of sources. The foundations for the project's data structure were built on the extensive encyclopedia of Alaskan place names in Orth (1967). Our current database contains 203 names from Orth (14.7% of the total collection), and the procedures for capturing geographic data that have developed throughout the life of the Place Names Project are built on Orth's parameters, such as how different geographical features are defined and where on a map points and labels are placed (e.g., a label at the mouth of a river labels the entire river).

In addition to Orth's work, many researchers from both communities in the Bristol Bay region and outside organizations and universities, have documented place names. These efforts range from exploratory to analytical to educational. The earliest are found in maps plotted by early Russian settlers and missionaries (Sarychev 1826; Shelikhov 1981; Teben'kov 1952, among others; for a full overview of Russian exploration of Bristol Bay and Alaska in general, see Vanstone 1988). While mostly focused on waterways and other geography relevant to naval navigation, many place names still used in Bristol Bay originate from Russian and reflect the effects of that early colonization. As a first step in processing the knowledge in these maps, the atlases—held across a variety of Russian state archives, Park Service records, and State of Alaska and university archives—were transliterated from their original Slavic orthography. These were then cross-referenced with known toponyms from regional knowledge bearers to identify and confirm the contemporary forms of the original Russian names. One example is the Russian name for the river known in English as Wood River, Алягнагик “Alyagnagik,” or *Alaḡnaqim Kuiga*^{YUG}/alaḡnaqim кʷiγɑ/ “river of Aleknagik (village),” which appears in Russian documents as early as 1826, attributed to Russian cartographer Gavriil Andreevich Sarychev (Sarychev 1826).

A second source of place names is legal documents. Since the advent of colonization, land in Alaska has been highly politicized and historically expressed through land ownership and allotments. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971 resolved Alaska Native land claims by transferring approximately 44 million acres of land to newly created Native regional and village corporations. ANCSA dramatically altered land allocation in Alaska by transferring land ownership from traditional Native groups and

federal government control to 12 regional corporations and over 200 village corporations created under the act. BBNC, the sponsor of the Place Names Project, is one such Native corporation. The legal paperwork involved in individual, village, and regional corporations, as well as state parks and federal land divisions, often cites geographical features and place names in reference to specific allocations: for example, the Alutiiq name *Qukak*^{SUG}/*qukak*/, referring to Kukak Village, was documented in the Katmai National Park and Preserve's Historic Resource Study (Clemens and Norris 1999).

While legal and historical documents provide a solid set of verifiable resources, some of the most valuable sources of place names come from dedicated individuals and research teams who have, over the past several decades, contributed to conservation efforts through field work. Notable individuals include Nick Abalama, Dr. James Kari, Dr. Jeff Leer, Dr. Yoko Kugo, Irene Reed, Mike and Anecia Toyukak, Tim Troll, James Vanstone, and Willie Wassillie, among many others (Chythlook and Wright 1985; Coiley Kenner 2002; Gross 1987; Jacobson 1984; Kari and colleagues 1986; Kugo 2021; Leer 1978, 1980; Morseth 2003; Orth 1967; Vanstone 1971). Of course, the Place Names Project has relied heavily on the knowledge and expertise of Elders and knowledge bearers living in Bristol Bay. To date, 25 Elders have participated in place names interviews, and community workshops have taken place all over the region.

Since 2016, both BBNC and its nonprofit arm, the Bristol Bay Foundation (BBF), have provided small grants for community-driven workshops and documentation projects in villages across the region. To date, 19 have been funded. They serve the simultaneous role of expanding the Place Names Project's scope and reach while empowering communities to do their own documentation. These small-scale projects have covered a variety of activities. Some focus on Elder documentation, such as the projects by the Manokotak Village Council working with Mike and Anecia Toyukak, or by the Traditional Council of Togiak with Willie Wassillie and Evelyn Yanez. Others involve site trips, like the Native Village of Port Heiden's visit to the old village of Ilnik. There are also explicitly narrative-focused efforts, such as the Nondalton Tribal Council's Dena'ina Revitalization and Place Names Narratives project. Finally, some projects emphasize education, as seen in the Traditional Council of Togiak's "Learning our Traditional Camping and Hunting Place Names" initiative.

Altogether, these workshops have resulted in robust community participation. They begin with community outreach. Once scheduled, preparation for a community workshop minimally requires a map of the target area and recording equipment. We use geographical maps that include topography to identify mountains, valleys, and waterways, as well as federal GIS names. In general, the target area will likely include at least one village and the surrounding landscape, but more may be required, depending on

the location. Some knowledge about the history of each village is helpful in this regard. For example, for the workshop conducted in Perryville in summer 2024, we brought three maps: one of Perryville alone, including some coastline and nearby islands; one of the area surrounding Perryville, where there are more villages, as well as a volcano and some mountains; and one bird's-eye view, which included Katmai National Park. Including Katmai was important because the early 20th century eruption of the Novarupta volcano caused the relocation of the people living in that area to what is now Perryville; in fact, the village is named after Commodore Perry, who led the relocation in the wake of the eruption. Bringing both more zoomed-in maps and larger area maps enabled us to capture details of human migration and old village sites all along the Alaska Peninsula.

Regarding equipment, when working with physical maps, it is good to have a range of markers in bold, distinctive, and legible colors (black, blue, red) to transcribe locations directly onto the map. Sticky notes and dot stickers can also be used, so long as they are taped over with translucent tape to secure them in place when the maps are rolled up or folded. It is also a good practice to use a notebook or laptop to record the names themselves and any associated factoids or stories that come up throughout the workshop. Redundancy in notetaking ensures that no details get lost in transit.

Whether audio or video is recorded during a place names interview depends on the location, the participants, and the desired audience. Audio, for example, can be difficult to capture if the workshop is taking place in a public space, and many Elders are uncomfortable with being on a microphone or in front of a camera.² However, given that the Bristol Bay region is home to three Alaska Native languages and cultures, plus names in English and in Russian, audio recording is a high priority for the Place Names Project. Audio can be recorded live, in which case we use digital tape recorders placed near interviewees, but for targeted pronunciations of specific names, we often ask community and family members to document audio post-hoc.

2. There are a number of reasons why an Elder or knowledge bearer might be uncomfortable in front of recording equipment. Of course, any documentation effort can be intimidating if there is not an established relationship of trust and reciprocity between the Elder and the team behind the camera. There are also individual and cultural reasons to consider: for example, when the Elder in question is concerned about being perceived as an expert in areas where they do not consider themselves to be the best source of knowledge, even if their preferred sources have passed away. Other common reasons include performance pressure or privacy concerns. While these can be overcome with relationship building, flexible session structuring, and encouraging the Elder to lead documentation sessions, they remain obstacles in the documentation process.

Lastly, although maps are an important tool in our toolbox, they are not the only option to documenting place names. Some people also find organizing their knowledge on a map difficult, as it presents a top-down perspective, rather than a human perspective, of the landscape. For a more humanistic perspective on the land, maps can be supported with photographs of the target area. Best, however, are actual site visits. These can be difficult, as many locations are difficult to reach, especially for Elders, who may be disabled or otherwise find travel difficult. Organizing visits to sites of significance has many advantages, despite the difficulties. In person, there is no abstraction from the land: One is not viewing it through maps or second-hand photography, but is actually present in the moment, able to observe the place as it is. If Elders or knowledge bearers can come along, then retellings of the names and histories of each location can contribute to a more fully lived experience.

One such site visit occurred in 2023, when the documentation team visited *An'gaqtar*^{YUG}/anyqtaʔ/, or the Stone Lady. This well-known site is the subject of a popular oral story (from renowned Yup'ik storyteller Annie Blue), which tracks the movements of the titular lady as she moves throughout the region in search of her husband, eventually turning to stone and standing as a monument on the eastern end of Nunavachak Bay in northern Bristol Bay. The team for this site visit included Francisca Demoski, McKinley Alden, University of British Columbia anthropologist Kristen Barnett, and Yup'ik Elder Evelyn Yanez. The team travelled by skiff boat from the nearby village of Togiak, which was hosting a summer culture camp for local youth. While visiting An'gaqtar, Mrs. Yanez retold pieces of the Stone Lady story while the visitors made offerings to the monument, such as dried fish, and took photos of the site and surrounding area. In addition to Annie Blue's story, other wisdom from the Elders was shared—for example, the outcropping that hosts the monument is also home to many bear skeletons, said to be a result of elderly bears visiting An'gaqtar before transforming into boulders. This experience was then brought back to the culture camp, where Mrs. Yanez shared the Stone Lady story with camp participants. Through this visit, the Place Names Project was able to document more Elder wisdom and stories connected to the area while obtaining contemporary photographs and GIS information and sharing the knowledge directly with local youth.

Data and Results

The following tables outline the demographics of the place names collection. Here, manmade feature refers to constructions and settlements, ranging from communities, old village sites, campsites, and cabins to weirs and docks. Water features include any place names that refer to water specifically, including rivers, streams, bays, coves, creeks, waterfalls, et cetera.

Land features refer to non-water geographical features, such as mountains, hills, bluffs, caves, and valleys. Unspecified features include entries that are underdescribed: they exist in the historical record and we know the general area they refer to but specific information is absent. In addition, the data is organized according to the names' language of origin, namely, Alutiiq, Dena'ina, English, Yup'ik, and Unspecified. Russian-origin names are generally Anglicized, and thus are included in the English category. The unspecified category refers to names whose origins are not clear and are still in the process of being researched.

Table 1 presents a general overview of the geographical features included in the dataset. There are a sum total of 59 types of features:

Table 1. Place Names Dataset Demographics by Feature Type

Geographical Features	Number of Features	Percentage of Total Names
Manmade	16	27.12
Water	24	40.68
Land	17	28.81
Other/Unspecified	2	3.39

Table 1 shows that water features account for the largest share, suggesting a landscape where bodies of water are a prominent and commonly named aspect. Natural features (water and land together) represent 69.49% of the total, while manmade features are significant but clearly secondary in terms of frequency. These numbers broadly reflect the relationship between land knowledge and navigation in the natural world and human development in Bristol Bay. Table 2 illustrates the demographics of the place names database by language.

Table 2. Place Names Dataset Demographics by Language of Origin

Language of Origin	Number of Names	Percentage of Total Names
Alutiiq	77	5.19
Dena'ina	134	9.03
English	316	21.29
Yup'ik	939	63.27
Unspecified	18	1.21

There is a clear preponderance of Yup'ik names, following by English, then Dena'ina, then Alutiiq. Among the Alaska Native languages, these figures suggest a relationship between the contemporary population of each group, as well as their relative number of speakers. Yup'ik has the highest population of speakers, and so it follows naturally that there are more

records of Yup'ik place names, as well as more knowledge bearers able to provide them. English-origin names are the second most common, indicating significant colonial or modern naming influence. Overall, this table underscores the enduring presence and influence of Alaska Native cultures in the region, while also reflecting a layered history where English naming has played a notable role.

Table 3 provides a breakdown of each category of geographical feature per language of origin. The demographics are presented as both a number and a percentage of the total per language (e.g., the 7 manmade features in Alutiiq represent 9.09% of all Alutiiq place names in the database). The percentages are visually summarized in Figure 1, where each bar represents the sum total features in each language.

Table 3. Place Names Dataset Demographics by Feature Type and Language of Origin

Features	Alutiiq		Dena'ina		English		Yup'ik		Unspecified	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Manmade	7	9.09	8	5.97	73	23.10	80	8.52	1	5.56
Water	29	37.66	76	56.72	110	34.81	371	39.51	6	33.34
Land	31	40.26	49	36.57	118	37.34	391	41.64	5	27.78
Unspecified	10	12.99	1	0.75	15	4.75	97	10.33	6	33.34

In Table 3, land features are the most commonly named category, particularly in Yup'ik (41.64%) and Alutiiq (40.26%), with similar prominence in English (37.34%) and Dena'ina (36.57%). Water features are a close second in most languages and are especially dominant in Dena'ina (56.72%), which is somewhat surprising, given that water features represent the largest category in Table 1. Manmade features are the least represented overall, though they are relatively more common in English (23.1%) and to a lesser extent in Yup'ik (8.52%) and Alutiiq (9.09%). Unspecified features are generally rare across most languages, with the exception of the "Unspecified" language category itself (33.34%) and, to a lesser extent, Yup'ik (10.33%).

When comparing across languages, Dena'ina contains significantly more water features relative to their total share in the dataset, with 56.72% of its place names being water features, well above the overall average of 40.68%. In contrast, Alutiiq (37.66%) and Yup'ik (39.51%) closely mirror the overall water feature distribution. English underrepresents in terms of water features (34.81%) relative to the dataset, placing greater emphasis instead on manmade features (23.1%), which, while high, still falls slightly below the

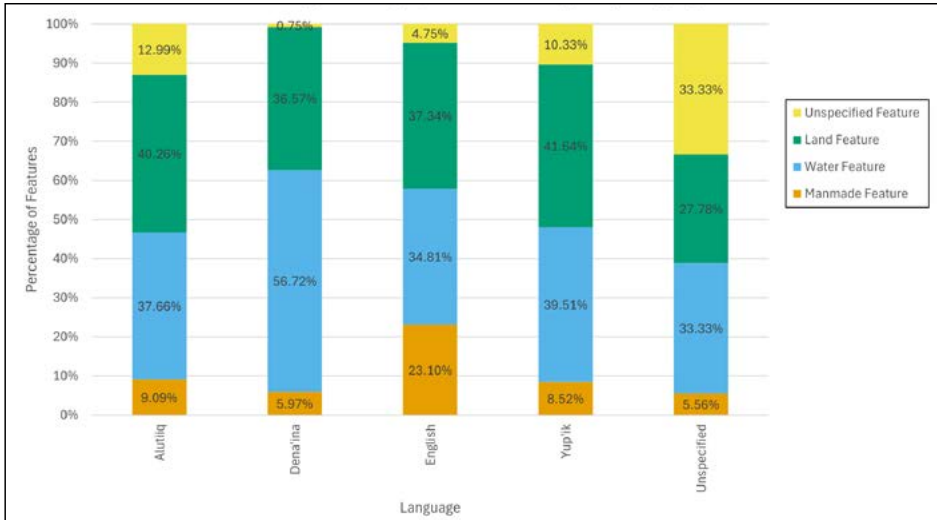


Figure 2. Percentage breakdown of geographical feature types by language. Each bar represents 100% of the features in a given language.

overall proportion of manmade features (27.12%). The “Unspecified” language category lacks clear trends but shows a concentration in water (33.34%) and unspecified feature types (33.34%), likely indicating gaps or ambiguity in the database.

Land features make up 28.81% of the total dataset, but all languages—Alutiiq (40.26%), Dena’ina (36.57%), and Yup’ik (41.64%)—consistently overrepresent them. English also slightly overrepresents land features at 37.34%, but not to the same extent. The strong land-water naming balance in Yup’ik is particularly striking, as its proportions of water (39.51%) and land (41.64%) nearly mirror the dataset’s overall makeup while still tilting slightly toward land. Interestingly, manmade features are most strongly emphasized in English (23.1%) and to a lesser degree in Alutiiq (9.09%) and Yup’ik (8.52%) but are minimally represented in Dena’ina (5.97%). All Alaska Native languages underrepresent manmade features relative to their overall share in the dataset, reinforcing the idea that their naming traditions prioritize natural over constructed elements.

In sum, as the overall dataset is dominated by water features, followed by land and manmade elements, Dena’ina amplifies this emphasis on water, while Alutiiq and Yup’ik maintain a near-proportional balance. English, meanwhile, diverges by placing comparatively greater weight on manmade and land features. These patterns imply cultural orientations toward landscape, with Indigenous naming systems predictably more attuned to natural geographies and English reflecting more infrastructural priorities. It is

however difficult to extrapolate a linguistic or anthropological analysis of these trends in our dataset, simply because it represents an incomplete record. We would not, for example, claim that water features are more important to Dena'ina culture than to Yup'ik or Alutiiq because relatively more of them are documented; rather, these figures illustrate trends in surviving place names. We expect that, as more place names are documented and more research into known place names is done, historical and contemporary narratives describing the relationship between human geography and land will emerge.

Applications and Testimonies

The most impactful result of the Place Names Project has been the creation of the online GIS map of place names (bristolbayonline.com). Indeed, the Bristol Bay Online! website is seeing widespread use. The Togiak Traditional Council uses the website to print maps for search and rescue operations. A former teacher from Togiak School has used the site to develop lesson plans, while the Yup'ik Studies Coordinator has incorporated the website to educate students about local place names and regional geography. The following are brief testimonies from local educators, knowledge bearers, and participants in our place names workshops. We asked them to reflect on the importance of their project, why place names knowledge is important, and their role in conservation.

Evelyn Yanez

Evelyn “Eva” Yanez is a Yup'ik Elder from Togiak, Alaska. In recounting her experiences with place names, she emphasized that they are essential for location and locating resources, unlike the Western system that relies on miles for distance. She learned these names through stories, and they remind her of the resources available in each area. For people who live off the land, knowing place names is crucial. Sometimes, when people were hungry, her grandfather would mention a place called *Pengurpak*^{YUG}/*pəŋuɾpək*/, known as a plentiful place where no one would go hungry. She also heard from someone from the Iliamna Lake area about a similar place called *Talaariq*^{YUG}/*talɑ:ɾiɻ*/, again a spot where one would never go hungry. In each region, these places can be found, offering sustenance through the knowledge of place names.

Lorraine Masterman

“I used the Place Names website when I taught a 6th grade social studies class in the 2012-2013 school year and introduced it to classes as recently as the 2019-2021 school year.

Place names are important to teaching our language and culture in that the names carry so much meaning. Sometimes place names convey dangerous areas and are therefore important for travelers, hunters, and gatherers. Sometimes place names mark areas of abundance and alert subsistence hunters and gatherers about a particular area. To me, place names signify our deep intimacy with the land. Over generations of observation, use, care, and communication, our people have mapped mountains, hills, oceans, rivers, creeks, tributaries, inlets, peninsulas—indeed every observable landform—into the fabric of everyday Yup’ik life.”

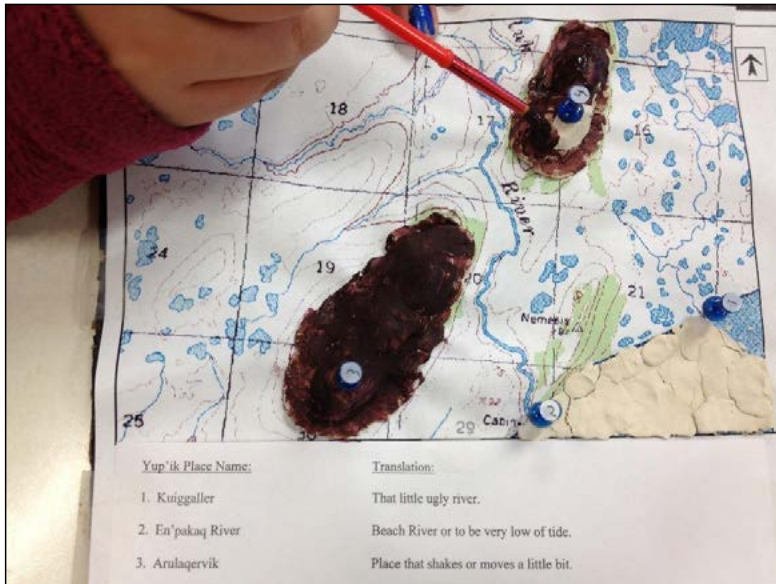


Figure 3. Example of place names in use in a 6th grade classroom.

Research Prospects in Alaska Native Toponymy

Research, in the Western academic sense of the term, is not at the forefront of the Bristol Bay Native Place Names Project. Our focus is conservation and education: not only in documenting place names, but also in preserving their use in communities that frequently self-report increasing

dependence on English terms, and whose awareness of original Native names is decreasing with passing generations (Larson-Blair, Demoski, and Ilutsik-Snyder 2021). This is done through the distribution of new maps showcasing Native names, encouraging the use of local toponyms in classrooms and cultural events, and providing new access to names by aggregating them on one interactive website. However, given toponymy as an anthropological and linguistic field of study, there are outstanding research questions unique to Bristol Bay that are worth examining.

In terms of formal linguistic research, little has been dedicated to place names of Bristol Bay. Linguists have been involved with place names documentation since at least the mid 20th century, resulting in many of the resources listed in the Methods section above. Outside of documenting names, in terms of linguistics, many of these efforts have been descriptive, such as morphosyntactic accounts of their use in phrases and other constructions using ablative (“from a place”) and allative (“to a place”) markers. For example, in Alutiiq, the use of place names in locative constructions is well-documented.

Cirnimek Perry-men nunalluteng. (Leer n.d.:4940)

Cirniq-ABL Perry(ville)-ALL go.visit.a.settlement-3PL.PST

/tʃiɾnimək pɛ.ɹimən nunəlutəŋ/

They went on a visit from Chignik to Perryville.

That said, there has been little research done on the form of the names themselves. One particularly ambitious direction for linguistic research would be the development of a place names corpus, which would enable researchers to observe the distribution of place name types; for example, how many known names form possessive constructions (e.g., *Agisam Cingia*^{SUG}/aʃisam tʃiŋiɑ/ “lookout point,” marked with a possessive morpheme *-m* on the possessor and *-a* on the possessee); how many are descriptive of the features they refer to (e.g., *Kiayiwik*^{SUG} /kiɑjiwik/ “summer camping place,” lit. “summer place”); or how many are named after people (e.g., *Ggarituunam Nuni*^{SUG}/xɑ.ɹitu.nam nuni:/ “[Father] Hariton [Kaiakokanok]’s land”).

Beyond the structure of the place names themselves, there are also many standout research questions regarding how toponyms are referred to in speech and in narratives: beyond morphosyntax, there is further work for linguists in their pragmatic usage as location and identity markers. For example, how do speakers decide which toponyms to use when multiple names exist for the same location? What role do social and cultural factors play in the choice of toponyms in storytelling or ceremonial contexts? How are place names adapted or abbreviated in casual speech compared to formal discourse? Also, how do toponyms contribute to the construction of group

identity, and in what ways might their usage vary across generations or between local and diaspora communities? Exploring these questions could provide a richer understanding of the interplay between language, culture, and geography in the use of place names.

In addition to linguistic research questions, there is considerable anthropological research being done through the lens of ethnogeography. Dr. Yoko Kugo is an anthropologist in Alaska and Northern Studies at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. In her own work, and as a contributor to the Place Names Project, she explores ethnogeography through place names and narratives. She is particularly interested in the Lake Iliamna region, and how place-centered stories enable people to visualize landscapes while proliferating cultural survival and subsistence knowledge (Kugo 2021, 2024). Her work raises several compelling anthropological research questions: How do place names encapsulate and transmit ecological and subsistence knowledge critical for survival in the region? What role do place-centered stories play in fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer in Indigenous communities? How are these narratives evolving in response to environmental changes, such as climate shifts or resource depletion? Furthermore, how do such stories and names mediate relationships between people and their environment, and what can they reveal about shifting cultural identities and values in the Lake Iliamna region? Addressing these areas of anthropological research could provide critical insights into the ways communities navigate and preserve their relationships with their landscapes and traditions.

For both linguists and anthropologists, then, the Bristol Bay Native Place Names Project lays the foundation for promising research that centers community relationships with land, as well as cultural narratives and individual identity in a changing landscape. It provides a unique opportunity to explore how traditional place names encode historical, environmental, and social knowledge, serving as living records of human interaction with the natural world. Moreover, it highlights the importance of community capacity building to document and preserve place names, encourage research methods that prioritize local knowledge systems, and empower communities to lead their own cultural and linguistic preservation efforts. This collaborative approach not only ensures the authenticity of the documentation but also strengthens the community's agency in safeguarding their heritage amidst ongoing social and environmental transformations.

Conclusion: The Future of Place Names

As the Place Names Project concludes its second decade, we find ourselves at a point of reflection. The project represents a massive coordinated and collaborative effort from so many communities and individuals, all dedicated to preserving what was known and transforming

it into what is known. With over 1,500 names catalogued, our immediate priorities have become to provide more context to place names by pairing them with photographs, recordings of their pronunciation, and stories associated with significant sites. In doing so, our hope is that the names will not be merely words on a map online, but rather living, reclaimed terms whose contexts and histories are taught and known in our communities.

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Perpétuer le vrai : De l'importance de l'exactitude dans la culture inuit contemporaine

Jaypetee Arnakakⁱ, Louis-Jacques Doraisⁱⁱ et Alana Johnsⁱⁱⁱ

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article, nous présentons la tradition culturelle inuit voulant qu'en inuktitut, on ne rapporte que les événements dont on a fait soi-même l'expérience, ou les événements et les faits explicitement attribuables à des sources crédibles. Nous montrons que cette tradition de précision narrative appelée *suliniq* est encore vigoureuse chez les locuteurs modernes de l'inuktitut. Qui plus est, elle imprègne aussi les nouvelles productions culturelles telles que la littérature et le film inuit. Cette tradition s'est ainsi perpétuée en tant qu'état fondamental de la parole, et ce même après l'avènement des influences, religieuses et autres, venues de l'extérieur.

MOTS-CLÉS

Inuktitut, notion de vrai, notion d'exactitude, littérature et film inuit, christianisme

ABSTRACT

Continuing Truth: On the Importance of Accuracy in Contemporary Inuit Culture

In this paper we discuss the Inuit cultural tradition of only relating events in Inuktitut which have been personally experienced, or events or facts that are overtly attributable to reliable sources. We show that this tradition of accurate report called *suliniq* is still strong among modern Inuktitut speakers. Moreover, it is reflected in newer cultural products such as Inuit literature and film. This tradition has thus continued as the ground state of speech, and this even after external religious, and other, contacts.

KEYWORDS

Inuktitut, notion of truth, notion of accuracy, Inuit literature and film, Christianity

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*Kuup kuungunirartaugutinga kuunninga.
Imanga kuunginnamat kuungunirartaq kuuk.
(Luikallaaluk 2019, 3)*

Comme la rivière (*kuuk*) qu'on nomme ainsi parce que son eau (*imanga*) coule constamment (*kuunginnamat*), la vérité se perpétue de par son immanence à la parole qui la répand. Dans son dictionnaire *Inuit Uqausillaringit*, l'intellectuel du Nunavik Taamusi Qumaq définit en effet le mot *uqaqtuq* ('dit, parle') comme en (1) (Qumaq 1991, 101; toutes les traductions de l'inuktitut et de l'anglais ont été effectuées par les auteurs).

1. **Uqaqtuq** – Inuk suliniraqsuni isumaminik uqatuarami taga uqaqtuq piujumik piunngitumigluuniit

Parle – Quand une personne, laissant entendre qu'elle dit vrai (*suliniraqsuni*), dit ainsi quelque chose de bon ou de mauvais sur un sujet donné.

On voit ici que dans sa définition de la parole, Qumaq admet explicitement une prétention à la vérité.

Pour plusieurs auteurs, tous les locuteurs de toutes les langues sont censés dire la vérité. C'est là, par exemple, une des normes conversationnelles de Grice (1975), comme le rapporte Potts (2015, 177). C'est son principe de qualité (2).

2. **Qualité**: N'avancez que ce que vous savez être vrai. Ne dites pas de faussetés. Ne dites pas quelque chose sans en avoir la preuve.

Ce dont nous discutons dans cet article, c'est jusqu'à quel point les Inuit s'en tiennent à ce principe quand ils parlent l'inuktitut. Nous ne traitons pas de ce qu'il advient quand ils ont recours à d'autres langues. Ce que nous observons et illustrerons par des exemples, c'est que les Inuit pratiquent mieux le principe (2) que d'autres cultures, en particulier les cultures occidentales modernes. Ceci entraîne bon nombre de caractéristiques langagières notables, dont les enseignants inuit comme non-inuit devraient tenir compte dans la préparation de programmes d'études et de travaux pour les étudiants. Nous montrerons que pour les locuteurs natifs, faire usage de l'inuktitut et dire la vérité sont intrinsèquement entremêlés, au point où l'un est impensable sans l'autre. C'est pour cette raison que la société inuit accepte difficilement les œuvres de pure fiction. Les récits en inuktitut s'attachent généralement à rapporter des événements observés, par soi-même ou par d'autres, ou personnellement vécus (Nungak et Arima 1969, 113; McGrath 1984; Martin 2012).

Cet article propose une réflexion sur cette question, souvent négligée malgré son importance pour la crédibilité et, donc, le futur de la parole inuit. Il s'appuie à la fois sur des données lexicographiques provenant des deux grands dictionnaires de définitions en inuktitut (Qummaq 1991; Ootoova *et al.* 2000) et sur l'examen de pratiques culturelles liées au langage. Ainsi, nous explorons d'abord les significations sous-jacentes des expressions ou des mots inuit se rapportant à la vérité. Puis dans les deux sections suivantes, nous présentons des exemples montrant comment le rôle joué par l'exactitude factuelle était les conversations quotidiennes, les récits oraux et écrits et les autres productions culturelles. C'est pourquoi l'exactitude est un peu comme un *paukturvik*, 'le châssis où on fixe les peaux', qui ne restreint pas mais encadre. Selon Jaypetee Arnakak, co-auteur de cet article, ce mot connote un « espace de fixation sur un fondement ». Dans la quatrième section, nous examinons le croisement complexe entre exactitude factuelle et religions en contact. Nous concluons enfin brièvement en anticipant les débats à venir sur la tradition inuit de juste parole, dans les domaines de l'éducation, de la justice et de la traduction.

La sémantique de l'exactitude et du mensonge

La définition de Qummaq sous-entend que quand quelqu'un parle, on estime ses paroles conformes à la réalité (*sulijut*); ce qui est dit ne défigure pas la vérité. Qummaq (1991, 480) définit *sulijut* comme en (3).

3. **Sulijut** – Amisut inuit uqaqtangit sulijut mitsiliit taimaimmat ukpinaqtut sulitsiamata

Sont conformes à la réalité – Les paroles de plus d'une ou deux personnes sont exactes (*sulijut*), elles possèdent la vérité (*mitsiliit*); de cette façon, elles [les paroles] sont crédibles car [ces personnes] parlent vraiment justement

Selon Qummaq, les paroles énoncées sont crédibles (*ukpinaqtut*) quand les locuteurs sont à la fois justes et véridiques. Leurs affirmations doivent être exactes et exemptes de contre-vérités. On attend donc des gens qu'ils parlent de leur propre vécu ou qu'ils rapportent ce qu'ils ont entendu ou appris de source sûre. En cours de conversation, les locuteurs inuit valident souvent ce qu'ils disent, en précisant: « *qaujimavunga* » ('je le sais [d'expérience]') ou « *tusaumavunga* » ('j'ai entendu dire que...'). L'inuktitut possède également des marqueurs d'évidence servant à indiquer si le locuteur a vu ou vécu lui-même ce qu'il raconte (voir à ce sujet Mahieu 2016). Pour Arnakak, je peux me considérer *sulijunga* ('juste dans mes paroles') si *qaujimajara*, *atuqsimajara*, *tusaumajara*, *iqqaumajara maliglugu* ('je m'en tiens à ce que je sais, ai expérimenté, en ai entendu parler [ou] m'en souviens').

Cela signifie qu'au Nunavik et, comme on le verra ci-dessous, au Nunavut oriental aussi, la langue inuit combine en un seul radical (*suli-*) des concepts qui diffèrent en français, 'vérité' et 'exactitude des mots'¹. Qui plus est, *suliniq* ('être *suli-*', c'est-à-dire 'véracité/exactitude') est intrinsèquement lié à la parole car, selon Qumaq, quand les gens parlent, on suppose qu'ils sont véridiques et rigoureux. Dans un environnement arctique difficile, la précision des perceptions et des faits évite souvent le désastre.

Puisque l'objectif explicite de Qumaq était d'éduquer les jeunes Inuit, son insistance sur la juste parole est quasiment morale. Il est donc important de comprendre comment et jusqu'à quel point la véracité/exactitude demeure pertinente pour les Inuit contemporains, en particulier à une époque où leur langue affronte de multiples défis. Ceux-ci concernent, par exemple, la transmission du savoir, le développement de l'information écrite et l'usage des données multimédias.

À la différence de celui de Qumaq, l'autre dictionnaire majeur en inuktitut, dans le dialecte de Baffin nord, n'évoque pas le radical *suli-* lorsqu'il définit le langage (Ootoova *et al.* 2000, 176):

4. **Uqaqtuq** – Inuuqatiminut qanutuinnaq nilliqtuq uqaqpuq

Parle – Émet un son de voix vers son partenaire, [donc] parle

Cette définition se limite au son du langage, en esquivant sa fonction. Toutefois, le même dictionnaire définit le mot *sulijuq* en le reliant au contenu de la parole, quoique de façon négative (id., 554):

5. **Sulijuq** – Inuk saglunngittiaqluni uqaqtuq

Correspond à la réalité – Quelqu'un parle sans être du tout inexact / ne ment pas

1. Et aussi 'conformité à la réalité'; voir plus bas l'analyse sémantique de *miksiliit* ('possèdent la vérité'). Notons ici que les locuteurs ne sont pas toujours conscients des connotations sous-jacentes des mots qu'ils utilisent. C'est l'usage qu'ils font de ces termes qui en dévoile le sens profond.

Afin d'avancer dans notre compréhension du sens de *sulijuq*, nous devons donc comprendre son contraire en (6), le concept de mensonge (*saglu-*). Ootoova *et al.* (2000, 571) définissent *saglu-* comme suit :

6. **Saglujuq** – Taimannaungittuq uqaqtuq mangattilluni pivikluniluunniit

Ment, est inexact – Dit quelque chose qui n'est pas ce que c'est vraiment, soit intentionnellement ou en étant incapable [d'être exact]

Notons que la définition en (6) ne présume pas que l'inexactitude de l'énoncé est nécessairement intentionnelle. Par contraste, la définition française de 'mentir' attribue toujours une intention à l'énoncé inexact.

Sagluniq ('être *saglujuq*'), fait donc référence aux assertions qui sont inexactes parce que ceux qui les énoncent mentent intentionnellement ou se trompent. Comme *suliniq* (vérité ou exactitude), le concept de *sagluniq* évoque les relations tant intentionnelles qu'involontaires entre parole et réalité².

Au Nunavik, Qumaq (1991, 501) définit *sallujuq* en termes assez semblables :

7. **Sallujuq** – Sulinngituq, suligani uqaqtuq, mitsiqanngitumik uqaqtuq

Ment, est inexact – Ne correspond pas à la réalité, parle inexactement, profère une fausseté

Dans les définitions de *sagluniq/salluniq*, selon Ootoova et selon Qumaq, le concept de 'mensonge', source d'inexactitude, peut aussi s'exprimer par un terme spécifique, différent chez chaque auteur. Pour Ootoova et ses collègues (*supra*), ce terme est *mangattilluni*. Dans le dictionnaire multi-dialectal inuktitut-anglais de Spalding, *mangattijuq* ('il/elle *mangatti-*') est défini ainsi : « Il fourvoie ou trompe par badinage » (Spalding 1998, 53), ce qui semble suggérer que le locuteur sait qu'il s'écarte du réel. Cependant, la définition de *mangattijuq* chez Ootoova et ses collègues (2000, 483) est la suivante :

8. **Mangattijuq** – Saglujuq pijaarilluni mangattivuq

Fourvoie, trompe – Quiconque s'écarte du réel (*saglujuq*) intentionnellement (*pijaarilluni*) fourvoie et trompe les autres

Ce mot dénote donc un recours volontaire à l'inexactitude, un « mensonge ».

2. Selon la regrettée Lydia Tuglavina de Nain/Goose Bay, on peut *sallujuk* accidentellement en transmettant une information de seconde main. En français, on n'utiliserait pas le verbe 'mentir' dans ce contexte.

La définition que Qumaq donne de *sallujuq* (7) fait appel au mot *mitsiqanngitumik* ‘qui est sans *mitsi*’. Les énoncés véridiques sont qualifiés de *mitsiliit* [singulier *mitsilik*] (‘qui ont du *mitsi*’). Selon le dictionnaire inuktitut-français de Schneider, *miksi/mitsi* est un radical locatif, qui signifie au Nunavik: «En-deçà de la chose nommée et entre elle et le [locuteur]», mais au figuré, ce locatif peut s’appliquer à la vérité (Schneider 1966, 145). Selon Mahieu (2022, 84), *mitsi-* désigne alors «la réalité extérieure comme fondement de la vérité ou de la fausseté des assertions factuelles». Ainsi, *mitsilik* (‘qui a du *mitsi*’) signifierait «ce qui est ‘vrai’ au sens de ‘réel’» (*ibid.*), en relation avec le sujet traité, ou encore, pour Arnakak, «une affinité pour la vérité». Voici ce qu’en dit Qumaq (1991, 322):

9. **Mitsilik** – Sunatuinnaq uqaajaujurluuniit pinasuaqtaujuurluuniit sulimmat pitaqarmaluunniit

Dit vrai, est vrai – Quelque chose est mentionné ou travaillé parce que ça correspond à la réalité ou parce que ça existe

Qumaq semble suggérer qu’avoir du *mitsi* c’est faire prendre conscience de quelque chose. Une assertion en accord avec la réalité (lorsque «mentionnée»)³, aussi bien qu’un objet tangible (puisque «travaillé») sont présents ici et maintenant. Leur vérité est attestée par la tangibilité de leur présence, qu’elle soit physique ou évoquée en paroles.

L’expression en un seul mot (*suliniq*) des concepts *qallunaat* de vérité et d’exactitude et, parallèlement, celle des notions de mensonge et d’inexactitude grâce au seul terme *sagluniq*⁴, combinée au fait qu’on attend des locuteurs qu’ils soient fidèles à la réalité, semble indiquer qu’en règle générale, les Inuit considèrent crucial de donner un compte-rendu adéquat de ce qu’ils savent. Une telle présentation factuelle des choses, transmise avant tout par la langue, joue un rôle social important dans l’évaluation du comportement des individus. Dans un article sur le futur de l’inuktitut, Qumaq affirme que la médisance et le mensonge, suivis du bavardage, étaient, respectivement, les second, troisième et quatrième pires défauts selon les ancêtres⁵. Voici ce que l’auteur dit au sujet du mensonge et du bavardage (Qumaq 1992, 353):

3. En supposant que les locuteurs affirment implicitement que leurs paroles sont exactes.

4. Selon Schneider (1966, 312), au Nunavik, *salluniq* signifie d’abord ‘mensonge’ et, quelquefois, ‘erreur’. ‘Parler erronément’ se dit plutôt *sulinnginiq*, ‘ne pas être *sulijuj*’ (Schneider 1970, 258).

5. Sur une liste de huit. Le pire défaut était l’inimitié.

10. a) Le mensonge. On ne doit pas dire des choses inexactes ou fausses quand une ou plusieurs personnes nous écoutent. Les menteurs ne se comportent pas du tout comme il faut.
- b) Le bavardage. Voici le sens du mot bavarder. C'est proférer des inexactitudes en répétant devant tous les autres quelque chose qui a été dit, mais qui n'est pas connu, et qu'il n'est pas encore souhaitable de faire connaître.

La médisance (*mangatsiniq* selon Qumaq 1991, 338), le mensonge et le bavardage présentent faussement la réalité. On l'a vu précédemment, pour Ootoova et ses collègues (2000), la présence de *mangattiniq* (*op. cit.*, 483) – le *mangatsiniq* de Qumaq – fait de *sagluniq* (*op. cit.*, 571) un mensonge intentionnel. Les locuteurs inuit ne devraient pas présenter faussement ce qu'ils savent ou croient être vrai, que ce soit volontairement ou parce que leurs sources d'information sont indignes de confiance ou confidentielles. Ils doivent plutôt spécifier l'origine de leur savoir, explicitement ou implicitement. Qui plus est, leur comportement doit refléter leur engagement envers la réalité.

La chercheuse Keavy Martin (2012, 107) remarque ainsi qu'elle a été «d'abord surprise par l'empressement des aînés à affirmer qu'ils ignoraient la réponse à une question». Ce degré de franchise différait de celui des «experts» avec lesquels elle était familière dans le Sud. Nous comprenons maintenant que leur empressement à ne pas répondre faisait intégralement partie du comportement d'une personne sur qui on peut vraiment compter. Lors d'un séjour de recherche linguistique à Iqaluit, la co-autrice Alana Johns, ainsi que Richard Compton et Christine Pittman, alors aux études supérieures, furent surpris lorsqu'un locuteur avec qui ils avaient travaillé sur le thème des quantificateurs – le mot 'tous' par exemple – déclara qu'il était incapable de traduire une phrase anglaise fabriquée pour l'occasion: «*All the policemen in Iqaluit are women*». Il leur expliqua qu'il ne pouvait pas dire ça parce que ce n'était pas vrai. On en arriva à un compromis en imaginant une ville appelée Ujagaq et en expliquant que dans cette ville particulière, seules les femmes devenaient policières. C'était une fiction dont la plausibilité, dans le cadre de l'exemple imaginé, permit au locuteur d'énoncer la phrase désirée. En planifiant à l'avance, les chercheurs auraient pu ne demander à traduire que des énoncés effectivement exacts. Dans la même veine, Marc-Antoine Mahieu (com. pers. 9 avril 2025) mentionne que les collaborateurs inuit avec qui il mettait au point du matériel pour enseigner l'inuktitut refusaient généralement de l'aider à créer de petits dialogues, parce qu'ils avaient trop de réticence à inventer dans leur langue des situations qui n'existaient pas réellement. C'est sur ce conflit potentiel entre la capacité d'invention des gens du Sud et l'aisance avec laquelle les Inuit s'astreignent à l'exactitude que nous cherchons à attirer ici l'attention.

La vérité dans le récit

Nous avons vu que les mots qui traduisent ce qu'on appelle 'vérité' en français sont liés en inuktitut à l'exactitude du discours et qu'en conséquence, l'acte même de parole est défini en termes de recours à ce principe d'exactitude (la vérité). Qui plus est, cette justesse du discours repose sur la proximité entre le locuteur et l'évènement relaté, par le biais des *mitsiliit*, ce qui revient à déclarer que le locuteur a assisté à l'évènement ou a eu accès à quelqu'un de fiable (qu'il mentionne) qui y assistait. Comment peut-on développer un lien de proximité avec les évènements? Comment signale-t-on les différents modes de contiguïté? Et ce qui est plus important, ce lien intégral entre parole et proximité/exactitude impose-t-il ce qui pourrait être des restrictions à l'énonciation orale ou écrite? Nous allons voir que ce qui semble constituer une restriction est en fait une garantie de qualité, au sens où Grice (1975), Qumaq (1991) et Ootoova *et al.* (2000) l'entendent. Commençons par quelques mots sur l'énonciation en langue écrite.

L'introduction de l'écriture constitue l'un des effets majeurs de l'avènement du christianisme au sein de la culture inuit. Les missionnaires apprirent à leurs ouailles à lire et écrire dans leur propre langue, soit en y adaptant l'alphabet latin, soit en ayant recours à des caractères syllabiques, comme dans l'Arctique central et oriental canadien (le Labrador mis à part). Le syllabaire résulte de l'adaptation d'un système d'écriture originellement créé pour les langues anishinaabe (ojibway) et crie (Harper 1985). Les premiers textes traduits en inuktitut furent les Saintes Écritures, ainsi que des catéchismes et des recueils de prières. Mais les Inuit utilisèrent rapidement l'écriture à leurs propres fins: communiquer par lettre avec la famille et les amis, noter les événements familiaux et tenir un journal personnel. Longtemps encore toutefois, les créations plus élaborées en inuktitut demeurèrent purement orales. Elles consistaient en récits anciens – les *unipkaaqtuat/unikkaa(q)tuat* – et en histoires personnelles, ainsi qu'en divers types de chants.

