

Inuit Students' Journeys from High School into Post-Secondary Education.

By

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Abstract

Education is a critical social process and is the responsibility of the society of which a child is a member. Education and Schooling promote the cognitive development and professional skills acquisition that produce economic development and positive socio-economic outcomes. In the modern world, education is strongly correlated with employability, access to food, housing, social status and associates strongly with measures of individual health and wellbeing. However, despite moderate gains in education outcomes for Inuit students, school engagement and graduation rates remain low across Inuit Nunangat in the K-12 system, and entry into post-secondary education has increasingly lagged behind that of the rest of Canadians. All the while, Inuit remain the most socio-economically disadvantaged people in Canada.

At the root of this education gap is the collision of two cultures and world views. In the last sixty-five years (roughly just two generations), Inuit non-monetary social and economic systems, as well as teaching methods, have been eroded and replaced by dominant Western pedagogical and economic practices. This has caused tension between Inuit and Western pedagogy and provoked re-examination of what gets taught in the dominant Western education system in order to prepare Inuit students to participate in Canadian society.

This study narrates the experiences of six Inuit students' education journeys and explores how they navigated cultural tensions to successfully reach and complete their post-secondary education. Findings indicate that the presence of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (Inuit epistemology), or rather its prescriptive Guiding Principles (the branch of Inuit social epistemology) when practiced, supported their success. Further, the lack of these Principles, evident in microaggressions from educators, segregation, racism, suicides, and lateral violence from peers all served as barriers to their educational goals of being able to participate bi-culturally in both the Inuit and Western ways of living.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge Inuit Elders and knowledge keepers for keeping *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ) alive and accessible. If it was not for their work, I would not have been able to use IQ as my epistemological framework for my research and analysis of my findings. In addition, I would like to acknowledge allies such as Dr. Kathy Snow, Dr. Shelley Tulloch, and Dr. Melanie O’Gorman whom I have worked closely with on Inuit Education research and specifically to make research findings accessible to policy makers to improve Inuit education out-comes.

I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to my research Advisor, Dr. Ruth Kane who believed in my work and encouraged me to continue during what became a long and difficult journey to complete my thesis. I also extend my gratitude to my participants who shared their lived experiences through the K-12 and post-secondary education systems and communities. Their often-difficult lived experiences highlight where we need to be doing better to improve Inuit Education systems and human interactions. Furthermore, their individual and collective voices may be used as a beacon of light by Inuit students who relate to their stories.

My sincere appreciation is also extended to Andrew Ochalski who has been my biggest supporter in obtaining my post-secondary education and to my beautiful children, Christopher, Matthew, and Lillian who inspire me with their love, spirit, and thirst for knowledge. To Annie Aningmiuq who has been truly an amazing friend as she witnessed my highs and lows during this period of my education journey. Our conversations and your encouragements will forever be cherished!

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Positionality of the Researcher

My motivations in undertaking this study are founded in my lived experience of the cultural tensions that exist between the Inuit and Western worldviews. These tensions existed as I was growing up in Baker Lake, Nunavut and they continue to be present in the primary and secondary education systems and in communities across Inuit Nunangat.

I am a bi-cultural Inuk who is fluent in both English and Inuktitut. Though I am genetically part European and can be viewed as, “white passing”, I was raised in traditional Inuit culture by a unilingual Inuk single mother, who was orphaned at a young age, moved through several foster homes, and survived the residential school system. My white biological father has been absent throughout my entire life by choice. As a result of her history, my Inuk mother was ill-equipped to support my progress through the Western public education system. As a result, I left school at an early age, and learned quickly that traditional Inuit knowledge and work experience by themselves, were not sufficient to gain respect from members of the dominant society, employers, or gain advancement in any field of work. I did not have the certificates, diplomas, or degrees from the colonial education system that are prerequisites for advancement in Canadian society, including in Inuit Nunangat. I worked hard to acquire the Ontario high school equivalency certificate and entered university as a mature student where I earned an Honors B.A. in Psychology with a minor in Sociology.

I currently work as a Director of an Inuit-specific Early Years Program at the Inuuqatigiit Centre for Children, Youth, and Families in Ottawa. My work experience includes working at Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), the national voice for 65,000 Canadian Inuit, where I was implicated in developing and implementing national policies and programs in the area of education, health and social development. In addition, ITK partnered with federal, provincial, and territorial governments and the rights-holding land claims organizations to address environmental concerns. For much of my tenure at ITK, I worked closely with Inuit regions to help improve education outcomes for Inuit students. Many Inuit students leave school before graduating, as I did, and are thus prevented from pursuing further educational or professional opportunities. The

Canadian K-12 system is the sole education pathway for Inuit students in Inuit Nunangat and graduating from this system is a pre-requisite to access postsecondary programs and gain employment that enables one to escape the poverty and social disadvantage to which Inuit are disproportionately subjected in Canada. I am interested in how other Inuit university graduates navigate the cultural tensions they encounter as members of Inuit communities engaged with the culturally foreign European education system of K-12 schooling and through subsequent postsecondary education. I wish to document how my participants, themselves successful university graduates, perceive that their experiences have shaped their educational pathways toward postsecondary success. The findings of this study could potentially inform Inuit regional organizations responsible for education, as well as teachers, education leaders, students and parents, of the conditions that lead to Inuit educational success and may suggest ways to improve Inuit educational outcomes.

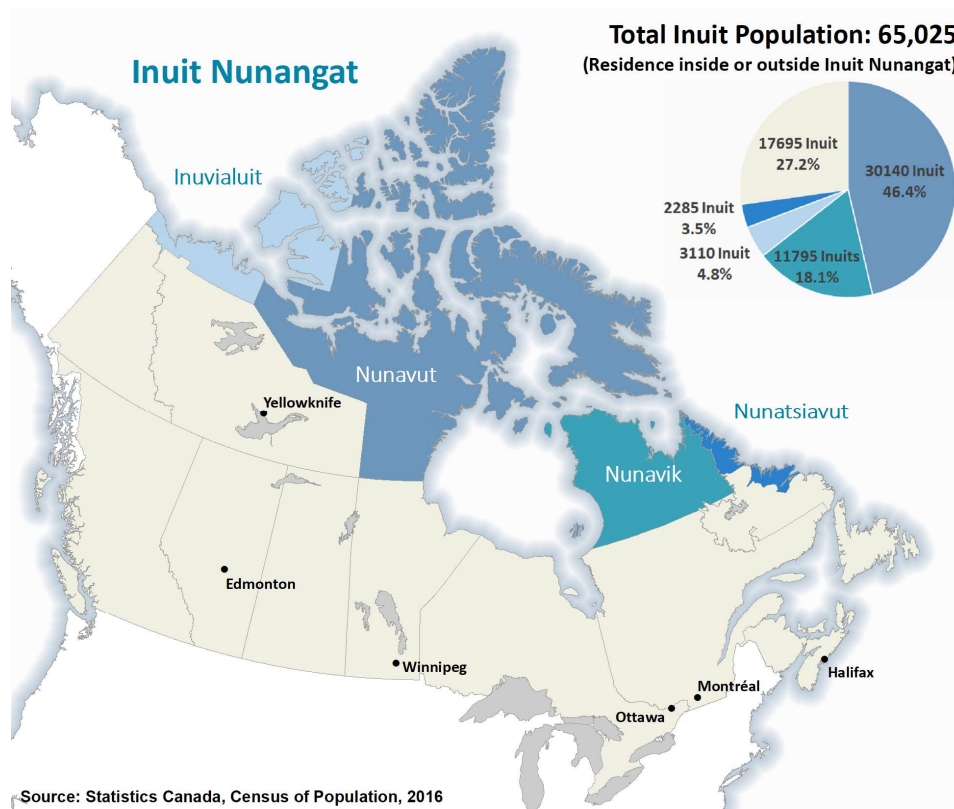
The remainder of this chapter aims to inform the reader of the demographics of Inuit in Canada. I discuss the existence of colonial power over education in our communities despite Inuit having the majority status in our homelands (Inuit Nunangat). I also highlight the disproportion of graduation rates among Inuit and the rest of Canadians in both K-12 and post-secondary education. I provide the objective of my study as well as the research questions and the type of study (narrative) I am using.

1.2 The Inuit in Canada

As Figure 1 (below) shows, there are roughly 65,000 Inuit in Canada who predominantly live in four Inuit Land Claims Regions which we collectively refer to as Inuit Nunangat (Inuit Homelands). Inuit Nunangat encompasses 35% of Canada's land mass and 50% of its coastline, spanning across two territories and two provinces: the Inuvialuit region of the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik in Northern Quebec, and Nunatsiavut in Northern Labrador (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2020). There are smaller Inuit populations living outside of Inuit Nunangat in city centres such as Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Yellowknife (Statistics Canada, 2016). The Inuit population is relatively young and rapidly growing. In 2016, the average age of the Inuit population was 27.7 years, compared with 40.9 years for the non-Indigenous population. The Inuit population (65,025) grew by 29.1% from 2006 to 2016 while

the total population of Canada grew by 11% over the same period. (Statistics Canada, 2016, 2017).

Figure 1



Map of Inuit Nunangat and the Inuit Population (2016)

Note: Map created from Statistic Canada's 2016 Census of Population Data (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Inuit report high social and economic inequities across Inuit Nunangat compared to the rest of Canadians, which ultimately impacts their health and well-being. For example, according to the 2016 National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy produced by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK): 39% of Inuit in Inuit Nunangat live in overcrowded housing compared to only 4% for the rest of Canadians; the median income for Inuit in Inuit Nunangat is \$17,778.00 compared to non-Indigenous Canadians living in Inuit Nunangat whose median income is over 3.5 times higher at \$77,683.00. Inuit employment sits at 45.6% across Inuit Nunangat compared to 60.9% for all

Canadians; and 70% of Inuit in Nunavut alone do not have enough to eat compared to 8.3% of households in Canada who are food insecure (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2016).

The suicide rate for Inuit is estimated to be nine times higher than the Canadian average at, “72.3 versus 8.0 deaths per 100,000 person-years at risk” (Statistics Canada, 2019. p.5). Moreover, the highest rates and disparities were seen in Indigenous youth and young adult females and males aged 15-24 (Statistics Canada, 2019). Between 2004 and 2008, the suicide rate among children and youth in Inuit Nunangat was 33 times higher than for the rest of Canada and among Inuit adults, the rate was four times higher than that rate of all Canadians between 1991 and 2006 (Statistic Canada, 2019). Conditions identified as associated with the high rates of suicide for Indigenous peoples include historical traumas (i.e. residential schools, sixties scoop, forced relocation, transmission of intergenerational trauma). Such historical legacies are associated with the breakdown of Inuit political, social, and economic structures with catastrophic loss of traditional repositories of cultural knowledge and identity, including, language, traditional cultural and economic activities and the integrity of family units. Other conditions considered to be associated with high suicide rates include the on-going processes of colonization that contributes to negative socioeconomic outcomes such as low levels of educational achievement, and chronic disparities with respect to employment status, household income, feelings of marginalization, and lack of mental health services. The end result is notably increased risk of death by suicide for Inuit-- 40% over that for Canadians in general (Statistics Canada, 2019).

While death by suicide is higher for Indigenous people in Canada, it is important to note that not all Indigenous communities experience deaths by suicide. In these communities, mitigating conditions include securing Indigenous title to traditional lands; achieving self-governance; gaining control over educational, health care, police and fire services; and establishing cultural facilities to preserve traditional culture and enrich the cultural life of these communities (Chandler & Lalonde, 2009; Hallett et al., 2007; Statistics Canada, 2019). In addition, economic conditions such as higher income are found to be associated with lower suicide rates among Indigenous peoples (Bagley, 1991; Lester, 1995; Statistics Canada; 2019; Young, 1990). Across Inuit Nunangat suicide rates are negatively correlated with school attendance and employment rates (Penney, 2009; Statistics Canada, 2019). Conditions that have been identified as protection

against suicide for Inuit include healthy child development, family strength, tailored mental health services, and social equity (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2016; Statistics Canada 2019). With funding from the federal government of Canada, several Indigenous specific suicide prevention programs, such as the 2016 National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy, have been developed by Indigenous agencies but their effectiveness has yet to be determined (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2019).

1.3. Inuit Majority Status and Colonial Power in Education in Inuit Nunangat

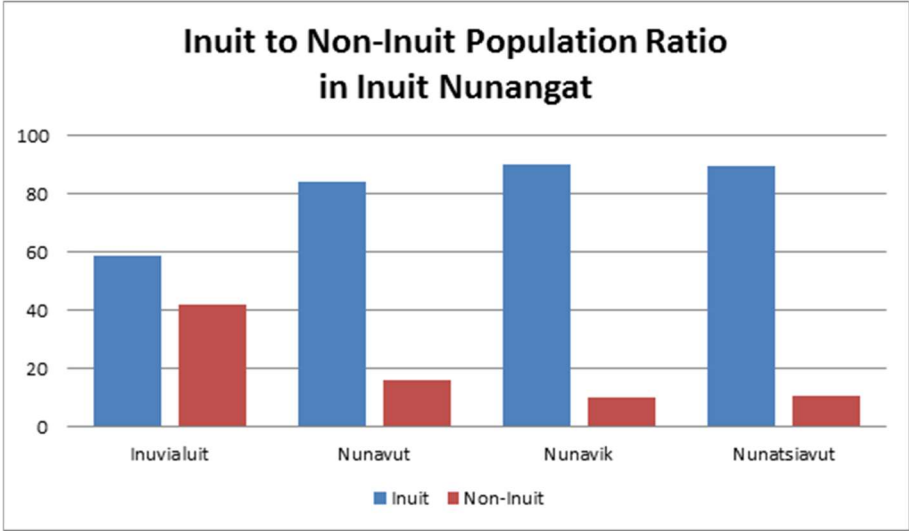
Inuit are among the most marginalized and politically divided Indigenous groups in Canada. For instance, our homelands are divided and governed by two provinces and two territories who as former colonies of the British Empire use the Westminster model of governance. Furthermore, according to the 2016 Census, while Inuit represent only 0.2% of Canada's population, we are the majority population within our land claims regions, at roughly 84% compared to 16% non-Inuit (Statistics Canada, 2016; 2017).

Despite having majority status in our homelands, the jurisdictional divide and the colonial public government framework within our land claims regions has made it difficult for Inuit educators to implement pan-Arctic culturally relevant curricula. In addition, Inuit language curricula have been difficult to implement (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2011). This is largely because Inuit Education does not fall under the Indian Act and as a result is administered by four different ministries of education in two provinces and two territories which are responsible for their entire populations, not only their Inuit stakeholders (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2011; Parliament of Canada, 2018). While some concessions have been made through land claims agreements and other negotiations, ministries of education predominantly favor Eurocentric methods of curriculum development and continue to impose this model on Inuit students (Berger & Epp, 2006; Berger, 2009; Brady, 1996).

As Figure 2 (below) shows, the 2016 Census data illustrates the Inuit to non-Inuit population distribution in each of the four Inuit land claims regions. For instance, at the time of the census the Inuit population in the Inuvialuit land claim region was 58.4% compared to 41.6% non-Inuit. In this region, Inuit education is administered through an Inuvialuit regional-specific Beaufort

Delta Education Council which is one of 8 divisional education councils or branches of the Ministry of Education within the Northwest Territories (Beaufort Delta Education Council, 2018). In Nunavut, the Inuit population was 84.2% compared to 15.8% non-Inuit (Statistics Canada, 2016). In this region, education is administered by the Nunavut ministry of education, predominantly in the English language with a plan to phase-in Inuktitut as a bilingual language of instruction (Government of Nunavut, 2020). Compounding these ministries' inability to deliver culturally relevant educational resources is the fact that they rely on Alberta's curriculum for most subjects such as math, science, English, language arts, and health, utilizing the Common Curriculum Framework which was developed in partnership with Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Manitoba, Saskatchewan Alberta and British Columbia as part of a Western Canadian protocol for collaboration in basic education. The Nunavut territory has developed its own social studies curriculum for use in K-9 curricula, called *Nunavusiutit*. The *Nunavusiutit* curriculum is, however, shackled to learning outcomes mandated by Western Canadian social studies curriculum framework. (Alberta Teachers Association, year; French, 2021; Government of Nunavut, 2019; Western and Northern Canadian Protocol, 2006).

Figure 2



Inuit to Non-Inuit Population Ratio in Inuit Nunangat (2016)

Note: Table created from the 2016 Census data (Statistics Canada, 2016).

In Nunavik, the Inuit population is 90%, compared to 10% non-Inuit. Education is administered by *Kativik Ilisarniliriniq* (KI) School Board (formerly Kativik School Board) which became a school district within the Quebec Ministry of Education as part of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA). The JBNQA granted KI, “power and jurisdiction to develop and deliver specific educational services and programs consistent with Inuit culture” (Kativik Ilisarniliriniq, 2021, para. 2). Despite this power, the Ministry of Education in Quebec still imposes its own curriculum development metrics and has refused to grant provincially recognized diplomas since 2015 after the Kativik Ilisarniliriniq, “failed to meet a five-year deadline set in 2007 by the ministry to adapt its math and science programs to meet province-wide reforms introduced in 2000” (Strong, 2017). In Nunatsiavut, in 2016 the Inuit population was 89.3% compared to 10.7% non-Inuit. Through the implementation of the land claims agreement, the Nunatsiavut Government will assume authority to administer K-12 and post-secondary programs. However, until this is implemented, primary and secondary educational services will continue to be provided to children in Nunatsiavut communities through the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial school authority (Nunatsiavut Government, 2018; Statistics Canada, 2018). It is evident, that in most regions of Canada, Inuit communities continue to lack control over curriculum development commensurate with their representation in the population of stakeholders.

1.4. Disproportion of Graduation Rates for Inuit Compared to the rest of Canadians.

Graduation from the K-12 system is the predominant criterion for entry into postsecondary programs and access to employment opportunities, yet Inuit graduation rates are very low in comparison to other peoples in Canada. Very few Inuit students make it past grade 12 and enter postsecondary education (Senécal, 2006). In 2011, roughly 70% of Inuit did not complete high school, compared to 15% for the rest of Canadians. Furthermore, according to the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, Inuit continued to have the lowest high school graduation rates in Canada, standing at 42% compared to 72% for First Nations, 77% for Metis and nearly 90% for non-Indigenous Canadians (Bougie et al., 2013; Statistics Canada, 2011). Truancy has been identified as a significant cause for the low graduation rates for Inuit. When school attendance rates were compared in 2001 with non-Inuit, Inuit students were less likely to attend school regularly (Senécal, 2006).

According to the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, only 12% of Inuit graduates reported attending school regularly in their last school year, while 24% of school leavers reported that they had skipped school. Further, only 16% percent of Inuit student graduates reported that they arrived on time while 27% of the school leavers reported that they had arrived late (Bougie, 2013). Although we have been aware of these statistics for some time, the truancy rates do not appear to be improving for some Inuit regions. For instance, the Nunavut bureau of statistics reports that the school truancy rate between 2001-02 and 2010-11 across the Territory increased from 16.3% to 22.4% which is an increase of 37.6% (Nunatsiaq News, 2016; Nunavut Bureau of Statistic, 2016). With increasing truancy, it is therefore not altogether surprising that Inuit high school graduation rates continue to lag behind other groups within Canada.