Martin (2012, 42-43) signale que les *unipkaaqtuat* sont des récits d'autrefois. Ils sont longs et on leur attribue une certaine valeur didactique. L'autrice cite Peter Irniq qui affirme: «Ils appartiennent à un autre temps, un autre lieu». Martin explique comment ce que les gens du Sud considèrent comme littérairement valable correspond bien, mais pas parfaitement, à ce genre de récit. Notre recherche sur la parole et l'exactitude nous amène à comprendre qu'une personne qui conte des *unipkaaqtuat* ne relate pas ces récits en tant qu'évènements connus par expérience personnelle, mais plutôt grâce à l'expérience qu'elle a de les avoir entendus auparavant, et probablement de façon répétée, de la bouche de personnes fiables. De cette façon, le lien d'exactitude dans ce genre littéraire unit le narrateur du moment à lui-même en tant qu'auditeur d'un conteur précédent. Autrement dit, les récits ne sortent pas du néant mais sont transmis. Alors que chaque

récit peut varier un peu dans son style et ses détails⁶, il ne peut être fabriqué de toutes pièces à des fins didactiques ou récréatives immédiates. Ce fait correspond à ce que nous avons signalé comme étant l'exigence que l'énonciation langagière en inuktitut se rattache à la réalité ou à la vérité. Ce rattachement passe ici par la répétition de ce récit particulier qu'on a entendu. De par sa nature, ce genre de récit forme un ensemble fini (nous en reparlerons à la section suivante). Arnakak ajoute à ce sujet que le conte traditionnel portant sur le héros culturel Kiviuq présente une description du mode de vie et des étendues à parcourir le long de la côte septentrionale de l'Amérique du Nord, ainsi qu'un dispositif mnémotechnique d'information géographique à l'usage des générations futures. Ceci démontre qu'un récit ancestral peut transmettre des données factuelles précises à travers le temps et l'espace.

Si le discours en inuktitut doit être relié à la réalité, cela mène à l'observation suivante de McGrath (1984) concernant les récits inuit: les narrations personnelles – ou histoires de vie pour Martin (2012, 101) – constituent le genre principal de récit.

Examinons maintenant quelques caractéristiques de ces récits, afin de préciser la manière dont ils relatent la vérité. Nous verrons qu'ils véhiculent plusieurs des conventions de validité et de dévoilement des sources propres aux travaux académiques, donnant ainsi au lecteur/auditeur confiance dans l'exactitude de leur contenu.

En premier lieu, les locuteurs commencent leur récit en s'identifiant par leur nom. Ils ajoutent souvent aussi de l'information sur leur localisation actuelle et leur lieu d'origine. Qui plus est, ils expliquent habituellement en quelques mots la raison pour laquelle ils s'expriment. On le constate dans le début d'une intervention de l'aînée Mary Dicker, du Nunatsiavut (Labrador).

11. *Mary Dicker*: Sivullipâmi uKagumavunga, Mary-uvunga unikkâKujauvunga, siagu piusigiKattalautta-nik Advent-timik pigiallunga.

'Je voudrais d'abord dire que je suis Mary. On me demande de conter des histoires de mon enfance, en commençant par l'Avent'.

6. Les *unikkaa(q)tuat* remontent à un passé lointain, mais il a été démontré qu'au cours des siècles, leur contenu s'est adapté aux événements vécus par ceux qui les ont transmis – les premiers contacts avec les *Qallunaat* par exemple (Sonne 1990).

Comme c'est l'habitude dans ce style d'introduction, Mary Dicker, après d'être identifiée, précise qu'elle raconte une histoire parce qu'on lui a demandé de dire quelque chose qui a trait à Noël⁷. C'était en décembre lors d'un atelier de transcription à Nain, où elle avait fait un enregistrement qui fut ensuite transcrit. L'auto-identification est un marqueur de qualité, puisque le locuteur atteste effectivement de ce qui va suivre. À plusieurs égards, cette identification orale équivaut à une signature écrite⁸.

Voici un autre exemple, cette fois de feu Marta Talerook de Qamani'tuaq au Nunavut. Johns lui avait demandé de raconter une histoire quelconque, et elle avait choisi le récit émouvant de la perte d'un enfant par un couple.

12. Uvanga nipiliurniarama unipkaaqtuamik.

taipkua unipkaaqtuak nagligija'tuarigapkik.

uvamnik unipkaaqtuamiarniarama. Maata Taliruugama.

unipkaaqtuaq taimna nuliariiguuq taipkuak atausinaamik nutaraqqtuk.

'Je vais enregistrer une histoire. Je ressens réellement beaucoup d'émotion quant à ces deux histoires. Je vais raconter l'histoire. Je suis Marta Talerook. L'histoire concerne ce couple qui avait seulement un enfant...'

Nous retrouvons ici l'auto-identification, le contexte et l'intention. Cela fait contraste avec plusieurs récits en français qui se situent «il était une fois» ou «il y a longtemps».

En second lieu, les histoires personnelles renferment surtout des événements spécifiques ou des actes habituels de l'existence vécue par le locuteur. Celui-ci a fait l'expérience ou a été témoin de l'évènement, était là quand il s'est produit, ou était conscient des activités en cours dans la communauté. Dans son récit, Mary Dicker parle de la préparation à Noël, y compris du fait de transmettre par écrit au Nalujuk⁹ ce qu'elle souhaite comme présents. Et l'histoire tragique racontée par Marta Talerook s'est probablement déroulée dans la communauté où elle vivait.

7. Le Nunatsiavut septentrional est surtout morave et l'Avent y constitue un prélude majeur de Noël.

8. Lorsqu'elle remplissait des formulaires liés à ses projets à l'Université de Toronto, on a souvent demandé à Johns comment elle protégerait l'identité des gens participant à ses recherches. Elle répondait qu'ils acceptaient spécifiquement de raconter des histoires, en supposant que ce type d'information serait diffusé dans la communauté et chez les universitaires intéressés et que le récit-même exigeait l'auto-identification.

9. Un personnage du folklore morave au Labrador.

Troisièmement, quand les évènements ou les actes habituels rapportés ont pris place hors de l'expérience du conteur, celui-ci mentionne généralement ses sources : ses parents ou un aîné par exemple.

Martin (2012, 107) cite les témoignages d'un certain nombre d'aînés inuit lors d'entrevues tirées d'Angmaalik et ses collègues (1999), où ils font précéder leur intervention de l'assertion qu'ils ne vont rapporter que ce dont ils ont été témoins. Nous incluons ici deux de ces témoignages, provenant d'Angmaalik et ses collègues (1999, 5). Le locuteur est feu Saullu Nakasuk. En (13a), l'autre personne est Eena Alivaqtuq, une étudiante du cours. En (13b) nous ne citons qu'une affirmation de Saullu, lors d'une discussion entre Julia (étudiante), Saullu et Pauloosie (un autre aîné).

13a. Saullu : Unikkautituinnaq qaujissimajannik. Unnikkajjaanngilanga kisutuinnarmik qaujissimanngitannik.

Saullu : Je ne te dis que ce que je connais par expérience. Je ne te dirai rien dont je n'ai pas fait l'expérience.

Iina : Ii.

Eena : Oui.

Saullu : Qaujimajaqaraluarumi, qaujissimallarinnngikukku unikkausirijjaanngilara.

Saullu : Même si c'est quelque chose que je connais, si je ne l'avais pas connu par expérience, je n'en parlerais pas.

13b. Saullu : Ii, unikkaqtuqariaqanngittuq tusatuinniqtaminirmik sallusarainnarmat. Uqaruminaqpanngilaq sulinngittunik.

Saullu : Oui. On ne va pas parler de quelque chose juste entendu par oui-dire, car c'est trop facile de proférer une fausseté. Ce n'est pas souhaitable de dire des contre-vérités.

Ces assertions de Saullu sont cohérentes avec notre exposé sur le langage et la vérité à la section précédente. Elles réitèrent aussi que ce n'est pas une bonne pratique de répéter des informations non vérifiées. Ces contrôles de qualité sont semblables à ceux qu'on applique aux témoins dans les cours de justice, où une preuve ne peut être admise en poursuite qu'à travers le témoignage de la source dont elle provient (Dostal 2021). Ce standard d'exactitude, habituel dans la culture inuit, diffère d'une façon frappante des standards du Sud ces années-ci, où la vérité factuelle a été remplacée par des opinions ou de la confusion¹⁰.

10. De nos jours, certains politiciens sont décrits comme « détachés de la vérité », ce qui est à l'opposé de la description donnée ici, où la vérité consiste en un ensemble de points d'attache sans lesquels on ne devrait même pas parler.

Les récits oraux constituent donc avant tout une forme de témoignage, ce qui ne les empêche pas de comporter des passages intéressants, drôles ou saisissants. Le stade jusqu'auquel le narrateur peut conduire ses auditeurs ne repose pas que sur le phrasé et la structure/présentation, mais également sur la voix. Plusieurs récits comprennent du discours direct, qu'on cite en imitant la voix du personnage qui le profère. Ceci peut accroître l'effet théâtral de la narration. On demande souvent aussi aux conteurs de bonnes histoires de les répéter encore et encore, et ils le font volontiers. Les auditeurs qui ont déjà entendu l'histoire apprécient l'écouter à nouveau, anticipant avec plaisir les passages amusants ou familiers.

Littérature écrite, film et vérité

En portant notre regard sur la littérature inuit écrite, nous remarquons, suivant en cela Martin (2012), que peu ou pas d'œuvres littéraires en inuktitut adoptent la forme du roman classique, défini ici comme un ouvrage important en langue écrite doté de propriétés artistiques et divertissantes, dont les personnages et les événements ne sont généralement pas considérés comme issus de faits réels ou d'histoires arrivées à d'autres personnes mais émanent de l'imagination de l'écrivain et sont donc fictifs. Il est maintenant clair que les créations sans lien aucun avec le connu sont contraires aux préceptes inuit sur le langage. Que publie-t-on donc en inuktitut? McGrath (2023, 192) note que les Inuit publient, entre autres, des mémoires autobiographiques, leurs rêves, ainsi que des créations personnelles équivalant plus ou moins à de la poésie. La poésie traditionnelle consiste en chants/poèmes, les *pisiit*, à la fois artistiques et très personnels. L'art complexe du *pisiq* dépasse nos compétences, mais on peut consulter à ce sujet McGrath (1984, chapitres quatre et cinq) et Martin (2012, chapitre trois). Ces autrices mentionnent trois éléments importants des *pisiit*: le contexte, la performance et la spontanéité. Un genre moderne comparable pourrait être le hip-hop en inuktitut, auquel s'adonnent plusieurs jeunes Inuit.

Connus en kalaallisut du Groenland dès le début du XXe siècle (Dorais 2010, 21), les écrits apparentés au roman ne firent leur apparition en inuktitut qu'une cinquantaine d'années plus tard. En 1953-1954, une jeune Inuk du Nunavik septentrional, Salome Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk, écrivit, en effet, un long récit intitulé *Sanaaq*, à la demande des missionnaires catholiques locaux qui avaient besoin de matériaux en inuktitut pour apprendre la langue. Toutefois, *Sanaaq* ne fut publié que trente ans plus tard (1984) en caractères syllabiques inuktitut, puis en traductions française (Nappaaluk 2002) et anglaise (2014). Le récit conte les faits et gestes d'une jeune veuve, Sanaaq, qui appartient à une bande semi-nomade du Nunavik à l'époque des premiers contacts avec les *Qallunaat*. La langue de l'autrice rappelle celle des récits vécus et des mythes. Par exemple, elle utilise fréquemment le

suffixe *-guuq* ('dit-on'), comme si elle relatait des faits connus par oui-dire fiable (Mahieu 2016). Une telle formulation supprime l'obligation d'être soi-même *sulijut*.

D'autres textes écrits par des Inuit canadiens firent leur apparition au cours des années 1960. Plusieurs d'entre eux parurent dans la revue *Inuktitut*, un périodique trimestriel publié par le ministère fédéral des Affaires du Nord (puis des Affaires indiennes, maintenant Relations Couronne-Autochtones et Affaires du Nord Canada). Cette revue existe depuis 1959 et utilise diverses formes d'inuktitut, l'anglais et, occasionnellement, le français.

En 1969-1970, *Inuktitut* fit paraître en trois épisodes le premier roman publié par un Inuk canadien dans sa langue maternelle, *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut* ('Chasseur au harpon'), écrit par Markoosie Patsauq, un pilote de brousse alors domicilié à Resolute (Nunavut), mais né à Inukjuak (Nunavik). Patsauq écrivit ensuite une adaptation en anglais de son récit, apparemment sous la proche supervision de James H. McNeill, un agent culturel des Affaires du Nord. Ce texte parut en 1970 sous la forme d'un livre intitulé *Harpoon of the Hunter* (Markoosie 1970). L'ouvrage en anglais fut alors traduit en français et en d'autres langues. On a récemment publié une nouvelle édition de l'original en inuktitut (Patsauq 2021), après en avoir vérifié et standardisé l'orthographe sous la supervision de l'auteur, avec traduction en anglais et en français à partir de l'inuktitut. Dans son enfance, Patsauq (2021, 178) avait entendu plusieurs récits contés par des membres de sa famille. Ceux-ci formèrent la base de l'histoire qu'il imagina au sujet de Kamik, un jeune chasseur qui part à la recherche d'un ours polaire tueur d'hommes. Kamik finit par abattre la bête, mais il se suicide quand il réalise que cette chasse a entraîné la mort de tous les membres de son camp saisonnier, y compris de sa fiancée. Cette œuvre de Patsauq est ce qui se rapproche le plus de ce que les gens du Sud définiraient comme un roman.

On peut considérer que ces deux textes fondateurs de la littérature inuit canadienne, *Sanaaq* et *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut*, respectent le principe fondamental voulant qu'on ne profère que des énoncés vrais et exacts (*sulijut*). En effet, ils rapportent des événements parfaitement crédibles et sont donc appropriés et instructifs, même si ces événements n'ont pas toujours été vécus par des personnes réelles, ne se sont peut-être pas exactement déroulés tel que raconté et n'ont pas été observés par les auteurs.

D'autres œuvres littéraires en inuktitut ont été publiées durant cette période. Elles incluent des transcriptions de mythes et légendes inuit, des descriptions de la culture traditionnelle, ainsi que des mémoires et réminiscences autobiographiques¹¹. Selon McGrath (1984), ces derniers adoptent souvent des thèmes et des structures propres aux récits oraux. Par

11. Quelques journaux personnels, en provenance surtout du Labrador, ont été publiés en anglais dès la fin du XIX^e siècle.

exemple, plusieurs autobiographies, telle celle de Qumaq (2020) racontent comment un orphelin démuné réussit à triompher des épreuves qu'il subit, pour finalement s'imposer en tant que chasseur, chef de famille ou dirigeant respecté. Tous les textes de ce type possèdent les mêmes caractéristiques de vérité et d'exactitude (*suliniq*) que les récits traditionnels. On peut également les considérer comme issus d'histoires déjà existantes.

À partir de la fin des années 1970, la généralisation de la scolarisation en anglais commença à faire ressentir ses effets sur l'écriture. Les jeunes générations préféraient ordinairement écrire en langue seconde ou, parfois, alterner d'une langue à l'autre, ce qui entraîna une chute significative de la production littéraire en inuktitut. Cependant, au cours des décennies suivantes, les Inuit prirent de plus en plus en mains leur propre développement politique et culturel. En ce qui concerne la littérature, ils réalisèrent que la narration d'histoires sous forme écrite, et ce dans quelque langue que ce soit, constituait un outil apte à transmettre les Savoirs traditionnels (*Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit*, IQ), comme aussi les expériences vécues en tant que personne inuk habitant une communauté nordique ou une ville du sud du Canada. En conséquence, on mit divers projets sur pied afin de colliger et diffuser par écrit les récits des Aînés et, en même temps, encourager les jeunes auteurs inuit à publier en anglais ou en inuktitut. En 2020, le gouvernement du Nunavut a lancé : *Inuktuuqta! Inuktit Writing Prize*, qui alloue un prix important en argent à la personne qui soumet le meilleur texte écrit en inuktitut.

D'une certaine façon donc, la littérature inuit canadienne d'aujourd'hui peut être considérée comme un instrument permettant d'acquérir le pouvoir de transmettre sa propre histoire, qu'elle soit mythique, traditionnelle ou contemporaine. Ici encore, les récits créés par les Inuit sont complètement *sulijut*, même quand on leur donne une forme inhabituelle, ou une nouvelle peau pour emprunter les mots de Keavy Martin (2012). Alook Ipellie (1991), dans *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares*, reconfigure des symboles tirés des *unikkaa(q)tuat* traditionnels, alors que Tanya Tagaq (2019), dans *Croc fendu*, propose un mélange d'imagination, de souvenirs, de poésie et de folklore baignant dans le réalisme magique. On peut ainsi affirmer que la littérature écrite inuit est en expansion, tout en restant fidèle au *suliniq*.

Ce que nous conjecturons ici à propos de la littérature s'applique aussi à d'autres formes d'art inuit. Les chansons, qu'il s'agisse des anciens *pisiit* ou de la musique pop moderne, expriment le plus souvent les événements ou les sentiments personnels dont leurs compositeurs ont fait l'expérience, certains de ces derniers, telle Tanya Tagaq, étant aussi des auteurs. Les sculptures et les estampes dépeignent généralement, de manière réaliste ou, parfois, symbolique, l'environnement naturel, la vie quotidienne (d'antan ou d'aujourd'hui) et certains êtres non humains faisant ou ayant fait partie de l'expérience de vie inuit.

Les films tournés par les Inuit reflètent eux aussi le *suliniq*. Ils peuvent raconter des histoires mythiques, comme *Atanarjuat* de Zacharias Kunuk, basé sur un récit transmis depuis plusieurs générations. Alternativement, ils peuvent illustrer un passé dont on se souvient encore. Dans le film *Une journée dans la vie de Noah Piugattuk*, également de Kunuk, les événements concernent une personne réelle, qui a subi les pressions du gouvernement pour forcer les Inuit à abandonner leur vie nomade et s'installer dans les villages, afin de satisfaire à la loi obligeant les enfants d'aller à l'école. Ce film n'est pas un documentaire mais il en est très proche, à cette exception près que ce sont des acteurs qui jouent les rôles des véritables protagonistes. Le film *Inuk en colère* d'Alethea Arnaquq-Baril est, lui, un documentaire sur les jeunes Inuit modernes, qui affrontent l'opposition environnementaliste à leurs pratiques cynégétiques traditionnelles. *Tautuktavuk (Sous nos yeux)* de Carol Kunnuk et Lucy Tulugarjuk (cousines dans la vie) s'inspire de l'expérience vécue des réalisatrices. Le Festival international du film de Toronto présente cette œuvre comme proche du cinéma-vérité (Toronto International Film Festival 2023).

Les réalisatrices y jouent les rôles de deux sœurs. Elles n'utilisent pas leur vrai nom, mais le film fait appel à ce qu'elles ont vraiment vécu en termes de violence domestique et du silence qui l'entoure. Quand on lui a demandé pourquoi ce film était un drame, Tulugarjuk, qui joue Uyarak, a répondu :

Notre ville est petite, Elle compte seulement 2 000 [personnes], la plupart d'entre nous sommes parents, la moitié de la ville m'est apparentée. Nous devons donc être prudentes et respectueuses envers celles et ceux qui sont impliqués dans certaines scènes, parce que nous avons aussi accepté, Saqpinak [Carol Kunnuk] et moi, Lucy, de respecter nos deux espaces personnels, en ne dévoilant toutefois pas quelle partie [du scénario] était mon histoire et quelle autre était la sienne, tout en en faisant un tout car ceci est notre histoire (Koziol 2023).

Ici encore, on tient le *suliniq* en haute considération. Le seul élément pouvant y contrevenir, c'est l'obligation de protéger les protagonistes du commérage en changeant leurs noms ou en entrelaçant les événements réels pour brouiller leur identification.

Cette insistance sur le fait d'écrire, chanter et tourner des films au sujet de réalités qui font sens pour les Inuit, de façon tangible ou non, est un témoignage sur la volonté fondamentale qu'ils ont toujours eue, et avec laquelle ils continuent de vivre, de ne communiquer que ce qu'ils considèrent être vrai et exact.

Récits traditionnels, christianisme et vérité

Les récits et légendes ont servi d'outil premier de transmission du *suliniq* à travers les âges. On l'a vu précédemment, les critères généraux de vérité et d'exactitude s'appliquent à eux aussi: on estime que ce qu'un *unipkaaqtuaq/unikkaa(q)tuaq* rapporte s'est réellement déroulé, dans le passé des Inuit ou – en ce qui concerne les récits dits mythiques ou légendaires – dans un registre temporel autre. Cela est donc vrai.

Ootoova et ses collègues (2000, 151) définissent le mot *unikkaaqtuaq* comme suit:

15. **Unikkaaqtuaq** – Inuup tusaumajatuqarminik unikkaaliarisimajanga ilalluniuk ilaginngitanginnik tusarumanaqsitinnasukłuniuk, nutaunngiluamut unikkaaqtuanguvuq

Mythe/récit/légende – Ce qu'une personne raconte avoir entendu dans le passé, mêlé à d'autres éléments d'information visant à rendre cela agréable à entendre; puisqu'il n'y a là rien de nouveau, c'est un *unikkaaqtuaq*

Qumaq (1991, 86) donne une définition plus courte:

16. **Unikkaatuaq** – Akuninitanik taitsumanialuk piusiulauqsimajunik unikkaatuaqtuq inuk inutuqaq ittuq ningiuq

Mythe/récit/légende – Quelqu'un, une personne âgée, un aîné ou une aînée, raconte des choses qui sont arrivées il y a longtemps, dans un passé lointain

On considère que les conteurs et conteuses rappellent des choses entendues ou, peut-être, observées dans le passé. Ainsi, comme tout autre énoncé, leurs récits sont censés être *sulijut*, en accord avec la réalité. Ootoova et al. admettent que certaines personnes pourraient incorporer à leur narration des données provenant de différentes sources, afin de rendre leurs histoires plus intéressantes, mais ici encore, ce qu'elles disent doit se plier au principe général voulant qu'on soit *sulijuq* chaque fois qu'on parle.

Pour les Inuit, il était crucial que les *unikkaa(q)tuat* racontent des faits réels. C'était grâce à certains de ces récits, aussi dénommés *unikkausit* (Schneider 1966, 210) et que les non-Inuit appellent des mythes, qu'ils savaient comment le monde est devenu ce qu'il est maintenant, quelles puissances gouvernent le temps qu'il fait et le déroulement des saisons, comment entretenir de bonnes relations avec les animaux, les esprits et les autres êtres non humains parfois rencontrés, qu'est-ce qui arrive à l'âme-ombre (*tarniq*)

et à l'âme-nom (*atiq*) après la mort, et de quelle façon les chamanes (*angakkuit*) accèdent au savoir particulier qui est le leur, la *qaumaniq* ('diffusion de lumière')¹².

La cosmologie et la spiritualité inuit traditionnelles reposaient sur le savoir et l'expérience. Elles découlaient des connaissances transmises oralement par les *unikkaa(q)tuat* et développées par des individus fiables tels les chamanes, comme aussi des rencontres avec des êtres non humains dont on faisait parfois personnellement l'expérience. Les savoirs ainsi acquis apprenaient aux gens comment gérer au mieux leurs rapports avec l'environnement (*sila*), les autres personnes humaines, les animaux et le monde des esprits. Ils ne formaient pas un corpus fermé de règles et d'enseignements, mais un ensemble ouvert de oui-dire crédibles (que les *Qallunaat* appellent « croyances »), de rituels, de chants et d'objets (les *arnguat*, 'amulettes', par exemple) qui illustraient la façon dont les Inuit devaient entrer en relation avec l'univers. De cette façon, le *suliniq* des *unikkaa(q)tuat* et des chamanes rendait possible la transmission et la préservation de tout un système d'attitudes et de pratiques qui donnaient sens à l'existence.

Les paragraphes précédents sont écrits au passé car depuis les deux derniers siècles, les savoirs spirituels traditionnels ont été en grande partie remplacés par les enseignements chrétiens. Toutefois, le christianisme a préservé plusieurs éléments de cosmologie, de croyances et de principes moraux antérieurs au contact, au point où, selon certains auteurs (Laugrand et Oosten 2010, par exemple), les chrétiens inuit d'aujourd'hui ont gardé une vision du monde influencée par le chamanisme, même si les *angakkuit* et leurs rituels sont disparus il y a longtemps.

Dans l'Arctique oriental canadien, le christianisme a été introduit au Nunatsiavut dès la fin du XVIII^e siècle, mais au Nunavik et dans les régions Qikiqtaaluk (de Baffin) et Kivalliq du Nunavut, la présence missionnaire commença à se faire ressentir à la fin du XIX^e siècle, pour se développer pleinement au cours des quatre premières décennies du XX^e siècle. À la différence des savoirs spirituels traditionnels transmis oralement, les enseignements chrétiens reposaient sur un corpus écrit, dont la véracité était matière de foi en la Révélation divine plutôt que d'apprentissages et d'expériences personnels. C'est pourquoi le concept nouvellement introduit de 'religion révélée' fut traduit par *ukpiniq* ou *ukpirniq* ('le fait de croire').

12. On appelle *qaujimaniq* ('conscience') la connaissance générale. Ce mot dérive du radical *qau-* ('lumière'). À l'instar du *suliniq*, la *qaujimaniq* suppose une vision et une transmission exactes et éclairées de ce que l'on perçoit et comprend.

Pour Qumaq (1991, 74), le radical verbal *ukpir*- ('croire') fait référence à la foi dans la religion du Christ, comme aussi à l'appréciation personnelle, basée sur le sens commun, de la crédibilité de ce qu'on dit:

17. **Ukpituq** – Kuutimut Jisusimut ukpituq piqujanganik maliktuq uvvaluunniit uqautijaugutiminik sulijuritsigami ukpituq inuk

Croit – Quelqu'un qui croit au Dieu Jésus suit sa loi; ou bien, une personne croit ce qu'on dit parce qu'elle pense que c'est exact et vrai (*sulijuq*)

Si nous suivons Qumaq, la foi au sens chrétien du terme procède logiquement du fait que les croyants la considèrent *sulijuq*. La religion contemporaine (*ukpiniq*) repose donc sur le même principe épistémique que la spiritualité traditionnelle: la conviction qu'elle concorde avec la réalité. Tel que noté précédemment, la différence entre les deux réside dans le médium qui transmet cette réalité alléguée: la Bible (*allait ijjujut*, 'les écrits épais') pour le christianisme, et les récits, rituels et rencontres avec les esprits en ce qui concerne les formes de spiritualité plus anciennes.

Au Nunavik et au Nunavut oriental, à partir de 1876, les missionnaires anglicans se présentèrent comme des enseignants (*ajuqituijiit*, 'ceux qui enseignent pour une longue période') envoyés dans l'Arctique dans le but d'apprendre aux Inuit un nouveau mode de vie, plus consolateur, disaient-ils, que les relations souvent hasardeuses que les gens entretenaient avec la nature et le monde des esprits. Plusieurs missionnaires, tel Archibald Lang Fleming, premier évêque anglican de l'Arctique, faisaient montre d'une grande perspicacité et d'un véritable respect à l'égard des Inuit et de leur spiritualité traditionnelle (Fleming 1956; voir aussi Laugrand et Dorais 2022). Pour cet auteur, les Inuit étaient conscients de leurs limites face aux forces naturelles. Ils ressentaient donc le besoin de se faire aider par des puissances supérieures. Dans leur culture, ces puissances étaient conçues comme des esprits, mais cette forme d'identification révélait un sentiment de crainte respectueuse et d'infini semblable à celui des chrétiens à l'égard de Dieu.

Luuktaq, un chamane du bassin de Foxe dans l'ouest de la Terre de Baffin, qui devint l'ami de Fleming, lui disait penser que la Loi des Dix Commandements convenait aux *Qallunaat*, mais que les Inuit devaient conserver leurs propres coutumes ancestrales. Cependant, le chamane admettait qu'après avoir été instruits par les missionnaires, ses gens pourraient observer une partie de chacun des deux ensembles de règles (Fleming 1956). Cette opinion émise par Luuktaq illustre la manière dont les Inuit en vinrent progressivement à considérer le christianisme comme exact et véridique et, par conséquent, utile. Sa doctrine, enseignée par des personnes apparemment sérieuses et honnêtes, était basée sur des idées

convaincantes : la protection d'un esprit tout-puissant et aimant, venu sur terre afin de s'assurer que tous les êtres, sans exception, jouissent d'une vie heureuse après la mort s'ils pratiquaient l'entraide, le partage et la gratitude, comme les Inuit le faisaient depuis toujours. Il semblait également significatif que les missionnaires appartenant à une société opulente et puissante aux yeux des Inuit, leur fournissant des biens désirables en échange de leur travail, de leurs fourrures et de toute autre chose tirée du territoire.

Dans le contexte d'une sécurité matérielle accrue en raison de la présence de commerçants *qallunaat*, comme aussi de missionnaires qui prodiguaient des soins de santé de base, les enseignements chrétiens apparurent bien adaptés aux nouvelles réalités de la vie dans l'Arctique, même si cela entraînait l'abandon des rituels chamaniques et la transformation des interdits traditionnels (*aglirutit*), lourds à porter, en tabous inspirés de Dieu, comme l'interdiction de chasser et de se déplacer le dimanche. Après un certain temps, la plupart des *angakkuut* se séparèrent de leurs esprits auxiliaires (*tuurngait*) pour se convertir. Selon Laugrand et Oosten (2010), les conversions se produisirent plus facilement dans les camps où les chamanes locaux avaient introduit des bibles (acquises aux postes de traite et dans les missions) avant même la visite des missionnaires.

Le fait de reconnaître que les enseignements chrétiens étaient *sulijut* ne signifiait pas que les croyances traditionnelles étaient fallacieuses. Avec le temps, les *unikkaa(q)tuat* cessèrent de constituer les sources principales de savoirs spirituels. Les offices chrétiens remplacèrent les rituels chamaniques et plusieurs *angakkuut* devinrent catéchistes, mais on continua à croiser des *tuurngait* et autres entités non humaines. C'est toujours le cas. Durant les années 1990, par exemple, on voyait parfois des *tuurngait* sous forme humaine venir acheter des marchandises au magasin coopératif d'Inukjuak (côte est de la baie d'Hudson), et en 2009, des enfants et des adolescents de Kangirsuk (Nunavik) aperçurent des *inugagulligait* ('lutins') derrière l'école de leur communauté (Dorais 2020, 92-93). Certains non-humains devinrent même chrétiens, comme les *tarriatsuit* ('gens cachés'), qui vivent dans un monde parallèle au nôtre et ne se rendent visibles aux humains (qu'ils peuvent épouser) que quand ils le désirent (*ibid.*).

Au-delà de la survie des esprits, le rapport spirituel entre les Inuit et le monde animal demeure très vivant. Aujourd'hui encore, les animaux ne viennent s'offrir d'eux-mêmes qu'aux chasseurs qui le méritent en raison de leur générosité, en partageant leurs prises avec quiconque a besoin de nourriture. C'est pourquoi le gibier doit être remercié pour le sacrifice qu'il fait de lui-même. Dans un autre domaine, les âmes-noms personnelles (*atiit*), y compris celles d'origine chrétienne, se transmettent encore aux nouveau-nés, avec la personnalité de ceux ou celles qui portaient récemment ces noms, et on transmet parfois aussi le nom d'une vedette de la musique inuit

encore en vie. Tout ceci démontre qu'avec l'avènement du christianisme, le *suliniq* ('vérité, pertinence') de la spiritualité inuit se perpétue à travers l'*ukpi(r)niq*, la nouvelle foi, sans pour autant cesser de s'appliquer à la vision du monde ancestrale.

Conclusion

Dans cet article, nous avons présenté la tradition culturelle inuit voulant qu'en inuktitut – nous ignorons ce qu'il advient quand les locuteurs ont recours à une autre langue –, on ne rapporte que les événements dont on a fait soi-même l'expérience, ou les événements et les faits explicitement attribuables à des sources crédibles connues localement. Nous avons montré que cette tradition de précision narrative, que nous appelons *suliniq*, est encore vigoureuse chez les locuteurs modernes de l'inuktitut. Qui plus est, elle imprègne aussi les nouvelles productions culturelles telles que la littérature et le film inuit. Cette tradition s'est ainsi perpétuée en tant qu'état fondamental de la parole, et ce même après l'avènement des influences religieuses venues de l'extérieur.

D'autres auteurs ont mentionné en passant cette tradition de précision narrative; on en parle, par exemple, chez Martin (2012). Nous espérons qu'en mettant cette question de l'avant dans cet article, cela conduira à de nouvelles discussions sur le *suliniq* parmi les éducateurs inuit, ainsi que chez les personnes qui travaillent dans le système judiciaire. Des questions se posent quant à la manière de préserver ou d'adapter cette précision narrative, à la lumière des contextes différents et évolutifs des cultures maintenant en contact avec le monde inuit. Le *suliniq* semble en effet être un fondement de base des *Inuit Qaujimatuaqangit* (IQ), ou Savoirs traditionnels inuit. Cette question pourrait aussi mener à des discussions parmi les traducteurs/interprètes de l'inuktitut et ceux qui font appel à eux pour naviguer d'un idiome à l'autre. En effet, peut-on préserver toute la véracité et l'exactitude de la parole inuit en la traduisant dans une autre langue?

En élargissant la perspective, nous espérons que cette valeur traditionnelle inuit deviendra connue des autres cultures. Nous la jugeons d'un grand intérêt car il s'agit d'une tradition peut-être peu commune. Cela mérite d'être pris en considération. Existe-t-il d'autres cultures avec une tradition d'exactitude similaire et aussi approfondie? En abordant le *suliniq* inuit sous un angle comparatif, nous pourrions en apprendre davantage à ce sujet.

Remerciements

Nous remercions les deux évaluateurs anonymes de cet article pour leurs commentaires, aussi enrichissants que judicieux et exhaustifs.

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Hors-thème
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The Computerized Database of Labrador Inuttut: A Language Revitalization Technology Component

Lawrence Smithⁱ

ABSTRACT

We present empirical results from the coupling of traditional linguistic research with computational technology, validating a hypothesis that this combination provides benefits beyond either alone. An experiential software innovation now offers automatic and clear visual diagrams of native language structures in full sentence contexts for a quick experiential understanding of how the language fundamentally operates. Such advances for cultural learning and maintenance are now possible because native linguistic polysynthetic structure is systematically integrated in computational technologies. Results from the Computerized Database of Labrador Inuttut are ongoing. Threatened languages can thus be renewed by technology even when they have been diminished by the inexorable domination of superstrate forces in culture and media. We propose continued computational linguistic resource development to enable language and cultural sustenance via new experiential technologies based on both inherent linguistic structure and computational processing.

KEYWORDS

Labrador Inuttut/Inuktitut, computerized tagged database, automatic exploded display of polysynthetic word structure, simple intuitive experiential user interface

RÉSUMÉ

La base de données informatisée de l'inuttut du Labrador : Une composante technologique de la revitalisation linguistique

Nous présentons les résultats empiriques de l'association de la recherche linguistique traditionnelle et de la technologie informatique, validant l'hypothèse selon laquelle cette combinaison offre des avantages qui dépassent ceux de l'une ou l'autre de ces méthodes. Une innovation logicielle expérimentale offre désormais des diagrammes visuels automatiques et clairs des structures de la langue maternelle dans des contextes de phrases complètes pour une compréhension expérimentale rapide de la manière dont la langue fonctionne fondamentalement. De telles avancées en matière d'apprentissage et de maintien de la culture sont désormais possibles grâce à l'intégration systématique de la structure polysynthétique de la langue maternelle dans les technologies informatiques. Les résultats de la base de données informatisée de l'inuttut du Labrador sont en cours.

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Les langues menacées peuvent donc être renouvelées par la technologie même lorsqu'elles ont été diminuées par la domination inexorable de forces suprêmes dans la culture et les médias. Nous proposons de poursuivre le développement des ressources linguistiques informatiques afin de permettre la survie de la langue et de la culture par le biais de nouvelles technologies expérientielles basées à la fois sur la structure linguistique inhérente et sur le traitement informatique.

MOTS-CLÉS

Inuttut/Inuktitut du Labrador, base de données informatisée balisée, affichage détaillé automatique de la structure des mots polysynthétiques, interface utilisateur simple, intuitive et expérimentale

This paper describes ongoing inquiry, with reference to Labrador Inuttut (LI), into the forward relationship between technology and both culture and language preservation mediated by computerized language analysis. It presents a significant development of practical and effective experiential software extending beyond practices of documentation and annotation at the center of many preservation efforts. For language and cultural preservation, there is evident need for technological advances and pragmatic actions as a realistic response pursuant to frequently sounded alarms (Kraus 1992; Hale 1992; Beck and Gerdts 2017; Epps, Webster, and Woodbury 2016; Seifart et al. 2018; Dorais and Krupnik 2005; Himmelmann 1998; Fitzgerald 2021; McIvor 2020; Austin 2016; Tamburelli 2021; Olko and Sallabank 2021). Realistic language preservation requires a digital presence for native languages (Kornai and Altmann 2013), including the accelerated creation of online cultural experiences.

Computational linguistic research on LI, initiated in the 1970s, has progressed to experiential online software, illustrating the possibility and value of instant and clear self-explanatory exploded diagrams of native language structures in full sentence contexts. A database and software based on typology-specific native polysynthetic structures enable complex sentences and wordforms to be broken down and “exploded” into a visual diagrammatic presentation, in which each of the elements of word building is exposed and explicated. This provides a quick understanding of how the language fundamentally operates in the context of a user query. Such a facility proceeds toward faster and fuller language learning with a crucial role in extended online native experiences that embody native culture in everyday life and on the land.

Language maintenance and preservation can progress beyond the fundamentals of dictionary preparation, collection of narratives and documents, preparation of traditional classroom materials, and rudimentary computer utilities. A rigorous orientation given to the importance of immersion requirements for language learning and cultural preservation has potential deep in the life of communities. Experiential products with immersion characteristics and high usability present as a *sine qua non* of progress against further culture and language loss for native communities in the digital age. Experiential engagement, extending toward online scenarios, gaming, and virtual reality product models, supported by integrated linguistic aids, can meet the immersion, immediacy, and structuring criteria for efficient second language learning in the context of everyday life and on the land.

A program of advanced technology development can indeed optimize the maintenance and revitalization of threatened native languages and cultures. This trajectory, initiated decades ago and aiming now more broadly toward advanced interactive resources, extends early proposals found in the language documentation literature (Woodbury 2011, 2014) by coupling linguistic with computational expertise. The advanced web-based prototype presented here can be central to continuing efforts.

Project Hypothesis

The Computerized Database of Labrador Inuttut (CDLI) was designed to test a hypothesis: A corpus of texts explicitly morpho-analyzed by linguists to individually encode the native polysynthetic elements and features known from traditional linguistic analysis can enable computation to both advance the discoveries of academic research and lead to important innovations to facilitate language preservation.

This brings a corollary: As technology itself advances in the digital age, a morpho-analyzed database can provide ongoing expanding opportunities for continued advances.

The academic side of this hypothesis has been recognized insofar as there has ensued over time a series of linguistic publications utilizing the database (Dorais 1981). Here, we present a continuing ongoing validation in the domain of language preservation resources.

History¹

In a nascent era of the computer study of language (Kučera 1962), the CDLI aimed to be the first native language tagged corpus extending to polysynthetic language, inspired by the model of the Brown Corpus created for English (Kucera and Francis 1970). Many publications ensued before being suspended in 1983.

Data was available from proficient native linguistic consultants with special linguistic expertise, who provided data in cooperation with the Linguistics Department. These included Bertha Kairtok Holeiter, Sam Metcalfe, Rose Jeddore, Ken Jararuse, Joel Tullak, and Titus Joshua, with help from others (a full list was not found in the archive after the passage of 50 years). Material was also available in the Labrador Coast newspaper *Kinatuinamot Illengajuk*. Furthermore, the CDLI resulted in over 20 scientific publications as monographs and peer-reviewed papers.

Loosely associated with scientific work on LI were publications authored by Inuit. These include Jeddore and Labrador Inuit Committee on Literacy (1976)—the above-mentioned newspaper, prompted by a committee at Memorial University organized by the present author, then run entirely by Labrador Inuit on the Coast; L. Smith and Metcalfe (1973); and L. R. Smith and Metcalfe (1973).

The project was suspended when the principal researcher refocused his career on computational linguistics and linguistic engineering. In recent years, the CDLI has again been an active self-funded project, and software engineering has been ongoing.

Research Independent of the CDLI

Since the advent of the CDLI, important non-computational work has been undertaken by scholars active in Newfoundland and Labrador. Alana Johns continues intensive work documenting and supporting language maintenance values in Nunatsiavut. Narrative material has been collected, a

1. The principal investigator held a tenured faculty position at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) and benefitted from multiple support systems between 1968 and 1983, after which he transitioned to unrelated work in computational linguistics. Support for subsequent work has not been sought and has been self-funded by the author. Earlier funding included: access to highly talented paid Inuit linguistic consultants afforded efficient data collection; generous support from SSHRC; grants from MUN's Vice-President's Research Fund; a department that filled needs without question (a Kay Sonograph, a computer laboratory for home-brewed computers in the microcomputer revolution, etc.); and highly talented graduate students available for linguistic analyses.

cell phone phrase book app has been developed, a user interface for story navigation and analysis has been imagined, with other initiatives underway (Alana Johns p.c.).

Recently, Nicolas Welch launched an overarching documentation and archiving project coordinated with the Nunatsiavut community and government. This important project aggressively addresses a notable lack of proper archiving facilities for native languages in Canada, the U.S., and elsewhere.

Relation to Past Work

Recent computational linguistic work on Inuit and other languages has produced useful context (Gupta and Boulianne 2020; Joanis et al. 2020; Le and Sadat 2020a; Micher 2019; Nicholson, Cohn, and Baldwin 2012; Roest et al. 2020; Gasser 2011; Monson et al. 2006; Llitjós et al. 2005; Vinogradov 2016; Mager et al. 2018; Johnson and Martin 2003; COLING 2018 *The 27th International Conference on Computational Linguistics Proceedings of the Workshop on Linguistic Complexity and Natural Language Processing*; Moeller 2021). This work has uncovered significant problems for the machine learning analysis of native languages with complex morphology, polysynthetic language typology, and forms of word structure that are not present in the predominant languages for which computational techniques have been developed. For a list of research and engineering works on natural language processing for American Native/Indigenous Languages, consult *About Naki / Naki* (n.d.).

The literature describes challenges related to word structure, where the machine learning input data lacks fully analyzed words in a schema adapted to the particulars of the target language. In this context, the CDLI presents an ambitious case because data was collected to include detailed morphological word analysis. This design feature provides opportunities to advance computational techniques and applications for LI. Structuring data collections per the typological structure of the Inuit target language also offers opportunities more easily to extend work to other Inuit dialects and inform work on other synthetic languages.

Language Preservation Motivations for the CDLI

Lacking intensive programs for children, such as extended time on the land with knowledgeable elders, language and cultural attrition are likely to continue at a fast rate. Printed materials and classroom lessons alone are inefficient for language learning and robust cultural maintenance. Cultural perseverance and language learning require experiential immersion and cultural participation. Emergent technologies, including computational

linguistics, machine learning, gaming, and virtual reality, promise a future with experiential resources available online without actual presence in a fluent social setting or on the land. Carefully designed online components accelerate and amplify linguistic and cultural learning as multiplying effects that are synergistic in experiential software. A ubiquitous on-screen language explanation agent is already possible, as evidenced by a recent CDLI prototype.

The CDLI was conceived as a database for machine learning contexts prepared in advance for basic experiential applications. Important ancillaries for experiential media become practicable.

The CDLI approach

The Computerized Database of Labrador Inuttut (CDLI) records the Labrador dialect of Inuktitut (LI, also referred to as Inuttut, or Inuttitut) as spoken in the political domain of Nunatsiavut. Earlier background is available in publications referring to the CDLI (Dorais 1981; Smith 1977, 2019; L. R. Smith 1975, 1977, 1978, 1980; (L. Smith and Metcalfe 1973).

We now address recent work and how it can be carried forward. Separate useful documentation of LI has been undertaken in a non-computational context (e.g., Andersen and Johns 2005) in a variety of ongoing projects by noted researchers Alana Johns and Nicolas Welch.

Recent work on language preservation has discussed computational linguistics (e.g., Le and Sadat 2020b), where a set of challenges and problems are raised. Many of these have been anticipated and met in the CDLI research program. One particular attribute of innovation in the database is full computational accommodation to a polysynthetic language by providing input data with detailed morphological analysis in the distinctive typological context of very complex word building.