Several reasons have been given as to why Inuit students disengage from the K-12 system in such large numbers. Most notable is the history and generational impacts of the residential school era, forced relocations, dog slaughters, and unethical tuberculosis treatments (Government of Canada, 2019; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2011; Makivik Corporation, 2013; Tester and Kulchyski, 1994). Other recent studies link poor education outcomes for Inuit students to an absence of sustainable economic growth in the Arctic and the concomitant lack of employment opportunities (White, 2013). White argues that many communities in Inuit Nunangat are dysfunctional in this regard. For instance, he asserts that economic growth normally acts as an incentive for educational engagement. In addition, the system does not encourage parental engagement in their children's schooling, which exacerbates truancy and failure to stay in school and dysfunction within communities leads Inuit families to migrate into precarious situations in the south (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2011; White & Beavon, 2013).

1.5. Inuit Post-secondary Education Outcomes

Research studies and reports show that academic success in the formal K-12 education system and at the postsecondary level are strongly linked to individual wellbeing, access to jobs and stable employment. Furthermore, the development of human capital and increased academic success within populations has also been shown to significantly reduce poverty levels, and to contribute to a society's cultural vitality and economic growth (Canadian Union of Public

Employees, 2014; Sharpe & Lapointe, 2007; White & Beavon, 2013). Academic opportunities and educational success are not uniformly available in Canada for people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. For instance, when it comes to entering and completing postsecondary education programs, Inuit are falling disproportionately behind in comparison to other Indigenous groups and to the rest of the Canadian population. Statistics Canada data illustrates that in 2012 among all three Indigenous groups aged 18 to 44; 47% of Metis, and 43% of off-reserve First Nations had a postsecondary qualification (a certificate, diploma or degree above high school level) compared to 26% for Inuit (Bougie, 2013). According to the 2011 National Household Survey, the figure for non-Indigenous Canadians was 64% (Bougie, 2013).

While some modest gains have been made by Inuit with respect to completing grade nine or higher and receiving college certificates, the gap between non-Inuit and Inuit with respect to university admissions and graduation increased from 6.4% in 1981 to 16.5% in 2006. This increase has been attributed in part to the ongoing fallout from Canada's historical treatment of Inuit as well as to an increase in non-Inuit admissions to university programs and an increase in non-Inuit graduation rates (Penney, 2009; Richards, 2008; Rodon et al., 2015). Thus, it can be seen that despite gains in Inuit educational attainment indicators, the most recent 2016 census indicates that relative measures between Inuit and non-Inuit have increased over time. The following statistics further illustrate these disparities. The proportion of non-Inuit aged 25-64 with a high school diploma or post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree increased from 71% in 1996 to 89% in 2016. The increase for Inuit in the same age bracket was lower in both relative and absolute terms, where the proportions were 33% in 1996 and 47% in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2018). Thus, Inuit continue to be poorly represented in high school and post-secondary graduations in comparison to others in Canada.

Some studies have identified regionally specific education policies and conditions that lead to improved access to, and completion of, post-secondary student outcomes such as family (parental, spouse, etc.) stability and support, school and community supports. For example, Rodon (2015) documents Inuit postsecondary success and identifies conditions for student success such as employer, family, and cohort support as well as the availability of culturally relevant programming. Rodon (2015) also identifies barriers faced by Inuit postsecondary

students, including readily available postsecondary program information, the lack of a university in the Arctic, and lack of available funding.

It is worth noting that Canada is the only circumpolar country that does not have a university in the Arctic and therefore Inuit students have to travel outside of their regions to universities that do not necessarily understand their unique culture, language and needs (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2011). Education outcomes for Inuit students who live and attend K-12 in southern Canada are consistently better than those living in Inuit Nunangat. 53% of Inuit aged 25 to 64 living in Inuit Nunangat had no certificate, diploma or degree compared to 23% of Inuit living in the south (Statistics Canada, 2016). A possible reason for this is that access to educational facilities and programs is more easily available in the South and perhaps that families took the decision to relocate to the South to enable access to education for their children, indicating that education was a priority within the familial culture and demonstrating that the family members were likely to support educational achievement among their members.

1.6. Narrative Study from an Inuit Lens and Research Questions

The preceding discussion of disparities in education outcomes indicates that Inuit face unique challenges in benefitting from the Canadian educational infrastructure, as it is administered through Provincial and Territorial governments. Though Inuit hold majority status within our territories, we are predominantly educated in English through a mainstream Canadian K-12 education system that adheres to Eurocentric academic expectations that are often at odds with Inuit worldviews, customary pedagogical traditions, and thriving in our socio-cultural and natural environment (Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 2019; Wood et al, 2020).

While truancy, dysfunctional communities, lack of parental engagement in the education system and lack of economic opportunities are recognized as conditions that correlate with educational disengagement and high drop-out rates for Inuit students, (Senécal, 2006; Tester et al., 2013; White & Beavon, 2013) this study seeks to expose the cultural and historical conditions that influence the lived experience of six Inuit students during the course of their educational journeys. These conditions collectively frame the social and cultural milieu within which each participant is navigating the systemic challenges of the (predominantly Western) educational

system in the pursuit of Inuit academic success. They include how the culmination of the students' understanding of their educational journey is influenced, not only by familial, historical and cultural realities, but also as it relates to their identity as Inuit, not only in their immediate cultural context, but also as Inuit in the larger Canadian context. The education system may hinder or support Inuit students' educational success, but there are other, unique, explanations for my informants' success that are important to consider when seeking to improve education K-12 and postsecondary outcomes for Inuit students.

The aforementioned studies contribute to our understanding of the conditions that impact school attendance and graduation rates for Inuit, however, there remains the need to better understand how those students who do graduate high school and gain entry to postsecondary programs navigate the system. How do these Inuit students live through the existing cultural tensions between the Inuit and the dominant Western educational and economic systems, including barriers that may be perceived as unsurmountable by the students themselves? Understanding their stories is the purpose of this thesis.

Through a narrative study of successful Inuit postsecondary students my thesis seeks to shed light on the conditions that assist six Inuit participants to navigate Inuit and Eurocentric cultural tensions and complete their postsecondary studies. To this end, I present an Inuit research paradigm, *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ: Inuit Traditional Knowledge), as the basis of my axiology. My epistemological stance is rooted in IQ's application of *Qaujisarniq* which traditionally means to, "investigate using logic" and may be applied to all things and contexts. For example, as a traditional Inuit investigative method, an Inuit researcher may *Qaujisaq* (investigate) a phenomenon, event, person, place, or thing in order to make the correct inferences. My ontological framework again is drawn from IQ and the application of *Inunnguiniq* in the educational context. *Inunnguiniq* means "the making of a capable and enabled human being" and is a process of socialization and education where every child will become able, enabled, and capable of being innovative and resourceful through knowledge that she/he has gained in proportion to her/his age, thereby increasing the individual's and the group's chance for survival while all the time enhancing future generations (Pauktuutit, 2008, 2016; Tagalik, 2010).

For my data collection I apply the principles of the Inuit oral tradition that allow repeated opportunities for the participants to tell their life stories, to examine their lived educational experiences in two contradictory worlds and to reflect on the meanings they assign to them. I apply *Ikpigusungiq* (the ability to be empathetic) as part of my traditional Inuit ethical process which signifies both respect and harm prevention for my participants. Though *Ikpigusungiq* (being empathetic or literally translated, feeling/absorbing) belongs to axiology as a value, it is intentionally applied in my methods as part of harm reduction. As an Inuk researcher this is an important methodological approach toward harm reduction because we can hear people's stories and lived experiences yet not be sensitive or relate to them. When we apply *Ikpigusungiq* as a method, we become more sensitive and respectful to those experiences that we are hearing and by doing so, reduce harm that could be done to the individual. My analysis comprises three steps. First, I capture each narrative to the participant's satisfaction (*Ajiiqatigiingniq*: discussion and consensus process), second, I consider each narrative through the IQ lens and third, I conduct an IQ themed cross-case analysis. The research question guiding this study is, "in what ways have Inuit students, who have successfully completed post-secondary education, navigated the different cultural contexts and experiences of education through K-12 (predominantly in Inuit Nunangat) and subsequently during their post-secondary education (predominantly in southern Canada)?" What challenges did they experience and what affordances helped them? Further details are found in chapter three where I discuss my conceptual framework and methodology.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1. About the Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesize and discuss the literature relevant to the focus of my research to convey current scholarly conversations. I begin by identifying and discussing the emergence of the Western K-12 system, including what it was historically intended to accomplish since it is the dominant system being used across Commonwealth countries like Canada and across Inuit Nunangat today. I discuss its links to the dominant economic system and implications it has on democracy. I differentiate the K-12 education system from the pedagogies of the Enlightenment era which is more closely aligned to the Inuit worldview and pedagogy. I link the Western educational paradigm to the erosion of the Inuit worldview and pedagogy, as well as how Inuit education policies today fit within the context of an increasingly globalized and interdependent world. I consider literature that addresses the impacts of receiving a Western education on individuals and groups of people from different ethnic backgrounds. Finally, I discuss how Inuit are attempting to assert self-determination in this neocolonial educational context. I close this chapter by providing a summary of the key themes identified in the literature.

2.2. Origin and Purpose of the K-12 Education System

Despite its origin from the military state of Prussia (now Germany) and its main objective to crush democracy, limit parental influences, and shape cognitive and behavioural norms for desired labor skills and mass consumerism over a twelve-year period (Falcone, 2013; Gatto, 2003; Soysal, 1989), the original purpose of formal K-12 education often goes unquestioned. It is worth taking a moment to reflect on its origin and in particular the socio-economic and cultural contexts within which it emerged because it forms the foundation of schooling in virtually all Western countries including Canada and across Inuit Nunangat. Further, success in the K-12 system is used as the predominant criterion (through academic grades) for entry into post-secondary programs and access to employment and social status.

The K-12 education system emerged in mid-to-late 18th Century Prussia as a result of two significant events that were occurring simultaneously. First, democracy was starting to emerge, and the working class (many of them parents) started demanding more societal rights. This threatened the authority of the ruling military elite. Second, capitalist industrialization was emerging as the main economic engine of the Prussian state. The military elite responded by creating the K-12 compulsory schooling system that enrolled children into military style classrooms as a way of grooming them for the new socio-economic regime. Children and youth were sorted by age, grouped into classrooms (grades 1 through 12), taught the same subjects under a single authority figure, tested and graded. Those who did well were rewarded with certificates and opportunities for employment at the end of their education. Those who did not comply with the system were marked as failures by their teachers, faced exclusion from their peers and were barred from desirable employment opportunities (Gatto, 2003; Soysal & Strang, 1989). The K-12 education system was eventually introduced to other European countries through churches, whose influence could offset the unpopularity of the model (Soysal & Strang, 1989), which continues to dominate today through government mandates.

Meindl (1987) further elaborates on the significance of socio-economic and cultural contexts argues that “organizations and their management are inherently dependent on the environments in which they operate” (Meindl, 1987, p.91). Our Western education system (as a form of organization), its leaders, managers, and providers are products of the sociocultural environments from which they arise. In fact, school leadership is a distributed practice, stretched over the school’s social and situational contexts and schools themselves can be understood as sociocultural artifacts with specific functions that include molding students to serve the larger economic system by acquiring fluency in useful cognitive schema, including computational methods, specific language skills, and equally important, normative behaviors and actions deemed appropriate for their particular socio-cultural context (Spillane, 2001; 2004).

The primacy of socio-economic and cultural contextual influences on Western education illustrates its origin and purpose to discourage democratic thought and the effect of parental and other influences on individual development. The goal was to shape the students’ schemata and fixed habits to serve the dominant economic system. That this was an intrinsic goal of the

educational system is implicit in the discourse on the deliberate concentration of wealth and power and how this consolidation is linked to education as far back as Plato's Republic c. 380 B.C. (Reeve, 1992). In his introduction to the Republic, Reeves states that the main argument of the Republic is that the stronger rule in any society, that the rulers are self-interested, and therefore seek to control education and socialization (worldview and values including ethical values) of their subjects to serve their interests. The outcome is that "the actions that subjects value as Just are actions that benefit the rulers and not the subjects" themselves (Reeve, 1992, p. xiv).

In Hutchison's 2015 documentary film, "Requiem for the American Dream" Noam Chomsky lays out ten characteristics of the deliberate concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few and how it is operationalized through calculated levelling of education systems. Chomsky claims that these characteristics include systemic actions aimed to reduce democracy, shape ideology, redesign the economy, shift the burden, attack solidarity, run the regulators, engineer elections, keep the rabble in line, manufacture consent, and marginalize the population (Media for Education, 2015, p.14). Chomsky notes that in its best form, the education system can serve as a form of solidarity for the people, e.g. "I pay taxes so that the child across the street can go to school". However, as soon as public education displays this unifying function, it becomes subject to calls for reformation. This is accomplished by reducing resources through defunding school boards, organizing campaigns to create resentment for support of schools by general taxation. People are encouraged to think "I don't have kids in school, why should I pay taxes?" (Media for Education, 2015, p.9) This encourages political support for privatization of public education, which limits accessibility to quality education from well-funded schools. According to Chomsky, this is practiced from K-12 all the way to post-secondary (Hutchison, 2015; Media for Education, 2015).

Chomsky points us to a 1975 report titled, "The Crisis of Democracy: Governability of Democracies" (Crozier et al., 2012). The report was written for the Trilateral Commission (representing the nexus of global democratic military-industrial power, namely Europe, United States and Japan), the report was a direct response to an increasing democratization of these countries in the 1960s which threatened the economic system that favored the elite. In the report,

the authors state that there exists an “excess of democracy. [...] Needed, instead, is a greater degree of moderation in democracy” (Crozier et al., 1975, p.113). During this time, youth - university students in particular - increasingly challenge authority. According to the report, institutions such as churches, schools, and universities were failing in their “role in the indoctrination of the young in their rights and obligations as members of society [...]” (Crozier et al., 1975, p. 113). It goes on further to state, “The effectiveness of all these institutions as a means of socialization has declined severely.” (Crozier et al., 1975, p.113).

A comprehensive critique of the Western educational system, and the social and philosophical motivations that undergird it, is beyond the scope of this study. Rather, the purpose of the foregoing discussion is to underline the cultural context supporting the evolution of contemporary education to illuminate a dissonance with the cultural norms and assumptions of students whose identity and cultural expectations are drastically different. Thus, although the contemporary K-12 school system has a long history in Europe and other Western countries like the United States and indeed for much of Canada, it has only been a little over sixty-five years since Inuit in Canada were introduced to compulsory public education largely through churches. For indigenous peoples, including Inuit, this came in the form of residential and federal day schools which have now been widely and officially recognized as a systemic force of political will toward the cultural genocide and assimilation of Indigenous Peoples into the mainstream ideology and economic agenda of the dominant Canadian culture (Gadoua, 2010; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2011; Simon, 2011; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The consequences have been dire, as “Inuit have been forcibly adapted to urban, capitalist lifestyles that the young cannot readily identify with and that they see no viable future in.” (Skutnabb-Kangas et al., p.10, 2019).

Furthermore, it is well known that under this socio-economic and cultural context many Inuit and other Indigenous children suffered alienation, loss of language and culture, mental, sexual, and physical abuses under the residential school system which in turn has had significant negative intergenerational impacts that many Indigenous Peoples are continuing to experience (Gadoua, 2010; Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2016; Pauktuutit, 2016). It has been well documented that the effects of loss of language and culture have significant negative effects on Indigenous peoples

such as, “poverty, poor health, drug and alcohol abuse, family violence and suicide” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2012, p.9). The negative impacts of schooling through churches, residential schools including the K-12 system that were and are not reflective of Inuit pedagogical and economic approaches continue to be felt across Inuit Nunangat.

2.3. Pedagogies: K-12, the Enlightenment and Inuit pedagogical approaches.

“There are two schools of thought on education:
one based on The Enlightenment and the other on indoctrination”
– Noam Chomsky

Unlike the dominant industrial and consumer-based K-12 and post-secondary education models used by Western countries like Canada, traditional Inuit education systems are more synonymous with the Enlightenment model of education and are more democratic in nature than the former. This becomes evident when the philosophies of the Enlightenment and the Inuit worldview and in particular, pedagogy are compared. For instance, in, “Emile: or Treaties on Education” Rousseau’s pedagogic method is as follows:

To unfold the powers of children in due proportion to their age; not to transcend their ability; to arouse in them the sense of the observer and of the pioneer; to make them discoverers rather than imitators; to teach them accountability to themselves and not slavish dependence upon the words of others; to address ourselves more to the will than to custom, to the reason rather than to the memory; to substitute for verbal recitations lessons about things; to lead to theory by way of art; to assign to physical movements and exercises a prominent place, from the earliest hours of life up to perfect maturity”
(Rousseau, 1904. p. 6).

Concerning the education of the developing person, Rousseau further states, “Life is the trade I would teach him. When he leaves me, I grant you, he will be neither a magistrate, a soldier, nor a priest; he will be a man (Rousseau, 1904. p. 13). The goals of traditional Inuit pedagogy are very similar to the goals of Enlightenment education as envisioned by Rousseau. Inuit use the

Inunnguiniq developmental process. Literally translated, *Inunnguiniq* means, “the making of a capable and enabled human being” and is a process of socialization and education where every child will become able, enabled, and capable of being innovative and resourceful through knowledge that he has gained in proportion to his age. This approach serves to increase the individual’s and the group’s chances for survival, while enhancing future generations (Pauktuutit, 2006; Tagalik, 2010). The *Inunnguiniq* process is embedded in Inuit philosophy and epistemological frameworks otherwise known as *Inuit Qaujamajtuqangit* (IQ). Four foundational laws observed in IQ include: to work for the common good, to respect all living things, to maintain balance and harmony, and to continually plan for the future (Tagalik, 2010). IQ’s branch of social epistemology uses guiding principles for the *Inunnguiniq* developmental process. Among others, these include the following seven prescriptive guiding principles: *Pijitsirniq* (the concept of serving), *Aajiiqatigiingniq* (decision making through discussion and consensus), *Pilimaksarniq* (development of knowledge and skills through practice, effort, and action), *Piliriqatigiingnaq* (collaborative relationships: working together for a common purpose), *Avatimik Kamattiarniq* (environmental stewardship), *Qanuqtuurniq* (being innovative and resourceful), *Inuuqatigiitsiaqrniq* (respecting others, relationships and caring for people) (Tagalik, 2010).

Prior to colonization, Inuit education and economic practices were rooted in a philosophy of sustainable, non-monetary, land-based harvesting practices. Inuit children were traditionally educated to develop knowledge and skills in order to survive and to be able to contribute to their society and kinships as they grew into young adults (Karetak et al., 2017; Pauktuutit, 2006). These social and developmental processes are situated in a complex network of spiritual relationships as well as the interconnectedness of natural elements: stars, air, water, land, animals, and kinships. There are clear role expectations for those involved with interacting and engaging with the developing child from conception to young adulthood. Some of the expectations include giving the child a certain degree of freedom while observing, nurturing, protecting, and creating a path in life that is uniquely fitted to that child in his or her natural environment. The child is also given age-appropriate roles as part of fostering their growth and contributing to their community (Fossett, 2001; Karetak et al., 2017; Owljoot, 2013; Pauktuutit, 2006; Tagalik, 2010).