The CDLI collects native language texts, like many preservation efforts, but it uniquely implemented a morpheme-tagged database to feed ongoing developments in machine learning in the technological future. This database is distinguished by breaking words down into their smallest parts with grammatical tags to readily generate manifold statistical compilations. Fundamental polysynthetic structures are made fundamental for analysis. These are useful for:

- the principled creation of efficient language learning materials, emphasizing the most frequent features of the language and bringing out the mechanical workings of the language for easy understanding.
- machine learning projects in evolving technology.
- the creation of a broad range of derivative and companion works.

The CDLI enables a range of ongoing supports for online experiences to engage with machine learning techniques as they evolve. The following facilities are already provided:

- Automatic analysis of complex sentences provides explanatory resources for experiencing and learning LI.
- A user interface “explodes” the grammatical structure of words (morphology) and sentences into simple diagrams, with easily understood illuminating explanations of the structure of the language.
- Data structuring is implemented for future potential in statistical computational linguistics:
 - A machine learning-based facility under development foreshadows real-time analysis of unanticipated data with high accuracy.
 - Rough automatic translation becomes feasible with future preparation of a sufficiently large database.
 - Speech recognition (speech to text) can be enabled with further development.
 - Spelling correction modules can be implemented.
 - A wide variety of automatically generated ancillary materials can be derived for research and teaching.

The CDLI approach provides major benefits not only over morphological analyzers that are not statistically based but also over statistical ones that fail to orient deeply to the synthetic structure of Inuttut. Machine learning limited to whole words (even if lemmatized or roughly analyzed) as basic manipulation units is disadvantaged in major ways compared to analyses conforming specifically to native structures in the derivational morphology of words and syntactic patternings of inflectional suffixes.

In the frequent cases where any automatic analysis is not 100% certain, a statistical machine learning approach based on sufficient data allows for the presentation of a high probability analysis that is much preferable to the unguided presentation of puzzling, less helpful lists of alternatives that characterize non-statistical methods. Failure to use a statistical approach obfuscates the useful probabilistic patterns so useful in an efficient and accurate system.

Less structurally oriented machine learning research would suffer from an inherent failure to operate at a sufficiently deep level of word analysis. This is an architectural necessity too often ignored in studies of synthetic languages. The CDLI breaks out all morphemes to overcome this limitation and benefit electronic methodologies for language study and preservation.

Current Realizations and Derivative Potential

The direct information products of the CDLI enable the secondary development of resources and ancillary supports in the form of software, printed materials, and classroom curricula.

A Ground-Breaking User Interface for CDLI

An exploding interface has recently been implemented for LI.² It is designed to make complex word building in the language visually self-explanatory. The user enters a base, post-base, or suffix (and optional grammatical tags) to retrieve fully exploded real-world examples to intuitively reflect language structure at work in an intuitive visual display. It is word-part lookup for how the language works.

For example, asking about the base ‘taku’, the user receives full example sentences, each containing a word built on the transitive base *taku* ‘to see’ (Figure 1). Each word is exploded out to a simple breakdown of parts: In available space, the following illustrates only the first of multiple exploded examples returned.



Figure 1. Auto-exploded diagram showing how words are built around a LI word piece.

2. This self-funded advanced prototype has no current known bugs. The interface is fully described and illustrated here. Online web delivery awaits beta testing and due process in coordination with primary stakeholders to maintain the author's standards and track record for user experience. This paper is an essential precursor to that process, documenting the logic, rationale, and benefits of the project over time, prior to planning and self-funding of future steps. Experience with software systems argues strongly against premature delivery outside the context of community guidance, for maximum user benefit. The CDLI is known among researchers and is deposited in Memorial University's Language Archive.

Alternatively, the user can search for an English word. Again, we present only the first of multiple exploded examples returned (Figure 2):



Figure 2. Auto-exploded diagram showing LI words building from an English word.

These automatic exploded diagrams are available for the input of any LI element occurring in the database, whether it be base, post-base, or inflectional suffix.

The ability of this user interface is itself an empirical result from experimentation building a database strictly oriented to polysynthetic morphological structure. From the perspective of its inherently native content, independent of outside context, this interface might become an everyday technology, much as the *ulu*, rooted in native culture, persisted for its usefulness.

Derivative Educational Materials

The CDLI can automate the preparation of materials for language learning. Graded readers can be designed to repeatedly present the most frequent vocabulary. Frequency-ranked vocabulary allows for story creation workshops targeted to structured language learning. Efficient homework assignments thus become possible using the exploded dictionary to learn word parts (e.g., look up how *qatta* is used in actual examples).

Further User Interface Opportunities

An electronic interface allows for easy switching among alternative orthographies for both individual preference and policy development. This is important where options are in contention.

An automated interface to extend and refine the database itself can allow for exponential advancement of the technology. Intelligent data input and editing software reduces the expense of keyboard input, catches entry errors, and breaks out new morpheme suggestions.

New interfaces for reading, understanding, and annotating stories can use automatic analysis to accelerate preliminary concepts (Dicker, Dunbar, and Johns 2009).

In all electronic media, omnipresent explanatory exploded interfaces can enable readers to understand quickly and provide an experiential, active role for learners. For any word or morpheme, the user can summon examples and explanations, exploded out in simple piece-by-piece analysis and translated with grammatical information. This radically enhances the concept of *online dictionary* for a polysynthetic language in ways not possible using only the whole word as the basic unit of analysis, thus demonstrating another major advantage of the CDLI. Indeed, a polysynthetic dictionary can boost the value of all native language media.

The Social Benefits of CDLI Technology

The CDLI's components and potential aim to provide several social benefits beyond academic research objectives.

Management of Orthographic Policy. Alternative orthographies can be electronically toggled on-screen with a checkbox to neutralize controversy and promote community consensus over time.

Computer Scientist Contributions. The computer specialist can contribute broader choices for implementing community requirements and can also promote technology transfer and skills development in Inuit communities.

Data and Analyses for Efficient Language Teaching and Preservation. Many products of computer processing can be applied for practical benefit, including word and bigram statistics, concordances, hypertext links to explanations, specialized sub-dictionaries, lexeme frequencies, etc.

Low Investment Revision of Legacy Resources. Legacy descriptive resources such as dictionaries, morpheme lexicons, declensions and paradigms, and important traditional texts can be subject to automatic modification for preferred orthography.

- Traditional Moravian Dictionaries (Peacock 1974a, 1974b). These are already being converted to electronic form in a project initiated by Nicholas Welch (p.c.).
- Computerized Dictionaries (L. Smith and Metcalfe 1973; L. R. Smith and Metcalfe 1973; *Labrador Inuttut Dictionary* n.d.).
- Inuit-authored Dictionaries (Jeddore and Labrador Inuit Committee on Literacy 1976).

Data Preparation for Cultural Curriculum. The CDLI promotes a lay understanding of language structure that is central to Inuit culture. The most frequent words, bases, affixes, and suffixes of a language can be tabulated and prioritized to provide enhanced cultural learning in graded materials. The fascinating interrelationships of lexical items with their historical provenance emerge, as word-building processes are made transparent.

Workshop Support for Graded Readers. Community workshops can use a list of high frequency words and morphemes as stimuli to write stories for graded readers emphasizing vocabulary with high functional load.

Demonstrations of Inuttut Language Structure for Cultural Appreciation. The elegant morphological structure of Inuttut is exposed as a topic of general educational interest to internal and external communities.

Computer Career Development for Interested Inuit. The code base of a structured language database can offer graded opportunities to learn computer programming gradually without a technical degree.

New Technologies. A computerized database with detailed morphology provides opportunities for evolving projects as computer science itself advances:

- speech recognition and other machine learning technologies
- statistical morphological analyzers
- Inuttut N-gram models for application development
- frequency-based spelling error correction
- correction and validation of OCR text-to-speech conversions

The Social Dynamics of Orthography

Technology Requisites for Social Cohesion in Orthographic Endeavour

In this section, we document the compelling case in which a basic technology of the CDLI can have broad implications for social cohesion. Whereas in the past, orthographic alternatives have been naturally controversial, the technology in the CDLI offers a simple switch for orthography choice, enabling the user to flip on-screen between alternative spelling systems. This is of special interest for ongoing deliberations to unify Inuit spelling across Canada and within Nunatsiavut.

Questions of technology in support of orthography originate in the history of Labrador Inuit spelling. Literacy arrived early to the Labrador Coast via the quick intellectual uptake of writing conventions imported by the Moravian Church from Greenland. Inuit literates were early reported to help write letters home for English-speaking seasonal fishermen lacking literacy skills. Forward two centuries to the 1970s, dialect differences from the

Greenland model of the Moravians, plus phonological evolution, resulted in orthographic difficulties in Inuttut. There was non-compliance with the phonemic principle on which phonetic writing is based for optimal transparent use.

A new scientific phonemicization in the early 1970s (L. R. Smith 1975; Dorais 1981), was intended only for academic theoretical analysis, never for policy nor recommendation for use by Inuit.³ The new phonemic system nevertheless resulted in some adoption and use by a few young Inuit language experts. Foremost was the major new dictionary, *Labrador Inuit Uqausingit* (Jeddore and Labrador Inuit Committee on Literacy 1976; Dorais 1981) by Rose Pamack Jeddore and collaborators.

A feature of the new phonemic system, as a few began to consider it, was its divergence from the traditional Moravian spelling, which was held dear and firm by elders for its familiarity and cultural availability in the Bible. It is natural that any shift in a centrally important tradition might cause a variance in perspective. Revision could not be immediately welcomed among highly respected Inuit elders without a process of deliberation within the community. There was a temporary transitional period of notable controversy in which some young people considered early revision, in the vanguard of community viewpoints, which was resisted by elders. Considerable social pressure against reform resulted. There were reports of strong uncomfortable feelings for a period of time by younger Inuit associated with the new phonemic spelling. Elements of a purely academic perspective, unconnected to the sphere of active cultural context, had inadvertently introduced a potential for conflict.

As community discussion proceeded, a collegial process was, in time, set in motion. Communities in due course converged and achieved consensus on a new bespoke revised compromise spelling system that implemented a middle ground between the original scientific notation and beloved cultural traditions. This community system found its way well toward adherence to the phonemic principle, advancing Inuttut writing in a way that English, notably, has not yet achieved.

Labrador Inuit had found a workable resolution to orthographic differences in a solution that addressed variant points of view. It is a clever compromise achieving community consensus. It maintained some spirit of Moravian-entrenched historical spelling but also achieved some proper scientific steps toward phonemic regularity. This represented significant progress because phonemic writing can help the young to learn more easily.

3. Major contributions of data by Bertha Kairtok Holeiter and Sam Metcalfe and others catalyzed this system leading to data collection for post-base usage and an extensive set of suffixes that make up the inflectional system of the language (L. Smith 1977).

The compromise system exploited linguistic regularity well, as exemplified by the following: if /ii/, /uu/ are different from /i/, /u/ for the linguistic scientist, why not write them as a single letter /e/, /o/ in the spirit of Labrador history? This is possible, as there is no phonemic element corresponding to /e/, /o/.

One notable historic preservation is the orthographic upper case 'K' corresponding to the phoneme often represented as 'q' elsewhere. It gives Inuttut writing a familiarity from history but also creates infelicities per the general conventions of typography capitalization at sentence beginning and for proper nouns. This is a prime example in which further evolution for better typographical convenience can be considered in a collegial way by computer interfaces that switch readily among alternate conventions per user preference. At issue also are special characters with diacritics, which require considerable keyboard effort.

At present, all of this leaves an eventual forthcoming process of evaluation as to whether and how Labrador writing might evolve for its own benefits and together with any process of orthographic unification and standardization across Nunangat (Inuvialuit, Nunavik, Nunavut, and Nunatsiavut).

The CDLI and Orthographic Management

CDLI technology provides for immediate, automatic transliteration either from, or to, the orthography of user choice. Community participants can manage orthographic questions without conflict, helping to reconcile divergent perspectives, as consensus evolves. At the touch of a key, the user simply checks a box and alternatives become comparable. It is routine and inexpensive to provide transliteration technology for alternative writing systems to make them simultaneously available. Computer translation rules are automatic, requiring no clerical or editorial work by humans. Had this technology been available in the 1970s, it would have facilitated consideration of options in a spirit of consensus and collaboration.

Orthography provides an example of how collaboration between researchers, computer technologists, and community members encourages language maintenance. Electronic media can facilitate consensus building, and enable alternative spelling conventions to be maintained per community choice.

Surface vs. Abstract Phonology

In this section, we explore how questions of orthography extend beyond just alternative ways to use letters in spelling to the underlying cognitive models that enable the understanding and use of language. The depth of implications argues for technological support for orthographic policy development, which the CDLI can provide. We document an important case in LI in which an orthographic switch can greatly facilitate community convergence.

Effective reading and writing instruction requires phonemic awareness on the part of students (Adams et al. 1998; Adams 1979, 1994). A question often arises as to how abstract phonemes should be in a phonemically-based orthography, given that basic concrete contrasts of pronunciation can be confounded by the abstractness of patterns in morphophonology. Some work has led to a theoretical hypothesis that the surface phoneme may not even exist (Chomsky and Halle 1991; Schane 1971), yet elsewhere it has been widely found to be essential in learning to read.

In LI, /q/ is a uvulo-velar fricative, while /k/ is a uvulo-velar stop. This distinction is phonemic, enabling the differentiation of words. Yet, there is a dilemma for the consonant cluster 'kq', heard exhibiting first the stop followed by the fricative. Given abstractness in theoretical phonology, the question arises whether an orthography should simply write the stop symbol /k/, as the stop is actually heard in /kq/, or, alternatively, orient to abstractness of theory and write the double fricative symbol /qq/, even though that stop is heard initially. The former is a phonetic reality while the latter leans toward theory, language history, and other dialects, where /q/ is itself a stop and so /qq/ is uncontroversial.

There is also a side effect. If /qq/ is not written as an affricate /kq/, then the /qq/ can be reserved for the long fricative to avoid representation as /gg/, which falsely indicates a double voicing which in fact is typically not observed. In the more direct surface phonetic approach for Inuttut, for example, maqquuk 'two' and takuniakquk 'He will see' are written as the surface representations corresponding more to what one directly hears. Alternatively, at the more abstract level, one can propose the spellings *magguuk* and *takuniaqquk* with an eye to cross-dialect similarity, and abstract phonology. This has built in all the considerations of theoretical analysis but reflects less what strikes the ear. There arise in this way two contenders for everyday orthography (Andersen and Johns 2005). Inuit might choose whether they favour the surface form, which can be more immediately perceived—it is both heard and felt in the mouth—or a more abstract representation according to history and the surface representation in other dialects. The question also has reference to cross dialect considerations. Our point here is not to argue a solution, but only that a switchable user interface facilitates community cohesion as any resolution is sought.

Technology lurks here beneficially because electronic systems can support both approaches as instant visual alternatives, either in a transitional decision phase or permanently. Inuit need not juggle whether to favour an orthography reflecting some unity across dialects or one that offers more direct connection to pronunciation experience. One might even have it both ways at once.

Since the publication of *Sound Pattern of English* (Chomsky and Halle 1991), there has been some tendency to justify the more abstract, but evidently more problematic, traditional spelling of English. This diverges from both surface pronunciations and the consistency or regularity that eases learning to read and everyday spelling. It bears mentioning that many English speakers have long continued to struggle to read where orthographic problems remain unremediated.

As Nunatsiavut chooses an alternative, electronic platforms such as the CDLI can facilitate evaluation while also compiling statistics on the patterns and preferences observed in real world use as data to help communities rationalize and make policy decisions.

Projecting Revitalization into the Future: An Experiential Vision for Effectiveness

The CDLI already includes an advanced web-based experiential facility for presenting sentences and words in a self-explaining educational “exploded” form to quickly support efficient grammatical understanding and appreciation by natives and non-natives alike of the beautiful elegance of native language structures. This functional software, evolving from a prototype, can be extended as the source database is expanded. This prototype is conceived as a window inside other software running on a computer or on the web, and can also be portable to a smartphone with internet connectivity. The development architecture envisages a stand-alone version when internet is not available.

Exploded wordforms in experiential software are uncontroversially useful for language learning and revitalization. The experience of anthropologists and others has long been that learning Inuktitut requires a mind shift into the process of learning complex polysynthetic words. Language learning has always been supported by the availability of a word-based dictionary, but no less than three additional separate dictionaries for bases, post-bases, and suffixes are required for Inuktitut. The prodigious productivity of word formation yields far too many words to be practically listed, challenging the concept of a traditional dictionary. As a radical difficulty, both back and forth and multiple lookups in three or four places can frequently be necessary. This juggling is avoided by exploded diagrams in which all word parts are presented automatically at once in clear relationships. They can be thought of as an Inuit adaptation of the very concept of a dictionary. It might even be argued that language materials without them reflect an early Eurocentric view that can now be enhanced by native polysynthetic technology grounded in Inuit linguistic culture. No *a priori* experimental proof of utility for polysynthetic analysis is thus necessary to the extent that its native attributes are ones that are already in the language—begging for technological support.

This technology also provides impetus for further software components to magnify native attributes and spread them to diverse experiential domains. Online scenarios include gaming software, interactive virtual reality, language, and culture immersion tools, speech recognition, automatic translation, and so forth. Belabored justification for experiential delivery is unnecessary, as everyone has felt a preference for learning within the living context of a subject matter rather than at the distance of more abstractly learning about it. In one exploration, an early experiment at Memorial University was successful and widely adopted to expose medical students to clinical patients in tandem with anatomy, biochemistry, and so forth, rather than beforehand in abstract separation. Experiential learning is supported in many domains, so the value of moving cultural maintenance in this direction is clear.

Experiential programs can build on the extensive filming and recording of real-world experiences of particular native interest, including on the land. These projects not only illuminate and maintain cultural knowledge on their own but also provide the content resources for experiential software. Linguistic software can evolve in parallel to provide functionality that magnifies effectiveness. This multi-pronged approach to cultural maintenance may alone have a realistic potential for cultural maintenance, given the advent of the electronic age.

Resource development projects to memorialize culture can be significantly expanded to provide content for technology development:

- Continued recording of narratives, memoirs, stories, opinions, and descriptions.
- Extensive filming of on-land experiences as a resource for electronic delivery in online models.
- Transcription of film and audio recordings to provide linguistic database resources.

Investment in preparatory resource development for cultural maintenance is doubly justified when its processes have community development benefits independently, in and of themselves. There are four major side-benefits, each one a primary justification:

- The collection and organization of materials can accelerate skill acquisition for individuals seeking to enhance personal careers.
- Preparation of materials creates cultural archives for future generations.
- As shown by the documented history of the program known as the Fogo Process, community development is fostered and advanced by an endeavour to record a film record (Newhook 2009).
- The development program encourages experiences on the physical land to reinforce knowledge and skills.

Visualizing the Future

The Goal

In several years, a Labrador Inuk, sitting anywhere before a screen connected to the internet, can choose from a library of games and internet virtual trips onto the land in the virtual company of fluent speakers of Inuttut. S/he can pause at any time to see and hear clear ancillary resources explaining what was just said, to understand the workings of the language, and to help navigate the virtual world. This user, an interactive participant, can type or speak requests that will direct him/her to small modules on many cultural subjects reflecting ethnographic expertise, such as:

- How do I prepare the bird for cooking?
- How do I use the rifle?
- Where is the ice dangerous?

To the extent that sub-scenarios have been prepared, the user can direct the interaction through “subplots” that s/he chooses. Explanations of what was said are provided in “exploded” format, in which each word is explained but also with each word-part laid out in an easy-to-understand format, reflecting simply the systematic nature of the language. This enables virtual experience in authentic settings and on the land using only native language.

A Bridge to the Future

The existing CDLI prototype already allows for the input of an English or Inuttut item to receive real-world example sentences broken down into a clear, simple explanation. This provides support for *de facto* parallel linguistic bilingual identities in both native language and English without suppressing the native substrate bilingual matrix, as on TV and the internet.

This advanced technology widens the vision of possibilities. Earlier conceptualizations did not anticipate the trajectories toward virtualization that we now observe. There is new potential for a more radical anthropological perspective to situate language actively in the social psychology and dynamics of communities, continuing in the spirit, for example, of Dorais (Dorais 1970, 1977, 2006, 2010). A reimagined trajectory puts the history of research on language structure, computational work, and highly focused theoretical linguistics to work for direct social benefit.

Will endangered languages continue an inexorable march toward extinction? The best predictor can be active intervention. The application of technology, brought effectively, can launch possibilities well beyond what is imagined in more limited contexts.

Future Work

A typology-aware computerized database is the primary resource to serve both academic and community goals. It can be extended in the tradition of collecting stories and documents, including audio tape recordings transcribed phonemically to a fully tagged corpus with detailed grammatical markup. Material recorded as audio, aligned with both phonemic transcription and morphological analysis, conforms to methods of recent advances in computational linguistic and machine learning technologies.

An electronic future thus includes many projects in which Inuit communities can engage and thrive. The newer priorities of deciding, organizing, and executing projects by Inuit leadership themselves, using academics and computer specialists as consultants, inverts the relationship whereby Inuit have been the consultants to academic projects. The following is a list of possible community development projects to extend the regime of Inuit culture, each with a linguistic component. In each of these, Inuit agency and community involvement take precedence using scientific processes as resources:

- developing ideas for curricula
- memorializing specific aspects of Inuit culture
- developing ideas for new software
- developing technology expertise among young Inuit
- developing skills using the CDLI to create pedagogical resources
- developing skills in computer science for Inuit communities
- creating language explainers for both Inuit and others
- providing stimulus for personal narrative collections
- creating community publication venues
- providing resources for informal online local newspapers
- developing on-the-land programs using Inuit language
- developing more effective models of language education
- enabling automatic translation
- supporting immersion experiences
- developing online cultural experiences

Summary

The CDLI was engaged to test the hypothesis that a morpho-analyzed database, built on native polysynthetic linguistic principles, can beneficially enable both new academic results and cultural maintenance that could not

otherwise be achievable. This hypothesis has been confirmed in basis by a series of academic publications, and now more recently by two principal developments:

- the advent of automatic software to explode and explicate complex polysynthetic wordforms via diagrammatic simplicity;
- a computational database to derive derivative works such as dictionaries, post-base and inflection lists, lexical frequency counts, concurrences with statistics, N-gram counts, language models, machine learning data sets, and so forth.

Properly harnessed technology provides renewed hope for seriously threatened minority languages in the electronic age. Although they have been diminished year by year by the inexorable domination of superstrate cultures, linguistic and cultural traditions can be reinforced and built up by exploiting new technological potential. Experiential software enabled by linguistic components lies at the center of this hope.

Acknowledgements

Special recognition and credit are due to Bertha Kairtok Holeiter, Sam Metcalfe, and Ken Jararuse for their expertise as linguistic consultants. Morpho-analysis was provided by Leila Clase and Christa Lietz. Professor Dr. Philip Hiscock, Director of the Memorial Language Archive, skillfully forwarded data through stages of technological need above and beyond any call of duty. Brad Parker brilliantly reconstituted data in damaged storage using his own invention to bake and restore acetate media.

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NUMÉRO 23, 2024

LA (RÉ)APPROPRIATION DES (NOUVEAUX) MÉDIAS PAR LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES : revendication, revitalisation, connexion et partage

NUMÉRO 23 (2024)

La (ré)appropriation des (nouveaux) médias par les peuples autochtones : revendication, revitalisation, connexion et partage

Danny Baril et Roxanne Blanchard-Gagné

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Paul Bénézet



Classes verbales et changements de valence en inuktitut (Nunavik)

Marc-Antoine Mahieuⁱ

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article consiste en une présentation systématique des faits de valence verbale en inuktitut. Il utilise des exemples agrammaticaux, mais se fonde avant tout sur la fréquentation et l'analyse de ce que les Inuit du Nunavik disent et écrivent spontanément dans leur langue. Les outils théoriques mobilisés sont ceux de la typologie syntaxique. La thèse centrale est qu'il est utile, pour comprendre les faits de valence en inuktitut, d'admettre que les bases verbales se répartissent en cinq classes, comme l'avait établi Lucien Schneider (1967). Chaque classe verbale est compatible avec certains changements de valence, pas avec les autres. De plus, certains changements de valence peuvent en affecter un ou plusieurs autres. L'article présente les diverses combinaisons possibles. Il tient compte d'un changement de valence important en inuktitut, qui nous semble ne pas avoir encore été identifié pour ce qu'il est : le médiopassif.

MOTS-CLÉS

Inuktitut, classes de bases verbales, valence verbale, changements de valence multiples, médiopassif

ABSTRACT

Verb Class and Valency Change in Inuktitut (Nunavik)

This article is a systematic presentation of valency phenomena in Inuktitut. It uses agrammatical examples but is based above all on the observation and analysis of what Nunavik Inuit spontaneously say and write in their language. The theoretical tools used are those of syntactic typology. The central thesis is that, to understand valency phenomena in Inuktitut, it is useful to admit that verb bases fall into five classes, as established by Lucien Schneider (1967). Each verb class is compatible with certain valency changes, but not with the others. What's more, some valency changes may affect one or more others. The article presents the various possible combinations. It takes into account an important valency change in Inuktitut, which we feel has not yet been identified for what it is : the mediopassive.

KEYWORDS

Inuktitut, verb base classes, verbal valency, multiple valency changes, mediopassive

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L'objectif du présent article est de montrer que, pour comprendre les faits de valence verbale en inuktitut, il est utile d'admettre que les bases verbales de l'inuktitut se répartissent en différentes classes. Commençons par des définitions.

Par «valence verbale», on entend l'ensemble des propriétés sélectionnelles du verbe, des deux points de vue sémantique et syntaxique (Creissels 2006, 1). Tout verbe sélectionne un certain nombre de termes appelés ses «arguments». Chaque argument reçoit un rôle sémantique et assume une fonction syntaxique. Par exemple, en français, le verbe *mordu* (dans *a mordu*) sélectionne deux arguments assumant chacun une fonction syntaxique nucléaire: 1) un sujet recevant un rôle sémantique agentif; 2) un objet direct recevant un rôle sémantique patientif (ainsi dans *le chien a mordu le voleur*)¹.

Un changement de valence verbale est une opération modifiant la valence d'un verbe. Par exemple, le passif canonique est l'opération qui, à partir d'une forme transitive (*a mordu*), produit une forme intransitive (*a été mordu*) dont le sujet reçoit exactement le même rôle sémantique que l'objet direct de la forme transitive de départ. L'argument représenté par le sujet de la forme transitive de départ peut soit ne pas être exprimé (*le voleur a été mordu*), soit devenir un complément oblique, c'est-à-dire un argument assumant une fonction syntaxique périphérique (*le voleur a été mordu par le chien*).

En inuktitut, les opérations qui modifient la valence verbale s'effectuent presque toujours au moyen de suffixes placés entre la base et la terminaison, autrement dit de postbases. Dans un même verbe, une ou plusieurs postbases peuvent modifier la valence de la forme à laquelle elles s'attachent. Dans l'exemple ci-dessous, extrait de Taamusi Qumaq (1986-87, 34), **pijuma-** 'vouloir' est suivi du passif (**pijuma-jau-** 'être voulu'), du causatif (**pijuma-jau-tit-** 'faire être voulu' + objet direct), et de l'intransitiveur (**pijuma-jau-tit-si-** 'faire être voulu' + complément oblique)².

1. Les fonctions syntaxiques nucléaires sont réservées aux arguments du verbe, tandis que les fonctions syntaxiques périphériques peuvent concerner aussi bien un argument du verbe (comme *à Paris* dans *je vais à Paris*) qu'un non-argument (comme *à Paris* dans *je travaille à Paris*).

2. Dans cet article, le nom des cas et des modes suit la terminologie actuellement dominante dans la recherche sur l'inuktitut. Les seules abréviations utilisées sont: 1 = première personne; 2 = deuxième personne; 3 = troisième personne; sg = nombre singulier; du = nombre duel; pl = nombre pluriel; CL = classe.

- 1 **sanangnguagar-nik** **pijuma-jau-tit-si-gasuar-tut**
 sculpture–modalis.pl vouloir–passif-causatif-intransitiveur–s’efforcer–participial.3pl
 ils promeuvent la vente des sculptures (< ils s’efforcent de faire être voulues des sculptures)

De telles combinaisons n’ont rien d’exceptionnel. Elles sont banales dans la langue parlée et écrite spontanément par les locuteurs natifs. Mais toutes les combinaisons ne sont pas possibles. Or, un classement des bases verbales permet de mieux comprendre ce qui est possible et ce qui ne l’est pas. Les fondements d’un tel classement sont présents dans l’œuvre de Lucien Schneider (1967, 69-70). C’est son idée que nous approfondissons ici, à partir des faits observables dans le dialecte du Nunavik³.

Les cinq classes de bases verbales

Le principe du classement des bases verbales de l’inuktitut repose sur la possibilité d’attacher ou non, directement sur la base, une terminaison de l’un ou l’autre type de terminaison verbale existant dans la langue. Le premier type de terminaison verbale met en jeu un mode grammatical (par défaut, le participial) et un indice pronominal représentant l’argument explicitable sous la forme du sujet du verbe. Le second type de terminaison met en jeu un mode grammatical et deux indices pronominaux : l’un représentant l’argument explicitable sous la forme du sujet du verbe, l’autre représentant un argument explicitable sous la forme de l’objet direct du verbe. Nous parlerons respectivement de «terminaisons intransitives» et de «terminaisons transitives». Ainsi, **+tunga** est une terminaison intransitive, **+tara** une terminaison transitive⁴:

- 2 a **+tunga** [mode: participial, sujet: 1sg] = ‘je’
 b **+tara** [mode: participial, sujet: 1sg, objet direct: 3sg] = ‘je le, je la’

Avant de présenter les cinq classes verbales, notons qu’une base verbale en inuktitut sélectionne au moins un argument. Il existe des bases monovalentes (1 argument), divalentes (2 arguments) et trivalentes (3 arguments), mais apparemment pas de base verbale zérovalente. Les candidats imaginables pour ce statut se révèlent être des bases monovalentes. Ainsi, les verbes météorologiques sélectionnent tous un argument explicitable sous la forme du

3. Pour une présentation récente et vivante de la langue des Inuit canadiens, on lira le dernier livre de Louis-Jacques Dorais (2020).

4. Le signe «+» indique que le suffixe n’élimine pas l’éventuelle consonne finale de la forme à laquelle il s’attache. Le signe «/» indique au contraire que le suffixe élimine l’éventuelle consonne finale de la forme à laquelle il s’attache. Enfin, le signe «±» indique que le suffixe élimine un **t** final de la forme à laquelle il s’attache, mais pas un **k** ni un **q**. Sur la morphophonologie de l’inuktitut du Nunavik, on peut lire l’article de Marc-Antoine Mahieu (2017).

sujet **sila** ‘temps météorologique, extérieur’, comme dans l’exemple 3a. La base **unnuk-** ‘devenir le soir, commencer à faire nuit’ sélectionne un argument explicité sous la forme du sujet **silarjuaq** ‘monde’ dans l’exemple 3b, rapporté par une collaboratrice inuit. La base **pitaqaq-** ‘y avoir’ sélectionne elle aussi un argument explicitable sous la forme du sujet, comme dans l’exemple 3c, extrait de Qumaq (1986-87, 9).

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 3 a | <p>(sila)
 (temps.météorologique.absolutif.sg)
 il y a du vent (< le temps vente)</p> | <p>anuri-juq
 venter–participial.3sg</p> |
| b | <p>unnu-valla-saralua-ri-vuq
 commencer.à.faire.nuit–constat–cependant–
 à.nouveau–indicatif.3sg
 le monde a retrouvé [le calme de] la nuit⁵</p> | <p>silarjuaq
 monde.absolutif.sg</p> |
| c | <p>ataata-ga
 père–absolutif.sg/1sg
 il n’y avait plus mon père</p> | <p>pitaqa-runnai-mat
 y.avoir–ne.plus–contingent.3sg</p> |

La première classe

Les bases verbales de la première classe sont monovalentes et intransitives. On ne peut leur attacher directement qu’une terminaison intransitive. C’est le cas de **pisuk-** ‘marcher’. Quand l’argument unique est explicité, il reçoit le cas absolutif.

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 4 a | <p>pisut-tunga
 marcher–participial.1sg
 je marche</p> | |
| b | <p>*pisut-tara
 marcher–participial.1sg/3sg
 *je le marche</p> | |
| c | <p>anguti
 homme.absolutif.sg
 l’homme marche</p> | <p>pisut-tuq
 marcher–participial.3sg</p> |

Les bases de la première classe sont à la fois les plus nombreuses et les plus courantes. Ainsi, dans *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut*, récit de Markoosie Patsauq (2021 [1969]) totalisant près de 7000 mots, 141 des 325 bases verbales (soit 43,5%) appartiennent à cette classe. En voici d’autres exemples: **arsuruq-** ‘forcer, peiner’, **asiu-** ‘se perdre, disparaître’, **aullaq-** ‘partir au loin’, **aunaaq-** ‘saigner, avoir ses règles’, **iki-** ‘embarquer’, **inuu-** ‘vivre’, **irquma-** ‘être réveillé’, **ingit-** ‘s’asseoir’, **itsiva-** ‘être assis’, **kaak-** ‘avoir faim’, **kitsaq-** ‘être tourmenté’, **kivi-** ‘couler’, **mamaq-** ‘être goûteux, sentir bon’, **ningngaq-** ‘se mettre en

5. Plus librement: ‘Dieu merci, c’est vendredi’.

colère’, **nuita-** ‘être visible’, **nuvuja-** ‘être nuageux’, **pai-** ‘rester à la maison en l’absence des autres’, **qai-** ‘venir, s’approcher’, **sajuk-** ‘trembler’, **sinik-** ‘dormir’, **tirlik-** ‘se faire avoir, être pris par surprise’, **tuqu-** ‘mourir’, **utiq-** ‘revenir’⁶.

Dans les parlars du Nunavik, d’où proviennent les données de cet article, un sous-ensemble des bases de la première classe supportent mal qu’on leur attache directement la terminaison verbale (Schneider 1967, 33, Dorais 1988, 114-115). Les locuteurs nominalisent d’abord la base avec **+tuq** ‘un qui’, puis reverbalisent la forme résultante avec /**u-** ‘être’ (**+tu-u-** ‘être un qui’) avant de pouvoir ajouter une terminaison verbale. Ces bases ont toutes un sens adjectival (dimension, propriété physique, tendance humaine, valeur, etc.). Une vingtaine des 326 bases verbales employées dans *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut* appartiennent à cet ensemble. C’est le cas de **ungasik-** ‘être loin’.

5 a	qarqa-it montagne-absolutif.pl les montagnes sont loin (< sont des qui sont loin)	ungasit-tu-u-mata être.loin-un.qui-être-contingent.3pl
b	* qarqa-it montagne-absolutif.pl	ungasim-mata être.loin-contingent.3pl

En voici d’autres exemples: **angi-** ‘être grand’, **isuit-** ‘être mauvais, ne pas convenir’, **kingik-** ‘être haut’, **maniit-** ‘être accidenté (banquise)’, **miki-** ‘être petit’, **paniq-** ‘être sec’, **piu-** ‘être bon, être de bonne qualité’, **saat-** ‘être mince’, **sukkait-** ‘être lent’, **uqumait-** ‘être lourd’.

La deuxième classe

Les bases verbales de la deuxième classe sont divalentes et ambitransitives. Autrement dit, on peut leur attacher directement aussi bien une terminaison intransitive qu’une terminaison transitive. C’est le cas de **uqaq-** ‘dire, prononcer’:

6 a	uqar-tunga dire-participial.1sg je dis quelque chose
b	uqar-tara dire-participial.1sg/3sg je le dis ⁷

6. Un évaluateur anonyme écrit avoir déjà rencontré la base **utiq-** ‘revenir’ directement munie d’une terminaison transitive. Il s’agit d’une autre base, de la deuxième classe (voir la section suivante *La deuxième classe*), signifiant ‘restituer, rendre (quelque chose)’. Le même évaluateur écrit que la base **tuqu-** reçoit une terminaison transitive dans **tuqup-paa** ‘il l’a tué’. L’évaluateur semble confondre la base **tuqu-** ‘mourir’ (première classe) avec la base **tuqut-** ‘tuer’ (troisième classe).

7. Un évaluateur anonyme pense que **uqar-tara** peut signifier ‘je lui dis’ et qu’il s’agit même de l’interprétation la plus fréquente. Au Nunavik, tout au moins, une telle interprétation paraît exclue. Les formes **uqa-uti-jara** et **uqar-vigi-jara** signifient ‘je lui dis’ (voir la section *L’application* dans la deuxième partie de cet article).

Quand une base de la deuxième classe porte une terminaison transitive, son argument agentif est explicitable sous la forme d'un sujet au cas ergatif, et son argument patientif explicitable sous la forme d'un objet direct au cas absolutif. Mais il est exceptionnel, dans l'usage spontané, que les deux arguments d'un verbe transitif soient explicités. D'une manière générale, le sujet à l'ergatif est très rare (Carrier 2021), sauf dans les phrases élicitées par les linguistes. Voici deux exemples relevés dans *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut* (Patsauq 2021 [1969], 54, 57):

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 7 a | nanu-up
ours.blanc-ergatif.sg
l'ours blanc arrive jusqu'à lui | tikip-paa
atteindre-indicatif.3sg/3sg |
| b | qimmi-ni
chien-absolutif.pl/3pl.réfléchi
ils se mettent à chercher leurs chiens | qini-lir-pait
chercher-inchoatif-indicatif.3pl/3pl |

Lorsqu'une base de la deuxième classe porte une terminaison intransitive, le verbe résultant est lui-même intransitif. L'argument agentif est explicitable sous la forme d'un sujet à l'absolutif, mais l'argument patientif n'est pas explicitable sous la forme d'un objet direct. Pour être explicité, il doit prendre la forme d'un complément oblique au cas modalis:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 8 | nanur-mik
ours.blanc-modal. sg
il voit maintenant un ours blanc | taku-lir-puq
voir-inchoatif-indicatif.3sg |
|---|--|---|

À première vue, il est tentant de traiter la phrase 8 comme une construction transitive, dans laquelle le verbe régit un objet direct à l'accusatif. Mais le cas en question n'a pas la distribution d'un accusatif: il est le cas par défaut des noms assumant une fonction syntaxique périphérique. On le trouve tout aussi bien sur l'argument patientif du verbe que sur des non-arguments:

- | | | | |
|-----|--|--|---|
| 9 a | nanur-nik
ours.blanc-modal. pl
il dit quelque chose sur les ours blancs | uqar-tuq
dire-participial.3sg | |
| b | sukkai-tu-mik
être.lent-un.qui-modal. sg
elle coud lentement | mirsu-tuq
coudre-participial.3sg | |
| c | ullu-nik
jour-modal. pl
nous allons marcher pendant trois jours | pingasu-nik
trois.unités-modal. pl | pisun-nia-tugut
marcher-futur-participial.1pl |

Les bases de la deuxième classe sont nombreuses, mais nettement moins que celles de la première. Ainsi, dans *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut* (Patsauq 2021 [1969]), 88 bases verbales sur 325 (soit 27%) en font partie. Exemples supplémentaires: **angiq-** 'dire oui (à)', **asiuji-** 'perdre', **atuq-** 'utiliser, se servir de', **ikaaq-** 'traverser', **ikajuq-** 'aider', **ilaaniq-** 'faire exprès',

ilitsi- ‘apprendre’, **malik-** ‘suivre, accompagner’, **naima-** ‘sentir l’odeur de’, **natsiq-** ‘tuer (phoque annelé)’, **niri-** ‘manger’, **parriaq-** ‘aller à la rencontre de’, **pilak-** ‘dépecer’, **pui-** ‘faire surface (à la vue de)’, **puiguq-** ‘oublier’, **qaujima-** ‘connaître, savoir’, **qiniq-** ‘chercher’, **sana-** ‘fabriquer’, **taku-** ‘voir’, **tikit-** ‘atteindre, arriver (à)’, **tigumiaq-** ‘tenir avec la main, garder à la main’, **tukisi-** ‘comprendre’, **turaaq-** ‘viser’, **tusauma-** ‘avoir entendu dire’, **usi-** ‘transporter’, **utarqi-** ‘attendre’⁸.

La troisième classe

Les bases verbales de la troisième classe sont divalentes ou trivalentes, et strictement transitives. On ne peut donc leur attacher directement qu’une terminaison transitive (voir dans la partie suivante la section *Le médiopassif*, pour les faits apparemment contradictoires). La base **avit-** ‘renvoyer, se séparer de’ appartient à la troisième classe :

- 10 a **avi-tara**⁹
renvoyer-participial.1sg/3sg
je le renvoie, je me sépare de lui/d’elle
- b ***avit-tunga**
renvoyer-participial.1sg
(je renvoie quelqu’un, je me sépare de quelqu’un)

Lorsqu’une base de la troisième classe porte une terminaison transitive, son argument agentif est explicitable (mais très rarement explicité) sous la forme d’un sujet au cas ergatif. Si la base est divalente, l’argument patientif est explicitable sous la forme d’un objet direct au cas absolutif, comme en 11a. Si la base est trivalente, c’est par défaut l’argument bénéficiaire qui est explicitable sous la forme d’un objet direct à l’absolutif, comme en 11b. L’argument patientif reste explicitable sous la forme d’un complément oblique au cas modalis. Dans la situation où l’argument patientif est précisément défini, il est explicitable sous la forme d’un objet direct à l’absolutif, comme en 11c¹⁰. L’argument bénéficiaire reste alors explicitable sous la forme d’un complément oblique au cas allatif.

8. Un évaluateur anonyme de cet article doute que la base **natsiq-** ‘tuer (phoque annelé)’ puisse recevoir une terminaison transitive. Mais c’est pourtant le cas: **natsi-tait?** ‘tu l’as tué?’, **natsi-para** ‘je l’ai tué’.

9. Le **t** final d’une base verbale tombe devant les terminaisons transitives du mode participial (**avi-tara** ‘je le renvoie’ se distingue ainsi de **avit-tara**, ‘je le divise’, construit sur la base **avik-** ‘diviser’). En revanche, le **t** final d’une postbase ne tombe pas devant les terminaisons transitives du mode participial. D’où, par exemple, **uqa-runna-ngit-tara** ‘je ne peux pas le dire’.

10. La phrase 11c est nettement moins bonne sans la terminaison possessive sur l’argument patientif.

- 11 a **aippa-ra** **avi-tara**
 conjoint-absolutif.sg/1sg renvoyer-participial.1sg/3sg
 je me sépare de mon conjoint/ma conjointe
- b **Paulusi** **aittuuti-mik** **tujur-tara**
 Paulusi.absolutif.sg cadeau-modalis.sg envoyer-participial.1sg/3sg
 j'envoie un/le cadeau à Paulusi
- c **Paulusi-mut** **aittuuti-ga** **tujur-tara**
 Paulusi-allatif.sg cadeau-absolutif.sg/1sg envoyer-participial.1sg/3sg
 j'envoie mon cadeau à Paulusi

Les bases de la troisième classe sont à peu près aussi nombreuses que celles de la deuxième. Ainsi, dans *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut* (Patsauq 2021 [1969]), 67 bases verbales sur 325 (soit 20,5%) en font partie. Exemples supplémentaires: **ai-** 'aller chercher', **alik-** 'déchirer', **annuraaq-** 'habiller', **auk-** 'faire fondre', **igit-** 'jeter', **immiq-** 'remplir d'eau', **ipiq-** 'attacher (chien)', **katit-** '(r)assembler', **kii-** 'mordre', **naa-** 'achever', **nipit-** 'coller', **nungu-** 'user', **nungut-** 'épuiser, finir', **nuuk-** 'déplacer', **paa-** 'battre', **paaq-** 'rencontrer', **piiq-** 'enlever', **qimak-** 'laisser derrière soi', **salummasaq-** 'nettoyer', **sau-** 'enfouir', **tatsik-** 'tâter, sentir avec le toucher', **tili-** 'demander de faire quelque chose à', **tupaaq-** 'réveiller', **tuqut-** 'tuer', **tutjaq-** 'suivre à la trace'.

La quatrième classe

Les bases verbales de la quatrième classe sont divalentes et intransitives. On ne peut leur attacher directement qu'une terminaison intransitive. À moins d'un changement de valence (voir dans la partie suivante, la section *Le transitiviseur*), l'argument patientif n'est donc explicitable que sous la forme d'un complément oblique. C'est le cas de la base **isuma-** 'penser':

- 12 a **isuma-junga**
 penser-participial.1sg
 je pense à quelque chose, je réfléchis
- b **pani-ganik** **isuma-junga**
 fille-modalis.sg/1sg penser-participial.1sg
 je pense à ma fille
- c ***isuma-jara**
 penser-participial.1sg/3sg
 (j'y pense, je pense à lui/elle)

Une base verbale de la quatrième classe exprime toujours un acte ou un état mental. Les bases de la quatrième classe ne sont pas aussi nombreuses que celles des trois premières classes, mais elles s'utilisent beaucoup. Dans *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut* (Patsauq 2021 [1969]), 16 bases verbales sur 325 (soit 5%) en font partie. Les exemples suivants comprennent aussi des bases employées par Qumaq (1986-87): **ajuinnaq-** 'vouloir avec détermination, prendre à cœur', **ajuq-** 'ne pas y arriver, ne pas pouvoir', **irsi-** 'avoir peur (d'un être vivant dangereux)', **isumaaluk-** 'se tourmenter',

nakur-[saq-] ‘être reconnaissant, trouver digne de remerciement’, **qanui-[tsaq-]** ‘avoir du malheur, avoir à se plaindre de’, **quvia-[suk-]** ‘se réjouir, être heureux’, **suquti-[tsaq-]** ‘s’offusquer’, **tungnga-[suk-]** ‘se sentir à l’aise’, **upi-[gusuk-]** ‘être étonné, être admiratif, être fier, féliciter’, **uqumai-[lliuq-]** ‘trouver lourd’, **uumi-[suk-]** ‘détester’¹¹.

Bases verbales et changement de valence unique

Toutes classes confondues, neuf opérations principales sont susceptibles d’affecter la valence d’une base verbale en inuktitut. Une même opération peut correspondre à plusieurs postbases (avec ou sans écart de signification), une seule postbase, ou aucune postbase (dans un seul cas important, voir la section *Le médiopassif*).

Le passif

Le passif correspond à plusieurs postbases présentant des écarts de signification, mais partageant la propriété de ne pouvoir se combiner directement qu’avec les bases de la deuxième et de la troisième classes. En effet, les bases de la première classe ont un seul argument, et celles de la quatrième et de la cinquième classes ne sont pas transitives, ce qui rend impossible la passivation. La postbase du passif canonique est **±tau-** ‘être -é’. Notons que le complément d’agent, en inuktitut du Nunavik, reçoit le cas allatif.

14 a	*pisut-tau-sima-juq marcher–passif–statif–participial.3sg		CL1
b	uqar-tau-sima-juq dire– <u>passif</u> –statif–participial.3sg cela a été dit (par Paulusi)	(Paulusi–mut) (Paulusi–allatif.sg)	CL2
c	avi-tau-sima-juq renvoyer– <u>passif</u> –statif–participial.3sg il a été renvoyé (par le chef)	(angajurqaa–mut) (chef–allatif.sg)	CL3
d	*isuma-jau-sima-juq penser–passif–participial.3sg		CL4
e	*kappia-jau-sima-juq avoir.peur–passif–participial.3sg		CL5

Les formes non-canoniques du passif sont des nominalisations (toujours susceptibles de donner lieu à une reverbération). Il s’agit d’abord de **±taq** ‘un qui est -é’ et de **/suuq-** ‘un qui est habituellement -é’ + terminaison possessive :

11. Notons le cas intéressant de la base qui, au Nunavik, signifie ‘être content (de)’. Sur la côte de l’Ungava et du détroit d’Hudson, il s’agit de **alia-[suk-]** (cinquième classe). Sur la côte de la baie d’Hudson, d’Akulivik à Kuujjuaraapik, il s’agit de **aliak-** (quatrième classe).

- 15 a **uqar-ta-vini-ra** CL2
 dire-un.qui.est.-é-ancien-absolutif.sg/1sg
 la chose que j'ai dite (< mon ancienne chose dite)
- b **takunna-suukka** CL2
 regarder-un.qui.est.habituellement.-é-absolutif.pl/1sg
 les choses que j'ai l'habitude de regarder (< mes choses habituellement regardées)

Il faut aussi mentionner deux postbases peu productives. La première est /**gaq** 'un dont la nature est d'être -é'. Exemples: **iirqa-gaq** 'pilule' (< 'dont la nature est d'être avalé plusieurs fois'), **kali-gaq** 'remorque' (< 'dont la nature est d'être traîné'), **mali-gaq** 'règle, loi' (< 'dont la nature est d'être suivi'). La seconde est **+tsaq** 'un pouvant être -é'. Exemples: **taku-tsaq** 'un pouvant être vu', **tusar-saq** 'un pouvant être entendu', **tikit-saq** 'un pouvant être atteint'.

L'intransitif

L'intransitif correspond à plusieurs postbases sans écarts de signification, partageant la propriété de ne pouvoir se combiner directement qu'avec les formes strictement transitives et avec les formes qui ne peuvent pas recevoir directement de terminaison verbale. L'intransitif se combine donc avec les bases de la troisième et de la cinquième classes. Il ne modifie pas les rôles sémantiques, mais rend l'argument agentif explicitable sous la forme d'un sujet à l'absolutif, et l'argument patientif explicitable sous la forme d'un complément oblique au cas modalis. L'intransitif est ce que l'on appelle couramment «l'antipassif» dans les travaux consacrés à l'inuktitut.

- 16 a ***pisut-si-junga** CL1
 marcher-intransitif-participial.1sg
- b ***uqar-si-junga** CL2
 parler-intransitif-participial.1sg
- c **pinasutti-mik** **avit-si-junga** CL3
 employé-modalis.sg renvoyer-intransitif-participial.3sg
 je renvoie un employé, je me sépare d'un employé

Sur les bases de la troisième classe, l'intransitif a six formes possibles: **+si-**, **/i-**, **+ji-**, **/gi-**, **/tsi-**, **+nni(k)-**. La forme de l'intransitif doit être stipulée:

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 17 | piiq- 'enlever' | intransitif piir-si- |
| | qimak- 'laisser derrière soi' | intransitif qima-i- |
| | naa- 'achever' | intransitif naa-ji- |
| | annuraaq- 'habiller' | intransitif annuraa-ri- |
| | ai- 'aller chercher' | intransitif ai-tsi- |
| | paa- 'battre' | intransitif paa-nni(k)- |

Il importe de ne pas confondre ces postbases avec d'autres postbases homophones. L'intransitif **+si-** se distingue de l'inchoatif /**si-** 'tout de suite' (de même que de **±si-** 'devenir un qui' + base verbale de sens adjectival, et de **+si-** 'trouver, rencontrer, acheter' + base nominale). On peut facilement démontrer que l'intransitif **+si-** et l'inchoatif /**si-** ne sont pas le même morphème (*pace* Spreng 2012): d'une part ils peuvent s'enchaîner dans le même mot, d'autre part l'inchoatif /**si-** peut se combiner avec une terminaison transitive:

18 a	mimir-mik cuisson-modal.1sg je découpe tout de suite le cuisson	nakati-si-si-junga découper-intransitif-tout.de.suite-participial.1sg	CL3
b	nakati-si-jara je le découpe tout de suite	découper-tout.de.suite-participial.1sg/3sg	CL3
c	isuma-si-juq il pense toute de suite à quelque chose, il se met tout de suite à réfléchir	penser-inchoatif/*intransitif-participial.3sg	CL4

Sur les bases de la cinquième classe (et uniquement sur elles), l'intransitif prend d'autres formes: /**gusuk-**, /**suk-**, **+tsaq-**, très rarement /**lliuq-**, **+si-**, /**gak-**. La forme de l'intransitif doit être stipulée:

19	nalli- 'aimer d'amour'	intransitif nalli-gusuk-
	kappia- 'avoir peur'	intransitif kappia-suk-
	qanuit- 'avoir du malheur'	intransitif qanui-tsaq-
	uqumait- 'trouver lourd'	intransitif uqumai-lliuq- , uqumai-tsaq-
	ilitaq- 'reconnaître'	intransitif ilitar-si-
	pingik- 's'inquiéter'	intransitif pingi-gak-

De nouveau, il importe de ne pas confondre ces postbases avec les postbases homophones (citons en particulier /**gusuk-** ou /**suk-** 'avoir envie de'). Nous répétons ci-dessous des exemples cités dans la section *La cinquième classe*.

20 a	kappia-sut-tunga j'ai peur	avoir.peur-intransitif-participial.1sg	CL5
b	qupirru-nik j'ai peur des petites bestioles	avoir.peur-intransitif-participial.1sg	CL5

Le transitif

Le transitif fait que les formes verbales divalentes et non transitives deviennent transitives. Il rend l'argument patientif explicitable sous la forme d'un objet direct au cas absolu. L'argument agentif, s'il est explicité (ce qui

est très rare), reçoit le cas ergatif. Le transitif correspond à un seul morphème, /**gi-**, qu'il ne faut pas confondre avec le morphème d'intransitif homophone (voir la précédente section *Le passif*). Le transitif ne peut se combiner qu'avec les bases de la quatrième et de la cinquième classes, puisqu'elles sont les seules bases divalentes et non transitives :

21 a	*pisu-gi-jara marcher–transitif–participial.1sg/3sg	CL1
b	*uqa-ri-jara parler–transitif–participial.1sg/3sg	CL2
c	*avi-gi-jara renvoyer–transitif–participial.1sg/3sg	CL3
d	isuma-gi-jara penser–transitif–participial.1sg/3sg j'y pense, je pense à lui/elle	CL4
e	kappia-gi-jara avoir.peur–transitif–participial.1sg/3sg j'en ai peur, j'ai peur de lui/elle	CL5

Le causal

Le causal consiste en la destitution de l'argument agentif d'une forme verbale et son remplacement par un argument recevant le rôle sémantique de cause ou de stimulus. L'argument agentif reste parfois explicite (mais n'est généralement pas explicité) sous la forme d'un complément oblique au cas allatif. Le causal correspond à un seul morphème, **+naq-** (variante occasionnelle **+nnaq-**), 'être cause du fait de, être à l'origine du fait de', qui se combine directement avec des bases de toutes les classes verbales, sauf celles de la troisième classe, à moins d'un premier changement de valence (voir la section ci-dessous *Le médiopassif*):

22 a	pisun-na-tuq marcher–causal–participial.3sg cela pousse à marcher, cela invite à une marche	CL1
b	uqar-na-tuq dire–causal–participial.3sg cela pousse à dire quelque chose	CL2
c	avin-na-tuq renvoyer.médiopassif–causal–participial.3sg cela pousse à se séparer, à être séparés (≠ cela pousse à renvoyer quelqu'un)	CL3
d	isuma-nar-tuq penser–causal–participial.3sg cela donne à penser, cela fait réfléchir	CL4
e	kappia-nar-tuq avoir.peur–causal–participial.3sg cela fait peur, c'est effrayant	CL5

Si la forme verbale de départ a un argument patientif, ce dernier reste explicitable sous la forme d'un complément oblique au cas modalis, sauf s'il a lui-même remplacé l'argument agentif de la forme de départ, ce qui se produit systématiquement avec les bases verbales de la cinquième classe. Ces deux cas de figure sont illustrés ci-dessous :

23 a	suli-ju-nik être.vrai-un.qui-modalis.pl cela pousse à dire la vérité	uqar-na-tuq dire- <u>causal</u> -participial.3sg	CL2
b	Piita-mik Piita-modalis.sg cela fait penser à Piita	isuma-nar-tuq penser- <u>causal</u> -participial.3sg	CL3
24 a	*qupirru-nik petite.bestiole-modalis.pl (cela donne peur des petites bestioles)	kappia-nar-tuq avoir.peur- <u>causal</u> -participial.3sg	CL5
b	qupirru-it petite.bestiole-absolutif.pl les petites bestioles font peur	kappia-nar-tut avoir.peur- <u>causal</u> -participial.3pl	CL5

On peut considérer /**guminaq-** 'donner envie de' comme une forme de causal (provenant de /**guma-** 'vouloir' et +**naq-**). Seules les bases de la première et de la deuxième classes se combinent directement et couramment avec /**guminaq-**. Exemples: **sini-guminar-tuq** 'cela donne envie de dormir', **tukisi-guminar-tuq** 'cela donne envie de comprendre'.

Le causatif

Le causatif consiste en la destitution de l'argument agentif d'une forme verbale et son remplacement par un argument supplémentaire recevant le rôle sémantique de causateur. Ce causateur contribue de façon directe à l'action d'un causataire, identifié à l'argument agentif de la forme de départ. Si la forme causative ne subit pas elle-même de changement de valence, la terminaison verbale est transitive, le causateur est explicitable (mais très rarement explicité) sous la forme d'un sujet au cas ergatif, et le causataire explicitable sous la forme d'un objet direct au cas absolutif. Il existe en inuktitut plusieurs morphèmes de causatif, dont certains présentent des écarts de signification. Le morphème principal est **±tit-** 'faire faire', qui se combine directement avec les bases verbales des première, deuxième et quatrième classes :

25 a	pisut-ti-tara marcher- <u>causatif</u> -participial.1sg/3sg je le fais aller à pied (volontairement ou involontairement)	CL1
b	uqar-ti-tara dire- <u>causatif</u> -participial.1sg/3sg je lui fais dire quelque chose (volontairement ou involontairement)	CL2
c	*avi-ti-tara renvoyer- <u>causatif</u> -participial.1sg/3sg	CL3

- d **isuma-ti-tara** CL4
 penser–causatif–participial.1sg/3sg
 je lui fais penser à quelque chose (volontairement ou involontairement)
- e ***kappia-ti-tara** CL5
 avoir.peur–causatif–participial.1sg/3sg

Une variante de **±tit-**, **/kkaq-**, s'emploie optionnellement sur certaines bases se terminant par une voyelle. Exemples: **ani-kkaq-** = **ani-tit-** 'faire sortir', **qia-kkaq-** = **qia-tit-** 'faire pleurer', **qauji-kkaq-** = **qauji-tit-** 'faire savoir, informer'. La combinaison **niri-kkaq-** 'faire manger' est généralement préférée à **niri-tit-** quand il est question de nourrir les chiens. Schneider (1979, 32) précise que le causateur introduit par **/kkaq-** agit de façon intentionnelle, et rien ne vient contredire cette affirmation dans nos données. Un autre morphème de causatif important est **/qu-** 'vouloir que, souhaiter que, demander de', qui a les mêmes propriétés combinatoires que **±tit-** :

- 26 a **uti-qu-jara** CL1
 revenir–causatif–participial.1sg/3sg
 je veux qu'il/elle revienne, je lui demande de revenir
- b **utarqi-qu-jara** CL2
 attendre–causatif–participial.1sg/3sg
 je veux qu'il/elle attende, je lui demande d'attendre
- c ***avi-qu-jara** CL3
 renvoyer–causatif–participial.1sg/3sg
- d **isumaalu-qu-ngngi-tara** CL4
 se.tourmenter–causatif–participial–ne.pas–1sg/3sg
 je ne veux pas qu'il/elle se tourmente
- e ***kappia-qu-jara** CL5
 avoir.peur–causatif–participial.1sg/3sg

Une forme de causatif nettement plus rare, **/jiari-**, signifie 'faire faire involontairement'. Elle vient de la nominalisation **/jiaq** 'un qui, sous l'effet d'un causateur involontaire' et de la verbalisation **/gi-** 'avoir pour'. (Ainsi, **/jiari-jara** signifie littéralement 'je l'ai involontairement pour quelqu'un qui [fait quelque chose]'). Ses propriétés combinatoires sont les mêmes que celles de **±tit-** et de **/qu-** :

- 27 a **kaa-jiari-jara** (= **kaa-jia-ra**) CL1
 avoir.faim–causatif–participial.1sg/3sg
 je l'ai affamé involontairement
- b **naima-jiari-jara** (= **naima-jia-ra**) CL2
 flairer–causatif–participial.1sg/3sg
 je l'ai fait [me] flairer involontairement
- c ***avi-jiari-jara** (***avi-jia-ra**) CL3
 renvoyer–causatif–participial.1sg/3sg

- d **tusu-jiari-jara** (= **tusu-jia-ra**) CL4
 être.jaloux-causatif-participial.1sg/3sg
 je l'ai rendu jaloux involontairement
- e ***kappia-jiari-jara** (***kappia-jia-ra**) CL5
 avoir.peur-causatif-participial.1sg/3sg

Notons enfin l'existence de plusieurs morphèmes non-productifs de causatif: /**li-** dans **angi-li-jara** 'je l'agrandis', /**saaq-** dans **irsi-saar-tara** 'je cherche à lui faire peur', /**saq-** dans **ili-sar-tara** 'je lui enseigne', /**i-** dans **ningnga-i-jara** 'je le mets en colère', /**lirtiq-** dans **qausi-lirti-tara** 'je l'humidifie'.

L'applicatif

L'applicatif est l'opération qui, sans modifier le rôle sémantique du ou des arguments de la forme verbale de départ, introduit un argument supplémentaire. Si la forme applicative ne subit pas elle-même de changement de valence, la terminaison est transitive, l'argument agentif est explicitable (mais très rarement explicité) sous la forme d'un sujet au cas ergatif, et l'argument supplémentaire est explicitable sous la forme d'un objet direct au cas absolutif. Il existe quatre applicatifs en inuktitut: le bénéfactif /(**g**)**uti-** ou /(**g**)**utji-**¹² ('à, pour, envers'); le locatif-bénéfactif **+vigi-** ('à, dans, sur'); le comitatif /**qatigi-** ('avec'); l'instrumental /**utigi-** ('au moyen de'). Les trois derniers applicatifs viennent d'une nominalisation (**+vik**, /**qati**, /**uti**) et de la verbalisation /**gi-**¹³ 'avoir pour'. (Par exemple, /**qatigi-jara** signifie littéralement 'je l'ai pour quelqu'un avec qui [faire quelque chose]'). Les quatre applicatifs peuvent se combiner directement avec les bases de la première et de la deuxième classes:

- 28 a **anirra-uti-jara** CL1
 rentrer.chez soi-applicatif.bénéfactif-participial.1sg/3sg
 je l'emporte chez moi
- b **siniv-vigi-jara** CL1
 dormir-applicatif.locatif.bénéfactif-participial.1sg/3sg
 j'y dors, c'est l'endroit où je dors
- c **inuu-qatigi-jara** CL1
 vivre-applicatif.comitatif-participial.1sg/3sg
 je vis avec lui/elle
- d **pisu-utigi-jara** CL1
 marcher-applicatif.instrumental-participial.1sg/3sg
 je m'en sers pour marcher

12. La forme /(**g**)**utji-** est trompeuse, car l'intransitiver du bénéfactif est lui-même /(**g**)**ut-ji-** (voir dans la partie suivante, la section *L'intransitiver appliqué à un premier changement de valence*). Exemple: **iga-ut-ji-junga** 'je cuisine pour quelqu'un'.

13. La postbase verbalisante /**gi-** 'avoir pour' ne doit pas être confondue avec le transitiver homophone (qui s'attache uniquement aux bases verbales des quatrième et cinquième classes; voir la section précédente *Le transitiver*).

- 29 a **iga-gutji-jara** CL2
 cuisiner–applicatif.bénéfactif–participial.1sg/3sg
 je lui cuisine (quelque chose)
- b **uqar-vigi-jara** (= **uqa-uti-jara**) CL2
 dire–applicatif.locatif.bénéfactif–participial.1sg/3sg
 je lui dis (quelque chose)
- c **niri-qatigi-jara** CL2
 manger–applicatif.comitatif–participial.1sg/3sg
 je mange (quelque chose) avec lui/elle
- d **alla-rutigi-jara** CL2
 écrire–applicatif.instrumental–participial.1sg/3sg
 je m'en sers pour écrire
- 30 ***avi-uti-jara** CL3
 renvoyer–applicatif.bénéfactif–participial.1sg/3sg

Les quatre applicatifs peuvent aussi se combiner avec certaines bases de la quatrième classe :

- 31 a **sapi-rutji-jara** (= **sapi-ri-jara**) CL4
 perdre.courage–applicatif.bénéfactif–participial.1sg/3sg
 je me décourage de lui/elle/cela, il/elle/cela me décourage
- b **isuma-vigi-jara** CL4
 penser–applicatif.locatif.bénéfactif–participial.1sg/3sg
 je le/la prends en compte (< je l'ai pour occasion d['y] penser)
- c **kama-qatigi-jara** CL4
 s'occuper.de–applicatif.comitatif–participial.1sg/3sg
 je m'[en] occupe avec lui/elle
- d **isumaalu-gutigi-jara** CL4
 se.tourmenter–applicatif.instrumental–participial.1sg/3sg
 c'est quelque chose qui me tourmente (< je l'ai pour moyen de me tourmenter)
- 32 ***kappia-guti-jara** CL5
 avoir.peur–applicatif.bénéfactif–participial.1sg/3sg

Le réciproque

Le réciproque, qui demande toujours une terminaison intransitive de duel ou de pluriel (sauf s'il est nominalisé), signifie que les arguments du verbe endossent chacun le même rôle sémantique l'un vis-à-vis de l'autre ou les uns vis-à-vis des autres. Le morphème du réciproque est /**uti-**, à distinguer de l'applicatif bénéfactif (qui demande une terminaison transitive). Le réciproque ne se combine directement qu'avec les bases ambitransitives et les bases strictement transitives, soit les bases de la deuxième et de la troisième classes :

- 33 ***pisu-uti-juuk** CL1
 marcher–réciproque–participial.3du

34 a	taku-uti-juuk voir- <u>réci</u> proque-participial.3du ils se voient l'un l'autre	CL2
b	unata-uti-jut chercher.à.tuer- <u>réci</u> proque-participial.3pl ils cherchent à se tuer les uns les autres, ils se font la guerre	CL2
35 a	avi-uti-jut (= avi-ut-tut) renvoyer- <u>réci</u> proque-participial.3pl ils se séparent les uns les autres	CL3
b	aiva-uti-juuk (= aiva-ut-tuuk) invectiver- <u>réci</u> proque-participial.3du ils se lancent des invectives, ils se disputent	CL3
36	*isuma-uti-juuk penser- <u>réci</u> proque-participial.3du	CL4
37	*kappia-guti-juuk avoir.peur- <u>réci</u> proque-participial.3du	CL5

Le médiopassif

Le médiopassif (appelé « réflexif » et « passif caché » dans les travaux de Schneider) est une opération aussi courante que peu étudiée en inuktitut. Comme le réciproque, cette opération n'affecte directement que les bases ambitransitives et les bases strictement transitives, soit les bases de la deuxième et de la troisième classes. Le médiopassif produit une forme intransitive, dont l'unique argument reçoit un rôle sémantique cumulant les rôles reçus par les deux arguments de la forme de départ (valeur moyenne), ou bien un rôle sémantique s'identifiant au rôle reçu par l'argument patientif de la forme de départ (valeur passive).

La singularité de cette opération est qu'aucune postbase n'intervient pour l'exprimer. Si la base est ambitransitive, la terminaison intransitive ne permet pas en elle-même de reconnaître le médiopassif. C'est seulement le contexte qui permet de trancher. Si la base est strictement transitive, la terminaison intransitive suffit pour reconnaître le médiopassif en l'absence d'intransitiver.

La valeur moyenne du médiopassif s'interprète elle-même de différentes façons selon le contexte : vrai réfléchi, autocausatif ou décausatif (Creissels 2007). Voyons pour commencer des exemples de ces trois interprétations sur des bases de la deuxième classe.

38 a	uvva-tuq laver. <u>médiopassif</u> -participial.3sg il/elle se lave (ambiguïté avec: uvva-tuq 'il/elle lave quelque chose')	CL2
b	avvai-tuq écarter. <u>médiopassif</u> -participial.3sg il/elle s'écarte (ambiguïté avec: avvai-tuq 'il/elle écarte quelque chose')	CL2

- c **atur-tuq** CL2
 utiliser.médiopassif-participial.3sg
 il/elle/cela s'utilise
 (ambiguïté avec: **atur-tuq** 'il/elle utilise quelque chose')

Avec un vrai réfléchi (comme **uvva-tuq**), les deux rôles sémantiques cumulés par l'argument unique restent distincts l'un de l'autre: l'agent se prend lui-même pour objet, exerçant une action volontaire envers lui-même¹⁴. Avec un autocausatif (comme **avvai-tuq**), l'instigateur de l'action est le lieu où l'action se manifeste, sans qu'on puisse isoler un objet de l'action. Avec un décausatif (comme **atur-tuq**), le démarrage de l'action ne met en jeu aucun instigateur identifiable: le sujet est en quelque sorte prédisposé à subir l'action. Voyons des exemples de ces trois interprétations sur les bases de la troisième classe:

- 39 a **annuraar-tuq** CL3
 habiller.médiopassif-participial.3sg
 il/elle s'habille
 (≠ **annuraa-ri-juq** 'il/elle habille quelqu'un')
- b **nirtu-tuq** CL3
 vanter.médiopassif-participial.3sg
 il/elle se vante
 (≠ **nirtu-i-juq** 'il/elle vante quelqu'un')
- c **alit-tuq** CL3
 déchirer.médiopassif-participial.3sg
 il/elle/cela se déchire
 (≠ **alit-si-juq** 'il/elle déchire quelque chose')

La valeur passive du médiopassif, courante elle aussi, va souvent de pair avec l'aspect statif, que la postbase **±sima-** sert à exprimer. C'est la raison pour laquelle nous introduisons **±sima-** dans les exemples ci-dessous.

- 40 a **alla-sima-juq** CL2
 écrire.médiopassif-statif-participial.3sg
 il/elle/cela est écrit, il/elle/cela a été écrit
 (ambiguïté avec: **alla-sima-juq** 'il/elle a écrit quelque chose')
- b **niri-sima-juq** CL2
 manger.médiopassif-statif-participial.3sg
 il/elle/cela est mangé, il/elle/cela a été mangé
 (ambiguïté avec: **niri-sima-juq** 'il/elle a mangé quelque chose')
- c **atur-sima-juq** CL2
 utiliser.médiopassif-statif-participial.3sg
 il/elle/cela est utilisé, il/elle/cela a été utilisé
 (ambiguïté avec: **atur-sima-juq** 'il/elle a utilisé quelque chose')

14. Autre exemple parlant: **taku-laa-ri-vugut** 'nous nous reverrons, au revoir'. Nul besoin du pronom **imminik** pour exprimer le réfléchi.

- 41 a **akilir-sima-juq** CL3
payer.médiopassif–statif–participial.3sg
il/elle/cela est payé, il/elle/cela a été payé
(≠ **akili-i-sima-juq** ‘il/elle a payé quelque chose’)
- b **iluvir-sima-juq** CL3
enterrer.médiopassif–statif–participial.3sg
il/elle/cela est enterré, il/elle/cela a été enterré
(≠ **iluvir-si-sima-juq** ‘il/elle a enterré quelque chose’)
- c **alit-sima-juq** CL3
déchirer.médiopassif–statif–participial.3sg
il/elle/cela est déchiré, il/elle/cela a été déchiré
(≠ **alit-si-sima-juq** ‘il/elle a déchiré quelque chose’)

Notons que la valeur passive du médiopassif ne permet pas d’exprimer un agent de l’action :

- 42 ***Paulusi-mut** **alit-sima-juq** CL3
Paulusi-absolutif.sg déchirer.médiopassif–statif–participial.3sg
(il/elle/cela a été déchiré par Paulusi)

Le médiopassif est exclu sur les bases des première, quatrième et cinquième classes :

- 43 a **pisut-tuq** CL1
marcher(*médiopassif)–participial.3sg
il/elle (*se) marche
- b **isuma-juq** CL4
penser(*médiopassif)–participial.3sg
il/elle pense à quelque chose, il/elle réfléchit (≠ il/elle/cela se pense)
- c ***kappia-juq** CL5
avoir.peur(*médiopassif)–participial.3sg

‘dire’, ‘penser’, ‘attendre’, ‘craindre’

Nous avons vu que le causal et le causatif destituent l’argument agentif de la forme de départ et le remplacent par un argument supplémentaire, recevant le rôle sémantique de cause/stimulus dans le premier cas, de causateur dans le second. L’inuktitut emploie le même mécanisme pour des rôles sémantiques plus inhabituels. Ainsi, avec **+niraq-**, l’argument supplémentaire reçoit le rôle sémantique de personne à qui est attribuée une parole. Avec **+turi-** (parfois /**gasugi-**, /**latsi-**), le rôle sémantique de personne à qui est attribuée une pensée. Avec **+tsiari-**, une attente. Avec **+niangnguuri-** (parfois /**tjanguuq-**), une crainte. Ces postbases ne se combinent directement qu’avec les bases des première, deuxième et quatrième classes. À moins d’un nouveau changement de valence, la terminaison est transitive, l’argument


supplémentaire est explicitable (mais très rarement explicité) sous la forme d'un sujet au cas ergatif, et l'argument destitué explicitable sous la forme d'un objet direct au cas absolutif.

- 44 a **sinin-nirar-tara** CL1
dormir-dire-participial.1sg/3sg
je dis qu'il/elle dort
- b **tukisi-juri-jara** CL2
comprendre-penser-participial.1sg/3sg
je pense qu'il/elle comprend
- c ***avin-nirar-tara** CL3
renvoyer-dire-participial.1sg/3sg
- d **isumaalun-nasugi-jara** CL4
se.tourmenter-penser-participial.1sg/3sg
je pense qu'il/elle se tourmente
- e ***kappia-nirar-tara** CL5
avoir.peur-dire-participial.1sg/3sg

Synthèse

Compte tenu des propriétés de chaque classe de bases verbales et de chaque changement de valence, toutes les incompatibilités sont prédictibles à part le fait que les bases de la troisième classe ne peuvent pas se combiner directement avec le causal, le causatif, l'applicatif, 'dire', 'penser', 'attendre' et 'craindre'.

Tableau 1. Bases verbales et changement de valence unique.

	CL1 pisuk-	CL2 uqaq-	CL3 avit-	CL4 isuma-	CL5 kappia-
Passif	-	+	+	-	-
Intransitif	-	-	+	-	+
Transitif	-	-	-	+	+
Causal	+	+	-	+	+
Causatif	+	+	-	+	-
Applicatif	+	+	-	+	-
Réciproque	-	+	+	-	-
Médiopassif	-	+	+	-	-
dire, penser...	+	+	-	+	-

Double changement de valence

Les combinaisons de deux opérations sur la valence verbale sont courantes, mais toutes ne sont pas possibles. Ainsi, aucune opération ne peut s'appliquer directement à elle-même (un passif ne peut pas être directement passivé, etc.) et le transitif ne s'applique à aucune opération. Certaines combinaisons sont grammaticales, mais peu courantes¹⁵.

Le passif appliqué à un premier changement de valence

Le passif s'applique à toute opération qui rend transitive la forme verbale de départ: transitif (/gi-jau-), causatif (**±ti-tau-** ; /qu-jau-), applicatif (/g)ut-jau- ; /qatigi-jau- ; +viu- et +vigi-suuq- plutôt que *-vigi-jau- pour le passif du locatif-bénéfactif ; /utigijau-), 'dire', 'penser' et 'craindre' (+nirar-tau- ; +turi-jau- ; +niangnguuri-jau-).

45	kama-gi-jau-tsia-punga s'occuper.de-transitif-passif-indicatif.1sg on s'occupe bien de moi		CL4
46	niri-ti-tau-giaqar-tut manger-causatif-passif-devoir-participial.3pl on doit leur donner à manger		CL2
47 a	uqa-ut-jau-laur-tugut dire-applicatif.bénéfactif-passif-passé-participial.1pl on nous a dit ceci	imaak comme.ceci	CL2
b	pulaarti-minut visiteur-allatif.3sg/3sg.réfléchi unikkaa-viu-tillugu raconter-passif.de.l'applicatif.locatif.bénéfactif-conjonctif.3sg pendant que son visiteur lui racontait quelque chose		CL2
48	sinit-turi-jau-gama dormir-penser-passif-contingent.1sg car on pensait que je dormais		CL1

L'intransitif appliqué à un premier changement de valence

L'intransitif s'applique également à toute opération qui rend transitive la forme de départ, sauf au transitif, dont il annulerait l'opération: causatif (**±tit-si-** ; /qu-ji- ; /jiaqaq-), applicatif (/g)ut-ji- ; +viquaq- ; /qatiquaq- ; /utiquaq-), 'dire', 'penser', 'attendre' et 'craindre' (+nira-i- ; +turi-tsi- ; +tsii- ; +niangnguuri-si-).

15. Un évaluateur anonyme de cet article demande des exemples agrammaticaux pour chaque combinaison impossible. L'espace imparti ne le permet malheureusement pas. L'assertion selon laquelle certaines combinaisons sont moins courantes que d'autres se fonde sur la fréquentation assidue, depuis environ 15 ans, de ce que les Nunavimmiut expriment spontanément à l'oral et à l'écrit dans leur langue.

49	kisiani mais mais je veux que [tu te] repose[s] bien	taqairsi-sia-qu-ji-junga se.reposer-bien- <u>causatif-intransitiver-participial</u> .1sg	CL1
50 a	uqa-ut-ji-pa-laur-tuq dire- <u>applicatif.bénéfactif-intransitiver-répétition-passé-participial</u> .3sg imaak comme.ceci il disait à [ces personnes] la chose suivante		CL2
b	irni-ranik fils-modalis.sg/1sg pingngua-qatiqa-langa-juq jouer- <u>intransitiver.de.l'applicatif.comitatif-futur-participial</u> .3pl elle va jouer avec mon fils		CL2
51	ikaju-langa-nira-i-juq aider-futur- <u>dire-intransitiver-participial</u> .3sg aulla-rasut-tiluta partir-essayer-conjonctif.1pl elle dit qu'il va nous aider à partir		CL2

Le causal appliqué à un premier changement de valence

Le causal s'applique à toute autre opération que le causal lui-même, bien que ces combinaisons ne soient pas courantes: passif (**±tau-(n)naq-**), intransitiver (**+si-naq-**, jamais ***-sun-naq-**), transitiver (**/gi-naq-**), causatif (**/qu-naq-** uniquement), applicatif (**/g)uti-naq-** uniquement), réciproque (**/g)uti-naq-**), médiopassif (**-Ø-naq-**), et 'penser' (**+turi-naq-**).

52	ulapi-tau-na-tuq déranger- <u>passif-causal</u> -participial.3sg c'est source de distraction (< c'est cause d'être dérangé)		CL3
53	inuuli-tsi-nar-tuq sauver- <u>intransitiver-causal</u> -participial.3sg c'est quelque chose qui [vous] sauve la vie		CL3
54	kappia-gi-nar-tuq avoir.peur- <u>transitiver-causal</u> -participial.3sg cela donne peur de lui/d'elle, cela fait en avoir peur		CL5
55	pi-qu-nar-tuq obtenir- <u>causatif-causal</u> -participial.3sg cela inspire la générosité (< cela pousse à vouloir qu'il/elle reçoive)		CL2
56	uqa-uti-nar-tuq dire- <u>applicatif.bénéfactif-causal</u> -participial.3sg cela pousse à lui dire (quelque chose)		CL2
57	avi-uti-nar-tuq renvoyer- <u>réciproque-causal</u> -participial.3sg cela pousse à se séparer (l'un de l'autre/les uns les autres)		CL3

- 58 **nirtu-nar-tuq** CL3
vanter.médiopassif-causal-participial.3sg
cela pousse à se vanter
- 59 **suli-juri-nar-tuq** CL1
être.vrai-penser-causal-participial.3sg
cela pousse à penser que c'est vrai

Le causatif appliqué à un premier changement de valence

Le causatif s'applique au passif (**±tau-tit-**, **±tau-qu-**), à l'intransitif (**+si-tit-**, **+si-qu-**, **/sut-tit-**, **/su-qu-**), au causal (**+nar-tit-**, **+na-qu-**), plus rarement à l'applicatif (**/(g)uti-tit-**, **/(g)uti-qu-**), au réciproque (**/uti-tit-**, **/uti-qu-**), au médiopassif (**-Ø-tit-**, **-Ø-qu-**), et à 'penser' (**+turi-tit-**, **+turi-qu-**). Le causatif est concevable mais très peu naturel sur le transitif.

- 60 **taku-jau-ti-tara** CL2
voir-passif-causatif-participial.1sg/3sg
je le fais voir (< je le fais être vu)
- 61 a **qaria-mik salumasa-i-qu-jara** CL3
pièce-modal.sg nettoyer-intransitif-causatif-participial.1sg/3sg
je veux qu'il nettoie la pièce
- b **quvia-sut-ti-sia-langa-vagit** CL5
être.heureux-intransitif-causatif-bien-futur-indicatif.1sg/2sg
je te rendrai heureuse
- 62 **tukisi-na-qu-tsugu** CL2
comprendre-causal-causatif-conjonctif.x/3sg
en voulant que ce soit compréhensible
- 63 **uqa-uti-ti-langa-jara** CL2
dire-applicatif-causatif-futur-participial.1sg/3sg
je lui ferai lui dire (quelque chose)
- 64 **nipi-uti-tip-pait** CL3
coller-réciproque-causatif-indicatif.1sg/3pl
il les fait coller ensemble
- 65 a **aarqi-tip-paa** CL3
réparer.médiopassif-causatif-indicatif.3sg/3sg
il a fait ce qu'il fallait pour que ce soit réparé (< il l'a fait être réparé)
- b **kati-ti-laur-magik** CL3
assembler.médiopassif-causatif-contingent.3sg/3du
il les a mariés (< il les a fait s'assembler)
- 66 **suli-juri-ti-langa-jara** CL1
être.vrai-penser-causatif-futur-participial.1sg/3sg
je lui ferai croire que c'est vrai
- 67 a **?*isuma-gi-qu-jara**¹⁶ CL4
penser-transitif-causatif-participial.1sg/3sg
(je veux qu'il y pense)

16. On dirait plutôt: **isuma-tsa-siu-qu-jara**.

- b ?***isuma-gi-ti-langa-jara**¹⁷ CL4
 penser–transitiver–causatif–futur–participial.1sg/3sg
 (je l’y ferai penser)

L’applicatif appliqué à un premier changement de valence

On trouve des applicatifs sur le passif (**±tau-qatigi-**; **±tau-gutigi-**), l’intransitif (**+si-vigi-**, /**suv-vigi-**; **+si-qatigi-**, /**su-qatigi-**; **+si-gutigi-**, /**su-utigi-**) et le transitif (/ **gi-qatigi-**, / **gi-utigi-**).

- 68 **apirsu-tau-qatigi-niar-tara** CL3
 interroger–passif–applicatif.comitatif–futur–participial.1sg/3sg
CBC-kku-nut
 CBC–gens.de–allatif.pl
 je vais être interviewé avec elle par CBC
- 69 a **atuar-si-vigi-langa-jara**¹⁸ CL3
 lire–intransitif–applicatif.locatif.bénéfactif–futur–participial.1pl/3sg
taakkuninga
 cela.modalis.pl
 je lui lirai cela
- b **tungnga-suv-vigi-tsia-takka** CL5
 se.sentir.à.l’aise–intransitif–applicatif.locatif.bénéfactif–bien–participial.1sg/3pl
 je me sens très à l’aise vis-à-vis d’eux
- c **ippi-gusu-qatigi-tsia-tara** CL5
 être.attentif–intransitif–applicatif.comitatif–bien–participial.1sg/3sg
 je suis très attentif avec lui
- d **upi-gusu-utigi-jara** CL5
 être.fier–intransitif–applicatif.instrumental–participial.1sg/3sg
 cela me rend fière, c’est quelque chose dont je suis fière
- 70 **ippi-gi-qatigi-tsia-tara** CL5
 être.attentif–transitif–applicatif.comitatif–bien–participial.1pl/3sg
 j’y suis très sensible avec lui

Pour des raisons sémantiques, on imagine mal un applicatif sur le causal, le causatif, le réciproque, le médiopassif, ‘dire’ et ‘penser’. De fait, ces combinaisons semblent exclues.

Le réciproque appliqué à un premier changement de valence

Le réciproque s’applique au transitif (/ **gi-uti-**), à ‘dire’ et à ‘penser’ (**+nira-uti-**, **+turi-uti-**).

- 71 **kama-gi-uti-tsia-suta** CL4
 s’occuper.de–transitif–réciproque–bien–conjonctif.1pl
 en nous occupant bien les uns des autres

17. On dirait plutôt: **isuma-tsa-siu-qu-langa-jara** (ou **isuma-tsa-siur-ti-langa-jara**).

18. Le bénéfactif est possible aussi: **atuar-si-gutji-langa-jara**.

- 72 **tamma-nira-uti-juuk** CL1
 se.tromper-dire-réciproque-participial.2du
 l'un dit de l'autre qu'il se trompe (< ils disent l'un de l'autre se tromper)

Le réciproque ne s'attache normalement qu'à des formes transitives, à une exception près : il apparaît sur l'intransitif de certaines bases de la cinquième classe.

- 73 a **nalli-gusu-uti-jut** CL5
 aimer-intransitif-réciproque-participial.3pl
 ils s'aiment les uns les autres
- b **uumi-su-uti-jut** CL5
 détester-intransitif-réciproque-participial.3pl
 ils se détestent les uns les autres

Le médiopassif appliqué à un premier changement de valence

Comme le passif, le médiopassif s'applique à toute opération qui rend transitive la forme verbale de départ : transitif (**/gi-Ø-**), causatif (**±tit-Ø-** uniquement), applicatif bénéfactif (**/(g)ut(i)-Ø-**), 'dire' et 'penser' (**+niraq-Ø-**, **+turi-Ø-**).

- 74 **malu-gi-juq** CL5
 douter.de.la.valeur-transitif.médiopassif-participial.3sg
 il doute de sa propre valeur
- 75 **nallinir-mut** **inuu-tip-puq** CL1
 amour-allatif.sg être.homme-causatif.médiopassif-indicatif.3sg
 Il se fit homme par amour
- 76 **napaartulim-mut** **tiki-uti-tsuta** CL2
 forêt-allatif.sg atteindre-applicatif.bénéfactif.médiopassif-conjonctif.1pl
 en nous rendant jusqu'à la forêt
- 77 **qanui-ngngi-nirar-tuq** CL1
 aller.mal-ne.pas-dire.médiopassif-participial.3sg
 il dit qu'il va bien (< il se dit ne pas aller mal)

'dire' et 'penser' appliqués à un premier changement de valence

Les postbases **+niraq-** 'dire' et **+turi-** 'penser' peuvent s'appliquer à toute autre opération, sauf le causatif.


- 78 **qimat-tau-nirar-sugit** CL3
 laisser.derrière soi-passif-dire-conjonctif.x/3pl
 disant (d'autres personnes) qu'elles avaient été abandonnées
- 79 **qimmi-ngannik** **piti-nni-nirar-sugu** CL3
 chien-absolutif.sg/3pl tuer.à.l'arc-intransitif-dire-conjonctif.x/3sg
 [sa mère] disant qu'il avait tué leur chien

80	kappia-gi-juri-jara avoir.peur- <u>transitiver-penser-participial</u> .1sg/3sg je crois qu'il en a peur	CL5
81	kappia-nar-turi-jara avoir.peur- <u>causal-penser-participial</u> .1sg/3sg je pense que cela fait peur	CL5
82 a	*uti-qu-nirar-sugu revenir- <u>causatif-dire-conjonctif</u> .x/3sg	CL1
b	*pisut-ti-turi-jara marcher- <u>causatif-penser-participial</u> .1sg/3sg	CL1
83	uqa-uti-juri-jara dire- <u>applicatif.bénéfactif-penser-participial</u> .1sg/3sg je pense qu'elle lui a dit	CL2
84	avi-uti-juri-jaakka renvoyer- <u>réciroque-penser-participial</u> .1sg/3du je pense qu'ils se séparent (l'un de l'autre)	CL3
85	atur-sima-juri-jara utiliser. <u>médiopassif-statif-penser-participial</u> .1sg/3sg je pense que cela a été utilisé	CL2

Synthèse

Compte tenu des propriétés de chaque changement de valence, les incompatibilités non prédictibles sont seulement : le causatif du transitiver ; l'applicatif du causal, du causatif, du réciroque, du médiopassif, de 'dire' et de 'penser' ; 'dire' et 'penser' du causatif.