In a Focus Group held by the National Aboriginal Health Organization Inuit elders recalled specific disciplines their cultural education had instilled in them (Korhonen, 2006). For instance, the value of assigning children regular tasks such as having to wake up early each morning to observe the weather conditions in preparation for the day and work. These habits were instilled in them as a way of preparing them for more difficult cognitive and physical skills that they would have to apply in the future. Much like the Enlightenment goals of creating observers, pioneers, discoverers and accountable individuals, Inuit Elders recalled their upbringing and being encouraged to assess situations for themselves and make decisions based on those assessments in order to develop independence and mature judgment (Korhonen, 2006). Child development understood through an Inuit lens highlights that the prevailing Western industrial education model and its underlying socio-economic purpose, is very different from the Inuit worldview, culture and pedagogy and deviates from the Enlightenment perspective described by Rousseau. It is this tension of world views that is at the heart of this research.

2.4. Erosion of Inuit Worldview and Pedagogy

Traditional Inuit education and economic practice was marginalized through the church-run and federal residential schools that sought to jettison Indigenous spirituality, identity, knowledge, cultural practices, and language in favor of Eurocentric societal and economic practices (Pauktuutit, 2016; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The first residential school for Inuit opened in 1951 and the last one closed in 1996 (Pauktuutit, 2016). Other conditions that contributed to the erosion of Inuit Ways of Being include tuberculosis treatment among Inuit, Inuit relocations as part of Canada asserting sovereignty over the Arctic and the government sanctioned dog slaughters to prevent Inuit from having mobility (Canada, 2019; “Dog Slaughter” 2018; Tester, 1994). In today’s context, this erosion continues as Inuit educational practices and perspectives are largely absent from K-12 and post-secondary education systems (Berger et al, 2006; Berger P, 2009; Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 2019).

2.5. Inuit Education in National and Global Context

Speaking on the impact of western world views an international level, Tarc (2013) notes that middle-class Anglo Westerners who go to volunteer or teach internationally, “find themselves

having to confront contexts as partly shaped by legacies of colonial histories and on-going economic dependencies and domination advanced by neoliberal economic globalization” (p.xix). She identifies international schools as having imported the English language and curricula which “deliver all or some portion of the (internationalized or imported) K-12 school curriculum in English” (p.64). Tarc’s work can be applied to the reality of education across Inuit Nunangat which requires the participation of many non-Inuit teachers who travel north with little cultural awareness and holding assumptions and biases that result in pedagogical approaches that fail to engage Inuit children and are therefore counterproductive.

Inuit land claim regions struggle to prepare home-grown teachers and Inuit regions must rely on non-Inuit educators from the south to teach in the K-12 education system. Many of these non-Inuit educators come ill prepared (Berger et al., 2006; Berger, 2009). These communities can only be accessed by airplane and local populations are predominantly Inuit and Inuktitut is the main spoken language. Though non-Inuit educators may come with good intentions they arrive with little knowledge of our culture and language. In addition, they carry with them an indoctrination into Western colonial pedagogies and economic assumptions acquired during their own training as teachers. Cultural baggage frequently includes preconceptions about Inuit and culturally uninformed notions about improving education in the unfamiliar cultural context in which they find themselves. Because there is no simple pathway for them to integrate into the community and culture, you often see the non-Inuit teachers interacting largely with each other. Frequently, they do not mix with the broader Inuit populations in their communities and their Southern, (usually) anglophone identities are reinforced and they come to view us as “the Other”, rather than as fellow Canadians and educational collaborators with shared goals, albeit with a unique and respectable history and culture.

Finally, it is important to be aware of the larger context in which Canada’s implementation of the Western K-12 education system in Inuit Nunangat is a function of its role in the global economic community. Moutsios (2010) and Keating et al (2009) provide important insight to the processes used by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (of which Canada is one of the thirty-five member states) to influence policymaking in education on a transnational level. The way this directly affects Inuit education is that Provinces and Territories collaborate with the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada (CMEC) to provide expert

guidance and advice on a report that they are developing for the OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) on adult competencies among Indigenous peoples in Canada (CMEC, 2021). This has direct implication on what gets taught, how, by whom and for what purpose in the K-12 education system.

2.6. Effects of Receiving an Education

Not only does education, as a form of human development foster the expansion of a society's culture and economic growth (Canadian Union of Public Employees, 2014) but acquiring an education from the compulsory K-12 system and completing postsecondary studies is a solid predictor of positive socio-economic outcomes. Credentials obtained from Western institutions are prerequisites to secure employment, income, and social status in modern industrial societies and help to form the social identities which foster beneficial social outcomes with respect to indicators such as prosocial attitudes, health and wellbeing (ESRC-UKRI, 2014; Easterbrook et al, 2016; Harding, 2019).

The longitudinal research study, "Identity, Socioeconomic Status and Wellbeing" (Easterbrook et al, 2016) as well as the UKRI's Economic Social and Research Council indicate that people's level of education serves as basis for the formation of both positive and negative social identities and attitudes through in-group and out-group social comparisons (ESRC-UKRI, 2014).

Easterbrook et al (2016) assert that people have a strong desire to see their social identities in a favorable way and this is done by positively comparing their social identities against others and members belonging to a group that has a positive social identity tend to benefit in terms of subjective health and wellbeing, fewer intergroup conflicts or outgroup hostilities, and political engagement of members in their societies.

The same study found the opposite effect for those with lower levels of education. Constructing a positive social identity was more difficult for people with lower levels of education for several reasons. Firstly, because social identities are evaluated through social comparisons, individuals with low levels of education frequently come away from social situations with feelings of inferiority and a negative social identity. Secondly, because education is considered to be based on individual ability, people with lower levels of education are seen to be personally responsible for their low status and thirdly, the inherent characteristics of those with low levels of education

are the very consequences of their low status (ESRC-UKRI, 2014; Easterbrook et al, 2016). Snyder (2013) refers to this as a form of conditioning that fixes the mind set and is problematic because it creates implicit assumptions that abilities are fixed and innate, and not subject to change which, diminishes confidence and sparks an escalating spiral of negative emotion as people compare themselves unfavorably to others which then becomes tied to one's identity. While groups with lower levels of education report a sense of belonging to their local communities, they display hostility toward outgroups such as immigrants who hold the same level of lower status as themselves, and have less trust toward others including governments, and demonstrate lower levels of political engagement (ESRC-UKRI, 2014; Easterbrook et al, 2016).

Levels of education are also indicators of health in terms of the number of years lived, quality of life, and eudaimonic well-being (the subjective experiences associated with a person's welfare that gives way toward the pursuit of human excellence, self-actualization, personal expressiveness, and vitality) (Harding, 2019). Eudaimonic well-being is derived from a person's education and welfare and Harding (2019) reports that a meta-analysis combining ten prospective studies that controlled for social network size, medical conditions and even depression, found a significant reduction of risk in people who infused usefulness or purpose into their daily living. Examples included, "a reduced need for coronary artery bypass surgery and cardiac stenting procedures, lower risk of stroke (72 percent lower risk) and heart disease (44 percent lower risk) and for those who were sick had better outcomes with reduced spread of cancer, spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis, autoimmune disorders, or dementia" (Harding, 2019, pp.74-75).

Other health outcomes related to level of education have been observed by researchers since the 1970s in relation to "infectious diseases, smoking, alcohol use, diabetes, obesity, and heart disease" (Harding, 2019, p.76). A patient without a high school diploma has twice the risk of developing diabetes compared to a college graduate (15 percent compared to 7 percent) and is, "three times more likely to die of diabetes if he did not graduate from high school than if he had taken some college courses" (Harding, 2019, p.76). Furthermore, a woman with a college degree is 25 percent less likely to be obese compared to 40 percent for a woman without; another study of 27, 033 white women and men found a significant negative correlation between the number of

years spent in school and high blood pressure. Harding, (2019) affirms that there is increasing evidence that the health-protective possibilities of education are substantial. For instance, she notes that “having less than a high school diploma carries the same health risk as smoking” (Harding, p.76, 2019) and that “compelling evidence shows that education protects against telomere (nucleotide sequences that protect chromosomes from deteriorating) shortening, particularly for people of colour regardless of income” (Harding, 2019, pp.71-76.). Harding (2019) reflects, “As a doctor, I never imagined how much education impacts the health of my patients [...] but it makes sense now why so many patients who struggle the most with illness have the lowest education levels” (p.77).

By all accounts, Inuit report high levels of social, economic, health, and educational inequities and poverty in Canada (Bougie, 2013; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2016). While Inuit are among the most researched Indigenous groups in Canada, research in Inuit education appears to be neglected. There is scant scholarly literature available on conditions that lead to Inuit postsecondary education success; in addition, scholars report an absence of scholarly debate on Inuit education issues in Canada (Abele & Graham, 2010; Walker et al, 2013). My study aims to add to the scholarly literature and the much-needed debate on conditions that influence Inuit educational experience and the evolutionary (past to present) impact of education on Inuit within the Western socio-economic and cultural context that dominates across Inuit Nunangat.

2.7. Inuit Self-Determination and the Impact of Neocolonialism in the Educational Context

According to post-colonial frameworks, neocolonialism is characterized as formerly colonized countries having gained geographic and political independence but not cultural or economic independence. As a result, they continue to be ideologically, economically and financially dominated by their former colonizers (Wickens & Sandlin, 2007). This is true for Inuit across Inuit Nunangat who, to some degree, gained geographic and political independence through comprehensive land claims agreements, but have yet to achieve cultural or economic independence.

In Canada, as it is in the majority of Western countries, the dominant social and situational context within our economic system is resource extraction, mass production and capitalism for

mass consumerism. When neocolonialism is viewed from an educational context, schools today continue to function as social-cultural artifacts where the formal K-12 and post-secondary education systems are geared toward meeting labor market needs.

The Thomas and Postlethwaite (1984) and Thomas (1993) framework for analyzing neocolonialism within educational contexts is based on the idea that different dimensions of schooling within any country can be placed on a continuum where “complete control by foreign powers is at one end of the continuum and complete control by independent nations is on the other” (Wickens and Sandlin, 2007, p. 279). Thomas and Postlethwaite’s framework has six dimensions as indicated in Table 2:

Table 1

-
1. The purpose of schooling
 2. The educational system’s administrative structure
 3. Educational personnel
 4. Composition of student population
 5. Curriculum and instructional methodology
 6. The educational system’s financing.
-

Six Dimensions of Neocolonialism Within Educational Contexts (1984)

Note: Table reproduced Wicken’s and Sandlin who cited the six dimensions of neocolonialism within educational contexts from Thomas & Postlethwaite, (1984).

Although the last residential school system closed in 1996 and the overt genocidal practices have been lifted from schools that Inuit attend, the K-12 model remains unchanged (Berger, 2009) and its objective to prepare Inuit students for the labor market and mass consumerism is unlikely to change without political will. Political will is needed to transform unsustainable industrial and mass consumer based economic practices to more sustainable ones that are more in line with Inuit values and culturally relevant economic practices (Tester et al., 2013). The dominant education system continues to superimpose a one-dimensional Western worldview that caters to the elite and middle-class Canadians and generates a culture of exclusion towards minority students (Brady, 1996). In such a system there is an inherent risk of reproducing the values of the dominant society which will, in turn, continue to benefit those that the system serves best.

For example, if the dominant society's value is specific to economic outcomes that cater to the elite and middle class, it will limit and devalue models of egalitarian forms of education and push members of the lower socio-economic status out of the education system. These policies ultimately create a mainstream exclusionary culture that affects the ability for Inuit to not only compete in society but to help build a more equal society. For example, Brady (1996) states that Canada's education system caters to the mainstream Western capitalist upper to middle class cultures that ends up leaving students from lower socioeconomic status without equal opportunities in education and in society, whether they are Indigenous or non-Indigenous. Brady notes that while the social economic status (SES) effect is higher for Indigenous students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students feel excluded in how they were treated in the formal K-12 education system both by educators and their peers. Their feelings of exclusion were confirmed through an analysis of educational policies and practices as well as from respondents from students who belonged to higher economic brackets. These respondents felt that they were superior to Indigenous and non-indigenous groups from poor communities; both of whom generally belong to the lower socioeconomic status in Canada (Brady, 1996).

A recent report titled, "Is Nunavut education criminally inadequate? An analysis of current policies for Inuktitut and English in education, international and national law, linguistic and cultural genocide and crimes against humanity" (Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 2019) conducted for Nunavut Tunngavik Corporation highlights similar findings of a Euro-centric driven education system that excludes Inuit students. For instance, Skutnabb-kangas et al., state, "If the education system has been insensitive to local needs, and is mainly conducted through the medium of English, it is arguable that Inuit are pushed out rather than drop out. They opt out of what is seen as irrelevant education," (2019, p.10). Furthermore, the report says that the lack of investment in Inuit-centred education and language of instruction produces many adverse effects including, "econocide" (making people poor); "historicide" (exclusion from history); "ecocide" (killing the environment) and "linguicide" (killing a language.). (Nunatsiaq News, 2019; Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 2019).

Consistent with the above report and Brady's (1996) study, are anecdotal evidence from families and student's express isolation and discrimination in the education system. For instance, in a

submission to Nunatsiaq News, a Nunavut mother and student who declined to be named shared their story of their experience of being treated differently in the education system, “Inuit are constantly treated lesser than their southern peers. These southern peers develop ideas and preconceived notions of Inuit being less human, less intelligent, less capable, and are ‘ghetto,’ and are told they will not get anywhere in life.” (Nunatsiaq News, 2019). Despite experiencing these types of racially based barriers, there are Inuit students who go on to pursue post-secondary studies (Nunatsiaq News, 2019).

2.8. Summary of Literature Review

In summary, my literature review identifies several different but interrelated conditions that impact Inuit students’ academic outcomes in the Western K-12 and postsecondary education systems. Historically, Western based education or more accurately, school systems, have existed to serve those in power within certain socio-economic and cultural contexts. It was designed such that by the end of their 12-year compulsory schooling, the majority of students adopt the values and expected behavioral norms of the dominant society which ultimately serves those in positions of power. In order for the K-12 model to gain popular acceptance, it was introduced to the masses through churches and has since been adopted by many Western countries including Canada, and it is the model used in Inuit Nunangat today. This industrial and consumer-based model does not align with Inuit worldview and pedagogy, nor does it align with the ideals of the Enlightenment and as such, has created tensions in relationships between many white educators, Inuit parents, and students. The teaching artifacts (e.g., Western education protocols and pedagogy) deployed and the prevalence of educators who view the current model as superior to Inuit pedagogy and worldview, serve to ensure the reproduction of the dominant colonial world view.

The tensions between Inuit and non-Inuit are exacerbated by Canada’s colonial policies. The overt cultural genocidal and assimilative policies experienced by Inuit and other Indigenous groups through the K-12 system in Church and federally run Day and Residential School systems is indisputable. These policies contributed to alienation, physical, emotional, mental, and sexual abuses, and loss of language and culture experienced by Indigenous groups including the

majority of Inuit, resulting in intergenerational impacts that our communities are continuing to experience.

The Eurocentric education system continues to alienate the Inuit worldview, pedagogy, and Inuit students are systematically excluded from fully participating in formal K-12 education, post-secondary education, and ultimately, Canada's economic systems (Brady, 1999). Gaps in educational policies, the lack of culturally relevant educational systems, and need for family and cohort support systems, are considered to be the leading causes for the majority of the Inuit distrust and disengagement from the current K-12 Western education system (Berger et al, 2006; Berger, 2009; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2011). The low postsecondary enrolment of Inuit cannot be assigned to one specific cause but is, according to the literature, the result of a number of conditions that impact relatively young students, leading to disengagement from school, truancy and withdrawal prior to achieving a high school diploma. Without this diploma, access to postsecondary education and meaningful employment for Inuit youth is severely restricted. As important as the studies I have reviewed are, they have been conducted using European cultural paradigms and research methods which may or may not access the culturally located experiences and meanings assigned to educational experiences by Inuit. My research incorporates Inuit conceptual frameworks to help bridge this gap in scholarly research and to enable Inuit voices to be represented in Inuit ways. In the next chapter I speak to the conceptual framework and methodology which is situated in Inuit epistemology and research practices.

CHAPTER THREE

Conceptual Framework and Methodology

3.1 About my Conceptual Framework and Methodology

In this chapter, I present my research paradigm and methodology. Because I will be using Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ) as my conceptual framework which many researchers may not be familiar with, I begin by providing the definition of Logic and how as a universal concept and tool it may be applied by Indigenous philosophies to build knowledge. I then introduce my Inuit research paradigm: my epistemology (philosophy of knowledge), axiology (values), ontology (nature of existence, being, and order), and ethics (moral principles governing my activity) from an Inuit lens. I then discuss my methodology: my data collection methods, my approach to interviewing participants using Inuit Oral Tradition which mainstream researchers may identify closely with Social Constructivism. Finally, I discuss my approach to the data analysis and verification of my participants' unique stories.

3.2. European Definition of Logic

Before presenting the Inuit research paradigm I used for this study, like Saunders and Hill (2007), I feel it is important to confront existing criticisms that Indigenizing educational approaches including research methods is a form of “dumbing down” academic standards (Saunders & Hill, 2007, p. 19). In order to do this, I refer critics of Indigenous conceptual frameworks in education and research to go back and consider the evolution and definition of *Logic* including its presence -the ability to build and organize knowledge to make correct inferences- in many different cultures and languages (Saunders & Hill, 2007; Simpson, 2000). I feel this is important because throughout my own education journey and career in Inuit educational policy, I have come across many non-Indigenous educators who, to my surprise (whether it was conscious or unconscious), do not apply key definitions such as the definition of logic -that derived from members in their own society- when considering Indigenous educational approaches. The basic concept of Logic as defined by Western academics is, “the science of formal principles of reasoning or correct inference” (Simpson, 2000, p.577). Simpson states that according to this view, logic is a tool or instrument that is independent of any philosophical orientation but may be used by philosophers and scientists as a general framework or method,

“not only for philosophical reasoning but also for reasoning about any subject matter whatsoever” and he further states that the attitude toward this definition is, “in agreement with modern view” (p.577).

The above definition tells us that the epistemological frameworks that we embrace are generally situated in our culture’s philosophical paradigms and that we use reasoning and inferences as *tools* within this context to produce knowledge in search of *truths*. In formal academic settings, epistemological frameworks that have been designed for making inferences and reasoning to produce knowledge have historically been dominated by European cultural and philosophical paradigms. Eurocentric education in Canada for instance has been used as a colonial agent to devalue and invalidate Indigenous knowledge production (our inferences and reasoning) in favor of Eurocentric worldviews. Yet, the European axiom and definition of logic presented above indicates that other cultural philosophical paradigms and their epistemological frameworks used for making inferences and reasoning to produce knowledge, are just as valid as those that come from a European cultural lens. As such, I weave in European examples into my study as a form of mixed method not to validate my work but to educate non-Inuit readers so that they can relate to my research and findings.

3.3. Inuit Research Paradigm

My research paradigm is drawn from *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*, an Inuit epistemological framework. I include information on my epistemology, axiology, ontology, and ethical process in such a way that it is palatable to non-Indigenous researchers who otherwise would not have understood some of the concepts.