Tableau 2. Changements de valence combinés.

	du passif	de l'intransitiver	du transitiver	du causal	du causatif	de l'applicatif	du réciroque	du médiopassif	de dire, penser...
Passif	-	-	+	-	+	+	-	-	+
Intransitiver	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	+
Causal	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+
Causatif	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+
Applicatif	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Réciroque	-	(+)	+	-	-	-	-	-	+
Médiopassif	-	-	+	-	+	+	-	-	+
Dire, penser...	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-

Triple changement de valence

Un changement de valence verbale peut tout à fait s'appliquer à deux autres, comme dans l'exemple cité en introduction, où l'intransitif s'applique au causatif du passif (**±tau-tit-si**). Du troisième au deuxième changement, on retrouve les mêmes impossibilités que du deuxième au premier (voir la *Synthèse* qui précède). La troisième opération est souvent le passif ou l'intransitif, mais il peut s'agir occasionnellement du causal, du causatif, de l'applicatif, du médiopassif, de 'dire' ou de 'penser'.

Le passif appliqué à deux changements de valence

On trouve assez souvent le passif du causatif d'une autre opération, dont le passif, et plus rarement le passif de 'dire' ou de 'penser' d'une autre opération.

- | | | | |
|----|---|--|-----|
| 86 | uvilu-it
moule-absolutif.pl | qanima-ju-nut
être.malade-un.qui-allatif.pl | |
| | niri-jau-ti-tau-suungu-mmi-jut
manger-passif-causatif-passif-habituellement-aussi-participial.3pl
on a aussi l'habitude de faire manger des moules aux malades | | CL2 |
| 87 | maanna
maintenant | ai-tsi-qu-jau-jut
aller.chercher-intransitif-causatif-passif-participial.3pl | CL3 |
| | niqi-tsa-minik
viande-futur-modal. pl/3pl.réfléchi
ils sont maintenant invités à aller chercher leur [part de] viande | | |
| 88 | tukisi-nar-ti-tau-sima-mmat
comprendre-causal-causatif-passif-statif-contingent.3sg
parce que cela été rendu compréhensible | | CL2 |
| 89 | uima-nar-turi-jau-ppat
agir.en.hâte-causal-penser-passif-conditionnel.3sg
si l'on pense que c'est urgent | | CL1 |

L'intransitif appliqué à deux changements de valence

On trouve assez souvent l'intransitif du causatif d'une autre opération, dont l'intransitif, et plus rarement le passif de 'dire' ou de 'penser' d'une autre opération.

- | | | | |
|----|--|---|-----|
| 90 | illu-nik
maison-modal. pl | sana-jau-qu-ji-tsuta
construire-passif-causatif-intransitif-conjonctif.1pl
voulant que des maisons soient construites | CL2 |
| 91 | qaritauja-ranik
ordinateur-modal. sg/1sg | siqumi-jiaqa-lau-rama
casser.médiopassif-intransitif.du.causatif-passé-contingent.1sg
j'ai cassé (< j'ai involontairement fait se casser) mon ordinateur | CL3 |

- 92 **ataata-ga sanangngua-rii-rami**
père-absolutif.sg/1sg sculpter-finir.de-contingent.3sg.réfléchi
qillasa-i-tit-si-qatta-sima-juq CL3
polir-intransitif-causatif-intransitif-répétition-statif-participial.3sg
uvannik
moi.modalis.sg
quand mon père avait fini de sculpter [une pierre], il me [la] faisait polir
- 93 **ilisarvi-mik tungnga-nar-ti-si-tsutik** CL5
école-modalis.sg se.sentir.à.l'aise-causal-causatif-intransitif-conjonctif.3pl
[les enseignants] rendant l'école accueillante
- 94 **sivulirti-mik apiri-jau-juri-tsi-kainna-rama** CL2
maire-modalis.sg interroger-passif-penser-intransitif-passé-contingent.1sg
je pensais que le maire avait été interrogé

Autres combinaisons de trois changements de valence

Rarement, le causal s'applique au passif du transitif :

- 95 **nika-gi-jau-nna-tu-t** CL5
avoir.pitié-transitif-passif-causal-nominalisation.active-absolutif.pl
[des mots] causes d'être pris en pitié

Le causatif s'applique notamment au passif du causatif, au passif du transitif, plus rarement à l'intransitif du causatif :

- 96 **suli-ti-tau-qu-jakka** CL1
être.vrai-causatif-passif-causatif-participial.1sg/3pl
je veux que [ces mots] deviennent réalité (< je veux qu'ils soient rendus vrais)
- 97 **kama-gi-jau-qu-jara** CL4
s'occuper.de-transitif-passif-causatif-participial.1sg/3sg
je veux qu'on s'en occupe
- 98 **pi-taar-ti-si-tip-paa** CL2
chose-recevoir-causatif-intransitif-causatif-indicatif.3sg/3sg
il lui fait remettre quelque chose [à quelqu'un] (< il lui fait faire recevoir quelque chose)

Un applicatif peut aussi se combiner avec l'intransitif du causatif :

- 99 **ilinnia-tit-si-gutigi-lugit** CL2
étudier-causatif-intransitif-applicatif.instrumental-conjonctif.x/3pl
en les utilisant pour enseigner (< en les ayant pour moyen de faire étudier)

Le médiopassif s'applique notamment au causatif du passif, à 'dire' ou 'penser' du passif :

- 100 **patti-tau-ti-giartu-sutik** CL3
baptiser-passif-causatif.médiopassif-aller-conjonctif.3pl
allant se faire baptiser (< allant se faire être baptisés)
- 101 **qimat-tau-nirar-sutik** CL3
laisser.derrière soi-passif-dire.médiopassif-conjonctif.3pl
disant (d'eux-mêmes) qu'on les avait abandonnés

Enfin, ‘dire’ et ‘penser’ s’appliquent notamment au passif du transitif, au passif du causatif, et à l’intransitif du causatif :

- 102 **kama-gi-jau-nirar-sugit** CL4
 s’occuper.de–transitif–passif–dire–conjonctif.x/3pl
 disant (d’autres personnes) qu’on s’occupait d’elles
- 103 **ani-ti-tau-nirar-sugu** CL1
 sortir–causatif–passif–dire–conjonctif.x/3sg
 disant (d’une autre personne) qu’on l’avait fait sortir
- 104 a **imar-mik** **kuvi-tit-si-juri-jara** CL1
 eau–modalis.pl couler–causatif–intransitif–penser–participial.1sg/3pl
 je pense qu’il fait couler l’eau
- b **qallunaa-nik** **ilinnia-tit-si-juri-jara** CL2
 Blanc–modalis.pl étudiant–causatif–intransitif–penser–participial.1sg/3pl
 je crois qu’elle enseigne aux Blancs

Au-delà de trois changements de valence

Il arrive que quatre changements de valence interviennent dans le même verbe. Ce cas de figure est rare, mais les impossibilités mises à jour précédemment restent les mêmes. Nous nous limiterons ici à citer quelques exemples relevés au fil de nos recherches :

- 105 **quvia-sut-ti-si-juri-jara** CL5
 être.heureux–intransitif–causatif–intransitif–penser–attributif.1sg/3sg
Suusi-mik
 Suusi–modalis.sg
 je pense qu’il rend Suusi heureuse
- 106 **kavama-i-guuq** **tuttu-nik**
 gouvernant–absolutif.pl–dit.on caribou–modalis.pl
kama-gi-jau-qu-ji-gunnai-mata CL4
 s’occuper.de–transitif–passif–causatif–intransitif–ne.plus–contingent.3pl
ukiu-nik **tallima-nik**
 année–modalis.pl cinq.unités–modalis.pl
 les gens du gouvernement, disait-on, ne voulaient plus que les caribous soient chassés pendant cinq ans
- 107 **pingasu-ngngu-pat**
 trois.unités–devenir–conditionnel.3sg
ai-qu-jau-nirar-suni CL1
 aller–causatif–passif–dire.médiopassif–contingent.3sg
 disant qu’on lui demandait d’y aller (< se disant être priée d’y aller) à trois heures
- 108 **tukisi-nar-ti-tau-qu-gajar-tara=li** CL2
 comprendre–causal–causatif–passif–causatif–irréel–participial.1sg/3sg=mais
 mais j’aimerais que ce soit clarifié (< rendu compréhensible)

On peut trouver jusqu'à cinq changements de valence dans le même verbe. Il semble que cette limite ne puisse pas être dépassée en pratique :

- 109 **iirqaga-it** **puvallunir-mik** CL3
 pilule-absolutif.pl tuberculose-modalis.sg
nungu-tit-si-juri-jau-laur-mata
 finir.médiopassif-causatif-intransitiveur-penser-passif-passé-contingent.3pl
 on pensait que les pilules étaient venues à bout de la tuberculose
 (< avaient fait se finir la tuberculose)

Conclusion

L'inuktitut emploie couramment de nombreuses combinaisons de changements de valence sur les bases verbales. Ces données sont largement absentes de la recherche linguistique fondée sur l'élicitation. Le classement proposé ici à la suite de Lucien Schneider permet de mieux cerner ce qui est possible et ce qui ne l'est pas. On peut probablement construire des explications formelles pour les incompatibilités non prédites par ce classement (hormis les incompatibilités sémantiques). Il faut aussi tenir compte de la norme d'usage des locuteurs, qui opère une sélection parmi les potentialités du système grammatical. Ainsi, une locutrice juge négativement 110a, contrairement à 110b. Mais 110a, produit spontanément par une autre locutrice, fait partie des potentialités du système :

- 110 a **tuni-si-vigi-giaqa-lir-tavut** CL3
 offrir-intransitiveur-applicatif.locatif.bénéfactif-locatif.bénéfactif-devoir-inchoatif-participial.1pl/3pl
 nous devons maintenant leur offrir [cela]
- b **tuni-giaqa-lir-tavut** CL3
 offrir-devoir-inchoatif-participial.1pl/3pl
 nous devons maintenant leur offrir [cela]

Remerciements

Je remercie mes collègues inuit à Kativik Ilisarniliriniq, en particulier Tukirqi Pilurtoot, pour nos nombreux échanges à propos des données en

The Parent-Child Relationship and Child Development in the Context of Historical and Complex Traumas: Perceptions of the Inuit Community of Kangiqsualujjuaq

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ABSTRACT

In the community of Kangiqsualujjuaq, as elsewhere in Nunavik, the socioeconomic conditions in which Inuit families live are much more difficult than those in the rest of Canada. These conditions are a symptom of a colonial past that has resulted in many historical and complex traumas. In a traumatic context, mentalization capacity, which refers to the ability to interpret one's own behaviours and those of others in terms of underlying mental states, can have a protective effect on the individual. The present exploratory action research aimed to document the perceptions of members of this Inuit community regarding the particularities of the parent-child relationship. Two focus groups were conducted with community members, counsellors, and elders. A thematic analysis was done from the collected verbatims and guided by a phenomenological perspective. Factors extracted from the results were associated with well-being and suffering in the parent-child relationship and placed on a continuum. Openness and transmission were associated with well-being, while closure and a breakdown in communication were linked to suffering. Finally, this study highlights the relevance of focusing on mentalization among Inuit.

KEYWORDS

Inuit, parent-child relationship, historical and complex trauma, mentalization, phenomenology

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RÉSUMÉ

La relation parent-enfant et le développement de l'enfant dans un contexte de traumatismes historiques et complexes : perceptions de la communauté inuite de Kangiqsualujuaq

Dans la communauté de Kangiqsualujuaq, comme ailleurs au Nunavik, les conditions socioéconomiques dans lesquelles vivent les familles inuit sont beaucoup plus difficiles que celles du reste du Canada. Ces conditions sont le symptôme d'un passé colonial ayant engendré de nombreux traumatismes historiques et complexes. Dans un contexte traumatique, la capacité de mentalisation – c'est-à-dire la capacité à interpréter ses propres comportements et ceux des autres en fonction d'états mentaux sous-jacents – peut avoir un effet protecteur pour l'individu. La présente recherche-action exploratoire visait à documenter les perceptions des membres de cette communauté inuite concernant les particularités de la relation parent-enfant. Deux groupes de discussion ont été menés avec des membres de la communauté, des intervenants et des aînés. Une analyse thématique a été réalisée à partir des verbatims recueillis et a été guidée par une approche phénoménologique. Les résultats mettent de l'avant des facteurs associés au bien-être et à la souffrance dans la relation parent-enfant, s'inscrivant sur un continuum. L'ouverture et la transmission étaient associées au bien-être, tandis que la fermeture et la rupture de la communication étaient liées à la souffrance. Enfin, cette étude souligne la pertinence de l'utilisation du concept de mentalisation auprès des communautés inuit.

MOTS-CLÉS

Inuit, relation parent-enfant, traumatisme historique et complexe, mentalisation, phénoménologie

Nunavik is a region in Northern Québec where Inuit are settled in fourteen villages along the coast. Since the 1960s, the provincial government's acculturation policies have brought about drastic changes to the Inuit way of life, including residential schools, the slaughter of sled dogs, and the imposition of a sedentary lifestyle. These changes have had a significant impact on both individuals and families. Inuit families' current social and health conditions are significantly lower than those in the rest of the province or even the country. High suicide rates, substance abuse, domestic violence, overcrowded homes, and over-representation of children in the child welfare system are just a few examples (Levesque, Rassy, and Genest 2022; Riva et al. 2020). However, these problems represent only the tip of the iceberg: symptoms resulting from the loss of a strong and coherent sense of identity and a breakdown in the transmission of parental practices and traditional know-how. The traumas experienced by Inuit as a result of historical events associated with colonialism are therefore passed on from

generation to generation, today affecting individuals, families, and entire communities (Evans-Campbell 2008). Current government policies also contribute to maintaining a colonial position and thus perpetuate the impacts of historical trauma for Inuit.

Located on Ungava Bay, Kangiqsualujjuaq is the easternmost Inuit village in Nunavik. Meaning *The Very Large Bay* in Inuktitut, its approximately 1,000 inhabitants live on the banks of the George River (hence its former name). Intending to one day replace the current youth protection system and following regional and local consultations, the village of Kangiqsualujjuaq created the Qarmaapik Family House, literally and symbolically located in the heart of the community. Its objective is to help families, both from a prevention perspective and through a crisis intervention program (Emudluk 2017). However, those who work in this field face many challenges in their practice. In particular, it can be argued that because they grew up in the context described above, their ways of intervening are probably strongly influenced by historical trauma, which makes their interventions with families symptomatic of that trauma.

Mentalization refers to an individual's ability to interpret their own and others' behaviours based on underlying mental states (Allen, Fonagy, and Bateman 2008). This ability, which occurs within the attachment relationship, has great evolutionary value, as it allows for the acquisition of self-regulation, individuation, and a more complex, symbolized interpretation of the world, thus decreasing the need for recourse to actions. In a traumatic relational environment—particularly in a broader context of historical trauma—the value of this capacity is strongly affected. Psychosocial interventions aimed at developing mentalization thus take on their whole meaning in a perspective of protection against the intergenerational transmission of trauma.

In this light, this action research proposes a phenomenological stance: Researchers attempted to suspend their presuppositions to collect individuals' subjective perceptions regarding the phenomenon of historical trauma, its influence on children's development, and the interventions aimed at supporting families in difficulty. We therefore take an exploratory approach to better understand the perspective of the Kangiqsualujjuaq community by focusing not on individual traumatic experiences but rather on collective viewpoints and cultural interpretations.

The article explores the historical and social context of Kangiqsualujjuaq, examines intergenerational and complex trauma, and highlights mentalization as a protective factor. It outlines the research objectives, methodology, and key themes from the analysis. Finally, it examines how strengthening mentalization can mitigate the psychological challenges described in parent-child relationships in the community. Limitations of this study and future research directions are also discussed.

Theoretical Background

Historical Overview

Kangiḡsualujjuaq was established as a small community around the first Nunavik cooperative founded by Inuit in the early 1960s and was officially recognized as a municipality in 1980 (Emudluk 2017). Although the history of this village is recent, that of its inhabitants, 95% Inuit, is far from being so (Statistique Canada 2017). Inuit traditionally had a nomadic lifestyle, following the movements of the herds and the rhythm of the seasons. In the second half of the 19th century, European colonization intensified logging activities in central northern Québec, impacting the game population. Contact with *Qallunaat*¹ was limited to a few missionaries and traders from the Hudson's Bay Company trading posts and stores. Although the way of life remained mainly nomadic, some villages were created around fur trading posts (Commission of Inquiry into Relations between Indigenous People and Certain Public Services 2019). As communities became increasingly organized around these trading posts, along with declining animal populations and the economic depression following the First World War, issues never before experienced by Inuit (e.g., famine and major epidemics) befell them (Igloliorte 2011).

As early as the 1830s, in southern Canada, Catholic and Protestant missionaries opened boarding schools with the stated goal of assimilation. Children were thus sent away for the ten months of the school year at great distances from their community. In these boarding schools, several practices inculcated a sense of inferiority and isolation, such as the numbers assigned to boarders and the separation of siblings (Igloliorte 2011). Victims of residential schools have widely denounced the psychological or physical violence and the sexual abuse occurring. The severing of family ties led to a loss of meaning for the parents, who were powerless. These children therefore internalized a sense of shame about their cultural roots, often rejecting their identity and seeing themselves as being superior to their parents. Inuit youth were also brought into residential schools later, beginning in the 1960s, as a new federal education system was introduced to the northern territories. Although the residential schools in Nunavik were closer to the communities, communication was still non-existent, and the *modus operandi* remained similar to that of the former residential schools (Igloliorte 2011).

Then, in the 1950s–1960s, due to the construction of several schools and the obligation to attend them, a rapid increase in sedentarization began, coupled with the number of sled dogs in the villages. It is in this context that

1. In Inuktitut, refers to people who are not Inuit.

the federal and provincial police authorities slaughtered more than a thousand dogs under the pretext that they represented a danger if they were not tied up (Lévesque 2010). For thousands of years, these dogs² were necessary for the survival of Inuit, enabling them to move around the territory and hunt. The Inuit way of life, autonomy, identity, and culture were once again undermined in history (Lévesque 2010).

A second wave of mass removal of children from their families occurred in the 1960s when the provincial government claimed the administration of Nunavik and uniformly extended child welfare regulations—with no cultural consideration for Inuit and First Nations. It is estimated that over 11,000 Indigenous children were placed in the care of other families in Canada, the United States, and Europe between 1960 and 1990. These years marked only the beginning of the over-representation of Indigenous children in the child welfare system (Commission of Inquiry into Relationships between Indigenous People and Certain Public Services 2019).

Finally, in the 1970s, the development of the hydroelectricity network in James Bay led several First Nations and Inuit communities to leave their territory, as their historical occupation had not been recognized (Commission of Inquiry into Relations between Indigenous People and Certain Public Services 2019). The first half of the 20th century thus brought forth a context of extremely rapid social change for Inuit within only a few decades (Igloliorte 2011).

This historical overview highlights hundreds of years of assimilation policies for Indigenous peoples, leading to a historical accumulation of experiences of oppression, which has definitely—and dramatically—impacted these populations. Indeed, these assimilation policies for Inuit peoples in Québec have not been without consequences on Inuit communities and individual identity, not to mention mental health. A report on socioeconomic inequalities affecting Indigenous peoples in Québec (Posca 2018) compared various indicators among First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and non-Indigenous populations. Among Inuit, the findings revealed lower education levels, a lower median after-tax income, overcrowded housing, a higher prevalence of reported chronic illnesses, significant food insecurity, and alarming rates of infant mortality and suicide. The rate of violent victimization was also significantly higher among Indigenous peoples overall. In their work, Kirmayer and Paul (2007) focus on the mental health of Inuit in Nunavik, highlighting that psychological distress is generally higher among young people, women, and individuals with lower incomes.

2. Dogs are given a particular social status in the Inuit culture as they are the only animals considered to have a soul.

Trauma: Past and Present

Psychological trauma occurs when the intensity of a life event exceeds the subject's ability to respond adequately, resulting in lasting pathogenic effects on the psyche (Laplanche and Pontalis 1997). In other words, an external or internal event can become traumatogenic when it exceeds the capacity of the self to make sense of it. When meaning cannot be attributed to sometimes senseless events, the painful feelings linked to them become fixed and knotted within the unconscious. Trauma then resides in the intrusion of the past into the present. From an individual point of view, for example, this can take the form of painful memories, flashbacks, nightmares, or even hallucinations. To cope with trauma, it is necessary to separate the past from the present and master both the painful emotions and the defence mechanisms erected against them (Allen 2005). In this article, two categories of trauma are evidenced: historical trauma and contemporary trauma. Historical traumas precede the individual who feels their psychological impact (Gameon and Skewes 2021), while contemporary traumas are traceable within the individual's life history.

Historical trauma (HT) refers to the psychic effects experienced by descendants of historically oppressed groups in response to the intergenerational transmission of trauma experienced by their ancestors (Evans-Campbell 2008; Brave Heart 1998, 2003). In other words, the devastating effects of traumatic events are also felt by those who did not directly experience the traumatic events. Because of the immense emotional burden and unacceptability of these traumas, they have become unspeakable and have more often been kept quiet by the generation who experienced them. As a result, they have also become unspeakable for the following generations who bear the stigma. The impacts of these traumas therefore appear as ghosts from the past who come back to haunt the individuals who find themselves powerless in the face of an evil that is felt but not seen (Fraiberg, Adelson, and Shapiro 1975). Consequently, these effects are transmitted from generation to generation and extend beyond the individual and the family to the community (Gone 2013).

Colonization not only perpetuates adverse conditions for Inuit families such as poverty, overcrowded housing, reduced access to education, loss of identity, and coping strategies, but makes Inuit communities more vulnerable to trauma. Indeed, in addition to the racism and discrimination that are perpetuated by social institutions that sometimes adopt colonialist attitudes (Bryant-Davis 2007), Inuit are at high risk of experiencing contemporary trauma in their communities (e.g., family violence, physical or sexual abuse, substance abuse, and addiction). Although these traumas are easier to describe in time, they are not necessarily easier to deal with psychologically. In fact, they are often part of the definition of complex traumas. Kirmayer,

Gone, and Mose (2014) emphasize the importance of considering the historical post-traumatic context when examining the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and how the lack of recognition of past oppression, combined with ongoing structural violence, continues to contribute to present-day suffering.

Herman (1992) describes complex trauma as the psychological traumas that result from a chronic, repetitive, and prolonged submission of a group or an individual to a totalitarian control that is experienced in a subjectively intense way. For the author, the totalitarian system can be as much political (e.g., prisoners of war, concentration camp survivors, or specific religious sects) as it can be domestic or sexual in nature (e.g., domestic violence, physical or sexual abuse during childhood). Complex traumas are therefore distinguished by the captivity of the victim: The person has no means of escaping the traumatic situation, hence the chronicity and repetitiveness of the psychological violence suffered (Tarquinio, Houllé, and Tarquinio 2017). Therefore, the symptoms of complex trauma are more lasting and multiple than are those of simple trauma (Herman 1992; Terr 1990).

As Aguiar and Halseth (2015) argue, it is necessary that we consider the link between historical and contemporary trauma and adopt approaches that are not based on individual symptoms and are responsive to the historical and social context. Thus, we will use the term intergenerational and complex trauma (ICT) to reflect the cumulative effect of these traumas. Some authors have identified mentalization capacity as a protective factor that enables individuals to understand and appropriate their traumatic experience to minimize subsequent effects (see, for example, Ensink et al. 2017). However, it is often impaired in the context of ICT.

Mentalization Capacity and Its Development

Mentalization capacity refers to the mental processes that enable individuals to make sense of their actions and those of others by perceiving and interpreting the mental states that underlie these behaviours (i.e., beliefs, intentions, feelings, desires, and thoughts; Allen, Fonagy, and Bateman 2008; Fonagy et al. 2002). According to Bouchard et al. (2008), mentalizing capacity facilitates emotional regulation, particularly disruptive feelings, by notably providing a symbolic buffer between the other person's behaviour and its impact on the individual's mind. Indeed, when mental states are attributed to others, their behaviour becomes decodable and predictable (Fonagy and Target 1997). Mentalizing capacity also allows for a self-reflective attitude by facilitating narrative coherence and the meaning of mental constructions about internalized interactions (Bouchard et al. 2008). In summary, mentalizing capacity makes it possible to grasp the meaning of one's own behaviours as well as those of others.

In a traumatic context, mentalization is an essential protective factor (Berthelot, Ensink, and Normandin 2014). Indeed, according to Fonagy and colleagues (1994), mentalizing capacity in childhood is associated with resilience to interpersonal stressors in the family sphere. This can be explained by the effectiveness of thinking in terms of mental states, which can reduce defensive behaviours and promote a coherent sense of identity (*ibid.*, 1994). Therefore, mentalizing capacity is an essential faculty in high-potential traumatic contexts (Cicchetti 1990).

According to Bretherton and colleagues (1979), a harmonious mother-child relationship contributes to the emergence of the child's symbolic thinking. In fact, mentalizing capacity is said to develop substantially in the child's early relationships with their primary caregivers. Fonagy and Target (1997) suggest that a parent can support the development of a child's mentalizing capacity by behaving in such a way that enables the child to see that they have thoughts and feelings that determine their actions and the reactions of others to them, which can then be generalized to others. In doing so, the parent recognizes the child's ability to think about the meaning of the signals they are sending, while also recognizing the intentional nature of this communication (Fonagy et al. 2002). This genesis of the child's mentalizing capacity within the parent-child relationship is facilitated by three types of interactions (Fonagy and Target 1997), namely, play (especially pretend play), language, and peer group interactions.

Given that mentalizing capacity is developed within the parent-child relationship and that the parameters of this relationship are culturally dependent, it is reasonable to believe that the factors determining the development of this ability may vary from one ethnic group to another, as mentalization develops through verbal and non-verbal processes (Gagné, Lemelin, and Tarabulsy 2021).

Mentalization has been explored in another Aboriginal context in Québec (Robert 2021) through a study conducted in the Mohawk community of Kahnawake. The Circle of Security Parenting program, an eight-week group intervention designed to strengthen parental mentalizing capacity, was implemented. According to the researcher, its approach—centered on community spirit, connection to the environment, and resilience—aligned well with the community's values. Three case studies evaluated its impact on the development of mentalization in preschool-aged children, highlighting increased security in the parent-child relationship, which is essential for the transmission of mentalization, as well as the emergence of early mentalizing skills in children. While interesting, this research is not completely transferable to Inuit, who are another people with a distinct culture.

The Inuit Perception of Child Development

According to Briggs' work with the Nunavumiut (1998), the Inuit perception of child development differs significantly from that of Western models that often emphasize formal education and direct parental supervision. Rather, Inuit education uses a holistic approach to child development, fostering emotional regulation, social awareness, practical survival skills, and moral responsibility to ensure integration within the community (Rahm et al. 2024).

Firstly, Inuit children learn through observation and participation; they have a great deal of freedom to explore their environment and interact with those close to them. Adults do not systematically intervene to correct or direct their actions but use social scenarios to make them understand the consequences of their behaviour. Again, according to Briggs (1998), dramatic interactions are very important in children's emotional learning. Adults frequently ask shocking questions designed to stimulate reflection in children, such as: "Why don't you kill your baby brother?" (ibid., 1998, 5). These questions aim to help reflect on essential values such as love, attachment, and social responsibility. Secondly, in Inuit culture, it is common for adults to simulate situations to help develop emotional regulation. While these moments may provoke reactions of sadness or incomprehension in the child, the goal is to teach them not to overreact to negative emotions. Inuit children must understand that emotions are unstable and they must not allow themselves to be dominated by them. This mastery of feelings is essential in an environment where cooperation and social cohesion are necessary for survival. Similarly, children are encouraged to not overtly express emotions, such as frustration or jealousy, but rather find subtle ways to manage them (ibid., 1998). Thirdly, unlike Western educational practices, which are often based on punishments and rewards, Inuit favour more subtle methods. When children misbehave, they are not punished directly; they are told a story or asked questions to make them think about their behaviour (Rahm 2024). Stories and legends also play a fundamental role in Inuit education. Fourthly, Inuit children are encouraged to make decisions for themselves from an early age. Strict rules are not imposed on them, but they are left to manage the consequences of their choices. This autonomy enables them to quickly become competent and independent (Briggs 1998).

Inuit child development is therefore based on principles that are profoundly different from those of Western societies. Rather than imposing rules or directly explaining what is right or wrong, Inuit adults use educational strategies based on play, ambiguity, and emotional experimentation.

Research Objectives

This research documented the cultural particularities of the parent-child relationship among Inuit to reflect on the parameters of the development of mentalization capacity in their children. Specifically, we sought to gather the perceptions of the members of the community of Kangiqsualujjuaq on the indicators of children's and parents' well-being and the main difficulties parents encounter in their relationships with their children.

The study is part of an ongoing partnership project aimed at developing, co-constructing, and implementing various culturally adapted interventions focused on updating the mentalizing capacity of Nunavik counsellors to help children and parents in their community who have experienced ICT.

Method

Context of the Study and Positioning of the Researchers

In line with the research questions, this project was based on a qualitative approach to understand the complexity of the study theme. The project was also based on participatory action research, as its implementation was rooted in a need expressed by Kangiqsualujjuaq counsellors to a clinical psychologist practicing in the community who created a partnership with a scientific research team to combine experiential and theoretical knowledge. Moreover, the iterative process of the project (see Fig. 1) adapted to the reality of the community and the objective of co-construction of culturally adapted training were central to both the research and the reflection process. One of the authors of this article, who is also coordinator of Qarmaapik Family House and a member of the Kangiqsualujjuaq community, guided the research team through every stage of the process. Together with the chosen specifications, we used a constructivist paradigm postulating a reality constructed from the interactions between those involved in a phenomenon and how they represent and interpret it (Tracy 2014). Because the researchers were interested in the perceptions and experiences of the members of the community of Kangiqsualujjuaq regarding parent-child relationships, a phenomenological perspective guided this study to bring out a sense of the subjective experience of the people concerned by the phenomenon under study (Paillé and Mucchielli 2016; Stolorow 2011). Although difficult to avoid, the researchers tried to remain aware of the influences of their own theoretical, clinical, and cultural referents of parent-child relationships throughout the research project, while acknowledging that some biases of which they were unaware may have influenced the study's approach.

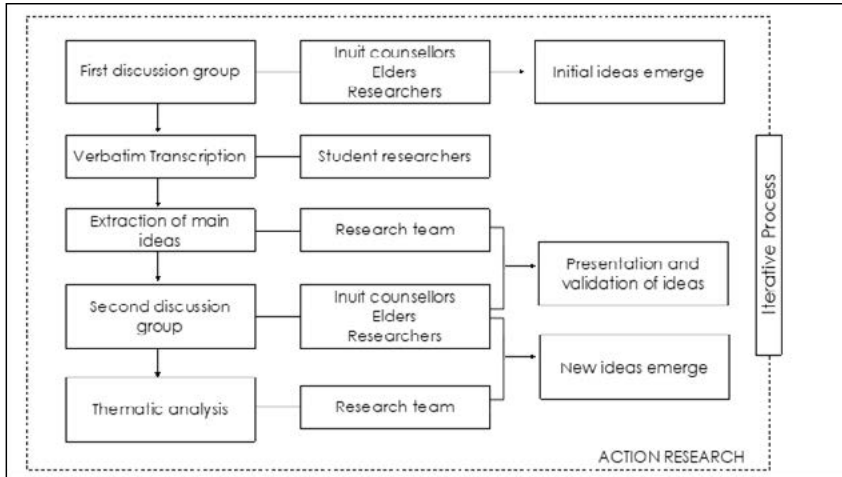


Figure 1. Illustration of the research method used.

Participants and Data Collection

The data collection took place in May 2021. We proceeded with a sampling of volunteers whose only selection criteria were that they be Inuit and be part of the community of Kangiqsualujjuaq. A local counsellor spread the recruitment announcement by word of mouth. A semi-structured focus group was first held with eleven people from the community and the research team. The included community members were mainly counsellors from Qarmaapik Family House, school counsellors, and elders from the community. A total of six people spoke, while the others tended to act as observers. The focus group was conducted in both Inuktitut and English, thus making it possible for participants to express themselves in the language of their choice. The coordinator of Qarmaapik Family House volunteered to translate between Inuktitut and English.

Following the presentation of the project, the objectives, the stages of implementation, and the advantages and disadvantages of participation, the participants gave their free and informed verbal consent. The verbal method of collecting consent was chosen because it is the preferred mode of communication in the community. The focus group addressed perceptions of children's development and family well-being as well as the difficulties parents are likely to encounter in their relationship with their children. Several possible follow-up themes were considered, including observations related to well-being, parent-child play and sharing, manifestations of suffering, worrisome family situations requiring intervention, and community responses to interventions. At the end of the focus group, the participants

were invited to return to provide feedback on the discussions. The interventions during the focus group were transcribed verbatim and the research team attempted to draw out the main ideas, which were then validated and nuanced by an influential member of the Inuit community.

A second focus group was held eight days later involving nine people, including, again, Inuit counsellors from the Qarmaapik Family House, the school community, and elders, some of whom had also participated in the first focus group. The objective was to share the main ideas that emerged from the first focus group and thus clarify and validate the researchers' understanding. At the end of this group, three Inuit counsellors from Qarmaapik Family House and the school community who were highly interested in the discussed themes continued the discussions, which also became part of the data set. These interviews were also transcribed verbatim.

In addition, participant observations were carried out in the community, notably in a socio-historical awareness activity at Qarmaapik Family House and the school with both Inuit and *Qallunaat* participants. Several informal interviews were also conducted with influential members of the community, including from the school community and Qarmaapik Family House.

The coordinator of Qarmaapik Family House and an influential member of the Inuit community also contributed to this article by reviewing the manuscript and ensuring that the facts reported were culturally accurate.

Analysis Method

The method of analysis used was the thematic analysis of Paillé and Mucchielli (2016), as its goal is to describe a phenomenon rather than an interpretation. This methodological choice appeared consistent with the constructivist paradigm and the goal of documenting and describing participants' perceptions. The description stage allowed for a better understanding of the issues related to the reality of the participants before moving on to the interpretation stage. Thematic analysis also allowed for the observation and dialogue of different points of view as well as differences of opinion and paradoxes surrounding the interpretation of parent-child relationships. Following several re-readings of the corpus data, themes were identified by the two student researchers on the team. A list of themes was then developed. The entire team then met to discuss the theme statement, which was adjusted. Thereafter, the two student researchers grouped the themes and developed headings and subheadings using colour coding, working upwards from the themes to arrive at a schematic representation. In a subsequent meeting, the entire team adjusted the schematization. Thus, the approach was carried out according to an iterative process using inductive logic, with the development starting from the initial overviews, and modifications being made throughout the process.

Ethical Considerations

Partnerships between community members, including counsellors, elders, and other members of the Kangiqsualujjuaq community scene, as well as the clinical psychologist, expert researcher, and students of the research team, were necessarily influenced by power relationships that were intertwined in the historical, social, cultural, political, and economic context. For this reason, the research team attempted to embody as much as possible the principles of ethics in research with Indigenous peoples, such as valuing cultural identity and competence, collaboration, respect, and concern for the impact of the results on the community (Asselin and Basile 2012; Viscogliosi et al. 2019). To preserve the confidentiality of the participants, fictitious names were assigned.

Results

Although perceptions regarding how the community helps families who were suffering or in a situation of psychological distress were collected from Kangiqsualujjuaq community members, these were not included in the subject of this analysis. This decision was made to reduce the breadth of responses and to focus only on the results on perceptions of child development within the parent-child relationship. These perceptions were grouped into two categories, namely, factors associated with suffering and factors related to well-being, represented as opposites to emphasize that these factors could qualify the parent-child relationship along a continuum (Figure 2). These factors were considered in their nuances, as their positioning could shift on the continuum according to the immediate, family, generational, and historical context involved. The context of intergenerational and complex trauma that influenced community, families, and individuals alike thus coloured the entire continuum. Consequently, each factor associated with one side found its opposite on the other side of the continuum.

Factors associated with suffering were those perceived by the participants as being present in the parent-child relationship and having a negative influence on the child's development. Conversely, factors related to well-being qualified the parent-child relationship and had a positive influence on the child's development (Figure 2).

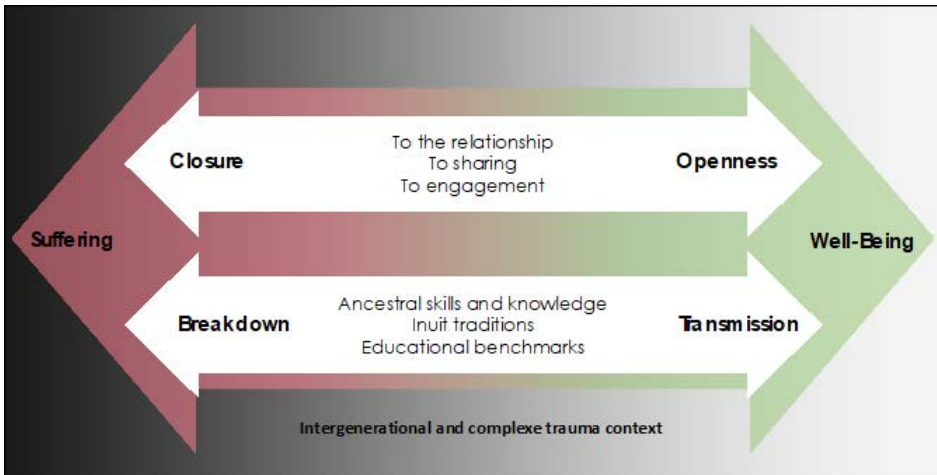


Figure 2. Perception of child development

This continuum of factors associated with suffering and well-being was further broken down into two other continua. The first referred to attitudes of either closure or openness in different aspects of the parent-child relationship. The Kangiqsualujjuaq community members who participated in the project initially described the attitude of closure in the parent-child relationship as a closure to the relationship on the part of the parent, i.e., that the parent struggled to invest in the relationship with their child. This bench of the parent was noticed by the participants when there was evidence of parental distress, substance abuse problems, or simply a physical absence. This unavailability was thus perceived as likely to cause suffering in the child. “For the children, even if they want to go with their parents (...), when the parents are not present, even if the children are asking, it’s because of the gambling, the alcoholism, even camping, they leave their kids to babysitters.” (Rorie).

Interestingly, relational closure was also observed in the community’s children and was perceived as an indicator of their suffering: “Because when they go through [abuse], children you can tell their behaviour is, they tend to close and not want to participate, or they stop caring about life” (Leanna).

At the other end of the spectrum, the attitude of parental openness to the relationship with their child was reflected in the focus groups as closeness in terms of family ties, such as between a mother and her newborn child, and more broadly, in intergenerational relationships, such as between the child and the elders in the family. This openness was described as essential to the child’s well-being. “When the children are used to getting [*aqausiq*] at home, they are really happy and it changes their mood a lot and they are really happy to get the *aqausiq*, the other ones they refuse that, they refuse the *aqausiq*, to get a saying from an adult” (Alma).

A child who was also open to the relational approach of adults, both in the family environment and in the community, such as at the daycare centre, was also, for some participants, an indicator of their well-being. “How do you know that he is doing well besides happiness?” (Researcher). “Maybe open, helping on” (Eileena).

Participants also discussed the parent-child relationship in terms of closure or openness toward sharing. According to the participating members, closure to sharing translated to a difficulty for the parent to share their personal, family, or socio-historical history, because it could be painful to delve into it: “We weren’t even taught to talk about our situations; same thing with our children” (Eileena). In addition, some participants noted that it could be difficult for many children in the community to tell others how they feel based on their emotions, which may be indicative of psychological suffering.

It can be really difficult for a child to express their feelings or to say what they want to say (...) and they are able to talk (...) if they have experience when it is difficult, (...), time will come to express and to say what is bothering them and that it is very important to be connected to our children, like to go out for a walk on the land, they [get] to know what is around the land, the animals and we talk about that. (Morgan)

On the other side of the continuum was openness toward sharing. One participant mentioned that one of the indicators of a child’s well-being was their openness to sharing their experiences with significant adults around them, for example, by telling their parents about their day, or their weekend during school discussions:

The boys at the daycare talk to other children [about] what they saw through the weekend: ‘My grandfather made the [fishing holes], my father made the fishing sticks, and my dad (...) fixed the Skidoo with his hands.’ So, they tell other children what they hear too, the stories. (Rorie)

The relationship between parent and child was then examined in the focus groups in terms of being closed or open to engagement. Some participants perceived that social changes in traditional gender roles have led to the disengagement of men, and thus fathers, from community activities, and more intimately, from the family sphere. This perceived disengagement by father figures was described as an influence on young boys in search of identity cues. “With the dog slaughter, it really lowered the [sense of autonomy] of the men, so that’s why we’ve seen the report effect of [them] being less involved” (Sally).

Finally, at the other end of the spectrum, openness toward engagement was conceptualized as an indicator of well-being in child development, i.e., children would appear to benefit from participating in community-organized activities, such as after-school activities.

[The recreational activities center] has been closed for over a year because of the pandemic (...) and they have recreational activities, but it's never open, but it helped a lot with the children to have a place to go, to do activities, but it's been closed since the pandemic started. And it helped the children a lot to have a place to go to. (Alma)

Across the continuum of suffering and well-being in child development was the second pair of factors associated with the breakdown of communication on one hand and transmission on the other. Thus, according to the interviewed community members, what related to the breakdown within the parent-child relationship was associated with suffering in the child's development, while that related to transmission referred to the well-being of young people.

Firstly, these two polarities were developed during the focus groups based on ancestral skills and knowledge. Thus, a breakdown in ancestral know-how corresponded to the loss of certain technical knowledge in the parent-child relationship. Some participants also linked this disconnection to the new technological reality, i.e., some perceived that the amount of time young people spent on their electronic devices undermined the transmission of skills.

I do a lot of hands-on work with [children], I try not to have them on the devices. Sometimes, it is hard when I am alone with my niece, so, [I] do things with her, I let her sew, she can sew now and she has a sewing machine. I [prepare her] because Inuit women, we are seen as clothes makers (...) because not everybody sews now. I never sewed for like ten years and it is very cold not to have a parka here or any hats or anything so that's why it's so necessary to have this skill to make clothing. (Sally)

The previous excerpt also demonstrates that sewing or garment-making may be an area where there has been a breakdown in the transmission of Inuit women's traditional skills. Our participants also reported a break in knowledge in the area of cooking. However, one participant explained how this discontinuity may not be expressed linearly across generations. "It depends on the parent how they raise their child, because my mother says my kids are picky because they do not eat [store-bought precooked meals], they always have home cooked, she doesn't want to babysit them when I go for a training up north" (Leanna).

Similar to what is described above, it was pointed out that this generational discontinuity in skills also negatively influenced men, leading to losses in their sense of masculinity, autonomy and pride. “(...) I think, because [the dog slaughter] really had an effect, it took their manhood away” (Sally).

In contrast, passing on these skills (e.g., making fishing gear, making clothes, traditional meal preparation) to children was viewed as being beneficial to their development: “She started making purses for a start and mitts and advances her sewing skills, so she is doing this for the first time, she was asking to make more and more as we acknowledged her. (...) It was very good for her” (Sally).

Secondly, breakdown or transmission could be applied to Inuit traditions. Most participants reported and described many examples of cultural traditions surrounding the parent-child relationship. To name a few, eponymy (*sauniq*) refers to the naming of a newborn child after a person (*sananiraqtuaajuq*) who is “recognized as the one who shaped/trained a child or gave a special blessing to a newborn child” (Rahm et al. 2024, 192). Another tradition that was shared was that of *aqausiq*, which was described by participating community members as using different language modalities (e.g., intonation, rate of speech, tone of voice) as a unique way of relating to each individual, which provides recognition from the community. An *aqausiq* is thus a personalized song, rhyme, or lullaby created for each child, which is sung to them repeatedly throughout their life to assure the children that they are loved (Briggs 1998) and accepted (Rahm et al. 2024).

We have like this tradition in terms of communication, where the elders are interacting with the children with an *aqausiq*, like sayings to our children, because we value in our culture the namesake. For example, if I name my child after Andy, I will make sure my child will be the same as Andy, his life, so they are more focused on that, the elders. (Morgan)

This excerpt demonstrates the importance community participants placed on this tradition and its influence on the child’s identity development. However, the participant mentioned that this tradition appeared to be less of a concern for new parents.

On the other hand, the participants reported a break with tradition in their relationship with consumption. These changes were perceived as potentially causing suffering. “(...) when I used to get money for the first time, I would get at least 10 or 20 chocolate bars and I would [eat] them all because it cost like 5 cents. That’s why I lost my teeth” (Gary).

Finally, educational benchmarks represented the last factor described in terms of breakdown or transmission. Elders were the most vocal regarding child rearing. Some senior participants perceived that parents of new generations sometimes had difficulty setting limits for their children, which contrasts with their educational methods.

The way [the elders] used to raise their children, like with disciplinary (unintelligible), like if we continue to raise our children with like a spank, not a really hard spank, we would lose our children today if we still continue to discipline our children physically, but not really like physically, but to make them understand that it is not OK. And the way that the children are being raised today is totally different from how they used to raise their children in the past, they would not even feel bad for the child and [they would] try to make them understand that it's their problem to solve and to try to deal with it on their own and not [only] feel bad for them. When that happens, today, that's how the parents raise their children, which means that there are more people that are incarcerated because their parents just let them spoil them (...). Because if they don't respect their parents, they will not respect anyone because [it] is really important to have discipline tools for the parents. (Sally)

One participant also explained that the greater proximity that families once had to the land provided children with natural boundaries. Frequenting the dangers inherent in nature helped children to learn through experience.

On the opposite side of the continuum, the community's elders who were interviewed perceived that the transmission of educational benchmarks from generation to generation was linked to greater well-being in the child. In particular, participants named observational learning and learning from interactions with the land as attitudes of children that demonstrated continuity in education across generations.

[...] her eleven-year-old boy went camping with her and the grandparents, since we learn a lot by seeing so he watches his grandfather setting on and taking off nets from the lake, so he was able to continue to take off the nets without being asked because he was watching how it's done, so we learn a lot from watching. (Rorie)

Discussion

Our results enabled us to identify some aspects of an answer to the question that guided this research project, namely, how do the members of the community of Kangiqsualujjuaq perceive the well-being of children and parents and the main difficulties encountered by parents in their relationship with their children?

First, the community members' perceptions of child well-being and suffering were organized along a continuum. This allowed for an account of the nuances, degrees of difficulty encountered, and examples and counter-examples used to clarify ideas.

Suffering was linked to closure, both in the child's attitude and the relational context with their parent, or, even more broadly, with the community. Suffering was also linked to social changes that affected the community, brought about intergenerational discontinuities, and more directly, challenged the ties between parents and their children. Social transformations in the broadest sense were raised, such as the advent of money or technologies.

As for well-being, it was described in relation to an attitude of openness, again both at the individual and community level, similar to suffering. This is in line with what Kirmayer and Paul (2007) report regarding the Inuit conception of mental health and well-being in Nunavik. The authors point out that these notions are based on respect and care for others, animals and nature, and the land, and that this is expressed through an attitude of openness and inclusiveness. In our study, community members also perceived well-being as something passed down from generation to generation. It was associated with tangible areas of skill that perceived to be necessary even today, such as cooking and sewing. In light of our findings, it appears that several elements associated with well-being were intimately linked to the transmission of an Inuit identity. In particular, the engagement of the individual appears to represent a form of adhesion to the community's identity.

Kirmayer and Paul (2007) also pointed out that the perception of community closeness had a positive effect on individual psychological distress. Thus, community closeness can be better understood through the tradition of *aqausiq* that helps provide the child with significant identity markers, which the adult attributes to the child according to what the child evokes in the adult. Several differences between men's and women's experiences in what has been lost or retained from traditional roles and the influence on their current sense of identity were also discussed. In this context, we can hypothesize that the concept of mentalization may be relevant in that the literature suggests that it supports self-regulation, reduced dependency, greater predictability of the relational environment, and ultimately, a stable and coherent sense of identity (Allen, Fonagy, and Bateman 2008; Fonagy et al. 2002). This ability could therefore have a protective function in the context of ICT.

In this regard, the slaughter of sled dogs—an event often identified among the roots of historical trauma—was brought up in our focus groups on child development and parent-child relationships. This may reflect awareness among community members of the possible repercussions of such events, even if these stigmas often appear unseen and unthinkable. Indeed, the focus group participants appeared able to perceive the consequences of historical trauma in the parent-child relationship, but the mechanisms of transmission appeared to remain unclear, which in turn appeared to make attempts to limit the intergenerational transmission of trauma less effective.

Consequently, we could hypothesize that developing a better mentalizing capacity among the community members could, in the long run, promote a more reflective reading of the difficulties encountered in the parent-child relationship. This would make it possible—in particular through the identification of mental states underlying behaviour—to give greater importance to what is unseen, but operative, in human relations.

There are some limitations to this study. In particular, the language barrier was significant, as the participants spoke mainly Inuktitut, which was not the case for the researchers. Although one participant also acted as a translator into English, she did not engage in a word-for-word translation. Some of the participants' ideas were summarized in this way, and it is possible that some words were inadvertently changed. Another limitation was the focus group process, in which many community members acted only as observers. It would have been appropriate to consider a cultural adaptation that would have made it possible for more community members to express themselves. Finally, having chosen a convenience sample and a word-of-mouth recruitment method, the results cannot be considered representative of the perceptions of the entire community of Kangiqsualujjuaq.

Conclusion

The present qualitative action research, designed to be exploratory, provides an overview of the perceptions of members of the Inuit community of Kangiqsualujjuaq regarding factors associated with the well-being and suffering of children within the parent-child relationship. Two continuums of attitudes and practices emerged from the voices of the community members: one between closure and openness, and the other between breakdown of communication and transmission. The challenges linked to the legacy of intergenerational trauma within the community, families, and individuals influenced the entirety of these continuums.

Here, openness and transmission appear as a form of resilience that plays a central role in the process of identity reconstruction. This resilience is mainly expressed through the transmission of traditional knowledge, which provides young people with essential cultural reference points for their development and sense of belonging. The continuation of ancestral practices, such as *aqausiq* or artisanal craftsmanship, serves as a vector of resilience by strengthening intergenerational continuity and fostering a positive vision of Inuit identity.

Furthermore, mentalization emerges as a key factor in mitigating the effects of complex trauma. Over generations, it becomes increasingly difficult to recognize the impact of historical trauma experienced initially by one generation, as these are progressively internalized in a less conscious manner. The ability to interpret one's own mental states and those of others,

which develops within the parent-child relationship, helps to counter the unconscious transmission of intergenerational trauma while also acting as a protective factor against trauma experienced in the present. This underscores the importance of interventions aimed at strengthening mentalizing capacity within this community.

By recognizing the value of traditions and supporting the development of mentalization, it becomes possible to envision support strategies that consider both the strengths and vulnerabilities of the community. Further research should explore these themes to define intervention strategies best suited to Inuit realities from a perspective of decolonization and the promotion of traditional knowledge. Additional aspects of this research are underway, including the development of mentalization workshops for practitioners in Kangiqsualujuaq and the creation of a technological tool to support them in their work with the community's children.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for their financial support. Thanks also to Qarmaapik Family House and the members of the Kangiqsualujuaq community for their warm welcome and contribution to this research.

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Renforcement des compétences relationnelles des intervenants inuit afin de contrer la transmission des traumatismes historiques, intergénérationnels et complexes : Adaptation culturelle d'une formation

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RÉSUMÉ

La Maison de la famille Qarmaapik vient en aide aux enfants et aux familles de la communauté de Kangiqsualujjuaq en situation de crise. Sa mission répond au besoin de prodiguer des services adaptés culturellement, offerts par les Inuit pour les Inuit. Pourtant, comme leurs pairs, les intervenants qui y travaillent sont affectés par des traumatismes intergénérationnels et complexes qui s'inscrivent au sein de leur histoire personnelle et collective. Or, pour aider leurs pairs, ils doivent parvenir à différencier leurs propres traumatismes de ceux des autres pour être en mesure d'utiliser leur expérience et leur résilience pour intervenir auprès de ceux-ci. Cet article aborde le processus d'élaboration et d'adaptation culturelle d'une formation s'adressant à ces intervenants. Des groupes de discussion réalisés auprès des intervenants inuit de Qarmaapik, de la garderie et de l'école, des aînés et des membres clés de la communauté ont permis d'extraire des thèmes à partir desquels bâtir une

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formation : la mentalisation, l'approche phénoménologique, l'intervention en situation de crise et l'intervention auprès des enfants. Un premier cycle de formation a été présenté à des intervenantes de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik dans le but de valider les thèmes et d'en faire l'adaptation culturelle.

MOTS-CLÉS

Inuit, formation, adaptation culturelle, traumatismes historiques, intergénérationnels et complexes, mentalisation, approche phénoménologique

ABSTRACT

Strengthening the interpersonal skills of Inuit workers to counter the transmission of historical, intergenerational and complex traumas: Cultural adaptation of a training course

The Qarmaapik Family House helps children and families from the Kangiqsualujjuaq community in crisis. Its mission responds to the need for culturally adapted services, provided by Inuit for Inuit. Yet, as their peers, the caregivers who work there are affected by complex, intergenerational traumas that are part of their personal and collective history. In order to help their peers, they must be able to differentiate their own traumas from those of others, and use their experience and resilience to intervene with them. This article looks at the process of developing and culturally adapting a training program for these workers. Focus groups with Inuit caregivers from Qarmaapik, the daycare center and school, elders and key community members helped to extract themes on which to build a training program: mentalization, the phenomenological approach, crisis intervention and intervention with children. A first training cycle was presented to caregivers from the Qarmaapik Family House to validate the themes and make cultural adaptations.

KEYWORDS

Inuit, training, cultural adaptation, historical, intergenerational and complex traumas, mentalization, phenomenological approach

Le présent article décrit le processus d'élaboration et d'adaptation culturelle d'une formation s'adressant aux intervenantes¹ de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik qui viennent en aide aux enfants et aux familles inuit en situation de crise. La Maison de la famille Qarmaapik a été créée en 2013, à la suite de la publication d'un rapport d'enquête sur la protection de la jeunesse au Nunavik rédigé par la Commission des droits de la personne et

1. Bien que des intervenantes et des intervenants peuvent être embauchés par la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik, l'équipe était composée de femmes et d'hommes inuit lors de la réalisation des groupes de discussion et uniquement de femmes inuit au moment où la formation a eu lieu. Ainsi, le terme « intervenants » est utilisé en référence aux groupes de discussion et lorsqu'il est question des intervenants de façon générale. Le terme « intervenantes » est employé en référence au personnel ayant participé à la formation.

des droits de la jeunesse du Québec (Sirois 2007). L'initiative de créer cette Maison de la famille est née d'une entente entre divers organismes impliqués auprès des enfants et des adolescents, soit le Centre de Santé Tullatavik de l'Ungava, la Direction de la protection de la jeunesse, la Régie régionale de la santé et des services sociaux du Nunavik, le Corps de police régional Kativik et l'école locale Ulluriaq. Cette initiative répond à un besoin exprimé par la communauté inuit de Kangiqsualujjuaq : développer des services de prévention et d'intervention menés par et pour les Inuit. Elle fait partie des solutions concrètes pilotées par la communauté afin d'offrir un service culturellement approprié qui soutiendrait les enfants et leurs familles (Emudluk 2017).

L'élaboration et l'adaptation culturelle de la formation s'inscrivent dans une recherche-action plus large visant à contribuer au développement des services de santé mentale adaptés aux réalités des communautés inuit. Pour ce faire, il a été essentiel pour les chercheurs que les intervenants inuit soient consultés en tant qu'experts de leur réalité et impliqués dans les diverses étapes du développement de la formation. Ils ont ainsi été considérés comme des partenaires tout au long du processus de recherche-action (approbation de la démarche proposée dans le cadre de la recherche, choix des participants aux groupes de discussion, traduction de l'anglais vers l'inuktitut et vice-versa, révision des propos des participants aux groupes de discussion, révision et adaptation culturelle de la formation, révision des articles scientifiques découlant de la recherche-action), le but étant de s'inscrire dans la démarche d'autonomisation (Fraser 2014) menée par la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik. L'objectif ultime de la recherche-action est que les intervenants inuit puissent s'approprier du matériel de formation développé conjointement avec les chercheurs, en vue de l'utiliser auprès des futurs intervenants. L'implication des intervenants inuit tout au long du processus visait à favoriser la décolonisation de la recherche auprès de cette population (Smith 2021) et à respecter les principes d'inclusion des différents intervenants, de reconnaissance de l'unicité et des forces de chaque partenaire, de développement de la confiance, de collaboration, de prise de décisions communes et de développement des compétences locales devant encadrer les actions posées auprès des communautés autochtones (LaVeaux et Christopher 2009; Fraser *et al.* 2017).

Contexte théorique

Le village inuit de Kangiqsualujjuaq, « la très grande baie » en inuktitut, qui est situé dans la baie d'Ungava, est le plus à l'est du Nunavik. Il comprend environ 1000 habitants qui vivent aux abords de la rivière George, d'où son ancien nom de George River. Dans la communauté de Kangiqsualujjuaq, les conditions sociales et économiques sont nettement inférieures au reste du Canada : des maisons surpeuplées, un nombre élevé de signalements pour

négligence, des abus physiques ou sexuels, un taux de chômage élevé, des problèmes d'alcoolisme, d'isolement social et de violence conjugale, ainsi qu'un taux de suicide élevé (Régie régionale de la santé et des services sociaux du Nunavik 2018; Lessard *et al.* 2008). Ces problèmes psychosociaux, qui affectent certains membres de la communauté, s'inscrivent dans un contexte historique où les Nunavimmiuts ont été contraints de s'adapter à de nombreux changements imposés par des instances gouvernementales au cours des 60 dernières années (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada 2006). Parmi ces changements, le passage du nomadisme à la sédentarisation semble avoir transformé significativement leur fonctionnement familial et systémique (Briggs 2000), miné la confiance de certains Inuit et provoqué d'importantes ruptures dans la transmission intergénérationnelle des pratiques parentales et des connaissances traditionnelles (Bennett et Blackstock 2002) qui s'appuient en grande partie sur des activités en plein air comme la chasse, la pêche et les campements saisonniers (Croteau 2010; Lévesque 2010). Il a également influencé les dynamiques de certaines familles et communautés (Fraser *et al.* 2018), aggravant les problèmes psychosociaux (par exemple, la violence dans la famille) et de santé mentale (par exemple, la dépendance à l'alcool et aux drogues), ainsi que la capacité de certains parents d'assumer adéquatement leur rôle auprès de leurs enfants.

Sur les plans social et culturel, Marie Yellow Horse Brave Heart fut la première à utiliser les termes «traumas historiques» pour expliquer les conséquences des traumas causés par la colonisation et les pensionnats aux différentes communautés autochtones afin d'accentuer le caractère collectif de ceux-ci (Aguilar et Halseth 2015). La notion de *traumas historiques* permet de prendre en compte les effets cumulatifs et perniciose des expériences traumatiques qui contribuent à aggraver le dysfonctionnement des communautés autochtones (Gone 2013). Selon Campbell et Evans-Campbell (2011), les effets des traumas historiques se manifestent à trois niveaux intrinsèquement liés et interdépendants. Le premier niveau concerne les individus. Ainsi, les traumas historiques sont susceptibles de générer de l'anxiété, de la dépression, de la dépendance et des comportements autodestructeurs chez les personnes qui y ont été exposées directement ou indirectement. Le deuxième niveau implique les familles et leur structure. Par exemple, les inégalités physiques, psychologiques et économiques sont héritées et persistent dans le temps. Le troisième niveau réfère aux communautés et aux impacts à long terme sur leur structure, leur fonctionnement et les trajectoires historiques des peuples autochtones. Les traumas historiques ont aussi affecté la façon dont les connaissances traditionnelles et les pratiques autochtones sont valorisées (Kirmayer *et al.* 2000). Les coutumes des peuples autochtones dans les domaines spirituel, émotionnel, physique et mental ont été brutalement et chroniquement perturbées (Locust 2000), les forçant à s'éloigner ou à renoncer à leur identité culturelle (Ing 1991).

Sur le plan familial, il est possible de penser que les traumas historiques qui affligent les communautés inuit constituent un contexte favorable aux traumas complexes, caractérisés par l'exposition des enfants en bas âge à différentes formes de maltraitance, qui ont lieu de façon répétée et prolongée dans le temps, au sein de la relation avec leurs parents (Courtois 2004; Herman 1992). En raison de leurs grandes difficultés psychiques, certains parents n'arrivent pas à reconnaître les besoins de leur(s) enfant(s) et à y répondre de façon constante. Affectés directement ou indirectement par les traumas historiques, ces parents peuvent faire vivre à leurs proches de façon fréquente et répétée des situations de négligence grave, d'abus physique ou d'agression sexuelle (Allen 2005; Bonneville 2010). Les traumas complexes qui s'inscrivent dans un contexte de traumas historiques peuvent ainsi se transmettre d'une génération à la suivante. De là l'importance de trouver des outils permettant d'interrompre la transmission intergénérationnelle de ces traumas.

Dans ce contexte caractérisé par la présence de multiples traumas historiques, intergénérationnels et complexes, les intervenants de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik sont confrontés à plusieurs défis. Premièrement, il est possible de penser qu'ils soient consciemment ou inconsciemment affectés par les traumas intergénérationnels inscrits profondément au sein de leur histoire (Evans-Campbell 2008). Par leur caractère inacceptable, ces traumas sont probablement indicibles pour la génération qui les a vécus directement et qui n'a pas nécessairement pu en parler et y donner sens. Ils sont ensuite devenus innommables pour la génération suivante, qui tend à les vivre comme des fantômes qui les hantent. Ils sont enfin impensables pour les générations subséquentes, prenant la forme d'une marque qui s'inscrit profondément dans leur mémoire collective (Abraham et Torok 1987). Ainsi, plusieurs problèmes psychosociaux présents dans les générations actuelles peuvent être compris comme les conséquences directes ou indirectes des traumas vécus par les générations précédentes (Aguilar et Halseth 2015; Robertson 2006). Deuxièmement, faisant partie de la communauté inuit, les intervenants ont possiblement eux-mêmes été confrontés à des situations potentiellement traumatiques semblables à celles vécues par leurs pairs. Pour être en mesure de venir en aide aux autres membres de la communauté, ils doivent d'abord distinguer leurs traumas de ceux des autres, pour ensuite être capables d'utiliser leurs propres expériences et leur résilience pour intervenir. En effet, les intervenants inuit pourraient être plus enclins à vivre de possibles conséquences d'une sur-identification avec ceux qu'ils tentent d'aider : du stress de compassion (comportements et émotions résultant du fait d'aider une personne significative ayant vécu des traumas semblables et présentant une souffrance importante) ou de la fatigue de compassion (contrepartie symptomatique chez l'intervenant face à une exposition prolongée au trouble de stress post-traumatique des personnes avec qui il travaille), qui se manifesteraient par un épuisement professionnel et un

dysfonctionnement sur le plan personnel (Figley 1995). Ce point nous amène à un troisième défi : la nécessité de composer avec la taille de la communauté de Kangiqsualujjuaq, à la fois suffisamment petite pour que l'ensemble de ses habitants se connaissent entre eux, mais trop grande par rapport à ce que les Inuit ont connu dans leur long passé nomade. Les intervenants sont donc appelés à jouer plusieurs rôles à l'égard des membres de leur communauté (par exemple, celui de voisin et d'intervenant). Dans ce contexte, il est fort probable qu'ils doivent intervenir auprès de proches, ce qui affecterait l'établissement d'une distance relationnelle optimale au sein de la relation d'aide, un élément considéré comme étant fondamental pour le bon fonctionnement de cette relation dans la culture occidentale. Quatrièmement, cette proximité peut amener chez les intervenants une difficulté à différencier le travail de la vie familiale et sociale. De plus, certains peuvent ressentir la pression de jouer un rôle de modèle par une conduite exemplaire au sein de leur communauté étant donné qu'ils ne peuvent pas offrir leurs services de façon anonyme. Enfin, les Inuit de Kangiqsualujjuaq semblent manquer d'espaces confidentiels dans lesquels ils peuvent s'exprimer avec liberté. Ce phénomène peut être relié aux conditions de vie dans des habitations surpeuplées et à la petite taille de la population, d'autant plus dans un contexte d'utilisation importante des réseaux sociaux.

Ces défis peuvent expliquer les difficultés de rétention de personnel qui affligent la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik et l'épuisement professionnel pouvant être vécu par les intervenants qui y travaillent. Le manque de ressources d'aide psychosociale culturellement adaptées justifie le besoin de repenser les formations pouvant être dispensées aux intervenants de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik pour que des services puissent être offerts aux Inuit, par des Inuit.

Processus d'élaboration et d'adaptation culturelle d'une formation visant à renforcer les compétences relationnelles des intervenants inuit qui œuvrent auprès des enfants et des familles

Le processus d'élaboration et d'adaptation culturelle de la formation ayant pour objectif de renforcer les compétences relationnelles des intervenants inuit comprend plusieurs étapes : 1) réalisation d'un premier groupe de discussion auprès des intervenants inuit, des aînés et des membres clés de la communauté ; 2) transcription des verbatims issus du groupe de discussion et extraction des idées principales ; 3) réalisation d'un second groupe de discussion auprès des mêmes participants ; 4) réalisation d'une analyse thématique des groupes de discussion ; 5) présentation des principaux constats issus de l'analyse des groupes de discussion ; 6) sélection des thèmes qui seraient abordés lors de la formation et élaboration d'une première

version de celle-ci; 7) réalisation d'un premier cycle de formation; et 8) élaboration d'une seconde version de la formation. Les étapes comprises dans ce processus, illustrées dans la Figure 1, seront expliquées dans les prochains paragraphes.

L'ensemble de ces étapes ont respecté les principes de la recherche décolonisatrice proposés par Shawn Wilson (2008). Ainsi, les chercheurs se sont assurés de reconnaître et de respecter les savoirs, les modes de vie et les pratiques autochtones, tout en s'engageant dans des relations réciproques. Par exemple, ils ont participé à une activité communautaire, menée par leurs collègues inuit, visant à prendre conscience des conséquences des traumatismes historiques. Ils ont également pris part à une activité réalisée par une femme aînée inuk auprès des enfants ayant pour objectif de leur transmettre un savoir traditionnel. La recherche a été menée d'une façon qui honore et contribue au bien-être des Inuit et de la communauté de Kangiqsualujuaq. Elle avait pour objectif ultime de renforcer les relations avec les partenaires inuit et de contribuer à l'autodétermination des intervenantes de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik via l'utilisation d'une approche qui favorise la pérennisation de la formation. Pour ce faire, les chercheurs ont impliqué activement les membres de la communauté dans toutes les étapes de la recherche-action garantissant ainsi que leurs voix soient au cœur du processus. Toutes ces étapes, sans exception, ont été réalisées selon une approche de co-construction entre les chercheurs, les membres de la communauté et les intervenants de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik, selon qu'il s'agisse respectivement des groupes de discussion ou de la formation. Un des chercheurs, David Poulin-Latulippe, avait travaillé en tant que psychologue clinicien auprès des enfants et des familles de la communauté inuit de Kangiqsualujuaq durant deux ans et avait tissé des liens significatifs avec les intervenants de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik et de l'école Ulluriaq. Il avait aussi réussi à bien s'intégrer à la communauté. Les chercheurs ont adopté une posture humble leur permettant d'approcher la culture inuit avec humilité. Cette posture est cohérente avec la position de «non-savoir» promue par l'approche basée sur la mentalisation (Allen *et al.* 2008). Suivant cette posture, les chercheurs ne se considéraient pas comme des experts des contenus abordés lors des groupes de discussion ou de la formation. Ils ont exploré davantage ces contenus en collaboration avec les partenaires inuit qui sont, pour leur part, les véritables experts de leur propre culture.

Premier groupe de discussion

Le premier groupe de discussion a été effectué à la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik. Des breuvages et de la nourriture ont été servis lors de l'activité. Le recrutement a été fait par bouche-à-oreille par l'intervenante-responsable de cet organisme. Onze personnes ont pris part au groupe de discussion : des intervenants inuit de la Maison de la famille, de la garderie et de l'école,

des aînés et des membres clés de la communauté de Kangiqsualujjuaq. Quatre chercheurs ont été présents au groupe de discussion. L'ensemble des participants se sont assis par terre, à l'exception des aînés. Le groupe de discussion a eu lieu en anglais et en inuktitut. Une personne inuk, bilingue, a traduit les questions des chercheurs et les propos des participants. Le groupe de discussion concernait les perceptions des Inuit relativement au développement des enfants et au bien-être des familles, ainsi que les difficultés que les parents inuit sont susceptibles de rencontrer dans la relation avec leurs enfants. Plusieurs thèmes de relance ont été utilisés par les chercheurs, notamment les comportements des enfants et des parents associés au bien-être, les jeux et les moments de partage parent-enfant, les expressions de la souffrance, les situations familiales inquiétantes nécessitant une intervention de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik et les réactions de la communauté face à ces interventions. Le groupe de discussion a été enregistré sur bande audio avec le consentement des participants. Les interventions ayant eu lieu lors du groupe de discussion ont d'abord été transcrites en verbatim par les étudiants-chercheurs. L'équipe de recherche a ensuite extrait les idées principales afin de les présenter aux participants lors d'un second groupe de discussion.

Second groupe de discussion

Un second groupe de discussion a eu lieu huit jours plus tard à la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik. Des breuvages et de la nourriture ont été offerts lors de l'activité. Neuf personnes ont pris part à ce groupe de discussion : des intervenants inuit de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik, du milieu scolaire et des aînés. L'objectif était de partager les idées principales extraites par les chercheurs à partir de la transcription en verbatim du premier groupe de discussion afin de préciser, valider et approfondir la compréhension des chercheurs. Cette approche visait la co-construction des connaissances relatives aux thèmes abordés lors des groupes de discussion. À la fin de ce groupe, trois intervenantes inuit de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik et du milieu scolaire, étant hautement intéressées à poursuivre la discussion sur les sujets abordés, ont apporté d'autres précisions sur les thèmes discutés avec les chercheurs. Leurs interventions ont également fait partie du corpus de données. Ces entretiens ont également été enregistrés sur bande audio avec le consentement des participants et transcrits en verbatims.

Analyse thématique des groupes de discussion

La méthode d'analyse thématique proposée par Pierre Paillé et Alex Mucchielli (2016) a été utilisée pour décrire les phénomènes à l'étude tout en évitant d'interpréter ces phénomènes. Ce choix méthodologique est cohérent avec le paradigme constructiviste dans lequel s'inscrit la présente recherche-action. Premièrement, les étudiants-chercheurs ont fait plusieurs lectures du

corpus de données. Deuxièmement, ils ont soulevé des thèmes permettant de synthétiser et de représenter les propos des participants. Troisièmement, un relevé de thèmes a été élaboré par les étudiants-chercheurs. Quatrièmement, le relevé de thèmes a été soumis à l'ensemble de l'équipe de chercheurs. Les discussions de l'équipe ont permis d'ajuster le relevé des thèmes. Cinquièmement, les étudiants-chercheurs ont regroupé les thèmes et ont élaboré des rubriques et des sous-rubriques en utilisant des codes de couleurs, selon une logique ascendante à partir des thèmes, pour arriver à faire une schématisation. Enfin, l'ensemble de l'équipe de chercheurs s'est réuni en vue de discuter de la schématisation et de l'ajuster. La démarche d'analyse a été réalisée selon un processus itératif suivant une logique inductive. Ainsi, l'élaboration a débuté dès les premiers survols et des modifications ont été apportées tout au long du processus d'analyse (Figure 1).

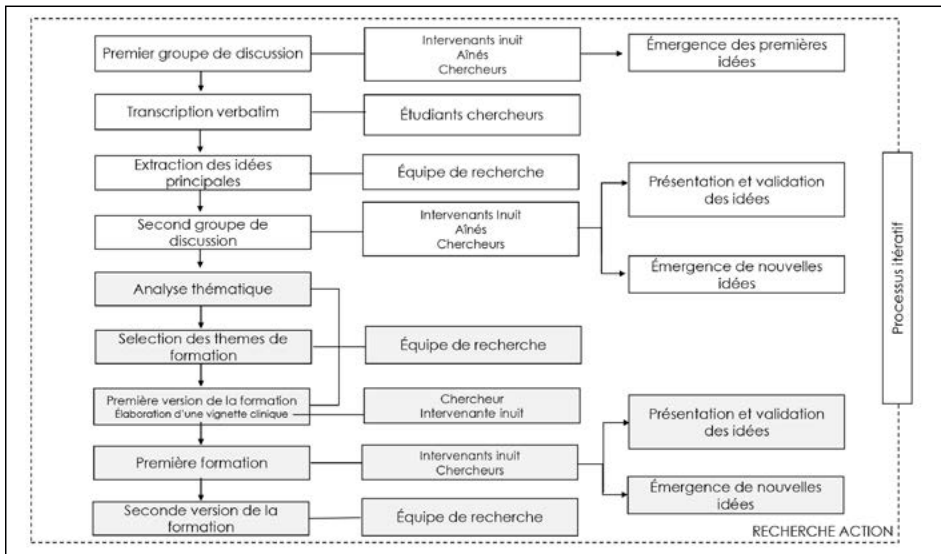


Figure 1. Illustration de la méthode de recherche et de formation utilisée.

Principaux constats issus de l'analyse des groupes de discussion

Selon les participants aux groupes de discussion, le développement de l'enfant au sein de la relation parent-enfant se situe entre deux pôles, soit les facteurs associés à la souffrance et ceux liés au bien-être. Les nuances et le positionnement de ces facteurs entre les deux extrêmes du continuum souffrance-bien-être dépendent du contexte immédiat, familial, générationnel et historique. Les traumatismes historiques, intergénérationnels et complexes qui influencent la communauté, les familles et les individus colorent la totalité du continuum. Ce continuum est composé de trois axes où chaque facteur

associé à un pôle trouve son opposé à l'autre extrême du continuum, nommément la fermeture versus l'ouverture, la rupture versus la transmission et la discontinuité versus la continuité (Dugas *et al.*, 2024).

Fermeture versus ouverture dans les liens parent-enfant

La fermeture réfère d'abord à l'attitude d'un parent qui peine à s'investir sur le plan relationnel avec son enfant. Cette fermeture est souvent liée à la détresse parentale, à l'abus de substances ou à l'absence physique du parent. Cette indisponibilité est susceptible d'engendrer de la souffrance chez l'enfant. La fermeture sur le plan relationnel peut aussi être observée chez l'enfant et serait également perçue comme un indicateur de sa souffrance. À l'autre extrême du continuum se trouve l'attitude d'ouverture parentale face à la relation avec son enfant, qui se traduit par une proximité dans les liens au sein de la famille nucléaire, et plus largement, dans les relations intergénérationnelles, entre l'enfant et les aînés de la famille. Cette ouverture est importante pour le bien-être de l'enfant. La fermeture réfère ensuite au désengagement des parents. Les changements sociaux dans les rôles traditionnels entre les hommes et les femmes semblent avoir généré un désengagement des pères en ce qui a trait aux activités de la communauté, et plus intimement, à la sphère familiale. Le désengagement des figures paternelles semble exercer une influence sur les jeunes garçons en recherche de repères identitaires. À l'autre extrémité du continuum se trouve l'ouverture à l'engagement. Elle est considérée comme un indicateur du bien-être de l'enfant qui semblerait bénéficier des différentes activités organisées par la famille et la communauté lors desquelles les valeurs et les traditions inuit pourraient être transmises entre générations. Enfin, le lien parent-enfant a aussi été abordé dans la perspective de la fermeture ou l'ouverture à raconter. La fermeture à raconter se manifeste par une difficulté des parents à partager leur histoire personnelle, familiale ou sociohistorique parce qu'ils souffrent peut-être d'en parler. De l'autre côté du continuum se situe l'ouverture à raconter : l'enfant qui fait preuve d'ouverture raconte ses expériences aux adultes significatifs de son entourage. Par exemple, il peut parler de sa journée d'école à ses parents ou raconter sa fin de semaine lors de causeries scolaires (Dugas *et al.* 2024).

Rupture versus transmission

La rupture au sein de la relation parent-enfant est associée à la souffrance dans le développement de l'enfant, et inversement, la transmission d'un parent à son enfant semble être liée au bien-être des jeunes. Ces deux polarités concernent d'abord le savoir-faire ancestral. La rupture sur le plan des savoir-faire ancestraux est associée à la perte de certains savoirs techniques dans la relation parent-enfant. Du côté des enfants, cette rupture semble être également liée à l'influence de nouvelles technologies : le temps passé par les jeunes sur leurs appareils électroniques met à mal la transmission des

savoir-faire ancestraux. Du côté des parents, cette rupture entre les générations semble avoir influencé négativement les hommes, menant à des pertes au niveau de l'autonomie, du sentiment de masculinité et de la fierté sur le plan identitaire. Elle est aussi liée à la consommation excessive d'alcool ou de drogues et à la souffrance sous-jacente à cette consommation. Inversement, la passation des savoir-faire ancestraux (par exemple, la préparation des repas traditionnels, la fabrication des outils pour la pêche, la confection des vêtements) aux enfants est perçue comme ayant un effet bénéfique dans leur développement. Enfin, les aînés perçoivent que les parents des nouvelles générations éprouvent de la difficulté à imposer des limites à leurs enfants, ce qui contraste avec leurs méthodes d'éducation traditionnelle et qui représente une autre rupture dans la transmission de leurs coutumes (Dugas *et al.*, 2024).

Discontinuité versus continuité

En ce qui a trait à la discontinuité, le plus grand lien de proximité qui unissait autrefois les familles au territoire confrontait les enfants aux limites imposées par la nature : côtoyer les dangers inhérents à celle-ci était pour les enfants l'occasion de faire des apprentissages par l'expérience. Ces occasions semblent être moins fréquentes de nos jours. En ce qui concerne la continuité, la transmission des repères éducationnels d'une génération à l'autre semble être liée à un plus grand bien-être chez les enfants. Ainsi, l'apprentissage par l'observation et l'apprentissage à partir des interactions avec le territoire offerts aux enfants témoignent d'une continuité dans l'éducation à travers les générations (Dugas *et al.*, 2024).

Sélection des thèmes de la formation et élaboration d'une première version de la formation

Les thèmes abordés lors de la formation ont été choisis à partir des résultats de l'analyse thématique des groupes de discussion. Ces choix ont aussi été influencés par des entretiens individuels auprès des membres clés de la communauté de Kangiqsualujjuaq. Nous avons ensuite sélectionné des notions théoriques ou des interventions pouvant être utiles pour les intervenants de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik qui travaillent auprès des enfants et des familles en situation de crise. Quatre blocs de formation ont été retenus : la mentalisation, l'approche phénoménologique, la gestion de crises et l'intervention auprès des enfants. Ils ont été conçus en tenant compte des contextes relatifs aux traumatismes historiques, intergénérationnels et complexes qui affligent la communauté de Kangiqsualujjuaq. Une vignette clinique décrivant une situation difficile au sein d'une famille, élaborée par un membre de l'équipe de chercheurs ayant une vaste expérience de travail thérapeutique auprès des enfants inuit et de leurs parents, conjointement avec une intervenante inuk, a permis de mettre en pratique les notions théoriques abordées lors de la formation.

La mentalisation en contexte de traumas historiques, intergénérationnels et complexes

La mentalisation réfère à une activité mentale imaginative (Fonagy *et al.* 2007), subjective, dynamique (Bateman et Fonagy 2013) et plus ou moins volontaire, qui permet à l'individu d'identifier et de comprendre les pensées, les émotions et les intentions sous-jacentes à ses propres comportements et à ceux d'autrui pouvant les expliquer (Allen, Fonagy et Bateman 2008). Cette habileté essentielle au fonctionnement psychique et interpersonnel de l'individu se développe de façon optimale durant dans les cinq ou six premières années de vie, au sein d'une relation parent-enfant sécurisante, grâce aux réponses sensibles, empathiques, contenantantes, congruentes, contingentes, marquées et différenciées, données par le parent à l'enfant, et qui respectent les cycles d'engagement et de désengagement de l'enfant. La mentalisation est un processus intersubjectif qui devient graduellement intrapsychique: tout d'abord, elle est effectuée par le parent; ensuite, l'enfant mentalise avec l'aide de son parent; et enfin, l'enfant est en mesure de mentaliser par lui-même (Fournier *et al.* 2019). La Figure 2 illustre le développement de la capacité de mentalisation chez l'enfant dans un contexte sécurisant. Une bonne capacité de mentalisation permet à l'individu de donner un sens à ses comportements et à ceux des autres afin de les rendre compréhensibles, prévisibles et porteurs d'intention (Allen, Fonagy et Bateman 2008). Elle aiderait également la personne à mieux comprendre ses propres émotions et celles d'autrui, ce qui l'amènerait à mieux réguler les impacts néfastes des traumas et, par le fait même, les comportements

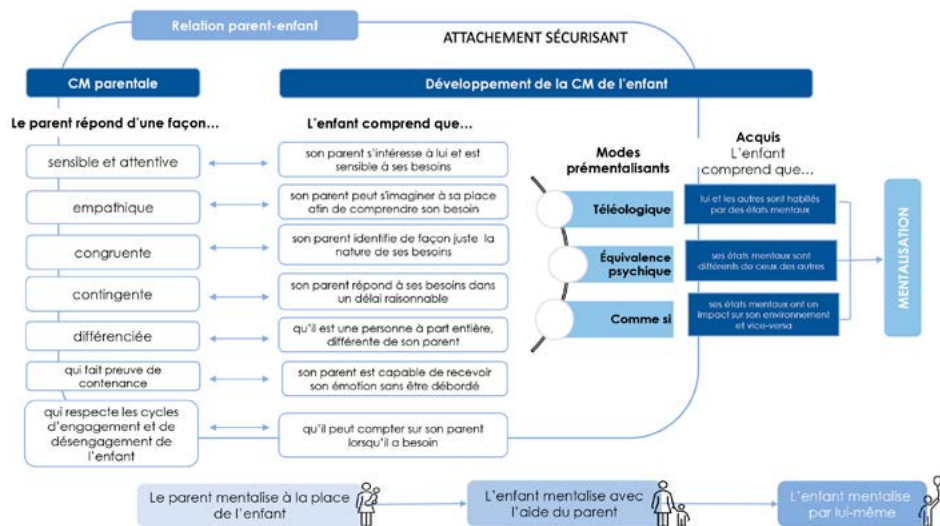


Figure 2. Développement de la capacité de mentalisation de l'enfant dans le contexte d'une relation d'attachement sécurisante.

engendrés par ceux-ci (Fonagy *et al.* 1995). Il a ainsi été démontré qu'une bonne capacité de mentalisation serait associée à une meilleure compétence sociale (Lalonde et Chandler 1995), à l'adoption de comportements empathiques (Zahn-Waxler *et al.* 1992), ainsi qu'à des relations positives avec les autres (Dunn et Cutting 1999). Inversement, des déficits sur le plan de cette capacité affecteraient l'habileté de l'individu à comprendre et à réguler ses émotions et son comportement, ce qui peut notamment se traduire par des conduites impulsives et des passages à l'acte dangereux (Allen, Fonagy et Bateman 2008; Eizirik et Fonagy 2009). Les difficultés de mentalisation peuvent aussi avoir un impact sur les relations interpersonnelles de l'individu. En effet, une défaillance en ce qui a trait à la capacité de mentalisation est liée à la difficulté à se former une représentation de l'état mental d'autrui, ce qui pourrait rendre difficile la considération de la perspective de l'autre, limitant ainsi l'empathie et la collaboration dans les interactions sociales (Lawson *et al.* 2013). Allen (2013), ainsi qu'Allen et Fonagy (2012), suggèrent qu'une capacité de mentalisation altérée joue un rôle majeur dans le développement de différents problèmes psychosociaux et psychiatriques. Les difficultés de mentalisation sont également associées à différents mécanismes de protection et manifestations pathologiques visant à éviter la douleur émotionnelle (par exemple, l'isolement, la dépression, les abus de substances, l'automutilation, les tentatives de suicide, les comportements agressifs, selon Allen 2001 et Bleiberg *et al.* 2012) et d'ailleurs plusieurs de ces manifestations ont été observées au sein de la communauté inuit (Fraser *et al.* 2018).

Sachant que la capacité de mentalisation se développe au sein de la relation parent-enfant, que les caractéristiques de ce lien dépendent grandement de la culture et que la capacité de mentalisation se développe par des processus verbaux et non verbaux, il est possible de penser que les facteurs qui influencent le développement de cette habileté varient d'un groupe culturel à un autre (Gagné *et al.* 2021). La mentalisation a été explorée par Joelle Robert (2021) dans le cadre d'une étude menée dans la communauté mohawk de Kahnawake. Le programme «Cercle de sécurité parentale» qui consiste en une intervention de groupe de huit semaines visant à renforcer la capacité de mentalisation parentale, a été adapté culturellement et mis en œuvre dans le contexte d'une étude pilote. Selon Robert, cette approche centrée sur l'esprit communautaire, le lien à l'environnement et la résilience s'harmonisait bien avec les valeurs de cette communauté autochtone. Trois études de cas ont permis d'évaluer l'impact de cette intervention basée sur la mentalisation sur le développement de cette habileté chez les enfants d'âge préscolaire issus de la communauté mohawk. Les résultats soulignent le développement d'une sécurité accrue dans la relation parent-enfant, essentielle à la transmission de la mentalisation, ainsi qu'à l'émergence de précurseurs de mentalisation chez les jeunes enfants.

La figure 3 tente d'illustrer le développement de la capacité de mentalisation en contexte de traumatismes historiques, intergénérationnels et complexes. Enfin, la capacité de mentalisation est considérée par plusieurs auteurs comme étant un facteur de résilience en contexte de trauma (voir, par exemple : Berthelot *et al.* 2014; Tessier *et al.* 2016) et, plus spécifiquement, à la suite de l'exposition à des stressors interpersonnels associés à l'adversité familiale durant l'enfance (Fonagy *et al.* 1994). La capacité de mentalisation permettrait notamment de réduire le recours à des comportements défensifs et favoriserait un sens cohérent de l'identité (Fonagy *et al.* 1994), dimension qui a été profondément ébranlée par les faits historiques vécus par les Inuit. Lors de la formation, l'accent a été mis sur les caractéristiques de la relation parent-enfant (et de la relation entre l'intervenant, l'enfant ou la famille) qui favorisent le développement et l'utilisation de la mentalisation dans le but d'aider les individus à penser les traumatismes au lieu de les agir.

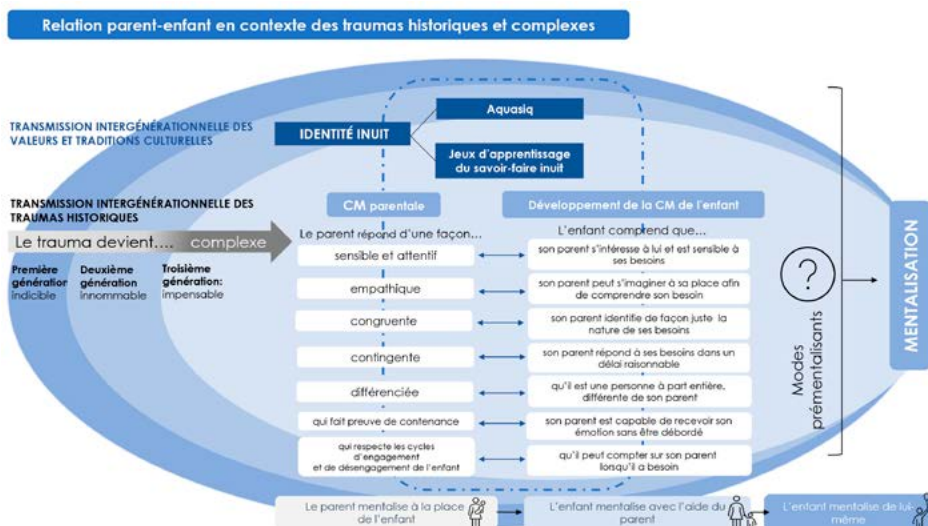


Figure 3. Développement de la capacité de mentalisation de l'enfant en contexte de traumatismes historiques, intergénérationnels et complexes.