My axiology (the values applied in my research) is grounded in *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ)* which is the epistemological (theory of knowledge) framework identified by Inuit elders that is rooted in Inuit philosophical paradigms and language. Directly translated means, “that which Inuit have always known to be true” (Tagalik, 2010, p.1). There is no single definition of *IQ* because it encompasses every spectrum of Inuit knowledge systems and values. Tagalik (2010) quotes Knowledge Keeper and Inuit linguist, Jaypeetee Arnakuk, “It is embedded in a continuous process as “IQ is a living technology. It is a means of rationalizing thought and

action, a means of organizing tasks and resources, a means of organizing family and society into coherent wholes” (Tagalik, 2010, p. 1).

My epistemological stance (method of how I came to know what I know) is rooted in IQ’s application of *Qaujisarniq* which, as noted in my introduction, traditionally means to “investigate using logic” and may be applied to all things and contexts. The example I gave as a traditional Inuit investigative method, is that Inuit researchers may *Qaujisaq* (investigate) a phenomenon, event, person, place, or thing in order to make the correct inferences.

My ontological framework is also drawn from *IQ* and the application of, *Inunnguiniq* in the educational context. As noted in my introduction, literally translated *Inunnguiniq* means, “the making of a human being” and is a process of socialization and education used traditionally by Inuit (Tagalik, 2010, p.1). *Inunnguiniq* fosters the development of every child to become capable of being innovative and resourceful through knowledge acquisition that he/she has gained in proportion to his/her age which increases the individual’s and the group’s chance for survival while making improvements for future generations (Tagalik, 2010). Within an Inuit-specific educational framework, *IQ* is used to shape the developing child into a fully capable and contributing human being through the following *Maligait* (foundational laws) and prescriptive guiding principles:

Table 2

Four Big Laws In IQ	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work for the common good 2. Respect all living things 3. Maintain harmony and balance 4. Continually plan and prepare for the future. 	
IQ Principle	Meaning

<i>Pijitsirniq</i>	The concept of serving: serving and providing for family or community, or both.
<i>Aajiiqatigiingniq</i>	Decision making through discussion and consensus.
<i>Pilimmaksarniq</i>	The concept of knowledge and skills acquisition: development of skills through practice, effort and action.
<i>Piliriqatigiingniq</i>	The concept of collaborative relationships: working together for a common purpose.
<i>Avatimik Kamattiarniq</i>	The concept of environmental stewardship: respect and care for the land, animals, and the environment.
<i>Qanuqtuurunnarniq</i>	The concept of being resourceful to solve problems: being innovative and resourceful.
<i>Inuuqatigiitsiarniq</i>	Respecting others, relationships, and caring for people.

Definitions of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (2010).

Note: The table is constructed from the definitions provided by Tagalik, (2010).

In addition to following the University of Ottawa’s Research Ethics Board (REB) guidelines, I intentionally applied *Ikpigusungiq* (the ability to be empathetic) as part of my traditional Inuit ethical process for harm reduction to my participants. *Ikpigusungniq* signifies both respect and harm prevention for my participants. My analysis comprised three steps. First, using transcripts created from audio recordings of our interviews I re-story the interviews into individual narratives that seek to relate the lived educational experiences of each of the participants. These narratives were presented back to each of the participants as a way of ensuring I am, as far as possible, relating their story in a respectful and authentic way. Second, in partnership with my participants I considered each participant’s individual narratives as singular case studies that represent intra-case analyses through the *IQ* lens and, third, I conducted an *IQ* themed cross-case analysis seeking any commonalities or synergies in the participants' individual experiences of

education. Participants were also given access to a list of counselors in case any of the questions triggered them.

3.4: Inuit Oral Tradition and Social Constructivism

My research is a qualitative narrative study that drew upon Inuit oral tradition to collect in-depth stories of my participants' experiences (accounts of past events in their lives and the evolution of their education journey). Oral traditions are culture's collection of spoken words that have been handed down for generations. The words of the oral tradition are the inheritance of an entire cultural group, and this tradition may include traditional law, medicine, cosmology, the environment, prayers, speeches, spiritual teachings, songs, stories, and histories (Laugrand & Oosten, 2010; Nelson Education Ltd., 2004). By applying this practice, I provided repeated opportunities for the participants to tell their life stories, lived educational experiences in the different yet competing cultural (Western and Inuit) contexts within which they engaged, and together, we sought to understand the meanings they assigned to their educational experiences.

In the Inuit culture, reasoning and inferences have historically been operationalized through our oral tradition. For example, knowledge production and acquisition are practiced through observation and carefully recounting lived experiences, events, people, places, the environment, and preserving them in stories. The information then becomes the collective knowledge of the people whose members tell and retell the information through the story. Inuit argue that oral tradition is a valid form of developing and transferring knowledge that have been inferred and reasoned upon; and the most recent example to date is the finding of Sir John Franklin's lost ship (CBC News, 2014). Knowledge and skill acquisition through Inuit oral tradition has been marginalized through colonization and currently does not exist as a form of pedagogy in the Western education system. It is a relevant and appropriate approach to this study as it enabled the participants to recount their experiences and tell their stories of their own educational journeys in their own ways using their own words and, when they chose to, in their own Inuktitut language. Recurring themes that emerge thus become the collective experiences with respect to the way Inuit post-secondary graduates navigated the tensions of two opposing worldviews within the K-12 and post-secondary institutions in order to complete their studies and participate meaningfully in Canadian society and across Inuit Nunangat. This information then becomes the inheritance of

the next generation of Inuit students who will inevitably have to similarly navigate through the K-12 and post-secondary education systems in the two competing cultures.

Academics trained in Western worldviews may find the oral data collection process closely related to Social Constructivism, through which:

Individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow meanings into a few categories or ideas. (Cresswell, 2013, p.24).

Building on Inuit oral traditions this study seeks to present the ways in which six Inuit university graduates seek and find understanding in their own education journeys. To recruit participants, I applied the purposeful sampling methods (Patton, 1990) to gather information-rich cases from six individuals who met the criteria of having an Inuit identity, having grown up in Inuit Nunangat, who have either completed K-12 or acquired their high school equivalency certificate and who have graduated from a university program. Though my intent was to exclude Inuit students who had grown up outside of Inuit Nunangat, I did interview one Inuit student who initially lived in Inuit Nunangat but relocated to the south at a young age. His experiences help to identify whether the struggles and successes were similar to the participants who were raised in Inuit Nunangat.

Participants were recruited through my professional networks. I drafted a call for participants with detailed information and with permission from my employer I was able to share it with my network in the Inuit regions through e-mail using my university of Ottawa student e-mail address. I was able to recruit participants through my education networks within each region of Inuit Nunangat. Interested participants were provided with an information letter and a consent form and invited to contact the researcher to discuss what their involvement in the research might entail.

In framing the interviews with my participants, I drew from Seidman's (2006) three-part interviewing procedure as a way to develop a narrative account of the Inuit post-secondary graduates lived educational experiences, the conditions that influenced their educational pathways through secondary school and postsecondary education and the meaning they ascribe to these experiences. I met with each participant on at least three occasions where the focus of our conversations moved from looking back into their past experiences, to a more detailed examination of their educational postsecondary experiences, and finally an opportunity for the participant and myself to reflect on the meanings of their educational experiences to date through shared reading and re-reading of the narratives I constructed from interviews one and two.

Following Inuit oral tradition of storytelling and acknowledging Seidman (2006), the first meeting was retroactive, focusing on the participant's reconstruction of their past lived and learning experiences and up to the present. I asked participants to tell me stories about their elementary and secondary experiences and what they felt hindered or helped their entry and completion of their secondary program. Stories of the participants past educational experiences provided a platform for understanding how they interacted /reacted in two often contradictory worldviews and how they navigated to obtain academic success in this socio-cultural context. Participants were asked to recount early educational experiences, challenges they may have faced, successes and triumphs. The 'interview', in keeping with Inuit oral tradition, was framed more as an opportunity to share experiences, to relate stories of key milestones and to 'map' each unique educational journey.

The second time we met we focused on their entry and journey through post-secondary education, again, through stories participants were invited to recount their educational journeys within their particular context. The focus was to, "strive, however incompletely, to reconstruct the myriad details of our participants' experiences" (Seidman, 2006, p.18) of education, particularly secondary and postsecondary education and how these contributed to the participants' current realities. I encouraged each participant to share their current context and how this interacts with their past educational histories. As someone who has taken this journey myself, from time to time when judged appropriate, I encouraged sharing through telling parts of my own journey, my return to gain a high school diploma as an adult and subsequent graduation

with a university degree. We talked about “how did we end up here, as postsecondary graduates” and in so doing, through sharing and conversation, built an account of their particular lived experience of post-secondary education.

The third and final meeting called upon participants to “reflect on the meaning of their experiences [to address] the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants’ work and life” (Seidman, 2006, p.18). Here there was an opportunity to draw on the shared stories from the first two meetings and to together reflect on how different conditions in their lives “interacted to bring them to their present situation” (Seidman, 2006, p.18). Prior to this third and final meeting I shared a re-storied narrative that I constructed from Interviews one and two with the participant. As best as I could, I represented a story of their journey through education to graduation from a post-secondary program. I used their voices and words to construct the narrative and seek to provide an authentic account of their journey. This was sent to participants to allow them to read and reflect on its form and substance and provide comment, if need be, before the third meeting. The goal of this third meeting was for us to confirm (or co-construct) their narrative. It was also an opportunity for us to examine together such questions as: Given what you said about your educational experiences, how do you understand the challenges and opportunities that are available to you now? What challenges and opportunities do Inuit students face? What challenges and opportunities do education leaders face? This final meeting allowed the participants to consider what can be learned through paying attention to the story of their educational journeys and how might their story inform the future education for Inuit. Participants were invited to look to the future and, given their successful navigation of an education system that is overwhelming to many other Inuit, they were asked to consider what needs to change in Inuit education in order for us to address the current low participation. In this phase, I invited the participants to draw parallels of their experience to the IQ laws and principles.

Each meeting with the participants was conducted in person, audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. I then created narratives based on the transcripts. I shared both documents with the participants to give them the opportunity to review the interviews and ensure the accuracy of the

narratives as well as to conduct a co-analysis and highlight where IQ was present in their education journeys.

3.5: Data Analysis

The process I undertook in analyzing the transcripts and narratives was two-fold. I began by transcribing each interview. I then analyzed where I thought IQ was present in their individual interviews. I then sent the transcribed interviews back to the participants and invited them to review the transcribed interview for accuracy and to go give them the opportunity to consider and to where they thought IQ principles were present or to omit portions of their interviews such as potential identifiers. They reviewed the transcriptions and sent their edits and suggestions back to me. I then wrote the individual narratives based on the revised transcripts and once again shared the narratives with them to review for accuracy.

Through reading and re-reading each person's transcripts and narratives I recognized patterns in the participants' experiences. I highlighted the sentences surrounding where the participants spoke to affordances and struggles throughout their educational experiences. As I continued to read the data from each participant, I coded similar experiences. As I identified a new code within a transcript, I went back and re-read the previous participants' data to ensure that all transcripts and narratives were coded repeatedly. In this way each transcript and narrative was read and re-read against the emerging themes that were identified and in subsequent chapters of this thesis are discussed in relation to current research and scholarship.

In the next chapter, I present each participant's individual narratives as singular case studies that represent intra-case analyses. A thematic cross-case analysis of the participants lived experiences follows in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings: Participants' Narratives

4.1 Participant Narratives

In this chapter, I present my participants' individual narratives as singular case studies that represent intra-case analyses. While respecting their privacy by using pseudonyms that they chose and eliminating identifiers, this chapter gives a sense of who my participants are and of their lived experiences, as told from their earliest recollections of entering into the K-12 system in Inuit Nunangat and post-secondary education in the south.

4.2 Suputik

Suputik is a young Inuk woman of mixed heritage who completed her elementary and secondary schooling in her home community, and her graduate studies in a southern university. Along with her younger sibling, she was predominantly raised by a single university-educated mother and her grandparents in a small coastal community in Inuit Nunangat. Her father, an educator, was not present for much of her childhood-

From her entry into kindergarten at age five, Suputik learned she was different. She recalls that children within her community who were “white-passing” or “pale-skinned”, like herself, were enrolled automatically into the English immersion stream in kindergarten as opposed to the Inuktitut immersion class. Whereas children who were more “Inuki-looking” were assigned to the latter, depending on which family they came from. This segregation at its foundation within the education system was ‘academic versus basic’, but also ‘White versus Inuit,’ and this continued through to high school. Suputik received the message that “if you want to be successful, you can’t go into Inuktitut immersion.” Being in Inuktitut immersion was being “set up to fail.” So, from kindergarten Suputik was taught about differences in this harmful way and could not attend the same classes as her friends who were placed in Inuktitut immersion. The placement in the English stream also meant she had limited access to learning Inuktitut in school, which remained that way from kindergarten to Grade 10. Assignment to the English Immersion stream positioned her at odds with her Inuit friends and she was often teased and taunted for being in the “white class”.

In the fall of grade 8 or 9 Suputik and her mother and sibling moved south to be closer to her father. She attended school for one semester which was totally different - she had to take French and she found the “kids were so smart” and the “teachers engaged with the students” and had high expectations. This was a “game changer” for Suputik as she had her first experience of academic failure and on her return to her northern community in December, she was even more determined to do well at school so she could leave. She continued to tell herself - “If you want to get out of here, you have to do better”

Suputik found herself continually explaining and defending her identity as Inuk - to both Inuit and others. Art, elders’ programs and cadets gave motivation and engaged her beyond the community. Her journey into university was not a straight-forward entry. Like many Inuit students educated in Inuit Nunangat, she did not have the pre-requisites that were required for entry into her program of interest. This initially made her feel that she wasn’t good enough. She had to take a pre-course and the stakes were high. When she finally entered, she felt a sense of isolation and was lonely. She recalled that she, “didn’t know what I was doing” and had switched degrees three times before finding her place. Though she made it on the Dean’s List, she often felt tokenized and expected to speak on behalf of all Inuit.

As a university student, she found she had to navigate through a post-secondary system that, except for the Aboriginal integration support program, was largely ignorant of Inuit culture, knowledge and values. There were times where her Inuit identity was challenged by professors who knew little or nothing about Inuit and Inuit history or contemporary issues.

Now that she has completed her post-secondary studies and is stable in her career and is where she longed to be, Suputik is exploring ways in which she can give back to her community that is still struggling with some of the issues that she had to endure throughout her K-12 schooling. She has deep concerns for Inuit youth who are having to unnecessarily live through some of the challenges that she had to overcome to get where she is today.

4.3 Iqaluk

Iqaluk is an older Inuit man who completed his post-secondary studies as a mature student. He was raised as a single child in a larger coastal community in Inuit Nunangat by a unilingual Inuit mother and a stepfather of European descent who spoke little to no English or Inuktitut. As a result of this language barrier, neither of them was able to support him with his schooling including homework which was predominantly in English, “I struggled at it because nobody taught me how to do homework. It’s a skill that I didn’t learn until later on”. He recalls having one Inuktitut class per week but because he was fluent in the language, he did not require help from his mother. It was in the other areas of his academic learning such as in, “algebra, grammar, and English” that he found he could have used the help. He felt that this was true for many other Inuit students at the time who had, “no support at home”.

Iqaluk recalls that entry into the K-12 education system, “felt like a foreign environment”. Starting in Kindergarten and all the way up through high school, he observed Inuit and non-Inuit students being grouped differently into “A, B, and C” categories based on the educator’s perception of the student’s English language proficiency and skin color. Iqaluk describes this division as racist, “‘A’ class was always 90% non-Inuit and then ‘B’ class being 90% Inuit, and then ‘C’ was always 100% Inuit” and that “you can always see the colour difference”. He felt that the school judged a child’s intellectual capacity based on the criteria of English language skills. He recalls there was a culture of exclusion that extended beyond the classroom to extracurricular activities such as exchange trips that were geared toward underprivileged Inuit students, but the non-Inuit students were predominantly selected, “the non-Inuit students didn’t need the opportunity to go south but somehow they were always the majority picked to go on any trips. Even though 90% of the school was Inuit. 75 % of the people that went on those trips were non-Inuit. So just glaring contradictions like that, I guess. We saw it all the time.”.

Iqaluk attributes his English language proficiency to having a “white” stepfather, [though he couldn’t speak English fluently] who exposed him to various forms of reading materials such as newspapers and magazines. Each day he would pick up a copy of the Montreal Gazette that, when his stepfather had finished reading, Iqaluk would read from cover to cover, “I read every article, every word basically from eight to nine years old until I left that house. I learned a lot

about the world, everything that was going on outside our little town.” This afforded him the opportunity to be in the “A” class. He recalls his motivation to stay in the “A” class was because, “I felt like I was as smart as the white kids and wanted to stay in the “A” class”.

Iqaluk doesn’t recall very many positive memories from his K-12 school experience. He recalls that there was a lot of fighting with non-Inuit peers, “we fought in school, after school, and at recess time”. He attributes this tension to the segregation or “artificial division” they faced in school and outside of school, “You’re from [location], I’m from [location], you’re from [location]”. He recalls, “of course the new white kids got beat up on the first day of school. That was their initiation to our world because again, the Inuit students had the resentment that they had an upper hand, that they had more opportunities than us.”. He recalls that it was very difficult to imagine an Inuk being in a position of power, “There was always racism back then. It was very normalized. It was the white government workers; the business owners were all white, Inuit were not business owners, and there was a very clear power structure back then too -and- it was hard, you could never picture an Inuk being a principal or being a big boss back then. You never saw it.” He recalls however, that one of his non-Inuit peers did become his best friend only after several conflicts, “we’re best friends now, his first day of school we fought. The next day another kid fought him and the next day another kid fought him. Poor guy. He became a very good fighter at the end.”.

Iqaluk was also exposed to suicide at an early age, “I was seven or eight years old”. His best friend’s father [...] was accused of, “inappropriate touching or something by an elementary student [...] he ended up committing suicide at their house”. He recalls that the remnants of the man taking his own life was not properly disposed of, “we would go to their house and there would still be blood splatter on the ceiling [...]. That was my first memory of suicide, like people killing themselves, and ahm, and since then it was part growing up, I guess.”. Prior to taking his own life, the man had taunted Iqaluk with the idea of suicide. For instance, Iqaluk recalls, “He used to have a little porcelain figurine and it was a little man flushing himself down the toilet and if you lift the lid it said, ‘good bye cruel world’ and he used to say to me, ‘Iqaluk, someday you’re going to do this’ and I didn’t know what he meant ‘cause I didn’t know what suicide was

until he killed himself later on that year. And it still sticks to my brain, what he used to say. I never got it at the time until after he died [...].”

Though Iqaluk found it difficult to recall positive experiences, he remembers some internal and external motivational factors that contributed to his continued learning. Among these was access to the library. He liked reading “fiction” and “the news” that “opened my eyes to the world”. He also recalls, “some teachers were good” and that he enjoyed, “organized sports”. Social studies was a favorite subject because, “it was about current events and news”. Another major motivational factor was to keep up with his non-Inuit peers and stay in the, “A” class. Iqaluk observed that this social stratification had real life consequences, “You’re, in ‘A’ you’re in the smarter kids class. B and Cs were like, no hope left in the world for them. You know they could barely read. Some of the students would only go twice a week. You don’t know what’s happening in their home, they were really poor.”. Their access to employment was limited or “boxed in” to labour, seasonal, or office work such as, “shop” or “clerical” work and no further opportunities for academic studies were possible.