L'approche phénoménologique soutenant l'intervention en contexte inuit

L'approche phénoménologique nous est apparue particulièrement utile dans un contexte où les intervenants proviennent de la même communauté que les personnes auprès de qui ils interviennent. La méthode phénoménologique consiste en la mise en suspend de nos perspectives (Husserl 2013). Les intervenants inuit ont probablement donc intériorisé des présupposés

en apparence semblables parce qu'ils ont été affectés par les mêmes faits historiques dans lesquels s'inscrivent les traumatismes intergénérationnels et complexes qui affectent la plupart des membres de leur communauté. Pour aider les familles, ils doivent bien différencier leurs traumatismes de ceux des autres. C'est cette différenciation primordiale qui leur permettra d'utiliser leurs propres expériences et leur résilience pour intervenir auprès d'eux. L'approche phénoménologique permettrait aux intervenants de mieux composer avec le stress et la fatigue de compassion. En effet, cette posture est particulièrement utile lorsque les traumatismes d'une autre personne confrontent l'individu à ses propres vulnérabilités (Stolorow 2013). D'abord, cela suggère que lorsqu'on intervient auprès d'une personne traumatisée, il n'est pas souhaitable de se détourner de son expérience traumatique en offrant de fausses réassurances sur le fait que le temps va guérir les blessures ou en proposant des attitudes de lâcher-prise. Ensuite, cette approche accorde une grande importance à la qualité de la relation entre l'intervenant et l'individu en difficulté. Ainsi, le changement serait principalement tributaire d'un processus où ce type de relation permettrait à la personne traumatisée de se sentir reçue, comprise et validée dans son expérience émotive. Enfin, pour être en mesure d'aider une personne dans un contexte de traumatismes historiques, intergénérationnels et complexes, l'intervenant doit apprendre à reconnaître et tolérer ses propres vulnérabilités afin de pouvoir accueillir les douleurs émotionnelles difficilement supportables et récurrentes qui peuvent être suscitées par le travail auprès des pairs ayant vécu des traumatismes semblables. Ainsi, les mondes émotionnels endommagés des personnes traumatisées peuvent être soutenus et respectés à l'intérieur d'un engagement compréhensif, bienveillant et empathique au sein de leur relation, dans laquelle les états traumatisés peuvent être progressivement transformés en sentiments douloureux, mais supportables. C'est ainsi que la douleur émotionnelle et la vulnérabilité existentielle trouvent une forme de « maison relationnelle » leur permettant d'être davantage intégrées de manière transparente et constitutive à l'identité de l'individu (Stolorow 2013). Lors de la formation, l'accent a été mis sur la posture interne de l'intervenant : reconnaître ses forces afin d'avoir confiance en ses ressources personnelles, apprendre à tolérer ses propres traumatismes pour pouvoir accueillir ceux d'autrui, accepter la douleur émotionnelle liée à ses propres traumatismes, reconnaître ses limites personnelles dans l'écoute d'une autre personne afin d'identifier les éléments qui affectent sa propre capacité d'empathie et être conscient de soi et de l'autre, séparément, ce qui aide à mieux composer avec le trauma, le stress et la fatigue de compassion. L'objectif ultime visait à aider les intervenants de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik à devenir une maison relationnelle aux yeux des membres de la communauté de Kangiqsualujuaq.

La gestion des crises en contexte de traumas historiques, intergénérationnels et complexes

Les intervenants de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik sont fréquemment confrontés à des situations de crises, souvent liées à la violence entre les membres d'une même famille et à la consommation d'alcool ou de drogues. Lors de ces crises, ils doivent intervenir auprès d'adultes et d'enfants en situation de grande vulnérabilité et désorganisés sur les plans émotionnel et comportemental. Ce bloc de formation comprend des explications concernant le fonctionnement cérébral en situation de stress aigu. En fait, la capacité de mentalisation étant une fonction, dite «supérieure», qui siège au niveau de différentes aires du cortex cérébral (la partie la plus évoluée du cerveau), est mise à mal en situation de crise. Dans un contexte de stress aigu, de façon adaptative, on observe un passage d'un fonctionnement basé sur le cortex cérébral (par exemple, la capacité à mentaliser) vers des zones sous-corticales associées à la réponse de stress et de survie (de type combat, fuite ou sidération). En raison de leurs expériences d'adversité, les personnes ayant vécu des traumas historiques, relationnels et complexes sont susceptibles d'avoir un seuil abaissé de passage des fonctions supérieures à la réponse de stress. Ceci s'explique, entre autres, par une exposition chronique à des stressseurs importants les rendant plus vigilants et sensibles aux indices pouvant suggérer leur présence. La robustesse de la capacité de mentalisation d'un individu est aussi contributive à la vitesse de ce passage. Une détresse accrue, comme celle qui caractérise une situation de crise où la violence est présente, fait perdre aux personnes impliquées, au moins temporairement, leur capacité de mentalisation (Domon-Archambault *et al.* 2023). Il est fort probable que la dérégulation affective et comportementale des différents membres d'une famille provoque de la détresse chez l'intervenant en raison des états émotifs intenses et psychiquement informés qui habitent les personnes avec qui il travaille. Ces états émotifs peuvent se traduire par des comportements tout aussi intenses chez les intervenants (par exemple, un retrait massif de la situation ou une agressivité verbale, selon Bateman et Fonagy 2012). Dans ce bloc de formation, les techniques à privilégier lors des interventions en situation de crise sont aussi abordées.

L'intervention auprès des enfants en contexte de traumas historiques, intergénérationnels et complexes

Les rencontres avec les intervenants de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik nous ont permis de constater que leurs interventions sont presque exclusivement destinées aux adultes. Pourtant, il serait primordial d'aborder les séquelles des événements potentiellement traumatiques vécus par les enfants. En effet, si aucune intervention n'est offerte aux enfants, ils risquent de répéter l'histoire traumatique vécue au sein de leur famille et ainsi de perpétuer la transmission intergénérationnelle de traumas historiques et complexes.

Ce bloc de formation est centré sur l'utilisation du jeu comme moyen d'intervention auprès des enfants. Le jeu symbolique permet aux enfants de mettre en scène ce qui les habite, de représenter des situations auxquelles ils sont confrontés, de communiquer ces situations aux adultes (Alvarez 1988) et de trouver des solutions à leurs difficultés (Chazan 2005). À travers le jeu, les enfants peuvent revisiter les expériences traumatiques vécues et leur donner un sens (Chabot *et al.* 2015). Jouer donne ainsi aux enfants un sentiment de contrôle sur ce qui les habite (Alvarez et Phillips 1998), en leur procurant un espace mental dans lequel ils peuvent trouver des solutions à leurs difficultés et réduire la tension engendrée par les émotions qui y sont associées. Pourtant, pour qu'un enfant ait accès au jeu symbolique, il doit non seulement se sentir en sécurité, mais également pouvoir compter sur autrui pour lui refléter les émotions et les réactions qui surgissent dans le jeu (Alvarez et Phillips 1998). Pour les enfants ayant vécu des traumatismes, le jeu représente une occasion de transformer leur passé et d'appivoiser les images et les sentiments intrusifs qui y sont liés (Chazan et Cohen 2010). Pourtant, ce processus n'est possible que lorsque les enfants ont réussi à développer une capacité de mentalisation suffisamment bonne, processus qui peut aussi être entravé par l'exposition à différents stressseurs ou traumatismes. Puisque les enfants n'ont pas développé la capacité d'abstraction nécessaire pour parler des expériences traumatiques, ces dernières s'exprimeront à travers une forme de jeu pathologique, le jeu traumatique, qui consiste en la répétition compulsive du trauma ou des thèmes traumatiques dans le jeu. Dans ce cas, le jeu se termine souvent de la même façon, ne permettant pas le soulagement de l'anxiété liée au trauma (Romano *et al.* 2008; Terr 1990, 1991). Les traumatismes historiques, intergénérationnels et complexes qui affligent certaines communautés inuit peuvent affecter la disponibilité de certains parents pour prendre soin de leurs enfants et, par conséquent, le développement du jeu symbolique de ces derniers. Dans ce bloc de formation, nous abordons le jeu symbolique, le jeu traumatique, ainsi que les techniques permettant aux intervenants d'utiliser le jeu pour venir en aide aux enfants confrontés à différentes formes de maltraitance au sein de leur famille, s'il y a lieu.

Premier cycle de formation et adaptation culturelle de celle-ci

Un premier cycle de formation, étalé sur quatre demi-journées, a été effectué auprès des intervenantes de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik. Deux travailleurs sociaux allochtones (une femme et un homme), qui sont bien intégrés à la communauté de Kangiqsualujuaq, ont également pris part à la formation avec le consentement des intervenantes inuit. À la demande des chercheurs, les participants allochtones ont adopté une posture réservée afin de favoriser davantage la participation des intervenantes inuit. La formation a été offerte au Centre d'études nordiques (CEN) du village. Du café, d'autres

brevages et de la nourriture ont été servis afin de faciliter les échanges. La formation a été présentée comme étant la résultante du travail réalisé à partir des groupes de discussion. Nous avons précisé que le contenu de quatre blocs de formation comprenait des notions que les Qallunaat trouvent utiles pour le travail auprès des personnes ayant vécu des traumatismes en situation de crise. Nous avons ensuite spécifié que l'objectif de ce premier cycle de formation était de recueillir leurs points de vue afin de compléter l'adaptation culturelle de celle-ci. La formation a été enregistrée en audio avec le consentement de l'ensemble des participantes. Elle a été présentée en anglais. Lorsque nécessaire, une intervenante inuit a traduit le contenu de la formation à la demande de ses collègues. Celle-ci a également traduit en anglais les propos de ses collègues lorsqu'elles préféraient s'exprimer en inuktitut. La formule utilisée nous a permis d'aborder un bloc de formation par jour.

Chaque demi-journée de formation a été organisée de la façon suivante. D'abord, le bloc concerné a été présenté aux intervenantes inuit. Ensuite, une discussion relative au contenu du bloc a été entamée. Lors de ces discussions, il a été demandé aux intervenantes inuit d'aborder les points suivants : leurs réactions face au contenu de la formation, la pertinence du contenu pour le travail qu'elles réalisent dans la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik, les changements nécessaires à l'adaptation du contenu à la population inuit et les éléments devant être ajoutés pour compléter le processus d'adaptation de la formation. Les intervenantes inuit ont apporté des précisions permettant de mieux adapter culturellement le contenu de la formation. Elles ont également ajouté des exemples des situations vécues à la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik qui ont permis d'enrichir le contenu de la formation. Après, la vignette clinique a été présentée et discutée à la lumière du contenu abordé lors de la présentation de chaque bloc de formation. Cette méthode de travail nous a permis de revenir plusieurs fois sur la situation présentée dans la vignette clinique dans le but de donner un aperçu plus complet du travail pouvant être effectué avec une famille en situation de crise. Ce premier cycle de formation nous a permis de faire quelques constats. Premièrement, les intervenantes ont besoin d'avoir un espace de parole dans lequel elles pourraient parler de leur souffrance personnelle et professionnelle. Deuxièmement, le partage de leurs expériences semble accroître leur sentiment de compétence, leur motivation au travail et leur niveau d'engagement auprès de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik. Troisièmement, les intervenantes ont réalisé que le travail auprès des enfants est souvent négligé dans la gestion d'une crise familiale. En ce sens, les connaissances sur le jeu semblent avoir ouvert une porte à la compréhension de la souffrance des enfants et aux interventions auprès de ces derniers.

Élaboration d'une seconde version de la formation

Cette dernière étape réfère à la révision de la formation à la lumière des réactions et des commentaires des intervenantes inuit. Les enregistrements audios des blocs de formation ont été écoutés par les chercheurs-étudiants dans le but de reformuler la façon de présenter les notions abordées lors de la formation et de mieux adapter les exemples utilisés pour illustrer ces notions.

Conclusion et pistes de travail futur

Cet article avait pour objectif de présenter le processus d'élaboration et d'adaptation culturelle d'une formation visant à aider les intervenants de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik à reconnaître, être conscients et tenir compte de leurs propres traumatismes historiques, intergénérationnels et complexes pour pouvoir venir en aide aux enfants et aux familles en situation de crise dans la communauté inuit de Kangiqsualujjuaq, au Nunavik. Des groupes de discussion effectués auprès des intervenants, des aînés et des membres clés de la communauté ont permis aux chercheurs de choisir les thèmes qui ont été abordés lors de la formation. Un premier cycle de formation a permis de valider les thèmes choisis et d'adapter culturellement le contenu de la formation. Ce cycle a également permis de constater que les intervenantes de la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik ont besoin d'avoir des espaces de parole dans lesquels elles pourraient aborder leur souffrance personnelle et professionnelle. Ces espaces pourraient leur permettre d'accroître leur sentiment de compétence, leur motivation au travail et leur niveau d'engagement quant aux services offerts aux autres membres de la communauté. Enfin, la formation nous a également permis de constater que le travail auprès des enfants est souvent négligé dans la gestion d'une crise familiale à la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik.

Le premier cycle de formation a été enregistré dans le but de réviser son contenu à la lumière des réactions et des commentaires des intervenantes inuit afin de compléter l'adaptation culturelle de la formation. D'autres activités pourraient être développées en vue de favoriser l'appropriation des notions abordées dans celle-ci. Par exemple, il a été suggéré de faire des mises en situation et de jeux de rôles permettant aux intervenantes de pratiquer les interventions apprises lors de la formation. Il a été également proposé de traduire la formation en inuktitut dans le but de favoriser l'appropriation des notions abordées dans celle-ci. Une autre session de formation a été offerte aux intervenants inuit et qallunaaq de l'école Ulluriaq. L'équipe de recherche travaille présentement sur le développement d'un outil électronique, basé sur la notion de mentalisation et sous forme de jeu, visant à aider les enfants qui sont confrontés à des situations de violence au sein de leurs familles.

Remerciements

Les auteurs souhaitent remercier le Conseil de recherche en sciences humaines du Canada (CRSH) pour leur appui financier. Ils souhaitent également remercier la Maison de la famille Qarmaapik et les membres de la communauté du Kangiqsualujuaq pour leur chaleureux accueil et leur contribution à la recherche.

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Voix inuit
Inuit Voices

Ce qu'on m'a raconté au sujet d'Aukkautik

Par Taamusi Qumaq

Propos transcrits, traduits et annotés par Marc-Antoine Mahieuⁱ

Dans un enregistrement non daté, comptant parmi les ressources éducatives de la commission scolaire du Nunavik (Kativik Ilisarniliriniq), Taamusi Qumaq a raconté l'histoire d'Aukkautik telle que Juanasi Qinnuaajuaq (1895-1964) la lui avait transmise. Ce document de quinze minutes et quelques secondes, d'une grande valeur, est ici transcrit et traduit pour la première fois, à partir d'une analyse linguistique approfondie.

Le texte qui a paru dans la revue *Tumivut* en 1998 (numéro 10, pages 36-42) n'est pas la transcription des mots de Taamusi Qumaq. Il s'agit d'une réécriture complète, accompagnée d'une traduction en anglais, elle-même traduite en français. Dans la note introductive, la rédaction de la revue écrivait: «Unlike most oral histories recorded in *Tumivut*, this article is not a faithful translation;» rather, it has been revised to provide clarity, consistency and brevity». Il nous semble cependant que les propos de Taamusi Qumaq ne manquent ni de clarté ni de cohérence, et qu'ils méritent d'être connus dans leur intégralité.

Les évènements décrits ont eu lieu vers la fin du XIX^e siècle. En 2015, Lisa Koperqualuk a publié de passionnantes recherches sur Aukkautik dans son ouvrage sur les traditions juridiques au Nunavik. La compagnie Aaqsiq a récemment présenté une adaptation théâtrale de l'histoire.

Je remercie Kativik Ilisarniliriniq d'avoir contribué à mettre en valeur la parole de Taamusi Qumaq. Tukirqi Pilurtoot m'a aidé à transcrire précisément l'enregistrement. John-Samuel MacKay a amélioré ma traduction anglaise en tenant compte de l'inuktitut. Je les remercie vivement tous les deux.

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Aukkautiup unikkaatauningit

Aukkautikkulu Kumainnakullu nunaqatigiiviniit ukiumi, tamaani Ivujiviup mitsitinni, qikirtami Aqiggituumik atilingmi, qanuitjagatik, tamarmik inuuqatigiitsiasutik, katutjiqatigiitsiasutik uumajursiunikkut.

Taima inuuqatigiitsialauraluarsutik, qanuinnatumut tikitaulirtuviniik Aukkautillu Qupirruallu, Kumainnaup irninga, Maulirvimut aullatuviniik puijisiursutik. Taima, puijiqatsiangimmat, imaapimmiitumik pitsiulaamik pitsiulaarniasijuviniik, imaapimmi akiliriitsutik akianiittulu taimailingatsutik qukiriaqattaramik. Taima, Aukkautik pitsiulaamik qukiriarsuni, akianiittumik inungmik Qupirruallummik qukiikallalirtuviniq. Immaqaa saku imarmut tulaursuni, nunamut, ilaa inungmut nammanaarviqarnimat, qukiituinnaalirtuviniq, tuqutsugu Qupirrualluk, atinga, Kumainnaup irninga, pijaarqutangngitumik.

Taima, Aukkaut unnuatuqaaluulirmat anirralirtuviniq inuarami ilirasunnikuminut Kumainnamik, inuactualuugami. Qaungmat kisiani uqautjigiartulirtuviniugunaq Kumainnamik, aitsisinirarsuni tuqungajumik. Asuilaa aitsisijuviniq Aukkautik uqautitsugulu Kumainnaq imaak: «irnira irnitaarinialirqait».

Asuilaa aitsitillugu Aukkautik tuqungajumik qukirtavinirminik, Kumainnaq Aukkautiup anirranginnik tuqurailirniq, ilalimaanginnik, arnanganik, qiturnganginnik, nungutsugit. Aukkautik tikilirami, anirrangit nungutaumalirtut. Aukkautik ningngapuq angijumik irsinarsisunilu. Ningngakami, takujalimaaminik tuqutsigumatuinnalirsuni piusiqalirniq.

Taima, Kumainnaq Aukkautimik katisilirtuviniq, sunauvva paasijualuutsutik. Paajualuulaurutik paap igluup aputiup paangata silataani, Kumainnaq iglumut itirialirnimat, Kumainnaq kapijauvuq Aukkautimut, tuqutsugu, itingagut, itingagut kapijaugami savingmut.

Aukkautik akimajuttisairuppuq.

Aukkautik inutuulirquq nunalingmini. Aglaat angmaturaqalirquq, igluminik aputimik kilaisimalirquq, killamik itsuararviminik qaijuqalirmangaat, aggituqalirmangaat. Aniniujarunnaituq.

Asuilaa tikitaulirniq aullaanut qiturngariinut, Aullalualukkunut, maruunik qiturngalingnut. Aippanga amaq, aippanga angijuulirtuq turusiq. Nurqakamik tikitsutik Aukkautikkut nunanganut.

Asuilaa Aullalualuup nulianga itirialirami, augaalungnik paap iluani takulirami, sirijualuulirtuq nirilangagiaq aliamut, sunauvva inuit aungit. Aullalualuk tukisitsautigijuugaluarli uumajuviniup augingngitanganik, arnaminillu uqautjigunnasitjagani itiliriirnat. Ullariatiguurunaulirtilugu tainna arnaq, sikkivallaaluk sikkivallaalutsaqq. Sunauvva arnaq qukirtaq amaatsaralua.

Aullalualuk qamutiminut arpasijuq, qukiutiminut, naqitarutiit aksunaat killutuinnasugit, tigusigunnasijuq qukiutiminik sakkuminillu. Qukiajaluutsuni qamutiik ungataaniigami, talirmigut qukirtaugaluarsuni, aturunnainarmat, ungammut qimaksikami, tuqutaungngituq. Qimaalirami tukimuatuinnajagani arpagirtuviniq, taikkua qukiutirqaaviniit sakkungit sukkainirsauinirmata. «Mappitartulialuit», taimaak atiqartitait, qukiutiutsutik sivullipaaviniit tikitsutik inungnut. Sikkivallamat tuaviriatqattasuni ammalu sikkivallamat nurqakallaqattarami, attutausaanitjangittuq ungasilliratarsuni.

Asuilaa Aullalualuk qimaagasuarami ujarauq aniniutitanganut tikiutilirniquq, ujarauq aniniqarmat tininnimi sikumi. Taima, taikaniilirami utarqituinnalirtuviniq Aukkautimik, ullatualuungmat, annaijaluujurigami Aullalualummik. Taikani utarqituinnalirtuviniq Aukkautimik, ullanginnaatuarpit Aukkautik qukirtautuinnalanganalirsuni Aullalualummik. Aukkautik ilimasulirami, irsilirtualuugami, utisituinnalirtuviniq igluminut. Aullalualuk annapuq, inuusivuq, sanatunikuminut qukirtaunginnami.

Aullalualuk inutsiuriasijuviniq qaujimagami nunamik inuktalingmik. Ijaittunik atilik nuna. Asuilaa ullaakut tikippuq Ijaittumiunut. Aullalualuk tusautigijauvuq Aukkautiup irsinarninganik. Aullalualuk unikkaapuq Ijaittumiunut qanuq piusiqalaurmangaarmi ammalu nulianga amaartuq tuqtaulaurninganik irniapingatalu piusinganik. Turusiapik, tainna Aullalualuup irniapinga, Aukkautiup qukirningimmauk sumigitsugu.

Ijaittumiut apirsusivut Aullalualungmik qanuittunik annuraaqarmangaat ammalu kinaummangaat tainna tuquraijuq. Aullalualuk kiuvuq Kumainnauniraitisuni tuquraijumik. Sunauvva Aukkautik Kumainnaup qulittanganik tuktujamik atulirnimat, Kumainnauniraijuviniq, tuqungalirtuup tuqtaviniirmata, itirqusugu itiriartutillugu igluminut.

Taikkua inniviviningit Ijaittumiut ukuangujuviniit: atingit Manualukkut, Turusilaakkut, Surnikut, asingillu. Nunaliit amisuiviniit.

Taima, ittungat Manualuk uqartuviniq: «Kumainnaq taimailuurniujatjangillaq, Aukaunginna» lajuviniq. Taima, qimaagumalirmata tagatagainnaq, Manualuk uqalirnimijuq: «qimaatsangilaukatta, qauppat qimaksialulaaliratta, turusiapik tikinniamat». Aullalualuup qimattavininga. Aukkautiup sumigitsugu tuqunningittanga. Manualuk ittuq suliqattatuviniq uqarami tamaat.

Ammalu Ijaittumiut arnangit aulasariartuviniit Ijaittuit tasinganut qimainnatautuinnalirniqut, anirrangit qimaksinirmata. Anirrangit igluvigatuinnaulirtulugit anirralirtuviniit, tainnalut turusiapik Aullalualuup irniapinga tikinnimitsuni igluvigarnut inuqarunnaitunut. Qanittulimaaraaluit qimaksinirmata tusatuaramik Aukkautik irsinalirmat.

Aukkautik malisinnimijuq qimaajunik iningitigut. Sallumiut tikitaugamik qimaajunut, qimaksilirnimijut taavunga Kangirsujuap mitsaanut. Aukkautik Sallunuurtuviniq inuqarunnaitunut. Aukkautik Salluniilirtulugu, unnuaq qannituvinaaluk inilijaarnirunnaisuni, mautjatualuk nuna, sikulu.

Aukkautik suviiruppuq, inutuusivuuq nuvummi, nuvulimaami, iluunnatik qimaksimata qanittulimaaraaluit Aukkautimik irsimut.

Taima, ukiuk marruuk naatillugik, ingirrajuqalirniquq tamauna tarratigit sanitartunik aujakkut, Akuliviup ungataagut, tamaunga siqiniup mitsaanut ingirrasutik, ilagiinik, Sallualualukkunik, Patsauraalukkunik, irniriinik. Taima, ingirragamik, takulirtuviniit tupiapingmik, nuirtaapingmik. Aukkautiup tupinga nalunarunnaisautigijuq, Aukkautik inutuummat nuvulimaami nunami.

Ittungat Sallualualuk aisijuviniq inutuutsuni, ilaminik uqautjisuni imaak: «taikaniiliruma tupirmi, qailangavusi tapitariittaililusi najararsigiittaililusi, Aukkautimut qukirtaupat, atausiq qukirtauniarmat». Taima tapitariittailiqujijuq Sallualualuk aisigami, taga imminik anniringngituq, ilaminik annigusunnisaugami. Sallualualuk uqariallasuni imaak: «qukiutiminut pigialangappaanga, qukiutiganik arsaaniartara, savimmut pigiarumappaanga, savinganik arsaaniartara». Sallualualuk sapingngituq, Aukkautimik nukinginnik qaujimannirami, inuuqatigivanniramiuk. Asuilaa Sallualualuk tikippuq Aukkautimut tukiapiup iluaniittumut, sanianut ingitsuni uqautitsuniullu imaak: «Aukkaut, ilimanartuqatjangillaq», taimailitsugu. Aukautiguuq sajuttualuk, upinnarani amisualungnik tuqutsisimagami inungnik. Sallualualuguuq ilangit tikiutilirnijut, katimajaulirmat Sallualualummut ittumut, Sallualualuguuq ilaminut uqarmisuni imaak: «tuqutsiniatjangillasi Aukkautimik, innikutta asittinut tuqtauraalulaarmat taimaak».

Taima, tiguartaarilirniqaa, tiguartaarilirtavininga Sallualualuup. Aukkautiguuq inuit immuaniirqajarpaningittuq taimangngat ilikkuuraapitsuni. Unnuamiguuq sinilirmata, tupatjuumijuqatuarmat siniktumik makikallatualuuvattuq Aukkautik pigiartaulangajuritsuni. Asuilaa, innisimalirami aarqiqajaranilu, taimangngat ilimanatuinnamat.

Ukiungulirtilugu maqaittuviniutsuni, tikisartutillugu utarqijaq. Imirtavimmit imirasuartilugu, qukiajausijuviniq tuqutsugu.

Tainna taimaittuviniq Aukkaut, taima.

Unikkaatuvinuq Juanasi Qinnuajuaq, Taamusi Qumarmut, uvangnut. Juanasi Qinnuajuaq ataatsialiviniq Sallualualungmik. Taitsumani Juanasi Qinnuajuaq turusiapiviniq suli, ilagijaujuviniutsunilu Aukkautik kamagijautillugu. Sallualualuk irniliviniq Patsauraalungmik. Patsauraaluk irniliviniq Juanasi Qinnuajuamik Aisa Tulugarmilu. Tulugaq Tulugaarjumik irniliviniq. Tulugaarjuk irniliviniq Aisakallamik Taamusi Tulugarmilu. Taamusi Tulugaq irnilik tallimanik, ilagijautillugu Jaipiti Nungaq. Taakkuataga.

Ce qu'on m'a raconté au sujet d'Aukkautik

La famille d'Aukkautik et la famille de Kumainnaq partageaient le même campement d'hiver, ici au sud d'Ivujivik, sur une île nommée Aqiggituuq¹. Ils n'avaient pas de difficultés, vivaient bien tous ensemble, et travaillaient en équipe pendant la chasse.

Mais alors qu'ils avaient bien vécu ensemble, un malheur frappa Aukkautik et Qupirrualluk, le fils de Kumainnaq. Ils étaient partis tous les deux chasser le phoque à Maulirvik². Comme il n'y avait guère de phoques, ils se mirent à chasser un guillemot à miroir³ qui se trouvait sur un petit chenal libre de glace. Ils étaient l'un en face de l'autre, chacun sur un des bords du petit chenal, quand ils tirèrent plusieurs coups de fusil. Or, Aukkautik, tirant sur le guillemot, toucha l'Inuk qui était sur l'autre bord, Qupirrualluk. La balle ricocha peut-être sur l'eau, mais comme elle atteignit la terre, précisément l'Inuk, Aukkautik tua par balle le dénommé Qupirrualluk, fils de Kumainnaq, sans l'avoir voulu.

Aukkaut⁴ rentra ensuite au campement, très tard dans la nuit, parce qu'il avait commis un homicide, un terrible homicide, et qu'il redoutait la réaction de Kumainnaq. Il n'alla parler à Kumainnaq que le lendemain, semble-t-il, disant qu'il partait tout de suite chercher le mort. Finalement, juste avant de partir, il dit à Kumainnaq : «tu auras mon fils comme fils adoptif».

Mais pendant qu'Aukkautik allait chercher la victime de son coup de fusil, Kumainnaq tua les membres du foyer d'Aukkautik, tous les membres du foyer, sa femme et ses enfants, jusqu'au dernier. Quand Aukkautik arriva au campement, son foyer avait été exterminé. Aukkautik entra alors dans une grande colère et devint dangereux. Sous l'effet de la colère, il était maintenant déterminé à tuer tous ceux qu'il voyait.

Puis Kumainnaq rencontra Aukkautik. C'est alors qu'un violent combat commença entre eux. Ils se battirent un moment devant l'entrée de la maison de neige de Kumainnaq, et quand ce dernier y pénétra, Aukkautik le tua d'un coup de couteau, que Kumainnaq reçut dans l'anus.

Plus personne n'était en mesure de se défendre contre Aukkautik.

Aukkautik était maintenant seul dans son campement. Il s'était même fait une ouverture, un trou qu'il avait percé dans sa maison de neige, par lequel il surveillait si quelqu'un s'approchait et venait jusque là. Il ne sortirait certainement plus⁵.

1. Littéralement, "endroit où abondent les perdrix des neiges (*Lagopus muta*)".

2. Littéralement, "endroit où chasser au trou de respiration".

3. *Cephus grylle*.

4. Variante du nom Aukkautik.

5. On comprend, implicitement, qu'Aukkautik était devenu cannibale.

Un jour arrivèrent des gens qui changeaient de territoire, c'était la famille d'Aullalualuk, avec ses deux enfants. L'un était un bébé sur le dos de sa mère, l'autre un garçon déjà grand. Ils faisaient une halte en arrivant sur le territoire de la famille d'Aukkautik.

Quand la femme d'Aullalualuk pénétra dans l'entrée, elle y vit de grandes taches de sang et lança le cri traditionnel de gratitude, heureuse à l'idée de manger. C'était en réalité le sang d'êtres humains. Aullalualuk comprit aussitôt qu'il ne s'agissait pas du sang d'un animal, mais ne put le dire à sa femme car elle était déjà à l'intérieur. Pendant qu'elle franchissait le double porche, semble-t-il, un grand coup de fusil retentit. La femme avait été abattue, alors qu'elle portait son bébé sur le dos.

Aullalualuk courut tout de suite vers son traîneau et son fusil, coupa les cordes qui retenaient les bagages, attrapa son fusil et ses munitions. Il tira plusieurs fois à l'abri derrière le traîneau. Il avait reçu une balle dans le bras mais pouvait toujours s'en servir. Il ne fut pas tué car il s'éloigna rapidement. Dans sa fuite il ne courut pas en ligne droite, car les balles des premiers fusils étaient plus lentes qu'aujourd'hui. Quand ils arrivèrent chez les Inuit, ces fusils avaient reçu le nom de *mappitartulialuit*⁶. Accélération puis s'arrêtant d'un coup à chaque détonation, il parvint à s'éloigner sans être atteint une deuxième fois.

Continuant de fuir, Aullalualuk finit par atteindre le refuge que lui offrait un rocher sur l'estran glacé. Puis, à cet endroit, il attendit Aukkautik, qui était parti à sa poursuite en pensant qu'Aullalualuk lui échappait. Aullalualuk attendait là en prévoyant de tirer sur Aukkautik si ce dernier continuait de le poursuivre. Mais Aukkautik se méfia, prit peur, et s'en retourna dans sa maison. Aullalualuk en avait réchappé, il vivrait, son habileté lui ayant permis de ne pas être abattu.

Aullalualuk partit chercher des gens sur un territoire habité qu'il connaissait. Ce territoire portait le nom d'Ijaittuit. On apprit par Aullalualuk qu'Aukkautik était dangereux. Aullalualuk raconta aux habitants d'Ijaittuit ce qui lui était arrivé, que sa femme s'était fait tuer avec un bébé sur le dos, et ce qu'il en était de son fils. Le fils d'Aullalualuk, son jeune garçon, n'avait pas été abattu par Aukkautik, qui l'avait trouvé trop petit.

Les habitants d'Ijaittuit interrogèrent alors Aullalualuk sur les vêtements et sur l'identité de celui qui tuait les gens. Aullalualuk leur répondit qu'il s'agissait de Kumainnaq. Il avait dit cette chose surprenante parce qu'Aukkautik utilisait la parka en peau de caribou de Kumainnaq, qui était mort, tué d'un coup de couteau dans l'anus alors qu'il allait rentrer dans sa maison.

6. Fusils à chargement par la bouche. Littéralement, « ceux qui ont quelque chose qui se soulève d'un côté ».

Voici le nom des familles que l'on pouvait rencontrer à Ijaittuit : c'étaient les familles de Manualuk, de Turusilaaq, de Surniq, et d'autres. Nombreux étaient ceux qui habitaient là.

Alors, le vieux Manualuk pris la parole : « Kumainnaq n'a certainement pas fait tout cela », dit-il, « c'est Aukkautik ». Comme les gens voulaient s'enfuir à l'instant même, Manualuk parla encore : « Ne commençons pas par nous enfuir, faisons-le demain, car le jeune garçon arrivera jusqu'ici ». C'était le fils qu'Aullalualuk avait laissé derrière lui. Aukkautik ne l'avait pas tué, le trouvant trop petit. Le vieux Manualuk avait raison chaque fois qu'il parlait.

Des femmes d'Ijaittuit qui étaient parties pêcher à travers la glace sur un lac de la région furent simplement laissées sur place, car les membres de leurs foyers avaient pris la fuite. Il ne restait de leurs foyers que des maisons de neige abandonnées lorsqu'elles rentrèrent chez elles, et le jeune garçon, le fils d'Aullalualuk, atteignit à son tour des maisons de neige que plus personne n'occupait. Absolument tous ceux qui se trouvaient dans les environs avaient fui en apprenant qu'Aukkautik était devenu dangereux.

Aukkautik se mit sur la piste des fugitifs grâce à leurs traces de traîneau. Les fugitifs arrivèrent chez les habitants de Salluit, qui prirent la fuite avec eux en direction de Kangiqsujuaq. Aukkautik arriva à Salluit, où il n'y avait plus personne. La nuit, alors qu'il était là-bas, il neigea beaucoup. La terre et la glace de mer se recouvrirent de neige molle, ne laissant plus voir aucune trace de traîneau. Démuni, Aukkautik se retrouvait seul sur la pointe du territoire, toute la pointe du territoire, car la peur avait fait fuir absolument tous ceux qui se trouvaient dans les environs.

Deux ans plus tard, pendant l'été, des familles voyagèrent ici, plus au nord, au-delà d'Akulivik, faisant des haltes de nuit en chemin vers le sud : c'étaient la famille de Sallualualuk et la famille de son fils, Patsuraaluk. Tandis qu'ils avançaient, ils aperçurent une petite tente ronde. Il fut aussitôt clair qu'il s'agissait de la tente d'Aukkautik, puisque personne à part lui ne vivait dans toute la pointe du territoire.

Avant de s'y rendre seul, le vieux Sallualualuk dit aux siens : « Quand je serai là-bas, à la tente, approchez-vous en ordre dispersé pour ne pas être abattus d'un seul coup. Si Aukkautik touche quelqu'un, ce ne sera pas plus d'une personne ». Sallualualuk leur demanda cela avant de s'en aller, car il accordait plus de valeur à la vie de ses proches qu'à la sienne. Il ajouta : « S'il m'attaque avec son fusil, je lui arracherai son fusil ; s'il veut m'attaquer avec son couteau, je lui arracherai son couteau ». Sallualualuk s'en sentait capable, il connaissait Aukkautik et sa force, pour avoir vécu avec lui. Sallualualuk parvint finalement dans la tente d'Aukkautik, s'assit à ses côtés et lui dit : « Aukkaut, il n'y a pas de raison de te méfier ». C'est ce qu'il lui dit. On raconte qu'Aukkautik tremblait beaucoup, ce qui n'est pas surprenant, car il avait tué de très nombreuses personnes. Les proches de Sallualualuk arrivèrent,

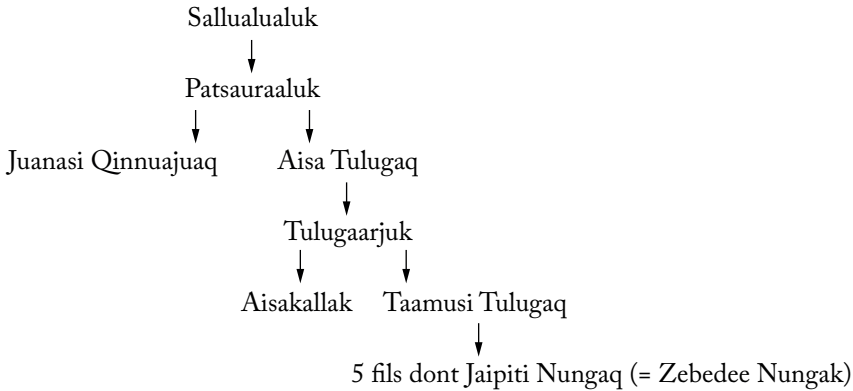
dit-on, lorsqu'Aukkautik était auprès du vieil homme. On raconte que ce dernier dit à ses proches: «Ne tuez pas Aukkautik, il se fera tuer par d'autres gens si nous en rencontrons».

Puis Sallualualuk l'adopta, le prit comme fils. On raconte qu'Aukkautik ne parvenait pas à rester au milieu du groupe, qu'il était toujours un peu à l'écart. La nuit, quand ils s'étaient endormis, si l'un d'entre eux sortait légèrement de son sommeil, Aukkautik se levait d'un coup, croyant qu'on allait l'attaquer. Il était maintenant relié à d'autres personnes, mais ne pouvait s'amender, forçant les autres à rester méfiants.

L'hiver venu, alors qu'il était presque arrivé de la chasse, on l'attendit. Pendant qu'il buvait à une source, on le tua de plusieurs coups de fusil.

Ainsi fut donc Aukkaut.

C'est ce que raconta Juanasi Qinnuajuaq, à moi Taamusi Qumaq. Sallualualuk était le grand-père de Juanasi Qinnuajuaq. À l'époque, ce dernier était encore un jeune garçon et faisait partie du groupe qui s'occupa d'Aukkautik. Patsauraaluk était le fils de Sallualualuk. Juanasi Qinnuajuaq et Aisa Tulugaq étaient les fils de Patsauraaluk. Tulugaarjuk était le fils d'Aisa Tulugaq. Aisakallak et Taamusi Tulugaq étaient les fils de Tulugaarjuk. Taamusi Tulugaq eut cinq fils, parmi lesquels Jaipiti Nungaq⁷. Voilà.



7. Zebedee Nungak.

What I've been told about Aukkautik

Aukkautik's family and Kumainnaq's family shared the same winter camp, here, south of Ivujivik, on an island called Aqiggituuq.⁸ They didn't have any problems, lived well together, and worked as a team when hunting.

But even though they had lived well together, misfortune struck Aukkautik and Kumainnaq's son Qupirruuluk. They had both gone seal hunting in Maulirvik.⁹ There were hardly any seals, so they set out to hunt a black guillemot¹⁰ on a small ice-free channel. They were facing each other, each on one side of the channel, when they fired several rifle shots. Aukkautik, firing at the guillemot, hit Qupirruuluk, the Inuk on the other side. The bullet may have ricocheted off the water, but as it reached the land, precisely the Inuk, Aukkautik shot and killed Qupirruuluk, son of Kumainnaq, without meaning to.

Aukkaut¹¹ then returned to camp, very late at night, because he had committed homicide, a terrible homicide, and feared Kumainnaq's reaction. It is said that he didn't speak to Kumainnaq until the next day, when he said he would fetch the dead man right away. Finally, just before leaving, he said to Kumainnaq: "You will have my son as your adopted son."

But while Aukkautik was fetching the man he had shot, Kumainnaq killed the members of Aukkautik's household: his wife and children, every last one of them. When Aukkautik arrived at the camp, his family had been exterminated. He was overcome by an immense anger and became dangerous. Furious, he was now determined to kill every person he saw.

Then Kumainnaq met Aukkautik and that's when a violent fight broke out between them. They fought for a while in front of the entrance to Kumainnaq's snow house, and when Kumainnaq entered the house, he was stabbed by Aukkautik, who killed him with a stab wound to the anus.

No one could defend themselves against Aukkautik anymore.

Aukkautik was now alone in his camp. He had even made an opening for himself, a hole he had made in his snow house, through which he would watch to see if anyone came near. He would certainly never come out again.¹²

One day, there arrived some people leaving for another territory: They were Aullalualuk's family, with their two children; one was a baby on its mother's back and the other was a grown-up boy. They were making a stopover upon reaching the territory of Aukkautik's family.

8. Literally, "place where snow partridges (*Lagopus muta*) abound."

9. Literally, "place to hunt at the breathing hole."

10. *Cephus grylle*.

11. A variant of the name Aukkautik.

12. By this, it is inferred that Aukkautik has become a cannibal.

When Aullalualuk's wife entered the doorway, she saw large bloodstains and gave the traditional cry of gratitude, happy to be eating soon. It was, in fact, the blood of humans. Aullalualuk understood at once that it wasn't animal blood, but couldn't tell his wife because she was already inside. The story goes that as she crossed the double porch, a loud shot rang out. The woman had been shot, even though she was carrying her baby on her back.

Aullalualuk immediately ran to his sled and rifle, cut the ropes holding their baggage, and grabbed his rifle and ammunition. He fired several shots from behind the sled. He had been shot in the arm, but could still use it. He wasn't killed because he quickly moved away. He didn't run in a straight line as he fled, because the bullets from the first rifles were slower than they are today. Back then, by the time they reached Inuit, these rifles had been given the name *mappitartulialuit*.¹³ Accelerating and then stopping with each detonation, he managed to get away without being hit a second time.

Continuing to flee, Aullalualuk eventually reached the shelter of a rock on the icy foreshore. There, he waited for Aukkautik, who had gone after him, thinking Aullalualuk was escaping him. Aullalualuk waited there, planning to shoot Aukkautik if the latter continued to pursue him. But Aukkautik became suspicious and scared, and returned to his house. Aullalualuk had escaped, and would live, his skill having saved him from being shot.

Aullalualuk set off to find people in an inhabited territory he was familiar with. This territory was called Ijaituit. From Aullalualuk, the news of Aukkautik's danger was heard. Aullalualuk told the people of Ijaituit what had happened to him, that his wife had been killed with a baby on her back, and what had happened to his son. Aullalualuk's boy, his young son, had not been shot by Aukkautik, who considered him too small.

The people of Ijaituit then asked Aullalualuk about the clothes and identity of the man who was killing people. Aullalualuk told them it was Kumainnaq. He said this surprising thing because Aukkautik was using the caribou-skin parka of Kumainnaq, who had died from a stab wound to the anus as he entered his house.

Here are the names of the families one could come upon in Ijaituit: Manualuk, Turusilaaq, Surniq, and others. Many people lived there.

Then old Manualuk spoke up: "Kumainnaq certainly didn't do all this," he said. "It's Aukkautik." As the people wanted to run away at that point, Manualuk spoke again: "Let's not start running away, let's do it tomorrow, because the boy will arrive here." It was the son Aullalualuk had left behind. Aukkautik had not killed him, considering him too small. Old Manualuk was right every time he spoke.

13. Muzzle-loading rifles. Literally, "those with something that lifts on one side."

The women of Ijaittuit, who had gone ice fishing on a local lake, were simply left behind, as the members of their households had fled. When they came back, all that remained of their homes were abandoned snow houses, and the young boy, Aullalualuk's son, in turn reached snow houses no longer occupied by anyone. Absolutely everyone in the vicinity had fled upon learning that Aukkautik had become dangerous.

Aukkautik set out on the trail of the fugitives by following their sled tracks. The fugitives reached the inhabitants of Salluit, who fled with them towards Kangiqsujuaq. Aukkautik arrived in Salluit, where no one was left. That night, while he was there, it snowed heavily. The land and sea ice were covered with soft snow, leaving no trace of a sled. Destitute, Aukkautik found himself alone on the tip of the territory, the whole tip of the territory, for fear had scared off absolutely everyone in the vicinity.

Two years later, during the summer, families traveled there, further north, beyond Akulivik, making overnight stops on their way south: they were Sallualualuk's family and the family of his son, Patsauraluk. As they moved along, they spotted a small round tent. It was immediately clear that this was Aukkautik's tent, since no one but him lived on the whole tip of the territory.

Before going there alone, old Sallualualuk said to his people: "When I get to the tent, approach in a dispersed way, so as not to be shot all at once. If Aukkautik hits anyone, it won't be more than one." Sallualualuk asked them this before leaving, because he valued the lives of his relatives more than his own. He added: "If he attacks me with his rifle, I'll tear his rifle from him; if he wants to attack me with his knife, I'll tear his knife from him." Sallualualuk felt he could do it; he knew Aukkautik and his strength, having lived with him. Sallualualuk finally reached Aukkautik's tent, sat down beside him, and said to him: "Aukkaut, there's no reason to be wary." That's what he told him. Aukkautik is said to have trembled a great deal, which is not surprising, given that he had killed so many people. Sallualualuk's relatives arrived, it is said, while Aukkautik was with the old man. It is said that the latter told his relatives: "Don't kill Aukkautik; if we meet any other people, he'll be killed by them."

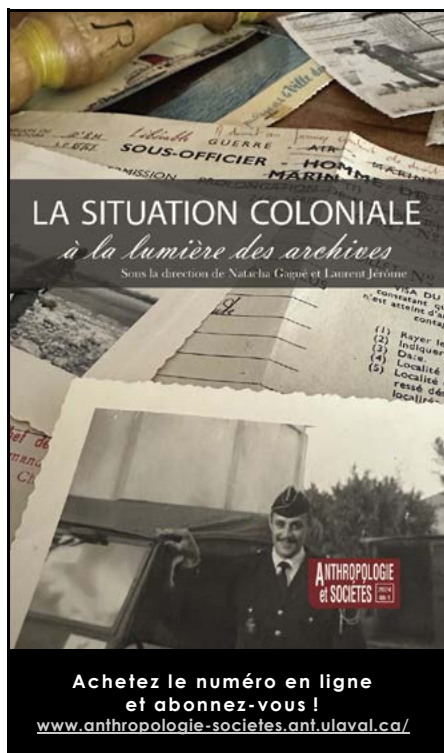
Then Sallualualuk adopted him, taking him as his son. The story goes that Aukkautik couldn't stay in the middle of the group, that he was always a little apart. At night, when they had fallen asleep, if one of them woke up slightly, Aukkautik would jump to his feet, thinking he was about to be attacked. Although he was now linked to other people, he could still not make amends, forcing the others to remain wary.

When winter came and he had almost arrived from hunting, they waited for him. As he drank from a spring, he was shot several times.

So that was Aukkait.

This is what Juanasi Qinnuajuaq told me, Taamusi Qumaq. Sallualualuk was Juanasi Qinnuajuaq's grandfather. At the time, the latter was still a young boy and part of the group that took care of Aukkait. Patsuraaluk was Sallualualuk's son. Juanasi Qinnuajuaq and Aisa Tulugaq were Patsuraaluk's sons. Tulugaarjuk was Aisa Tulugaq's son. Aisakallak and Taamusi Tulugaq were sons of Tulugaarjuk. Taamusi Tulugaq had five sons, including Jaipiti Nungaq.¹⁴ That's it.

14. Zebedee Nungak.



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Rahm, Jrène et Shirley Tagalik (dir.). 2024. *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit: Ce que les Inuits savent depuis toujours*. Montréal: Presses Universitaires du Québec, 324 pages.

Recension d'ouvrage par Frédéric Laugrandⁱ



Paru d'abord en anglais sous la direction de Joe Karetak, Frank Tester et Shirley Tagalik, cet ouvrage est un des premiers à paraître en français sur le thème de l'*Inuit qaujimajatuqangit*. Cette notion, rendue ici par «Ce que les Inuit savent depuis toujours» me semble se traduire plus adéquatement par «Les savoirs passé que les Inuit considèrent toujours pertinents», du fait que cette dernière expression les présentent de manière plus dynamiques et moins statiques. L'ethnolinguiste Michèle Therrien (2001) explique que *-tuqa(q)-* renvoie précisément à quelque chose d'ancien qui est toujours utile. Il s'agit d'un détail, mais

il est important à rappeler tant les détracteurs de l'*Inuit qaujimajatuqangit* le dépeignent comme des savoirs du temps passé.

On aurait aimé aussi qu'une section de l'ouvrage analyse de manière plus critique et didactique le contenu qui se cache derrière ce concept politique, avec ses risques (Laugrand et Oosten 2018) et qu'il s'accompagne d'un outil bibliographique (voir les articles de Francis Lévesque (1999) et de George Wenzel (2004)). Plusieurs textes publiés depuis plus d'un demi-siècle offrent également des contenus tout à fait indispensables pour saisir les savoirs inuit. À titre d'exemple, citons l'ouvrage de Wim Rasing pour la région d'Igloodik, *Too Many People* (1994), lequel vient d'être republié par le Nunavut Arctic College. Citons aussi les séries du Nunavut Arctic College

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(*Interviewing Inuit Elders; Inuit Perspectives on the XXth Century*, etc.), le vaste compendium édité par John Bennett et Susan Rowley (2004), *Uqalurait*, etc. Ce point est d'autant plus important que le contenu de l'ouvrage met en valeur les perspectives d'ainés de différentes régions du Nunavut et qui ont pour la plupart fortement contribué aux ouvrages précédents cités ci-dessus. C'est le cas des deux Nattilingmiut, Mariano Aupilaarjuk et de Jose Angutinngurniq (par exemple, Oosten et Laugrand 2007).

En plus d'un avant-propos de Shirley Tagalik, et d'un avant-propos de l'édition française rédigée par Shirley Tagalik, Joe Karetak, Jène Rahm et la traductrice Catherine Ego, le livre se poursuit par une introduction et une brève synthèse de l'histoire récente des Inuit rédigés respectivement par Joe Karetak et Frank Tester, sans oublier l'épilogue de Margo Greenwood.

Le corps de l'ouvrage se compose de 11 témoignages et points de vue qui, tantôt se complètent, tantôt se recourent et paraissent de longueur et de richesse inégales. Dans le chapitre 1, Mark Kalluak se penche sur ce qu'est l'*Inuit qaujimaqatuqangit*, faisant ressortir son caractère holiste et cosmologique, la maîtrise d'un savoir-faire et ses liens avec le bien-être, en somme un mode d'être au monde centré sur le partage avec les autres, le respect de la terre et des animaux afin de préserver des relations harmonieuses. L'ainé est originaire de Maguse River où il a été évangélisé par le révérend Gleason Ledyard qui y a ouvert une école dans les années 1950 et a été plus tard le rédacteur du *Kivalliq Echo*. De son témoignage, on pourrait souligner ce qu'il énonce à propos de la guérison, lorsqu'une maladie durait trop longtemps. Cette information me semble inédite :

Les Inuit offraient en cadeau un petit objet qui leur appartenaient afin d'être guéris. Un malade pouvait envoyer quelqu'un d'autre à sa place pour aller déposer l'objet lui appartenant quelque part dans le territoire, dans un endroit où personne ne le trouverait, en guise de cadeau pour être guéri. Il était offert à une force invisible ayant le pouvoir d'accepter le cadeau et de transférer la maladie à l'objet déposé sur le sol. Il ne fallait surtout pas le prendre ni le ramasser; sinon on risquait d'attraper la maladie qui avait été placée dedans. (p. 67)

Dans le chapitre 3, Atuat Akittiq, une Iglulingmiut et fille de Rachel Uyarasuk (Oosten et Laugrand 2001), connue aussi pour sa contribution aux films d'Isuma Productions, poursuit en abordant le rôle de la famille, du respect dû aux parents et aux aînés mais également les valeurs de partage et l'importance de la chasse. «Manger, c'était aussi montrer notre respect envers les animaux», écrit-elle (p. 77). Cette affirmation demanderait un long commentaire mais elle rappelle la centralité de la chasse et du partage des chairs animales dans les cultures inuit. Jose Angutinngurniq, dans le chapitre 4, élabore justement ce thème avec une contribution très riche. Son

témoignage montre, entre autres, comment les chasseurs de jadis savaient fort bien gérer leurs rapports aux ours, qu'ils adoptaient parfois lorsqu'ils étaient oursons avant de les relâcher :

En me bénissant, mon grand-père souhaitait aussi me protéger des animaux les plus féroces. Il a dit : «L'ours polaire ne t'attaquera jamais et les cornes du bœuf musqué ne transperceront pas ton corps.» Moi, je ne le croyais pas quand il me disait cela. Mais un jour, un ours polaire est sorti de sa tanière juste au moment où je me penchais pour regarder par son trou de respiration ; En un instant, il a surgi devant moi ; il me tenait presque entre ses pattes. Son museau était tout près de mon visage et il me fixait des yeux, complètement immobile. J'ai soutenu son regard et soudain, il a fait un mouvement brusque et s'est sauvé en courant. [...] Je crois que je me suis lancé à la poursuite de l'ours ; en tout cas, il est mort tout de suite. [...] Mon frère était tellement abasourdi et heureux de me voir en bonne santé qu'il n'arrêtait pas de répéter : «Regardez Angutinngurniq ! Il n'a pas une seule marque de morsure sur tout le corps. Il est protégé.» (p. 90)

Angutinngurniq explique ses souvenirs des tabous qu'il devait respecter, les amulettes qu'il portait quand il était jeune. Il serait intéressant ici que le lecteur lise ici d'autres ouvrages où Angutinngurniq relate son initiation au chamanisme (Oosten et Laugrand 2002, 2007). Dans le chapitre 5, Louis Angalik, originaire de Baker Lake, explique l'éducation des enfants, l'acquisition des compétences et les responsabilités des parents. Ce chapitre offre une variante aux témoignages recueillis par Jean Briggs (2000). Dans le chapitre 6, Alice Ayalik, établie à Kugluktuk et dévouée à la préservation des langues, poursuit sur le même thème, revenant sur les enseignements de ses parents, le rôle des aînés, les traditions de partage et le façonnement de l'être humain (*inunnguiniq*) en lien avec les animaux et son environnement. Dans le chapitre 7, Norman Attungalaq qui a vécu entre Rankin Inlet, Arviat et Baker Lake examine son histoire familiale, l'apprentissage de la chasse sans son père mort très tôt de vieillesse, et les sages enseignements de sa mère, y compris à propos de la chasse et de la préparation des viandes. Dans le chapitre 8, Atuat Akittiq entre en conversation avec Rhoda Akpaliapik Karetak, originaire de l'île de Southampton avant de déménager à Arviat. Les deux femmes expliquent la préparation des enfants pour la vie et les enseignements afin de mener «une bonne vie», le rôle des sage-femmes et la vie de femme mariée. Elles abordent aussi les liens entre l'*Inuit qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ) et le système de justice, prolongeant ainsi une réflexion entamé jadis par d'ers aînés (Laugrand et Oosten 2002). Une des conclusions de Rhoda mérite d'être mise en exergue :

Je ne veux pas entendre les gens dire que nous vivons dans un monde moderne, aujourd'hui, et que nous n'avons plus besoin de l'IQ. Même quand on vit dans un monde moderne, on ne peut pas mener une bonne vie ni vivre en harmonie avec les gens qui nous entourent si on n'a pas de bonnes lois et de bons principes pour encadrer nos comportements. L'IQ procure de bons principes de vie et, pour nous, il est très important que les jeunes les acquièrent et les maîtrisent. (p. 179)

Dans le chapitre 9, Donald Uluadluak qui a vécu à Churchill et à Arviat, aborde à son tour la formation des enfants dès leur plus jeune âge, la transmission des récits oraux, la puissance de certains mots, les leçons de vie, l'acquisition des savoirs, le respect des animaux y compris des insectes, le partage des viandes. Dans le chapitre 10, Mariano Aupilaarjuk, fort connu pour sa contribution à la notion d'*Inuit qaujimajatuqangit*, centre son intervention sur la chasse et le partage des chairs et des peaux des animaux, mais aussi les tabous et la pertinence de l'*Inuit qaujimajatuqangit*. Pour l'ainé, « nous ne pouvons pas redevenir comme avant » (p. 223), mais « le principe et la logique des tabous restent utiles de nos jours » (p. 223). Dans le chapitre 11, Rhoda Akpaliapik Karetak aborde la guérison des problèmes non résolus, la question des pensionnats et des droits autochtones, affirmant la nécessité d'une guérison collective, du pardon qu'elle attend des Qallunaat, tous ces éléments étant indispensables pour une vie harmonieuse. Dans le chapitre 12, Joe Karetak originaire d'Arviat livre enfin ses réflexions personnelles sur la pertinence des savoirs inuit. Margo Greenwood, une autochtone d'ascendance crie, clôt l'ouvrage par quelques observations et par son admiration envers les Inuit, voyant elle-aussi la pertinence et l'intérêt de cette notion d'*Inuit qaujimajatuqangit*.

On l'aura compris, cet ouvrage offre une très belle contribution à la mise en valeur des savoirs inuit. Il est accompagné d'un petit glossaire et de notes biographiques. Les aînés qui y ont contribué proviennent de toutes les confessions chrétiennes présentes aujourd'hui au Nunavut. Fait à souligner, aucun d'eux n'évoque ici explicitement les traditions chamaniques. Mais tous et toutes réfèrent aux tabous, aux pratiques de jadis et à des conceptions proprement inuit.

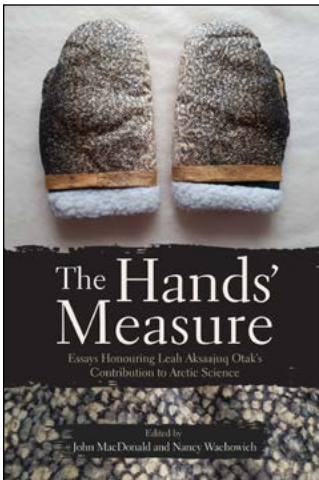
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Macdonald John and Nancy Wachowich (eds.). 2018. *The Hands' Measure. Essays Honouring Leah Aksaajuq Otak's Contribution to Arctic Science.* Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 396 pages.

Recension d'ouvrage par Frédéric Laugrandⁱ



This book comprises 19 texts written in tribute to Leah Aksaajuq Umik Ivalu Otak (1950–2014), whose contribution to northern science is outstanding. The collective follows an In Memoriam published in *Études Inuit Studies* in 2014 (Vol. 38, pp. 297–300) by John Macdonald. The contributions are signed by northern specialists who knew and/or collaborated with historian and linguist Leah Otak, while she was working in Igloodik at the Nunavut Research Institute's research centre. Along with other Inuit from this North Baffin community, Leah Otak played a key role in the Inuit Oral History Project launched in the 1980s. She not only

interviewed but also translated and documented Inuit knowledge, working with researchers in North America and Europe. Finally, she is known as an expert in the field of sewing, its techniques, and knowledge of skins, hence the title given to the festschrift: *The Hands' Measure*.

The seventeen researchers who pay tribute to her deliver contributions of a very different nature and on multiple themes essential to the northern world, at a time when Inuit continue to promote Inuit *qaujimajatuqangit*, “the knowledge of the past that the Inuit still consider relevant.” This knowledge covers a multitude of fields, from techniques to thought, from linguistic categories to values, from hunting rules to the principles of living together, with a view to maintaining as far as possible harmonious relationships between all existing beings: humans, animals, non-humans, etc.

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The preface, a fine tribute to the Inuit *qaujimajatuqangit*, is authored by Eva Aariak, then President of the Inuit Heritage Trust and Nunavut's first Languages Commissioner in 1999.

The introduction is by Nancy Wachowich, professor at the University of Aberdeen and author of *Saqiyuq*, an autobiography of three Inuit women from northern Baffin Island spanning three generations.

Chapter 1, written by George Quviq Qulaut, traces the genealogy, from an Inuit perspective, of the oral history work that has developed over the years in Igloolik, with Noah Piugaattuk (1900–1995) and others, such as Louis Tapardjuk, playing a major role. The project really took off with the arrival of Wim Rasing, a Dutch anthropologist, and John Macdonald, then head of the Igloolik Research Centre. Nearly 500 interviews were conducted, transcribed, and translated, creating a huge database: the Igloolik Oral History Project. Despite a slow start with some Anglican elders, more reserved, the project has now become a veritable oral and written library of exceptional wealth, used by researchers and Inuit alike. Indeed, the contributions of Piugaattuk, Rose Iqallijuq, George Agiaq Kappianaq, and many others have made it an unrivalled source of information. It was partly responsible for the later development of numerous films, including the famous *Atanarjuat*, by the Isuma company (www.isuma.tv). This aspect is curiously absent from the book, even though there are obvious links between the Igloolik Inuit Oral History Project and these new stories. All these achievements have made Igloolik a key site for the preservation of Inuit cultures, stories, and representations. This is the subject of Chapter 2, written by John Macdonald, who spent a good part of his life in Igloolik and published the magnificent *Arctic Sky: Inuit Astronomy, Star Lore, and Legend*, a book also born of these collaborative projects between elders and researchers. Macdonald, who worked extensively with Leah Otak and who met with researchers from everywhere in the world, synthesizes two centuries of Inuit tradition to show how images have evolved over time. Involving travelers and observers, missionaries, ethnologists, and Inuit, the analysis is remarkably thorough and provides a clearer understanding of Amitturmiut traditions. In Chapter 3, Smithsonian Institution researcher Bernadette Driscoll Engelstad provides a synthetic analysis of Inuit clothing displayed in museums, communities, and cities around the world, focusing on the symbolic dimension. The author rightly calls for further research in this field of material culture, which offers an interesting bridge to fascinating discoveries. Chapter 4 continues the discussion of material culture and the production of clothing by Inuit in contact with travelers. It is richly illustrated and signed by Jonathan King, a researcher at Cambridge University, who first visited Igloolik in 1986. In Chapter 5, historian-linguist Kenn Harper analyzes the case of the well-known murder of Robert Janes in 1920, suggesting that researchers reread the documents produced by the judges and coroners,

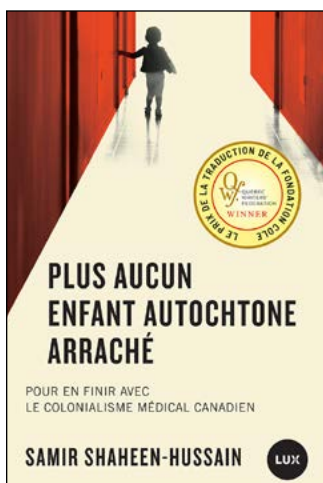
which contain a wealth of information for decoding and better understanding relations between Inuit and Qallunaat. In Chapter 6, anthropologist and filmmaker Hugh Brody looks back briefly on the film *The People's Land* and on what Mittimatalik Inuit like Simon Anaviapik taught him about Inuit history and knowledge. Birgit Pauksztat's Chapter 7 takes us to Greenland, to the history of a kayak club and the question of preserving traditions and the role of certain personalities. In Chapter 8, anthropologist Claudio Aporta, who has worked extensively with John Macdonald and with sources from the Igloodik Oral History Project, examines three processes—inhabiting, travelling and sharing—that characterize the Inuit world, highlighting the importance of storytelling and the use of new technologies to transmit knowledge. In Chapter 9, Jack Hicks draws on information from the Igloodik Oral History Project to understand Inuit suicidal behaviours, past and present. Louis-Jacques Dorais signs Chapter 10. The anthropologist and linguist has spent three periods in Igloodik and has worked extensively with Bernard Saladin d'Anglure, another Université Laval ethnologist who has spent many years in the community studying its shamanic traditions. Here, he presents a fascinating study of a Nunavik wedding ceremony that took place in 2015 and extends his remarkable monograph on *Quaqtaq* (1997). In Chapter 11, Carleton University doctoral student Sheena Kennedy Dalseg reflects on her own use of the Igloodik Oral History Project for education and community-based research. John Macdonald is again the author of Chapter 12, in which he reflects on Leah Otak's linguistic contribution. Chapter 13 is by Wim Rasing, who offers an inspiring reflection on his encounters with elders in Igloodik, and beyond that on anthropology and cultural brokers. In Chapter 14, Susan Rowley, archaeologist and anthropologist, offers a collaborative reading on what she calls "a geology of the Iglulingmiut." Her article is ethnographically rich, highly original, and remarkable, showing the great richness of Inuit traditions, the quality of observations, and the importance of experimentation and practice. In Chapter 15, John Macdonald provides a detailed analysis of the Nunavut flag, again based on data from the Igloodik Oral History Project. In Chapter 16, Sylvie LeBlanc, also an archaeologist and anthropologist, briefly recalls her time spent with Leah Otak in the context of a research grant on *inuksuit*—cairns scattered across the tundra and linked to multiple knowledges. The final word is given by essayist and traveler Noah Richler, who reports on a philosophical conversation with Leah Otak.

This rich collective will be of interest to all researchers and travelers who have been in contact with the community of Igloodik, born almost a century ago from the merger of several families, groups, and camps. Today, Igloodik is a key site for the ancient and contemporary traditions of Nunavut's Inuit. The dynamism of the Isuma company, whose films are shown all over the world, shows that these first initiatives to promote and preserve Inuit

knowledge are extremely stimulating, as they not only meet local needs, as many Inuit seek to learn more about their elders, but also international needs, both for the social life and identity of Inuit of Igloolik and Nunavut and for the arts. *The Hands' Measure* sheds light on a new bridge between Inuit and Qallunaat, as well as between elders and youth.

Shaheen-Hussain, Samir. 2021.
Plus aucun enfant autochtone arraché.
Pour en finir avec le colonialisme médical
canadien. Traduit par Nicolas Calvé.
Montréal: Lux, 488 pages.

Recension d'ouvrage par Arthur Floretⁱ



Plus aucun enfant autochtone arraché, une traduction de *Fighting for a Hand to Bold*, tire sa genèse de la campagne «Tiens ma main», lancée, entre autres par Samir Shaheen-Hussain, en janvier 2018, pour mettre fin à la pratique de non-accompagnement, par un parent, un tuteur ou un proche, d'un mineur transféré par avion d'une localité reculée du Québec à un hôpital pédiatrique du sud de la province. En une quinzaine de chapitres répartis sur quatre parties, le pédiatre urgentiste montréalais nous convie, à partir de là, à un exercice de positionnement critique sur ce que signifie «être soignant» – mais aussi, par extension, étudiant ou enseignant, citoyen ou immigrant – dans un pays, le Canada, fondamentalement bâti

contre les Autochtones.

La première partie du livre retrace la chronologie, dans le premier chapitre, de la pratique de non-accompagnement établie dans les années 1950 et, dans le deuxième chapitre, des nombreuses contestations qu'elle a suscitées à travers les décennies parmi les familles concernées, les professionnels de santé et le grand public, pour la plupart restées sans réponse significative du gouvernement québécois jusqu'à ce que ce dernier soit acculé à y mettre un terme en octobre 2018.

La deuxième partie, composée des chapitres trois, quatre et cinq, replace la pratique de non-accompagnement lors d'une évacuation aéromédicale dans son contexte socio-sanitaire et politique. C'est cette géographie-là qui

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éclaire la nature du problème, davantage que la carte du territoire. En effet, la pratique de non-accompagnement affecte en grande majorité des enfants autochtones, car ces enfants sont plus susceptibles de devoir y recourir en raison de leurs conditions de vie et de l'absence de centre de soins tertiaires à proximité. Or, les inégalités de santé dont ils sont victimes et les injustices sociales dont elles procèdent, ont une origine commune, que la culture médicale, en dépit des valeurs dont elle se réclame, perpétue : « il s'agit du racisme systémique et des politiques coloniales enracinées dans le capitalisme » (p. 119).

Dans la troisième partie, l'auteur reprend successivement, après un chapitre six introductif, chacun des cinq actes décrits dans la *Convention pour la prévention et la répression du crime de génocide* (1948) pour démontrer les « effets génocidaires » du colonialisme médical à l'échelle du Canada tout entier, à savoir : le meurtre de membres du groupe, la soumission intentionnelle du groupe à des conditions d'existence devant entraîner sa destruction physique totale ou partielle, l'atteinte grave à l'intégrité physique ou mentale de membres du groupe, les mesures visant à entraver les naissances au sein du groupe, et le transfert forcé d'enfants du groupe à un autre groupe. Les illustrations des violences imposées aux enfants autochtones, d'hier à aujourd'hui, par « l'establishment médical », abondent (chapitres sept à onze). Le chapitre douze, qui conclut ce survol historique, précise que ces événements – qui sont pour l'essentiel ceux dont les témoignages nous sont parvenus sous forme de récits oraux – dessinent les contours d'une entreprise laissant peu d'ambiguïté quant à l'objectif poursuivi, malgré leur étalement dans le temps et dans l'espace qui brouille la conscience qu'en ont les Canadiens : participer « à éliminer les peuples autochtones – légalement ou physiquement – et à s'approprier leurs terres » (p. 343).

La quatrième et dernière partie poursuit la mise en abyme de la pratique de non-accompagnement, de ses ramifications socio-sanitaires et politiques, et du projet colonial dans lequel elle s'inscrit. Les chapitres treize et quatorze reviennent sur les arguments budgétaires avancés lors de la campagne « Tiens ma main » par le ministre québécois de la Santé pour maintenir le *statu quo* : l'auteur les met à l'épreuve d'autres postes de dépense du gouvernement, ainsi que des formidables bénéfiques que ce dernier tire de l'exploitation des territoires des Eeyou et des Inuit (grâce, notamment, à l'hydroélectricité), puis met en lumière, sur une période de 100 ans, le coût humain et le déficit des infrastructures de santé découlant du souci constant des autorités (fédérales comme provinciales) de dépenser le moins possible pour leurs habitants. Le chapitre quinze propose, pour terminer, des stratégies pour décoloniser le système de santé : réforme des programmes d'éducation et de formation, sécurisation culturelle des soins, autodétermination des Autochtones, réparations, restitution.

À l'image de la définition qu'il donne du colonialisme médical (p. 207), un concept central du livre, Samir Shaheen-Hussain insiste, tout au long de son propos, sur les liens dialectiques entre les pratiques sociales et les idéologies, entre les individus et les institutions, grâce auxquels le racisme anti-autochtone imprègne, jusqu'à l'évanescence, toute la fabrique de la société canadienne, y compris le sacro-saint colloque singulier entre soignants et patients. C'est en effet la force d'une idéologie ayant atteint le stade «hégémonique», c'est-à-dire celui d'«un système dominant de significations vécues et de valeurs, de relations et de pratiques, qui façonne l'expérience de la réalité», que de pouvoir s'effacer du regard des individus (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 19). On peut ainsi avoir des institutions racistes sans nécessairement que leurs membres soient eux-mêmes (tous) racistes. Il existe, de plus, une tendance – souvent inconsciente – au déni de l'existence ou de la prévalence du racisme chez ceux qui en bénéficient directement ou indirectement (Harding 2018), déni facilité, dans le système de santé, par l'affirmation de l'universalisme, de l'expertise et de la neutralité des soins prodigués (Ramsden 2002). Ceci explique que la règle de non-accompagnement ait été suivie si longtemps sans avoir jamais reposé sur une politique officielle, ou encore que tant de professionnels de santé aient participé sciemment à des actes médicaux non consentis.

Pour mettre en lumière le travail de production et de reproduction des inégalités de santé procédant du colonialisme et du racisme à travers le temps, Samir Shaheen-Hussain propose d'inclure l'histoire parmi les déterminants structurels de la santé. L'enjeu n'est pas que théorique, puisque les déterminants structurels définis par l'OMS – la gouvernance, les politiques macro-économiques, sociales et publiques, la culture et les valeurs sociétales – ne permettent pas, d'après lui, «d'identifier les personnes et les systèmes responsables du maintien» des inégalités sociales (p. 388). Remonter la chaîne des causes pour identifier la racine du racisme relève donc d'une nécessité certes heuristique pour qui souhaite comprendre le racisme contemporain (Abubakar *et al.* 2022), mais aussi morale pour qui souhaite agir sur ses origines. *Plus aucun enfant autochtone arraché* procède précisément comme cela, en partant d'un fait singulier pour en explorer tous les prolongements. À la manière d'une enquête sont démasquées les décisions, les omissions et les compromissions des gestionnaires, des médecins et des infirmières qui, prises bout à bout, participèrent à «un génocide par un million de coupures de papier» (Thorne 2019).

Mais par où le changement social peut-il advenir dans le système autopoïétique décrit par l'auteur? L'émotion joue ici un rôle d'alerte éthique face à la vulnérabilité d'autrui. De nombreux philosophes, à l'image de Levinas (1990), la reconnaissent d'ailleurs comme un fondement du soin. Samir Shaheen-Hussain admet, par exemple, que le transfert de deux enfants

inuit à l'urgence de son hôpital au cours de l'été 2017 changea son regard sur la pratique de non-accompagnement. Son écriture reflète plus généralement les sentiments très vifs qui l'assaillent face à l'indignité des événements qu'il relate. Tout ceci l'éloigne à dessein du style désincarné de la littérature scientifique portant sur le colonialisme et le racisme systémique, en dépit des drames humains qu'elle ausculte. Les lecteurs sont invités à ressentir, à *com*-prendre, les injustices dont ont été et sont encore victimes les Autochtones, préalable indispensable au travail réflexif qu'ils doivent mener sur eux-mêmes. Refusant toute forme de neutralité, qu'il juge complice, l'auteur les engage à se coaliser dans des mouvements populaires et citoyens, seuls à même, d'après la longue expérience qu'il en a hors clinique, d'arracher des progrès dans «l'amélioration de l'accès aux soins et l'humanisation de ces derniers» (p. 415).

Suivant la célèbre formule de Rudolph Virchow, selon laquelle «la médecine est une science, et la politique [...] rien de moins qu'une médecine à grande échelle» (pp. 43-44), Samir Shaheen-Hussain place, en somme, la notion de pouvoir au cœur de son livre: pouvoir de mort, avec ses idéologies nocives et ses manifestations foucaldiennes, mais aussi, et surtout, pouvoir de vie. Pouvoir de refuser, par exemple, que ne se perpétuent les conditions ayant permis le décès de Joyce Echaquan (Kamel 2021), ou encore les stérilisations forcées de femmes autochtones (Shaheen-Hussain, Lombard, and Basile 2023). Pouvoir de guérir, chacun à notre niveau, la société malade que nous avons en partage. En dépit d'une tendance à la généralisation relevée par Bousquet (2022), ainsi que d'un fil conducteur parfois flouté par l'articulation des chapitres et des parties, *Plus aucun enfant autochtone arraché* offre aux lecteurs une synthèse critique de référence doublée d'un appel à l'action d'une grande ambition, telle qu'annoncée dans son sous-titre: «pour en finir avec le colonialisme médical canadien».

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NUMÉRO 24, 2024

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COMMENT INCARNER UN CHANGEMENT AU SEIN D'UN SYSTÈME BÂTI SUR L'OPPRESSION : regards sur l'allyship

NUMÉRO 24 (2024)

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Numero 24
Decembre 2024

Comment incarner un changement au sein d'un système bâti sur l'oppression : regards sur l'allyship

Sous la direction de Daphnee Yiannaki et Maude Darsigny Trepanier

Please
take your
indian
name

Big baby / fat
Stic chair / face
White
Lucky / name
Sorry you're not Indian
Missing sun in the middle
of the night
UNTRANSLATED / Indian
SUE HELEN
SLOW BROWN / arrow
Orange / moon
BALONEY / name?
BILLY / baby / men

In Memoriam

Michael A. Chlenov (1940–2024). Change and Survival for a Russian Yupik Scholar and Advocate

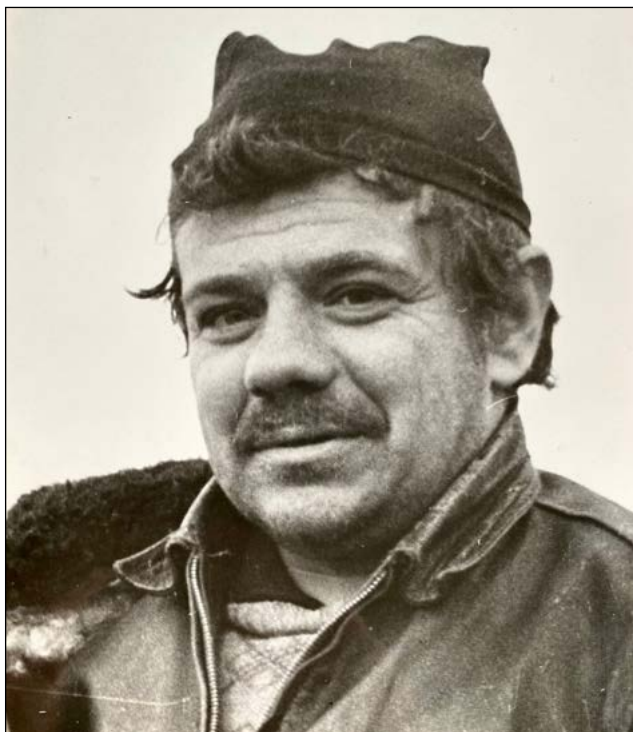


Figure 1. Michael Chlenov. Photo: Sergei Bogoslovsky, 1981, courtesy of Ekaterina Bogoslovskaya.

Russian cultural anthropologist Michael Chlenov, who spent almost 50 years studying and writing about the Yupik of Chukotka, passed away in Moscow, Russia on August 7, 2024. He was 83. He was called “Mika” (*Mee-ka*) Chlenov by almost everyone, young and old, and *Mikak* (“little Mika”) by his Siberian Yupik friends (Figure 1). In the 1970s, he transformed the old-style Russian “Eskimo ethnography” into a modern brand of western social anthropology and was later instrumental in integrating the study of Siberian Yupik into the international field of Inuit Studies, then called “Eskimology.” He was a person of many skills—and of many “hats” that he used to wear with his remarkable intellectual vigor and unmatched charm.

Mika Chlenov and I first met in the summer of 1971 in the Yupik community of Sighineq (Sireniki) in Chukotka, on the Russian side of the Bering Sea, where we were part of a field crew led by biological anthropologists Valerii and Tatyana Alexeev. For their bio-morphological survey of Russian Yupik, the Alexeevs invited Chlenov, an aspiring social anthropologist, to make family genealogies in three communities they were to visit. They soon placed me, then a junior student, as his field assistant for this task. Together, we visited the three largest groups of Russian Yupik residing in Sireniki, Nunyamo, and New Chaplino, in a swirl of village surveys, helicopter and aircraft flights, and boat rides.

The title of our co-authored book, *Yupik Transitions: Change and Survival at Bering Strait* (Krupnik and Chlenov 2013), was very much the life story of Mika Chlenov himself. Born in Moscow at the onset of WWII, he spent his childhood years in the war-torn Soviet-occupied zone in East Germany, where his father was stationed as a “cultural resource” Russian army officer. He graduated from the Moscow Institute of Oriental Languages with a BA in Oriental studies, as both student and interpreter of Indonesian language/s, adding fluent Dutch and Malay to his almost native German as well as good English and French (and later, a superb command of Hebrew). As a student of foreign languages, he received an exceptional chance in his college years to spend a year and half on Ambon Island in Eastern Indonesia, with his then-wife and fellow student Svetlana Chlenova, working as a Malay/Dutch/Russian interpreter at a Soviet construction site. While translating for Russian engineers and construction advisors, he also managed to use his time to explore local Austronesian languages of the nearby areas. This is where he first practiced his skills in language documentation, village surveys, and long rides in small Indigenous boats across the islands of Maluku and the adjacent seas. Upon his return to Moscow, he entered the Ph.D. program at the Moscow Institute of Ethnography of the Russian (then-Soviet) Academy of Science and obtained his Ph.D. in ethnology (history) in 1969, with his thesis on the ethnohistory of the people of Central Maluku. He remained on the research staff at that institute until the 1990s.

Mika Chlenov’s professional path went through many “bifurcations.” Being unable to pursue new field research in Indonesia—even to visit that country until the 2000s—he instead moved north and joined his colleague, ethnologist Vladimir I. Vasil’ev to study the Nenets and Khanty people on the Ob and Pur Rivers in West Siberia in 1969 and 1970. Although an exploratory trip to the Siberian Yupik in 1971 looked like a brief comparative visit, Mika remained dedicated to the Yupik people through two decades of fieldwork (trips in 1976, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1986, 1987, and 1990) and almost five decades of research and writing.

At that same time, he also learned and started teaching Hebrew to underground study groups in Moscow and became active in semi-official efforts to revive Judaica research in the USSR. In the late 1980s, prior to the

collapse of the Soviet Union, he entered public politics and served as the head of various Jewish organizations in post-Soviet Russia, including the Euro-Asian Chapter of the World Jewish Congress, which he helped create and headed for over twenty years. He also made his name as a scholar of Jewish heritage and history and as a champion of Jewish communities in the former USSR. While doing this, he continued his engagement with the Yupik people and Yupik ethnology, as well as with the linguistics and history of the Maluku.

As a scholar, Mika preferred meticulous research, therefore many of his writings remained “a work in progress” for years, even decades. His last published papers on Yupik placenames in Chukotka (in *Alaska Journal of Anthropology*, 2021) and Commander Island Aleut genealogies (in this very journal in 2022) were based on his fieldwork in 1981 and 1983, respectively. His research was at the cross-section of Yupik ethnohistory, linguistics, and social systems, primarily kinship; but he easily expanded it into folklore, mythology, symbolism, semiotics, and activist anthropology. This type of scholarship is uncommon today.

Chlenov’s published record of over 170 various contributions, and 5 books and edited volumes, was as diverse as his many interests. Of these, almost three dozen papers, both individual and co-authored, focused on Chukotka and the Yupik language, as were also *The Whale Alley* (1982), a monograph Chlenov co-authored with Sergei Arutyunov and myself, and our major book on Siberian Yupik socio-cultural transitions in the 20th century (Krupnik and Chlenov 2013). Besides Yupik, we also did joint studies of Commander Island Aleut/Unangan and among the Abkhazians on Russia’s Black Sea coast that both resulted in scores of publications. After the 1990s, most of Mika’s papers were dedicated to Russian Jewish communities, Jewish ethnicity, and identity, and he continued writing about Austronesian history and linguistics until his final years. Several anthropologists and linguists have successfully combined doing fieldwork in the Far North and in the tropical South—from Robert Spencer to David Damas and, recently, Gary Holton and Piers Vitebsky—but it would be hard to beat Chlenov’s record in terms of its diversity and productivity.

For a long time, Mika believed that his main contribution to Yupik studies was his discovery in 1976 of the monumental Whale Alley site, built of rows of bowhead whale skulls and jaw bones on a small island off Chukotka, and his three subsequent visits in 1977–1981, including our joint boat surveys of historical and ancient settlements in the nearby areas (Chlenov and Krupnik 1984; Figure 2). Not an archaeologist, Chlenov had little interest in multi-year systematic excavations to examine and date these sites according to archaeological protocols. Instead, relying on surface surveys, Elders’ memories, and ethnohistorical data, we produced a book loaded with venues into Beringian mythology, secret male societies, sacred rituals, old whaling stories, and intertribal social networks, with no firm



Figure 2. “Pirates of the Caribbean”: Mika Chlenov during a Chukotka coastal boat survey in 1981, next to Yupik boat captain, Eugene Paulin. Photo: Sergei Bogoslovsky, 1981, courtesy of Ekaterina Bogoslovskaya.

evidence unearthed from the digs. Today, Whale Alley and the abandoned nearby settlements (Figure 3) are designated heritage monuments and have become fixed stopovers for large tourist cruises visiting the Bering Strait—without ever mentioning Mika’s name (see <https://explorersweb.com/natural-wonders-whale-bone-alley/>).

Chlenov’s other notable contribution to Inuit Studies, perhaps even more important than *The Whale Alley*, was his vision of the Siberian Yupik social system as a network of semi-autonomous patrilineal units, clans, or *locuses* (Chlenov’s term) that had been moving and re-grouping historically as a societal adaptive mechanism. He developed this model in the 1970s, to which we added blood and bones from the stories of Yupik Elders who were born and raised in the early 1900s. That collective memory was then recorded and analyzed in a book (Krupnik and Chlenov 2013) that interpreted life in Yupik communities of the 1800s and early 1900s better than anything written before or after Chlenov’s vision.

Another of Chlenov’s many contributions was the richness of his favourite “toolkit” to retrieve Yupik history from the early 1800s and to upstream it to the imaginary *Whale Alley* era. He was a master of many domains—from the documentation of place names to folklore to linguistic reconstructions, kinship systems, archival and historical records, and more. On that path, he built several milestones, like his brilliant analysis of the so-called “Uelenski” Yupik language (first and only recorded in a German manuscript of 1791), his massive corpus of documented Yupik placenames



Figure 3. Masik site in Mechigmen Bay, first surveyed during a coastal boat trip in 1981. Photo: Sergei Bogoslovsky, courtesy of Ekaterina Bogoslovskaya.

in the vicinity of Whale Alley, or his vision of the linguistic transitions and inter-connected communities of Bering Strait cliff dwellers, namely, the people of King Island, the two Diomedede Islands, and the East Cape, in Siberia.

Besides academic papers, Chlenov accumulated an impressive archive of materials he did not plan to publish, such as his many field recordings of kinship terminologies of several Yupik groups. His most precious legacy is a pool of dozens of Yupik and Commander Island Aleut lineage, family, and clan genealogies. The former have been recently digitized and made partly accessible online, thanks to the efforts of our younger colleague, Dmitri Oparin (see <https://www.chaplino.ru/genealogy>). More importantly, these charts are now open to the Yupik people themselves, to the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those recorded in Mika's genealogies of the 1970s and 1980s. Many Chukotka Yupik visited him in Moscow to look at the clan records in search of their ancestors. Genealogical tables were backed by boxes of hand-written catalog cards (a cutting-edge technology in the 1970s!), with the information we learned about each listed individual. The genealogies and catalog cards include almost all adult Yupik who lived between the 1880s and 1970s (and many who passed as children during that time)—which amounts to almost three thousand individuals. These records are irreplaceable, as the Elders whom we interviewed 40–50 years ago are no longer with us. A smaller corpus of Commander Island Aleut genealogies is even more impressive, as it extends back to the 1820s at the time of the first Aleut settlement on the Commander Islands.



Figure 4. Mika Chlenov with his Yupik friends Ippi (1914–1991) and her daughters, Roza (1947–) and Valentina (born 1952) Seliakina, New Chaplino, August 1977. Photo: Igor Krupnik, from the site <https://www.chaplino.ru/about>, courtesy of Dmitri Oparin.

Like his late friend Sergei Arutyunov, Mika Chlenov was an international soul, a true “Crossroads man.” He was a heart and an intellectual fixture at many international meetings held in Russia, and later worldwide. He attended three Inuit Studies conferences (in 1988, 1990, and 1992), was a partner in the US-Russian program on the history of Beringia in the 1970s, and a contributor to many international venues, including this journal. He demonstrated his anthropology colours in his devotion to kinship, symbolic anthropology, and studies of social structures since his very first paper about Siberian Yupik social systems (Chlenov 1973) written for the 9th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Chicago (which he was not allowed to attend). He was intellectually a “world person,” free from any bearings of the old Soviet ethnology that he rejected upfront. This remarkable intellectual independence was obvious at our first meeting in 1971 and throughout our decades-long friendship and partnership. A charming erudite, a polyglot, an encyclopedic mind, and a sharp opponent, he epitomized how a free spirit could survive and thrive under the old Soviet academic system— by mainly living outside its rules.

For the Chukotka Yupik, his style of research (personal, introspective, and focused on their own interpretations (Figure 4), not on social theories) offered a path to a new vision of their history, free from the once Marxist,

now Russian imperial overtones. If today's Russian Yupik successfully incorporate his remarkable archive of clan and family genealogies, personal names, and other records into their heritage preservation and educational efforts—which has already begun, thanks to new digitization tools—the value of his legacy will continue to grow. For that, the Yupik of Chukotka will be forever grateful, as expressed in their many sympathy messages addressed to his family after his passing.

Without Mika Chlenov's lightning presence and his unique type of anthropology, a mixture of ethnohistory, linguistic, structural, and semiotic analysis will be gone, but his legacy is certain to influence new cohorts of students who are to step into the field. His personal high marks—intellectual freedom, inquisitiveness, superb scholarship, and a focus on people's social relations as clues to their past—remain as attractive today as they were 54 years ago, when I first met him in Chukotka. He will be deeply missed.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Nikolai Vakhtin and Dmitri Oparin for their helpful comments and to Ekaterina Bogoslovskaya, and Dmitri Oparin for kindly providing copies of old field photos for illustrations.

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