Iqaluk did not complete his K-12 formal education. At the age of sixteen, he received a letter from the superintendent at the time indicating that he was permanently banned from attending all schools in the territories as a result of vandalizing the school, “That was not our intention but once one of them got started, we, you know, overturned chairs and stuff. I ended up getting kicked out of high school. My friends were able to go back the next year, but I wasn’t allowed back.”.

Though it took him more than fifteen years to complete his General Equivalency Certificate this did not dissuade him from pursuing a higher education and got his college diploma. It was motivating to observe his peers who had completed college programs and were doing well economically while he was a bartender, taxi driver and a fast-food delivery driver, “I saw my friends that I knew from high school, they’d gone to college, they were homeowners now, they were, they weren’t poor, they were doing well”. However, having acquired his college diploma and working in a government job opened his eyes further to socio-economic stratification among college and university graduates working in government. Iqaluk recalls, “You know everybody

around me again, [...] I was working in the government with our non-inuit employees” who would ask him and each other, “oh what school did you go to? What university did you go to?” He recalls that, “It was like this little click that if you didn’t go to university, you weren’t part of the club, “I was shut out because of that lack of degree” and that’s when I started to realize that I probably need a university degree now.” Having a college diploma did not prevent ostracization or exclusion, “You know, though I had it all with a college certificate but realized [...] pretty quick that to have value in the workforce, in today’s workforce, you needed that degree and even then, I looked at those people and said, they’re not any smarter than me.”.

With sixty dollars in his pocket, Iqaluk applied for and entered university as a mature student. Even then however, he was presented with both financial, entry, and academic challenges that he had to overcome. He received a letter from the registrar’s office stating, “we don’t know if your language skills will be strong enough to take university level courses” so he made it a point to visit the registrar’s office to inform them that he had attended a residential school and that, “they didn’t teach us anything but English”. He was then accepted into the program. Though he was fluent in English, his writing skills suffered from, “school up north where, it’s kind of substandard education [...] so my first year I did it just on drive alone. And I read, and I read, and I tried to wrap my head around it. It basically taught me how to write.”. In his second year, he was able to access the resources available on campus to get the support he needed. Most of his education was self-funded due to lack of information and funding resources for Inuit students who don’t reside in his specific land claim territory. He noted that other Indigenous groups had better financial support for food and housing so that they could focus solely on their studies, “we were fricken broke and all my fellow students would be eating subway and McDonalds and I’m bringing fricken rice. You could see them, they’re not worried about money, I’m worried about what I’m going to feed my kids tonight at home”. Today, he is continuing to pay his student debt off. Iqaluk attributes all the challenges that he has had to overcome to discriminatory practices toward Inuit. The clearest example is being an Inuit beneficiary who is unable to access student benefits because he was not a resident of his land claim territory when he started his post-secondary education journey. This forced him to leave university for a time to make enough of an income but then came across a new form of colonial paradox when applying for a student loan from the territory he was born into and residing in for work but was not a beneficiary of. He

recalls being referred to as a, “non-indigenous aboriginal” that limited his options for a student loan whereas a non-aboriginal can be deemed an “indigenous non-aboriginal” to this specific territory and have access to full benefits without restrictions. Upon his return to university, he found that the teaching faculty was misinforming students about the distinctions about First Nations and Inuit Peoples as well as about traditional Inuit cultural practices. For instance, Iqaluk recalls, “You’re constantly having to correct your professors on anything Inuit related. They still call all native people First Nations, and you have to correct them and they’re teaching at a university and I’m going, ‘you have no idea but here you are teaching me’.” Some of the course material was also questionable, “I did make a complaint about one article we read in anthropology class how Inuit men find their wives, they basically club them and put them over their shoulders and take them home”. The response he received was, ““oh that’s reification where they take a moment in time and write about it but you’re viewing it from today’s standards. But I said, ‘it’s still wrong’.” Iqaluk completed his program and is currently considering taking graduate studies.

4.4 Kitula

Kitula had an overwhelming and difficult childhood. She was raised in a coastal community in Inuit Nunangat by a single mother along with her siblings until they were apprehended and separated into different families by the foster care system.

She recalls her first day of school of entering kindergarten and that her teacher was an Inuk. Her birth mother had dropped her off and while she had some anxiety about entering the school system, she has positive associations with it due to having caring and nurturing teachers, for having received basic health care needs, such as vaccinations and hearing tests, as well as for having developed “good friendships”. As a result of these encounters her entry into the school system was an overall “good experience” for her.

Shortly after entering the school system, “between k-4” Kitula and her siblings were removed from their birth mother’s custody and placed into different foster homes. She associates her early childhood adverse events with her mother’s socio-economic situation. She recalls her mother had struggled with not being able to provide them with enough food to eat, with abusive

relationships, alcoholism and was powerless to provide them with a safe place to sleep. She recalls seeing, “a lot of people struggling” and that there was, “a lot of community social issues” such as “poverty, alcoholism, and suicides” and that her “family was definitely affected by it”. For instance, she remembered, “My aunts and uncles struggle with alcoholism, and my father and grandfather took their own lives when I was between nine and ten”. Kitula also observed an absence of “basic and proper health care and social support systems” as well as a lack of proper infrastructure. For instance, she recalls having to, “get water at the pump house” before the age of ten. She stated that it was “like you survived against all odds there”.

As a result of their apprehension, Kitula and her siblings, “didn’t grow up together” as they were raised in different foster home environments. She often wondered why she was able to be more, “successful in the formal education system whereas my [siblings] did not”. She eventually learned that they were later diagnosed with a spectrum of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder which she feels affected their “cognitive abilities” but also refers to a term called colorism which she describes as, “a spectrum as well within racialized communities to be treated better than others within a certain race. She reflected that her siblings, “are darker” and recognized within herself the advantages of having lighter skin that may have afforded her certain privileges, “I also have European settler blood from my paternal lineage, so that is a privilege that I see now, I am mixed, and I believe in earlier times, any proximity to whiteness grants one more access to resources, supports than those who are non-white cannot equally possibly reach, so race, gender, appearance all impacted my ability to ‘succeed’”.

Kitula feels that as a result of, “genetic factors as well as external factors” that her siblings received differential treatment, “I think that they were discriminated against to be honest because they’re darker”. Kitula added that, “I also wasn’t raised in a really abusive foster home, my [siblings] were. They were really not only discriminated against, but they were abused much more traumatically than I was.” She felt that she wasn’t “overly discriminated against” as a result of, “self-fulfilling prophecy where if I’m being treated a certain way, I’m going to start behaving in ways that reinforce that treatment. So, my [siblings], you know being darker, having more cognitive disabilities perhaps, I think struggled more”.

This early adverse life experience resulted in Kitula experiencing mental health issues, “I’ve also struggled with alcoholism and depression” but feels that she developed self-efficacy with an inner drive that led her to seek support and care, “for some reason I navigate them a little differently. Like I make sure I access the proper health care.” She reflected that perhaps, “my health seeking behaviors were usually reinforced positively” with the ability to access, “mental health counselling, drawing upon friends” Kitula reflected that though sometimes she wonders how she had this ability that sometimes success is, “kind of the balance of how you’re treated socially and how people perceive you and how you are then able to take advantage of the social support that you’re given.”

Throughout her K-12 education journey, Kitula recalls having been placed in, “at least four foster homes” which were, “basically middle-class homes that benefit from education and to have access to those jobs”. She reflected that, “those who didn’t see the direction that schooling can have might not necessarily see the benefit of going”. She aged out of the foster care system which meant she lost her social support system and struggled to finish her last year of school where she felt she “had to fend for myself”. After a failed attempt to move back in with her birth mother, she moved into a boarding home and was able to complete her last year from there.

Kitula recalls that the foster care families that she was placed in always made sure her basic needs were met she had enough food to eat, received health care, a safe place to sleep and they ensured that she had educational support and made it to school regularly. Though Kitula describes her youth as, “very introverted, very shy, very quiet”, she felt that her intrinsic motivation to be a learner and reader and having, “a thirst for knowledge” also helped her to be successful in school. Other opportunities that Kitula felt were supportive included extracurricular activities such as sports and army cadets that helped her develop, “leadership and organizational skills”, supportive teachers and coaches, “who always saw the potential in me and took that extra step to take me aside or reach out and ensure that I would attend” as well as supportive friends. She remembers that she almost didn’t graduate but had a friend who “really helped me to pass a certain assignment” so she could graduate.

A somewhat smooth transition into post-secondary education was made possible for Kitula as a result of being exposed to a foster care sibling who went through the application process and who later took her under her wing and guided her through the university campus. Though the transition into a city and into a large campus was still, “a huge shock and shift from moving from a very small town,” the Indigenous transition year was particularly helpful where the faculty came from Indigenous and other ethnic groups who understood the difficult background that many Indigenous students were coming from. Kitula recalls that it served as a bridging program for students who needed the prerequisites to get into a Bachelor of Arts program and acted as a small community that allowed them to build long term and meaningful relationships between each other and the faculty. Though the Indigenous transition year program was beneficial, the broader institution and other faculty lacked basic understanding of Inuit. For instance, Kitula felt that Inuit students have “additional burdens of adjusting to the urban area or to academic culture and people not really knowing anything about who you are” and moving into a city contributed to a “real sense of isolation and struggle with feeling represented or feeling visible” ultimately, “it continues the loss of your identity.”

Regardless of these struggles, Kitula obtained her post-secondary degree and entered a master’s program. As she immersed herself in her graduate studies, she found that returning to her Inuit spirituality and connecting with Inuit elders helped her to find the strength to complete her research, it also allowed her to tell her story and to act as a “vessel” particularly toward “cultural restoration and reconnecting with the land”.

4.5 Kimik

Kimik was raised along with his sibling by their father outside of Inuit Nunangat. His earliest recollection of his life is that they had to move around a lot as a result of his father’s work. Because of his parent’s relationship breakdown, his mother was not in contact with them. He and his sibling knew that they were half Inuit but did not have the opportunity to learn about who they were or their heritage from either of their parents or from the southern school curricula. With respect to his early school experience, in particular from grade four and into middle school, he recalls often being singled out because of his skin colour; not so much by teachers but by his peers who he felt likely adopted “the prejudices that their parents had”. For instance, he recalls,

“I was in primarily smaller white towns where all the other students were white and I was a bit darker back then, so I definitely stood out” which caused some, “altercations” and made him feel “isolated”. He was also diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental disorder that presented some challenges in his education journey.

Kimik views these early childhood experiences in school as negative, but he reports that he was able to overcome these adverse experiences through reading and sport. Reading fed his natural curiosity and sports gave him an opportunity to “fit in” while being able to “be myself”. He also spoke of some understanding supportive teachers who made a positive difference in his school experience. He attributes his K-12 educational success to a “structured” environment, his father’s expectations and support, and his own “desire to learn”. Kimik recalls that while he wasn’t very “disciplined” in his studies, he highlights these conditions as important support systems that helped him navigate his K-12 education journey and pursue toward higher education.

Kimik’s interest and motivation in post-secondary education has roots in both intrinsic and extrinsic conditions that often interacted with each other. For instance, his father, as a college graduate, was a significant role model who had expectations for his children to acquire their education. Kimik also attributes his curiosity and the limitations of where he grew up in a rural southern community as motivating,

I wanted to pursue further studies and learn more about the world, and a big part of it for me also was the town that I went to high school in. I wanted to leave the county I grew up in, I didn’t see it as progressive. I wanted to learn more about the world and sticking at that place wasn’t going to allow me to do that.

Other conditions that influenced his decision came directly from his high school experience and in particular, exposure to information about universities from school visits and interactions with teachers and counsellors. His experience with teachers wasn’t as encouraging as it was with the counsellors when discussing post-secondary education. For instance, Kimik recalls,

Those that were particularly awful were the teachers, they would kind of worry about me going to university. You know, they would basically say, “you know maybe college is

best for you. If you want to go to university, it's lots of work, you know really, really hard". So [...], the teachers weren't as helpful as the guidance counselling office was.

Though he had hesitated in "reaching out to the indigenous student office centre", Kimik recalls that "the indigenous student office [...] where I attended for my undergrad was really helpful in getting me a spot in residence and that was one of the biggest things, I was worried about going to university is that, you know, the residence spot would allow me to make friends and make connections and everything".

Though he had made a link with the Indigenous student office at his university, Kimik had distanced himself from his Inuit identity as a result of the negative treatment he received as a youth such as being picked on by his peers for having slightly darker skin. "I think I hadn't reconciled with my own past and upbringing and how I was treated for my identity".

Furthermore, having been "in the academic stream" in high school that gave him a sense of "what university life would be like" ultimately delayed his connection with his Indigenous peers and culture as he entered post-secondary education. At this point, he searched for himself through academic learning, "I think on a personal level, it was more like, try and find myself in my studies instead of trying to find myself through who I am, if that makes sense.".

Furthermore, as he grew older, he started to learn that there was a series of substance abuse in his family, "particularly in my mother's side [...]. I started to see that sort of being in myself and I was scared that I would ruin all my relationships because of attachments to these meaningless things". Kimik recalls that although he became more aware of Indigenous issues through class discussions, "about Indigenous politics in my general politics class", his personal experience and lack of information about existing services on campus, feelings of isolation, and a need for a more meaningful educational purpose led him to withdraw two and a half years into his program. For instance, he recalls, "that was a big reason of why I stepped back, you know, getting too comfortable with this lifestyle and [...] how it's impacted my family and [...] myself personally" and "I didn't find that there was anything in school for me other than a paper at the end of the road". Kimik wasn't sure if he would return but he felt he needed to, "step back and figure myself out [...] and that's actually where I really grew a lot was not being in school.".

During this period, he boarded with a white family that gave him space to reflect. He also re-connected with an Indigenous cousin who was living in the same city in southern Ontario. She encouraged him to connect with his indigenous roots, “she pushed me to reach out to the urban Indigenous community, [...] to get me to go to sweats, and helped me [...] gain some employment skills and eventually ended up in an NGO [...] that allowed me to work full time with Indigenous communities”. Kimik also found the opportunity to work for a professor who was doing research in his Inuit land claim region. This allowed him to return to his homeland and reconnect with his mother and her family that added to his appreciation for his Inuit roots and identity, “I had more of an awareness, you know that teenagers just don’t really have, and I was able to appreciate being in the north a lot more.”

This experience motivated Kimik to return to university and pursue his post-secondary education. It had given him the purpose that was lacking during his K-12 and early post-secondary career. For instance, he recalls, “When I was working, I was able to see, ‘you know what, there’s a need’. I guess I didn’t need a degree to do that job, but it was a factor that helped me look forward to the end”. Now completing a master’s program, Kimik once again finds himself, “In that space where it’s a bit unsettling again but [...] I know that there’s good work to be done out there. So, I think the biggest thing for myself, and I imagine for others is knowing what’s on the other side”.

Though largely absent in his early life, in his reflection of his education journey, Kimik attributes external conditions such as family values and the need to be able to provide for family and community as foundational pieces that contributed to his persistence to complete higher education. For instance, he recalls the gap of family ties, “I didn’t have a great sense of family and I only started to realize the importance of that, [...] through my undergrad and in my masters. That’s one thing that really [...] motivated me in a way and this value of [...] you want to be there for those people around you.” Further to this, Kimik adds, “Ensuring that I can get certain certifications so that I can provide for my family was something that really motivates me because I didn’t really have all the means. My dad didn’t have the means when I was growing up. I guess the persistence is still there. A heightened sense of family was one of the biggest things.” As he

looks into the future, Kimik would like to further contribute to the Indigenous and Inuit communities and increase his exposure to his Inuit roots beyond the urban setting. He would like to do this before pursuing any further studies such as a PhD.

4.6 Aputi

Raised in Inuit Nunangat by both Inuit parents, Aputi and her sibling had a balance of traditional Inuit and Western upbringing. They were nurtured with Inuit cultural norms and values by both parents, grandparents, teachers, and a K-12 educational system that incorporated Inuit cultural practices and knowledge. Her exposure to the Western culture largely came from her K-12 and post-secondary experience. She was exposed to suicides in her family and community as well as lateral violence in school from Inuit peers who were struggling in the predominantly English and Western K-12 education system.

Aputi recalls her very first educational experience being a positive and an “impactful” experience. She recalls that her first teacher was an Inuk teacher who called her by her Inuktitut name,

She would always call me Aputi and to me that was, that’s such an impactful thing because that’s who I was. I didn’t necessarily understand the significance of Inuktitut naming, but to be told I was Aputi or to be called Aputi showed me the respect that she had given me because only my dad’s parents called me Aputi.

She recalls that it was more of a “respect” than a “loving” experience and that it was not just the fact that it was an Inuktitut class but an “Inuk” teacher that demonstrated this form of deep Inuit cultural respect that made it, “so impactful to me”. She also recalls the feeling of her elementary teachers recognizing her potential and take her and two other classmates to do advanced work in a smaller classroom, “I remember being in grade one and then two of my classmates [...], another Inuk and *Qablunaaq* would go into a different classroom [...] to do different work together and [...] I didn’t know exactly what was happening. All I knew is that we were [...] pulled away at certain times [...] and it turns out that we were doing grade two work.”. As a result of doing this advanced work, she recalls skipping grade two and entering grade three the following school year. She recalls that this early experience of her potential being recognized and challenged as

well as her Inuit identity [through her namesake] being respected by her teachers, “sparked my love for education”.

Aputi recalls her potential continuing to be recognized by skipping grade eight from grade seven and entering high school, “myself and two other classmates, this time both *Qablunaat*, [white people] were challenged and we were able to go to grade nine.” Looking back, she attributes smaller class sizes and resources afforded to the teachers by the education system such as having extra teachers and time made available to support students, “I think the school system back then may have been a little different because we didn’t have as many students, right? So, they were able to recognize, I guess, students more individually as opposed to being overwhelmed by the number of students in the classroom.”.

Aputi also recalls some adverse experiences that impacted her peer relationships and education such as exposure to suicides and lateral violence, “I had a string of friends and cousins that had taken their own lives, starting from grade nine onward.”. She recalls being bullied by Inuit peers who struggled within the predominantly English Western K-12 system. She recalls that they would say, ““oh you’re trying to be *Qablunaaq*’ [white person] because they only saw *Qablunaat* [white people] doing well in school. The way you speak is trying to be *Qablunaaq* [white].”.

These adverse experiences in high school impacted her ability to focus on her studies, “where combinations with the deaths, I dropped out of school twice both in grade twelve and I literally only needed one semester to graduate.”. She recalls having access to a guidance counsellor who was not properly trained to address these types of experiences, “the guidance counsellor wasn’t a qualified guidance counselor, but it was just someone put in that position, and she handed out pads if a girl got their period in the class. I remember her being that role. If you get your period you go to her office, right?”. Though she had left school before graduating in her home community, her parents continued to support her education journey and persuaded her to complete high school in the south, “that’s how I finished my grade twelve”.

Aputi recalls having no motivation during this period and had no intentions of going to post-secondary education, “I didn’t have plans for post-secondary”. Though her peers that she attended school from grade three through to twelve were moving ahead she recalls, “I really

didn't care that I wasn't up there with them" and though they would prompt her with inclusion words such as, "you should have been graduating with me" her response to them was often, "na, I don't want to". She recalls this difficult time in her life as, "I didn't care, I think I was too much in a depression to care. So, I think just what kept me going were my parents."

When looking back, Aputi discussed the internal and external conditions that helped her through high school included her natural curiosity, love for learning, reading and writing [for her, especially poetry] in both Inuktitut and English. Furthermore, she attributes the support she received from her parents and her teachers who allowed her to explore personalizing her education through poetry especially during difficult times in her life. Aputi also recalls having access to resources: a computer [at home and at school], to the internet, a library, having spares, paper, pens, and pencils was helpful in, "just finishing".

Aputi also recalls being taught Inuit forms of socio-economic practices as being "impactful" to her educational development and purpose as an individual within a social and cultural setting, "I love the cultural aspects. I remember going out as a class and it was so good to be learning from other people other than my family, like I love my family, but I remember being taught how to skin caribou even though I had watched my mom do it all my life". She recalled being on the dog sled, "qimuksiqtuq", even though she had done that many times with her family, it was all these things were a part of school that made it so meaningful to her. Being able to fish and go out fishing in the spring was so powerful to her because, as an Inuk she didn't necessarily think of it as, "alright, I'm practicing my culture" it was living it which gave them a break from this other way of living in a classroom setting. She recalls, "being in a chair all day isn't the most ideal part of living". To be out on the land with a team of peers and adults gave her "a role" in a formal group setting. She recalled that, "In a family, you have a role to play when you're out camping, or you have a role when you're out doing these cultural days. I remember being told, 'go get me some water' I had to *tuuq* and get some water". That was her role, and she recalls loving it and contrasted it with her in-school experience, "whereas in school, it's like, read this, we're going to go over this, we're going to do this. I'm contributing to this elder, which gives me so much, I don't want to say life, but I really appreciated that. To be contributing to something."

Though Aputi had not given much thought about going onto post-secondary education, she applied to a college program. The topic of suicide emerged in this context and Aputi realized that every single student in her class had been, “affected by suicide” and when she asked how many of them had access to counsellors in their communities, “very few raised their hands”. She recalled that the knowledge of Inuit from all different regions tell her that they are experiencing the exact same thing, “gave me a purpose” and this shared experience of suicides and lack of support systems for addressing the issue motivated her to look into university programs.

Aputi had access to funding for both her undergraduate and master’s degrees, “I had funding which was nice”. As a university student, Aputi experienced constraints including exposure to racism and a lack of institutional understanding of the existing racism within its walls. Having grown up in a predominantly Inuit community, this was a significant “culture shock” which led her to leaving her program in her second year. Aputi recalls with just one more term left to finish, “I was in social sciences so I couldn’t believe how many racists there were. So, it was very tough, and I ended up dropping out in second year”. She had just the exams to finish that term but recalls that she couldn’t do it. She was, “so mentally drained. I was so culturally shocked, I guess.”

In order to leave her program, Aputi had to submit an application indicating that, “it was for mental health issues”. In her application she explained that “I need to be home to be close to my family who are my strength and my culture which is my understanding”. She recalls feeling isolated in university, “I was so lost in this *Qablunaaq* [white] institution right and to hear this racism about the natives, you know”.

Aputi recalls that the racism she experienced came predominantly from her peers and the institution was silent about it making her feel defeated, “It was my peers. And I wondered how [...] or couldn’t believe how people were so ill informed or how they chose to look at things from one lens and I had no voice”. She recalled that she didn’t know how to use her voice and felt defeated, “and even if I did have a voice, I don’t think I would have used it, because I think putting energy into something that won’t necessarily change especially in, like, a first-year class wouldn’t have produced anything”.

After restoring herself with family and her community, Aputi returned to complete her post-secondary studies and recalls that it wasn't until her third or fourth year that university became more meaningful, when she was able to personalize her education through research and within her Inuit cultural context on Inuit spirituality. For instance, she recalls, "I was just sick of the system 'cause it just didn't fit me and then I started being a little bit stubborn in the sense that I wanted to make my education my own and I didn't want to do what they told me to do. The system didn't reflect me and who I was and where I was coming from".

In her third year of exam period, Aputi recalls losing someone close to her through a, "Very tragic suicide". And she wanted to go back home to be with her family, "I literally wanted to drop everything and go". However, when she called home and talked to her family, she was told, "Ajurnarmat" [some things cannot be helped and are beyond our control]. She recalled, "Being told, ajurnarmat was so powerful to me. Like, through my family telling me that was so powerful for me because it told me that, it indirectly told me that I was here for a reason" Her purpose was to finish her post-secondary studies, because "what's done is done". Being told this allowed her to focus on her purpose "I need to continue seeking out that purpose. So that beacon just grew brighter.". Aputi recalled that "serving other people" in particular, knowing the challenges that Inuit students face and the lack of resources such as not having access to counselors motivated her to complete her degree and perhaps directly or indirectly, "change the system".

Aputi completed her Honours Bachelors and Masters programs and as a young Inuk adult, pending "financial stability" is now considering doing a PhD to further advance her skills and resources to help improve lives of Inuit in Canada, "My goal has always been to work for Inuit in one way or another and if my personal life stabilizes to the point where I don't necessarily need to worry about finances, then I want to pursue a PhD in my field [...]. I want to change the system".

4.7 Ubluriaq

Ubluriaq was raised in Inuit Nunangat with two younger siblings until he reached grade five. His family moved to a larger community still in the north but outside of Inuit Nunangat. He recalls

these early years, before the move, to be very positive because, “I was with all my friends who I had gone to school with or known since I was a baby and kindergarten”. He recalls it being “very comfortable, very good and I did well.” Ubluriaq perceives his first, “formal and real” education as coming from Inuit economic practices such as from, “the land, being taught how to hunt usually by an elder; and there is the first real education about life and how things are; [...] how you treat things with respect, and be honest, and patient and you’ll be rewarded with food or sharing, or parts of the animal that you can give to family and yourself.” He recalls that being taught these, “was a grounding, in helping me as a person that not a lot of non-Inuit have.”

Ubluriaq recalls that his academics began to struggle as a result of the move at Grade five. He had lost all his friends and was in a new place that was, “mostly white people and French. I did not do well and from what I recall from my education from there to grade 12, I was a D student. [...] I was transplanted to a foreign environment: white people, not with my friends, not with Inuit.”

Ubluriaq recalls experiencing racial tensions from grade five onward. A friend of his who was also Inuk would claim to others that he was from the Philippines to avoid stating that he was Inuit, “because it was, quote un-quote ‘better’ than being a native” that could result in differential treatment. Ubluriaq recalls that during this period, First Nations and Inuit were referred to as, “Natives” or “Eskimos”. As a result of these colonial names given to Inuit and First Nations, Ubluriaq recalls that it was difficult to declare his ethnicity, “it wasn’t a source of pride or anything, it was like, you know, I’m an Inuk and it wasn’t something that was quite positive, really.” He recalls that as a result of these experiences, he “played sick a lot” to avoid going to school and despite his “suffering and just getting by” though his parents didn’t provide a lot of support still expected him to go to school. He recalls that he, “had no choice, I wasn’t going to drop out. Failing was not an option”. There was also a “fear of failing and being left behind”. Ubluriaq also recalls that organized sports were motivating and didn’t discriminate on ethnic backgrounds, “it didn’t matter that I was Inuk. I became captain of my team and went to tournaments and nationals”. As a result of a medical condition that developed in grade eleven, Ubluriaq was not able to complete high school and this became, “a source of shame” for him so, “in lieu of graduating high school” he joined the workforce. Ubluriaq recalls, “The peer pressure

was there, pressure from the family but the other factors were just too overwhelming to override those negative things [...] to complete my K-12 education.”

As a result of this early adverse experience, Ubluriaq did not receive much information about post-secondary education through the K-12 education system. Information about post-secondary opportunities instead came through the career choices he had made. The type of work he was doing landed him opportunities to attend post-secondary education as a mature student with the support of educational leave by his employer.

Ubluriaq recalls the transition into post-secondary education challenging. He initially did not do well in exams and essay writing and found it, “very disheartening”. He recalls that he, “hired a tutor on my own because my writing was not good.” The tutor he hired noticed this and said to him, “you write like you’re writing a briefing note”. This made sense to Ubluriaq because by this point, he had been writing this way for his organization. He recalls that the first couple of years of his post-secondary education helped fix, “all the bad mistakes, writing mistakes that I had just done in not completing high school, grammar, diction, this kind of thing.”. With practice and determination, Ubluriaq’s marks climbed to, “B’s and A’s”.

Ubluriaq received support both in terms of resources, tools, and cultural connection from the Indigenous resource centre in his university. When reflecting on the challenges that he faced as an Inuk and his observations of other Inuit students going through the K-12 education system and ability to function as a post-secondary student, Ubluriaq noted systemic challenges such as, “social passing, of the [...] education system practically doesn’t meet the minimum requirements that would allow them to get into universities. So, I think the challenges of graduating as an Inuk based on [name of territory] curriculum is a very big barrier for Inuit students moving on.”.

Unlike his K-12 experience, Ubluriaq recalls that his university experience was more positive in terms of accepting his identity as an Inuk. He recalls that the university was more accepting and welcoming of Inuit cultural practices such as, “where I’m from and connection to the land and hunting”. He found that “People at the university embraced it and it was unique and was almost beneficial to be an Inuk going to university there. I’d say that the challenges of being Inuk are

quite diminished in post- secondary life where it doesn't matter if you're Inuk or black or another cultural group". He did recall however, that many of his professors did not know as much about the field of study that they were teaching as he and his graduate peers did, "we knew more than professors about [area of study] because we're Indigenous, we paid attention, we talked about it and [...] what is happening with Indigenous people" which gave him a sense of pride, "so that was very positive".

A major motivator for completing his undergraduate program was to pursue his passion in a specific field in graduate studies that would support his work with his current employer. He worked hard to complete the aptitude tests and was accepted into his program. He found that attending his field of interest in graduate studies was transformative, "it really transformed from just what I thought an education would be to looking forward to applying what I had learned to my career, to practicing it.". Ubluriaq is positive about the future and making changes that are beneficial to Inuit as a result of his academic and career choices.

CHAPTER FIVE

Thematic Analysis of Findings in K-12 - Constraints Voiced

5.1. Research Questions and Structure of Analysis

In this chapter, I report my analysis of the participants' stories which responds to the research questions underpinning this study. Because of the large volume of data, I am reporting my findings in separate chapters. Chapter five focuses on the constraints while chapter six focuses on the affordances that the participants experienced in the K-12 system and chapter seven focuses on the constraints and affordances of my participants' post-secondary experiences.

- In what ways have Inuit students, who have successfully completed post-secondary education, navigated the different cultural contexts and experiences of education through K-12 (predominantly in Inuit Nunangat) and post-secondary education (predominantly in southern Canada)?
- What challenges did they experience and what affordances helped them?

Using IQ's *Inunguiniq* [the making of an able and enabled human being] as my ontological framework, my analysis of the participants' stories is framed by how IQ's Laws and Principles are reflected and experienced in the participants' K-12 and post-secondary educational journeys. As stated in my research question, I am interested in learning how the participants navigate the challenges of the co-existing yet competing cultural contexts of Western and Inuit societies to successfully complete their post-secondary education. What emerges from the analysis is a glaring absence of the IQ Laws and Principles within the K-12 Education System. Instead, we witness the overriding presence of racism as a shared and continual theme throughout the participants' education from kindergarten through to university. The literature available at the time of my study does not address racism in Inuit Nunangat. Rather, terms such as colonialism, inequity and assimilation are focal points of those studies. To assist in reporting the analysis therefore, I first give some attention to unpacking the concepts of racism, prejudice and discrimination, identified by participants as constraints or barriers to their progress through K-12 (Constraints that were Voiced).

The section following focuses on the affordances (tools and supports) that participants identify as being available, visible, and recognizable and that enabled them to take action based to overcome challenges and successfully navigate the constraints of living in two competing cultures (Western and Inuit) throughout their education journeys.

In each section I provide an overview of the emerging theme, discuss how the events within the theme affected the participants and support my analysis with the participants' voices. I structure my analysis this way for two reasons. As noted in my introduction, there is scant literature about Inuit educational experiences and secondly our Inuit population is so few, compared to the rest of Canadians, yet we are disproportionately disadvantaged and as such, I want my participants' voices to be heard while respecting their privacy. I use pseudonyms and remove any markers that may identify who they are. In this way their voices are made available to be heard by education leaders as well as by Inuit students who will inherit the stories and may themselves identify with some of the struggles that my participants went through and how they were able to overcome those challenges.

5.2. K-12: Constraints That Were Voiced

Racism emerges as a dominant theme throughout the participants' narratives and seems to be overwhelmingly prevalent in their experiences of schooling since day one. It appears in the participants' recollections of their education at all levels. Each of them attribute racism as the precursor that led to other negative systemic and social experiences during their education journey such as segregation of Inuit and non-Inuit students, lateral violence among Inuit peers, and microaggressions of different levels toward Inuit students. Because of this, I am presenting the themes identified in my analysis in a particular order, beginning with racism. This is the way in which these themes unfolded within the participants' stories.

In order to understand how racism operates and how it was experienced by the participants throughout their K-12 and their post-secondary education journeys, we must first distinguish it from prejudice and discrimination. Prejudice is a pre-judgement about another person based on the social group that the person belongs to. It includes things that are often subtle and not easy to detect such as a person's negative thoughts, feelings, attitudes, stereotypes and generalizations

about that entire group despite having little to no experience with that social group (Diangelo, 2018, p. 19). Diangelo (2018) argues that discomfort comes from living separately from the group while “simultaneously absorbing incomplete or erroneous information about them” (p.20). In my own experience, I have observed, and as the participants' stories tell, many non-Inuit teachers make their trek to Inuit Nunangat carrying many prejudices as part of their personal frames of reference. I will discuss this further as we address each emerging theme in the participants’ narratives.

Discrimination on the other hand is an *action* or a *decision* that has its foundation in prejudice. Discriminatory actions and decisions treat people badly based on, for example, their race, age, or disability (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2020; Diangelo, 2018). These actions and decisions include “ignoring, exclusion, ridicule, threats, slander, and violence” (Diangelo, 2018, p.20). Linking discrimination to prejudice as its foundation, Diangelo (2018) posits, “if hatred is an emotion we feel because of prejudice, extreme acts of discrimination such as violence, may follow” (p.20). According to Diangelo (2018), these forms of discrimination are easily recognizable, but we can also experience feelings such as of mild discomfort and unease around another person or certain groups of people, and then acts of discrimination are subtle and difficult to detect (Diangelo, 2018, p.20). The emerging themes in the participants’ narratives presented below, encompass both overt and subtle forms of discrimination within the K-12 system across Inuit Nunangat including decisions and actions made by non-Inuit teachers as agents of the institution.

Racism occurs when a dominant group’s collective prejudice is backed by the power of legal authority and institutional control (systemic) and is far reaching in its effect. It results in discriminatory actions and decisions that perpetuate unfair advantage based on the groups sense of superiority in intelligence, beliefs and morals, that are upheld by policies, procedures, behaviors, and rules that are harmful to the people of the other race (Cambridge, 2020; Diangelo, 2018, p.20). Racism is the antithesis to IQ’s Laws: work for the common good, respect all living things, maintain harmony and balance, and to continually plan for the future. It is also in direct opposition of the ontology of *Inunguiniq* and the IQ Principles I use in my analysis.

The majority of teachers including senior administrators of the K-12 education system in Inuit Nunangat are non-Inuit and belong to the culture of our colonizers. They arrive in Inuit Nunangat as individuals, but collectively are privileged to engage in the education system based on Western pedagogies which have historically been seen as superior to Inuit ways of knowing and pedagogical approaches. The participants' stories illustrate how the dominant members of society have enacted educational policies and procedures that create a culture of exclusion in the K-12 system across Inuit Nunangat in favour of the values of the dominant society.

5.2a) Racism in the K-12 Education System

All participants described situations and behaviors from educators where preferential treatment was given towards white students or white passing Inuit students. White passing was predominantly based on skin color and fluency in the English language. The preferential treatment came in the form of segregating Inuit and non-Inuit students. Segregation led to resentment and forms of aggression from Inuit-to-Inuit peers (lateral violence), verbal and physical violence between Inuit and non-Inuit peers, microaggression (constant messaging that Inuit students and Inuit ways of being were inferior), and a lack of understanding within the education system of these lived experiences as well as lack of support services for Inuit students to address these significant stressors.

5.2b) Racial Segregation in Schools

It is important to understand the term, "racial segregation" and to be aware that it has a presence in Canadian school systems. It is defined as, "the separation of people, or groups of people, based on race in everyday life" (Henry, 2019). According to Encyclopaedia Britannica (2020), "Racial segregation provides a means of maintaining the economic advantages and superior social status of the politically dominant group, and in recent times it has been employed primarily by white populations to maintain their ascendancy over other groups by means of legal and social colour bars." (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2020).

The participants in my study voiced their experience of systemic racism in the form of racially based segregation in their schools which was often disguised as an academic versus applied tracking system. For many Canadian high schools, the creation of an "academic versus applied"

course system was meant to end “streaming” and provide students with learning opportunities tailored to meet their goals (Counter, 2016). However, a study conducted by People for Education shows that this system has resulted in dividing students even further into separate tracks (Counter, 2016). For the Inuit participants in my study, the separate stream began as early as Kindergarten and the separate tracks were clearly visible through a color line, “White versus Inuit” and through English language streaming “English versus Inuktitut” that continued through to high school.

Though participants attended K-12 in different regions of Inuit Nunangat their experience was the same. Upon their entry into kindergarten, participants immediately experienced the racially based segregation process, and each recalled the preferential treatment that was given to white students or white passing Inuit throughout their K-12 journey. When asked, “What do you see when you recall your education starting at elementary school?” the participants respond in the following ways:

Suputik recalled her experience with a tone of frustration and feelings of deep disappointment in the system and the adults who were responsible for segregating her and her peers based on their skin colour and language of instruction:

In kindergarten, there were two streams. There was the English immersion and then the Inuktitut immersion -and- for anyone that was kind of white passing or the white kids as they called them would be put in the English stream and all the Inuki-looking kids would be put in the Inuktitut stream. So, there were only, like a handful of kids who looked Inuk – like very obvious and that’s what I remember. So that started at kindergarten. It just carried on through all the way up to grade 10.

Students put in the Inuktitut stream didn’t have the same advantages as the white or white passing students. She expressed being separated from her darker and Inuktitut speaking peers because she was selected by the teachers for the white English class stream:

So, it was like if you were in the Inuktitut immersion, they were setting you up to fail. When I first started in kindergarten, I was first put in the Inuktitut stream and then they were like, “no she shouldn’t be in that one she should in another one.

For Iqaluk, the process of segregation was conducted by streaming Inuit and white students into classes, “A, B, and C” again the selection was based on a colour line and English language competencies:

Back then, Inuit and non-Inuit; were grouped differently: A, B, C, grade 1A, grade 1B, grade 2C classes and most of the Inuit were in grade 1b and I guess they were splitting them up based on language proficiency, I’m assuming. You walked into different groups and the A class was always 90% non-Inuit. And then B class 90% Inuit and then C was always 100% Inuit. But yeah, they grouped us into A, B & C and you can always see the colour difference.

Furthermore, Iqaluk recalls the advantages that were given to a minority of white student over the majority of Inuit students even if the K-12 programs were specifically designed to give Inuit students experiences they would otherwise never have due to having lower socioeconomic status:

As an Inuit student you were never [...] let’s say, exchange trips to the south or to Greenland. The majority of the students that got to go were non-Inuit. When the opportunities were supposed to be for the poor Inuks who have never gone south. And you really saw that back then. Like, the non-Inuit students didn’t’ need the opportunity to go south but somehow they were always the majority picked to go on any trips. Even though 90% of the school was Inuit. 75 % of the people that went on those trips were non-inuit. So just glaring contradictions like that, I guess. We saw it all the time.

Aputi was part of a mixed-race class in elementary school so the colour line was not immediately obvious; however, she recalls being separated during certain periods without explanation and later realized that she was being cultivated for an advanced English stream:

I don't know if they saw me as just somebody different or somebody that needed to be challenged. But I remember being in grade one and then 2 of my classmates in my class, another Inuk and *Qablunaaq* [white person] would go into a different classroom or a smaller room to do different work together and we had a teacher there and I didn't know exactly what was happening. All I knew is that we were kind of pulled away at certain times and so we still had our grade one classroom but then we were pulled away at certain times and it turns out that we were doing grade 2 work, right?

This selection process for Aputi continued all the way through high school and was not necessarily a negative academic experience for her but it did impact her Inuit peer relationships in a negative way as we will see later under the “consequences of segregation” section.

So, our teachers had looked at us and I guess recognized the work that we had done. The same thing happened in grade 7 where me and two other classmates this time both *Qablunaaq* [white people] were challenged and we were able to go [directly] to grade 9.

Ubluriaq's earliest memories were positive to begin with as he was with peers whom he had known since birth and without racially based tension. However, this positive learning environment was severed when his family had to move, and he was placed in a predominantly white (and racially toxic as we will see under “consequences of segregation” section) school environment and his grades began to fall.

What do I see, looking back? Okay, when I was born and raised in [community] so kindergarten to grade 4 was at [name of school]. That was a very positive experience, more because I was with all my friends who I had gone to school with

or known since I was a baby and kindergarten. So, it was very comfortable, very good, and I did well.

Ubluriaq then recalled the impact this sudden change had on his academic performance and eventual departure prior to graduating grade twelve.

Grade 5 -our family relocated- lost all my friends. In a new place, mostly white people and French. I did not do well and from what I recall of my education from there to grade 12, I was a D student. I barely got by. I did not fail but I was always a struggling student in all areas. It seems that connection [of declining grades] was there, where I transplanted to a foreign environment. White people, not with my friends, not with Inuit. That's what I can recall. From there, I can say that I was a D student through my elementary, jr. high, and high school which I did not complete.

Despite having an extremely challenging childhood, Kitula recalled that she may have been treated more favourably than her siblings as a result of having lighter skin colour, and for gender and environmental reasons. She reflected that perhaps this gave her certain advantages that her siblings didn't receive. She reflected: "One of the questions I always thought about is what made me, quote-unquote "successful" in the formal education system whereas my [siblings] did not?"

Kitula reflected deeply on how skin colour, gender, and environmental conditions played a role in their different life outcomes and in particular, what was fostered or not fostered for them to be capable (think Inunguiniq) at meeting each of their life's challenges.

For me and my scenario, I wasn't overly discriminated against as a child because, there's this thing also called self-fulfilling prophecy where if I'm being treated a certain way, I'm going to start behaving in ways that reinforce that treatment. So, my [siblings], you know being darker, having more cognitive disabilities perhaps, I think struggled more. Kind of the balance of how you're treated socially and how people perceive you and how you are then able to take advantage of the social support that you're given.

Kimik was the only participant who did not grow up in Inuit Nunangat but still felt the impact of racism starting from a very young age and in his K-12 education experience in southern Canada.

I was a bit darker back then, so I definitely stood out. So those are two things I picture primarily. I guess the constant movement and then just being I guess singled out for my skin colour even though I wasn't super dark [...] I guess you know for the first years of my life it was definitely a negative experience.

My experience:

Like Iqaluk, we were grouped into A, B, and C in elementary school and at some point, were entered into a more formal grading system. The majority of my peers were Inuit and the majority of my white peers who were the same age as me, were placed in higher grades.

Socially, however, since I am of mixed heritage, I was able to transition between both worlds with some fluidity.

5.2c) Racial segregation in the Community

Despite the presence of mixed-raced marriages and families, racial segregation between whites and Inuit went beyond the classroom and was normalized in the community.

Some participants shared their observations of the imbalance of power and the opportunities that were afforded to non-Inuit and what it was like for them to grow up in a racially segregated community.

Iqaluk recalls the overtness of the imbalance of power white people had over Inuit:

Probably racism would have something to do with it. You know, it wasn't, just because we can't speak English as well as our white counterparts[...]. There was always racism back then. It was very normalized. Who was in power in the communities? It was the white government workers, the business owners were all white, Inuit were not business owners, and there was a very clear power structure back then too. And it was hard, you could never picture an

Inuk being a principal or being a big boss back then. It was not [pause] you never saw it.

Furthermore, Iqaluk reflected on his observations of the opportunities that were again awarded to the minority and more affluent white citizens over the majority of Inuit whom the programs were intended to target:

Old public housing units when they used to sell them for 1500 dollars. It wasn't for these guys, the white guys to buy, to amass wealth. It was supposed to be so Inuit can have affordable home ownership but of course the Qallunaaks [white people] took advantage of that stuff and they're the ones that bought them.

Iqaluk also questioned the selection process and how from his perspective it was rigged to benefit white members where the programs existed.

If you look back as late as the 90s the homeownership programs, Inuit were not getting approved for the home ownership grants. You would see a white couple one would apply for a grant basically like, huge, subsidized grants for homeownership and then the next year the wife would apply so they would own 2 homes and they would be approved by their friends that were mostly non-Inuit. So, it was always fixed for them to benefit.

Suputik also recalls racially based segregation in her community which was often based on what kinships people were perceived as coming from.

That's exactly what it was. It was classism based on which part of the community you came from or which family you came from. And depending on who your parents are. I would talk to friends about it and we'd be like, I just want to be known as, "me". I don't want to be associated with that because then once people know, they have certain perceptions of me. Like, "oh you're so-and-so's kid. You're lucky that you made it that far".

Though Suputik could pass for either being Inuk or white, her sibling was more Inuit-looking with darker complexion and not able to ‘pass as white’ and she always had concern for his wellbeing as a result.

Growing up and having mixed heritage wasn’t easy. It was, I call it like more passing but then not [her sibling]. So I would always be worried about him because he is way darker than me.

This was also true for Kitula and her siblings. Upon her reflection she recognized that preferential treatment was given to those with lighter skin and opportunities were fewer for those who had darker skin including her siblings.

It’s kind of like this spectrum as well within racialized communities to be treated better than others within a certain race. So, my [brothers/sisters] are darker. I’m, just like thinking of internal and external factors, right. Like internally they had some genetic factors and externally I think that they were, I think, discriminated against to be honest because they’re darker.

My experience:

Racial segregation was also present in my community. The Ministry of Transport for example had their own sub-division and the majority of its employees were white.

The Hudson Bay Company had staff housing for its white employees.

Southern teachers [predominantly white] were provided with housing but were dispersed in the community.

5.2d) Consequences of Segregation

Systemic racial segregation had real life consequences for the participants from the moment they entered kindergarten all the way through high school and into postsecondary education.

Throughout their education journey they experienced various forms of microaggression, racially

charged lateral and physical violence. They also experienced exclusion from educational, social, and employment opportunities. This often led to mental health issues and low self-esteem which in turn led to absenteeism or dropping out of school both in K-12 and postsecondary before going back to complete their schooling.

5.2d1) Participants' Experiences of Microaggression:

The on-line Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.) defines microaggression as, “a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority)” and is also commonly referred to as, “death by a thousand cuts”. For example, an Inuk experiencing microaggression may constantly hear both subtle and overt negative messaging about their ethnicity, culture, and language from different individuals they come into contact with throughout their day. Despite their harmful impact when experienced individually, these subtle attacks accumulate over a period of time (days into weeks, weeks into months, and months into years of stereotypical messaging) and become normalized. For the participants, the majority of microaggression they experienced often came from adults: teachers or authority figures who had low expectations of Inuit students – thus microaggressions were enacted by the very people responsible for *Inunguiniq*. *Inunguiniq* is the ethical responsibility of adults to create a human being who is forward thinking, able, enabled, capable, resourceful, and is encouraged to have sufficient and proper attitudes, skills and competencies in order that they may have a good life and plan for future generations.

Suputik's recollection of how some teachers mistreated Inuit students who were struggling at home and at school in front of the entire class on a regular basis, demonstrates the persistence of microaggressions and absence of *Inunguiniq* from educators.

Right from the get-go we're taught that our culture and our language [was inferior], if you want to do that you can't be academic. There were a lot of troubling experiences. You know when you're a kid, you're like, what do I do? There were instances where teachers would, like, not, what word should I use? To me they weren't acting like a teacher. The type of discipline that they would try to give people or those rowdier kids in class who

everybody kind of knew they didn't come from a happy home. They would just hone-in on them and it was like if things weren't okay at home, they're being problematic at the school. And then therefore, they wouldn't treat them well there either. It's like this cycle of violence and it just filled the whole classroom.

Other forms of microaggression included biases that were held by certain members in the community, including teachers, about a person's academic abilities based on their kinships. This form of microaggression shows an absence of the ethical responsibility of *Inunguiniq* [creating an able and enabled human being] but also an absence of *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* [respecting others, relationships, and caring for people]. Suputik for example recalls:

Like, "oh you're so-and-so's kid. You're lucky that you made it that far" [...] teachers so it's like, post-secondary to some is just impossible just because they've been taught to believe that they're not as valuable. That they're not as smart. And because of where they come from, who they were raised by, who they know. They're taught they are lesser.

An example shared by Kimik below shows a form of microaggression where the teachers actually did the opposite of *Inunguiniq*, where they discourage him from pursuing higher level education - essentially attempting to close the gate on his potential for a university degree.

Those that were particularly awful were the teachers, they would kind of worry about me going to university. You know, they would basically say, "you know maybe college is best for you. If you want to go to university, it's lots of work, you know really, really hard".

A form of microaggression recalled by Iqaluk was the allocation of social status and being limited in mobility based on the social script that Inuit were assigned, "You fit in this box, this is where you belong. And if you've ever been in another box, they usually stayed in that box."

In Ubluriaq's recollection, terms such as "Eskimo" and "Native" which Inuit have often been called historically, were perceived as being lower and as a result were terms that were avoided by some Inuit students as part of their identity.

I won't say his name but when I went to grade 5 [...] he used to pretend that he was Filipino even though he was Inuk because at that time we were called natives and sometimes "Eskimo" [...] it wasn't very good to be native and to him, he pretended to be Filipino because it was quote-unquote "better than being a native".

5.2d2) Participants' Experiences of Lateral and Physical Violence:

The segregation of Inuit and non-Inuit students resulted in lateral violence among Inuit peers and from members within their communities. The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) cites Jane Middleton-Moz who defines lateral violence as, "When a powerful oppressor has directed oppression against a group for a period of time, members of the oppressed group feel powerless to fight back and they eventually turn their anger against each other." (NWAC, 2020, p.1). According to NWAC, "Aboriginal people are now abusing their own people in similar ways that they have been abused. It is a cycle of abuse, and its roots lie in conditions such as: colonization, oppression, intergenerational trauma and the ongoing experiences of racism and discrimination." (NWAC, 2020 p1). and these include, "workplace bullying, horizontal hostilities/violence, internalized colonialism, and relational aggression." (NWAC, 2020, p.1).

Participants expressed that other Inuit students, who were excluded from entering the predominantly white academic stream during their K-12 education, began to show hostility toward them. Suputik recalls the tensions that emerged between Inuit and white passing Inuit students as a result of being put in separate tracks based on their colour. Educators putting children in this type of environment did not foster *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq*.

There would be tensions between the kids that were put in either stream. And it was like we were made to be at odds with each other. And it was kind of horrible [...] It's like, totally unfair. Because then you see that [negative sentiment], "oh you're going away to school". It's obvious where that's coming from. "Oh, you're better than me now". You hear that whenever you go to a community. It's like the whole system has set it up so there's these tensions and classism and everything like that.

Aputi recalled being picked on by her Inuit peers who resented her academic success and ability to speak English well and even went as far as accusing her of wanting to be white rather than Inuk.

I think because I did so well in school, I was also a target for bullying and growing up in a predominantly Inuk community. And so, doing well in school really put a target on me and people would, like my classmates would say, “oh you’re trying to be *Qablunaaq*” [white] because they only saw *Qablunaaq* [white people] doing well in school. “The way you speak is trying to be *Qablunaaq*” but I didn’t know how else to speak, right? What was in issue for me was the bullying that came with my ability to speak English. I think so, I can’t put words in their mouths but just based on what they would tell me like, “you’re too *Qablunaaq*” you’re not Inuk enough. I think that really played a mental – it took a lot of mental work to deal with that. And it wasn’t fun.

Furthermore, Aputi recalls that the hostility didn’t exist just in the school setting but extended into the community where those who are disadvantaged resented those who were doing well and as result passed on their anger to their children who then displayed it in the school setting.

When you’re doing well and other families might not be doing as well in whatever way, like I can’t prescribe that way, but they weren’t doing as well in whatever way. Their kids may have learned these bullying behaviours or they were just looking for the other, right?

Some participants recalled that there was resentment toward non-Inuit peers that often resulted in physical altercation between Inuit and non-Inuit students. Iqaluk retells of such an incident:

We fought in school, after school, recess time, fighting was a big part of it and that’s not a positive memory or anything. We all grouped together from different areas, right? “You’re from Base, I’m from Upper Base, you’re from Happy Valley” - artificial divisions. And of course, the new white kids got beat-up first day of school. That was their initiation to our world because again, the Inuit students had the resentment that they had an upper hand, that they had more opportunities than us.

For others, the physical altercation was initiated by white peers toward the Inuk student because they were different [darker]. For example, Kimik recalls: “I guess there was like physical altercations at times. It wasn’t in anything extreme, but it was enough to have a big impact in my childhood.”

Some of the lateral violence came from adults within the community toward the children. For instance, Iqaluk recalls an adult telling him at age seven or eight that he would one day die by suicide:

He used to have a little porcelain figurine and it was a little man flushing himself down the toilet and if you lift the lid it said, “goodbye cruel world” and he used to say to me, “Iqaluk, someday you’re going to do this. Iqaluk, someday you’re going to do this” and I didn’t know what he meant ‘cause I didn’t know what suicide was. Until he killed himself later on that year. And it still sticks to my brain what he used to say. And I never got it at the time until after he died. What a fucking asshole to say that to an 8-year-old kid, 7-year-old kid.

5.2e) Exposure to Suicides

In addition to experiencing microaggression and lateral violence, an emerging theme in the participants interviews was the exposure to suicides. As noted in my literature review, suicide among Inuit is nine times higher than the Canadian average and there are very few if any existing mental health support systems for Inuit or Inuit children. The majority of the participants had someone close to them die by suicide and did not receive the mental health services that they needed to cope with the tragedy.

Iqaluk for example recalls that his best friend’s father had died by suicide and the evidence of it remained for months after the incident. There was no proper cleaning of the remains in the home nor was counselling made available to him.

My first memory of a suicide. I was 7 or 8 years old. My best friend at the time, his father [...] ended up committing suicide at their house. We would go to their house and there

would still be blood splatter on the ceiling of his house, and we were 8. That was my first memory of suicide, like people killing themselves. And ahm, and since then it was part growing up, I guess.

After having experienced the loss of people close to Aputi by suicide, she recalled that she held onto the pain and it emerged in coldness towards the act only to learn its prevalence among Inuit and that these feelings were a result of the trauma and lack of mental health services to address them in a healthy way.

I guess I hadn't processed the suicides that happened in my life, so I was very angry and said something very shameful about suicide. And everybody was pissed off at me which was fine and very rightly so. But I think I was so hurt. Not by their reaction but I think by my life with suicide that I didn't care. And so finally after everything calmed down and settled down [...] I said, how many of us here have been affected by suicide and every single one of us had raised their hands. And I said how many here have counselors in their community and very few raised their hands.

Kitula was also very young when she first experienced the loss of a significant family member due to suicide. She reflected on the conditions that may have led to her family member to suicide including socio-economic status and substance abuse. Furthermore, she also recalled the lack of support systems to address these stressors in Inuit lived experiences.

My grandfather took his own life when I was between 9 and 10 so there were a lot of things like that going on in the community with alcoholism. Suicides and poverty and just a lot of people struggling that I saw growing up and it affects our ability to do well in the environment. There's a lack of social support that is needed there.

In Suputik's recollection, there is a lack of community preparedness to address the issue of death by suicide. Rather, everything comes to a standstill and the attention is given to the individual only after the fact. For Suputik the combination of being put in separate streams from other Inuit peers based on skin color and lack of support systems exacerbated the problem.

I think the hardest part was suicides. Whenever that happened, it's like they didn't really know what to do. And even when I lost one of my friends, like, it's just, like, everything [in the community] shut down to focus on that. And then it was almost like people were being taught, okay, if this happens, then you get all the attention. And there's no support for times like that. It's kind of terrible. And then that whole experience of being separated or being taught well, those are the kids from the basic education stream and you're in the academic and the kids in the academic have that advanced as well.

My experience: my first recollection of the idea of death by suicide came from stories that my mom had told me about Inuit elders telling the younger generation to go on without them or leave them where they are. In the stories, this was respected as it was the elder's wish not to hold the younger generation back when they had to move on to their next destination for survival. In this sense, it was a moral obligation as the person had lived a good life and was ready to rest without holding the group back and it was never a younger person who made such a request. It was always the older generation who were nearing the end of their life.

The idea of attempting to die by suicide came from someone very close to me. Before that, the idea of ending my own life had never entered my mind. When this person attempted, it gave me the idea that I could do it too. Much like, Dr. Edith Eger in her Memoir, "The Choice" (2017), in my times of suffering my pain manifested as suicidal urges. The idea of suicide was alluring in my early teenage years. I can't recall exactly why I had these thoughts and urges, but I do recall that I often felt unlovable and not fitting in where a young teenager ought to in terms of friendships and purpose. Though I sought help from the Health Centre, I never received counselling or coping mechanisms to deal with my stressors. Looking back, the experience was surreal. It's as if there was a very powerful voice in my head informing me that I would be at peace and life will be better for others without my presence. I wasn't afraid of dying. I equated it to going for a long sleep.

In deep conversations with my mother about these ideas and urges, I recall my mother informing me that people didn't have the divine right to take their own lives because it was not they who brought themselves into this world so it was not they who should be responsible to take them out. Over time, these thoughts and urges became infrequent and are now rare. If they happen, I can silence them with my mom's words and I am grateful today that she counseled me in her own stern but loving way. I have also developed strong coping mechanisms through self-reflection, personal growth, and a solid understanding of the world around me including my Inuit history. Like Dr. Eger, I use my past traumatic experiences as a well to draw from to help others.

I have since had close friends and family members die by suicide and can relate to some of the suffering that they must have felt. I hope they are resting in peace and when re-incarnated through their Atiq (their spiritual namesake), that they will have a better chance in life: not face racism and not be bullied, I hope that they will feel loved, know that they belong and are cared for, and that the proper support systems will exist in their new life.

5.2f) The Impacts of Systemic Racism and Exposure to Suicides

The combination of exposure to racism, microaggression, lateral violence, suicides and lack of support to address these stressors led to depression and lack of motivation to continue with school which led to some of the participants leaving school early, and then returning subsequently to graduate from high school or to complete their post-secondary education.

Aputi recalls the overwhelming weight the suicides had on her ability to complete her last semester of high school. A lack of mental health services exacerbated her feelings of despair and despite encouragement from friends to graduate with them, she was not able to continue.

I'm also very competitive [...] challenge myself to finish and unfortunately that was lost for a while with all the suicides that were happening. And so that ... really impacted me to the point where, in combination with the deaths, where I had dropped out of school twice both in grade twelve and I literally only needed one semester to graduate. But I didn't do it, I

couldn't do it and we didn't have a counsellor at school. I remember my friend saying, you should have been graduating with me, because she was like, preparing for the summer. I was saying, "na, I don't want to". I didn't care. I think I was too much in a depression to care.

Kitula recalls that the earlier supports she had drawn on were no longer available, and she was left to her own devices after reaching a certain age. She found herself having to navigate existing systems on her own despite struggling economically and with mental health issues that she was not aware of until she was able to find the proper treatment. Removing supports for Kitula based on her age strained her ability to acquire knowledge and skills to apply *Pilimaksarniq* and *Qanuqtuurniq*.

The social supports weren't really there anymore. I was basically doing it on my own. Yeah, that was a difficult time. Like, I didn't realize till later when I was getting therapy that I was depressed, basically my whole life. So again, dealing with the mental health issues you just kind of struggle to stay afloat and get by to the best that you can. Not having enough food to eat, having a safe place to sleep, and proper quality health care, access to the proper health care that we might need, those types of things. It's like you survive against all odds there.

For Suputik, while the situation tested her motivation, she continued to press on with the goal of escaping the toxic environment created by her school and the disparities that existed in the community. This environment lacked support for Suputik so that she could apply *Qanuqtuurniq* to be resourceful and solve the problems and as a result, she had to seek it somewhere else.

I think my big motivation was after my friend died by suicide, we had always talked about getting out of [name of community]. I was very much struggling and [...] I think back on those years, and it was like I just could not get into it and I didn't know what the heck I was doing.

While Ubluriaq's parents insisted that he attend school, they were not necessarily aware of the depth of his struggles so were not able to provide him with the support that he needed. In addition, the Inuit values which he would have benefitted from were scarce in his new environment. As a result, the adverse environment was strong enough to quash his ability to complete high school.

I was suffering through but it wasn't a positive thing where I wanted to go to school. You know it was like, I had to go, wasn't doing well, just getting by. I guess, I feel like it wasn't that much of a priority to complete. The peer pressure was there, pressure from the family but the other factors were just too overwhelming to override those negative things, so I guess the values weren't enough there for me to use it to complete my K-12 education.

During this period, Ubluriaq recalled the painful memory of the coping mechanism he managed to use in the absence of support systems. He frequently pretended to fall ill to prevent himself from attending the negative environment that existed at his school.

I do recall, I played sick a lot. School wasn't something that I looked forward to so it wasn't very good and especially with the moving and trying to make new friends and this kind of thing. It wasn't that positive of an experience that I look back. I was a D student. I barely did it. I did not have much supports from the parents. K-12 – not that great. I don't remember it, probably don't want to so I'll just leave it at that.

Iqaluk also noted the absence of *Pijitsirniq* [concept of serving] at home and from the educators to provide him with an environment that fostered *Qanuqtuurniq* [concept of resourcefulness] so that he could apply *Pilimaksarniq* [concept of knowledge and skill acquisition] when it came to completing his academic work outside of school.

I never did homework 'cause my mother was unilingual. My stepfather was [not English]. They never helped me with homework. I never ever had support for homework, so I rarely did homework. Only when I really, really had to and I struggled at it because nobody

taught me how to do homework. It's a skill that I didn't learn until later on. I think for most Inuit students there was nobody in the house to help us do homework.

For some participants, the impact of leaving the K-12 education system early led to a sense of shame for not being able to keep up with the academic demands despite the significant stress they were having to overcome at the same time. Furthermore, though employment was gained, leaving early made them susceptible to experience ostracization from white colleagues who formed cliques based on their post-secondary educational background. Lastly, racism in their K-12 system experience created a sense of shame in having an Inuit identity for some of the participants.

For instance, Ubluriaq recalls being left behind by his peers as they went onto post-secondary education. As a way to cope, he sought employment to foster different skills over academic ones.

A lot of my friends were going and applying to university and college, and it was very positive and this kind of thing. I did not and it was kind of a source of shame so what I did was I joined the workforce right away. I worked a number of jobs in lieu of graduating, I went that route.

Suputik recalls that there were times when she observed students who could not read English as well as the others as being put on stage and made to feel ashamed, instead of them being given the support that they needed to improve their reading and comprehension.

Whereas if you are sitting in English, just thinking about high school, teachers would get us to read passages from things and you could tell when people were really good readers and then others weren't. It was kind of a terrible experience because you are setting again that stage. So I mean taking that opportunity. I think it would have made a difference for people [to be given support]. Otherwise, it's almost like you're shaming someone.

Iqaluk also recalls his peers moving forward academically and as a result improved their socio-economic status while he continued to struggle with making ends meet. Observing this, Iqaluk made a decision to return to school.

Two of my classmates [...] we went from elementary through high school and they graduated high school and they went to [name of college] [...] and they both had great jobs after 2 years of school, making good money. So, it was always in the back of my head, “that’s probably what I have to do, I have to go onto college to make decent money” and being poor was my driver too. You know I worked 2 jobs and I still, you were still broke all the time. So, I knew I needed to do something. So that’s when I started applying for programs.

Iqaluk also recalls the impact that leaving school early had on his work environment. Though by this time he had a college diploma, he quickly realized that his certificate was undervalued by his white colleagues, and he was not like the majority of them who bragged with each other about their prestige in having attended university. In these situations, he was left out of group discussions as his white colleagues would form their own circles based on their post-secondary accomplishments.

I didn’t finish my high school either and I was around 30 when I did my GED [General Education Diploma]. I was working in the government with our non-Inuit employees, “oh what school did you go to? what university did you go to?” It was like this little clique that if you didn’t go to university, you weren’t part of the club and that’s when I started to realize that I probably need a university degree now.

Probably one of the most harmful impacts that systemic racism in K-12 and the community settings had on the participants was that it created a sense of shame in their Inuit identity. Though the perceptions of not completing K-12 by virtue of being Inuk are incorrect, these perceptions were powerful enough to have some participants avoid claiming their Inuit identity and heritage. For instance, Ubluriaq recalls resenting being asked what his background was as a

result of the cumulative effects of racism: microaggression, lateral violence, and lack of support systems.

So that's what it was like then and when I was asked what I was, it wasn't a source of pride or anything, it was like, you know, I'm an Inuk and it wasn't something that was quite positive, really.

Kimik recalls that after leaving high school, he avoided connecting with Indigenous services on the campus of his post-secondary institution as a result of the racism he experienced in his K-12 education journey, "I think I hadn't reconciled with my own past and upbringing and how I was treated for my identity. So, in that regard, I didn't transition into the indigenous student life on campus."

5.2g) Low Quality K-12 Education

Segregation within the K-12 education system experienced by the participants limited their access to be educated in Inuit knowledge systems including Inuktitut language acquisition. Furthermore, regardless of whether they were put into the "academic" stream or not, the K-12 system did not apply the same type of standards or equivalencies or supports that are required for easy transition into university for the majority of the participants. The participants recall a significant absence of *Pijitsirniq* and training in *Pilimaksarniq* that could have better prepared them for post-secondary education and to exercise their culture and language as well as to navigate their communities in healthy and safe ways.

Suputik recalls the feeling of having to choose either her culture, language, or the Western English stream. "Success" was based on selecting the Western English stream over the Inuit stream.

So, if you wanted to learn Inuktitut you'd have to go onto the other stream because they wouldn't make it available in the English immersion which totally wasn't fair, cuz, it's like well, if you want to be successful, you can't go into the Inuktitut immersion.

In Iqaluk's experience, Inuktitut language was given a token of one day per week and he recalls that this was based on decisions made by white educators backed by colonial power structures. In his view these individuals are still present in his region.

I think there was one Inuktitut class a week, growing up, one class a week. The Department of Ed is a very colonial power. Power clique inside there- they don't want change. They don't want Inuktitut as a language of instruction. Even though they're educators. They're more colonialists than educators. They're still there.

Iqaluk also recalls how the education system controlled by non-Inuit created an inferior model for preparing Inuit students for their transition into post-secondary education.

I went to school up north where it's kind of substandard education, I went to college up north, [...]sad to say but it's not academically rigorous or anything. So, my first year I did it just on drive alone. And I read, and I read, and I tried to wrap my head around it. It basically taught me how to write. I thought I could write but I couldn't write until, like I received my marks.

Ubluriaq identified the sub-standard curriculum as a significant roadblock for Inuit in his region to be properly prepared for post-secondary education.

Social passing, of the [...] education system practically doesn't meet the minimum requirements that would allow them to get into universities. So, I think the challenges of graduating as an Inuk based on [name of territory] curriculum is a very big barrier for Inuit students moving on.

For Suputik while she was selected to be on the academic stream, she felt that neither the academic nor the applied tracks prepared the students as she still felt unprepared for post-secondary education.

Or basic English class vs. academic English and it's like, yeah, so just the very curriculum itself was negative. Just thinking about how I got to post-secondary, and this system I had

to go through to get there and then coming to understand, [...] I don't think we're ever adequately prepared for it.

Kitula remembered struggling to complete her last course in high school in order to be able to graduate.

When I was 16 – 18 my goal at that time was really just to finish high school. And I barely did. Like if my biology teacher wasn't nice and I didn't get a 50, I wouldn't have graduated. So luckily, they gave me just enough to graduate the year.

5.3: K-12 Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Analysis of Constraints Voiced

Systemic racism appears to be a significant barrier for the IQ Laws Principles to be practiced and implemented at all levels: K-12 and the community. It is the absence of *Pijitsirniq* [concept of serving] which in the educational context is the concept of serving students and community equally. Segregation does not foster core values like *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* [respecting others, relationships and caring for people] rather it creates animosity and lateral violence between Inuit peers and resentment and physical violence between Inuit and white students. It fosters microaggression toward Inuit where we are told that we are less than if we do not conform to the dominant culture whether by appearance, behaviour or language. Systemic racism promotes preferential treatment toward “white passing” students and educators become gatekeepers to opportunities such as qualifications necessary to access post-secondary education, extra-curricular experiences like exchange trips that could otherwise be accessed by all students regardless of their colour, or English language competencies. When such selective behaviors and gatekeeping is enacted by educators, Inuit students end up with poor quality education that limits their abilities to access post-secondary institutions. Furthermore, many Inuit students are exposed to loss of close family and friends as a result of suicides without ever receiving mental health care. The combination of these stressors force Inuit students to use the IQ Value of *Qanuqtuurniq* -the ability to be resourceful to solve problems- to address the stressors rather than focus on their academic studies, further contributing to the loss of opportunities for Inuit students.

CHAPTER SIX

Thematic Analysis of Findings - Affordances Voiced

6.1 Structure of Chapter and Emerging Themes

After reflecting on the challenges discussed in chapter five, participants took the time to recall the ways in which they found motivation and support in order to prevail in their education. This included reflecting on how Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit Laws and Principles played a role in their educational success. In this section of my analysis, I highlight the themes that emerge, provide an overview of each theme and illustrate with examples from the participants' lived experiences drawing on quotes from their transcripts.

Respect for Inuit identity in the K-12 system was shown on rare occasions and when it happened, it was so unusual, that it created a strong response of self-worth. Other external examples given by the participants included strong family ties, having Inuit teachers, a formalization of cultural and outdoor activities, sports, trust given by teachers with respect to access to resources such as libraries, books, and tools, as well as classes that reflected their personal strengths which in turn allowed them to achieve self-efficacy [*Pilimaksarniq* and *Qanuqtuurniq*]. Internal conditions include an inherent and natural curiosity, spirituality, and a strong sense of needing to prove to themselves and to others that they are just as equal and capable as white people: the members of the dominant society who were favoured in their educational and community lived experiences.

6.1a) *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq*: Deep Respect for Inuit Identity

There were occasions when a teacher demonstrated respect for Inuit identity for example, when her Inuit teacher referred to Aputi through her Atiq [spiritual namesake]. This practice is unusual because calling Inuit students by their Atiq has not been formally implemented in the K-12 system and is usually practiced at family, social, and community levels. An Inuit teacher understands the nuances of what it means to call someone by their Atiq, therefore, the presence of Inuit teachers being able to bring this knowledge and practice into the formal school setting had a profound impact on some of the participants. Other benefits experienced by the participants included formally implemented Inuit land-based lessons in the K-12 education system.

6.1b) Atiq: Spiritual Namesakes

Inuit kinships are strongly tied to our naming customs and spirituality and keep Inuit history alive. Furthermore, it is believed that Inuit children carry on the spirit, skills and knowledge of the person after whom they are named, as they foster new ones in this current life. These child development or Inunguiniq processes are fostered through *aqausiit* [terms of endearment and songs specific to the child] and *tuq&urautiit* [the “&” is a specific sound in Inuktitut] calling a person by their Inuktitut name to show respect and foster closeness. Inuit researchers have also observed that calling someone by their spirit names contributes to healthier communities that result in less crime and violence (Ochalski, 2015; Owlijoot, 2013; Pauktuutit, 2006). The use of one’s *Atiq* demonstrates deep respect for the child, and it would not be appropriate to mindlessly order a child around or disrespect them as, “this would be the equivalent of ordering an elder or another adult about, thus violating an important social rule in Inuit culture.” (Pauktuutit, 2006, p.16).

Aputi recalls how being called by her *Atiq* had subtle implications for her development as a child, including the positive framing of her Inuit identity. After some further reflection, she noted that the impact was extremely powerful because it came from her Inuk teacher who would have understood the implications of referring to a student by their *Atiq*. This signified a deep respect for the developing human being [Inunguiniq].

I think what really stuck with me even if it was at a subconscious level, was my kindergarten teacher was Inuk [...] she would always call me Aputi and to me that was such an impactful thing because that’s who I was. As a kid, I didn’t necessarily understand the significance of Inuktitut naming, but to be told I was Aputi or to be called Aputi showed me the respect that she had given me because only my dad’s parents called me Aputi. It wasn’t necessarily a loving thing to, I didn’t interpret it as being a loving thing. It was more of a respect thing, like, I meant something, right? Because I never really associated with [...] my English name. So to be called Aputi by my Inuktitut [pause], it wasn’t even my Inuktitut teacher but my INUK teacher, it was so impactful to me.

For others, although their Inuit names were not used in the K-12 system, they were still able to draw strength from their Atiq [spiritual namesake] and ancestors despite, for some, having lost contact and having limited knowledge of who they are named after. Kitula recalls that she was given an Atiq and despite having lost connection as a result of loss of cultural practices, she was drawn to her roots to build her determination.

I was named after my grandfather's grandmother. I don't know anything about her. But my mom named me that and I always feel like whenever I do any prayer or ceremony, I encourage them to keep guiding me. I try to build that connection with the ancestors.

6.1c) Inunguinig: Avatami Kamattiarniq

When Inuit land-based learning practices were incorporated as part of formal K-12 education it helped to validate the practices taught by family members or within the community setting. The participants experienced enhanced purpose as they were assigned a role to contribute to the learning in their group setting. Being out on the land gave them mobility which they did not have in the school or community setting. Participants report that being on the land improved their mental health and that land-based programs fostered knowledge and skill acquisition that enhanced self-efficacy.

Aputi recalls how meaningful it was to have Inuit customs built into the K-12 educational programming. Though it was regularly practiced by her family outside of school, the fact that she was being taught these skills in a formal setting by others was a significant take-away from her educational experience.

I love the cultural aspects. [...] I remember going out as a class and it was so good to be learning from other people other than my family, like I love my family, but I remember being taught how to skin caribou even though I had watched my mom do it all my life. I remember being on the sled, qimuksiqtuq [dog team], even though I had done that. Right, like all these things were a part of school and it was so meaningful to me.

Furthermore, the experience of having Inuit culture practiced as part of the K-12 setting not only validated the importance of incorporating Inuit knowledge systems into a more formal setting but being outside in the natural world provided a balance from having to sit in class for long periods of time. As Aputi recalls, it makes it difficult to thrive when you are confined into a single classroom setting for several hours at a time.

And to be able to fish and go out fishing in the spring. It was so powerful to me, I guess as an Inuk and I didn't necessarily think of "alright, I'm practicing my culture" it was like part of living and so we had this break from this other way of living. Right? Being in a chair all day isn't the most ideal part of living, right?

In our culture, children are often assigned age-appropriate tasks which is part of Inunghuiniq. These tasks give them a purpose in life while developing skills and competencies in order to survive and to contribute to the group. Undoubtedly, it shows the child that their unique being has a role that is needed and that they are important contributors to their society.

So then to be able to go out there and fill a role because you have a role to play. In a family, you have a role to play when you're out camping, or you have a role when you're out doing these cultural days. Right. I remember being told, "go get me some water" I had to tuuq and get some water. That was my role.

Ubluriaq asserts that Inuit formal education has its foundation on the land. In this setting, Inuit children are taught and internalize the interconnectedness of all things while acquiring the essential skills for self-efficacy, ethics, morals, and their role in social cohesion all of which are fulfilling.

My first formal education as an Inuk and -I think we share this all- is that the first formal education is on the land. It is a living off the land, the respect for the animals and the elements. Being taught how to hunt, usually by an elder or other family and there is the first real education about life and how things are and you know, you treat things with

respect and be honest and patient and you'll be rewarded with food or sharing or parts of the animal that you can give to family and yourself.

Ubluriaq recognizes that these teachings are very rarely made available to non-Inuit. He reports that for him, learning on the land has health benefits and allows him to navigate and carry on through difficult times.

So, I think that that was grounding in helping me as a person that not a lot of non-Inuit have. And so I would say that my first formal education is on the land and through the environment and that was beneficial in helping me persevere through the harder times.

Suputik recalls that teachers who recognized the significance of incorporating Inuit education with K-12, brought energy into the educational experience that fosters attendance and connections with Inuit elders, while also supporting learning specific skills and different ways of comprehending things. Unfortunately for Suputik and her peers, the Inuit land-based component of this program was canceled.

I think too, teachers that actually made an effort to not exclude culture, like actually brought it in, there was such a big difference because it was like, "oh yaay" we got to do that and one of the big ones was the [cultural] program which is life skills. Elders were actually coming in and we got to do beadwork and carving. But, by the time I got to grade 9, that's usually when they did the on the land trip, they cancelled it. Everybody was always excited about it. Like it motivated people and people were really interested in it. It was great because, one we got to sit with elders and actually learned different ways of thinking.

Although the land-based program was cancelled in K-12, there were other opportunities to harness this learning. Inuit land-based programs not only brought economic activities but cultivated the values of Inuti Qaujimajaqtuangit such as being up early with nature and being in touch with natural elements.

But then there was like, going to summer camp. That meant getting out of the community. [...] it got you out of the community too. And for many people, they got money, so they got to buy things that they liked. Ahm, of course there was the drill, you had to be up at 6:30 every morning, whatever, but, it was still nice. It was one, you're being outside. And then there was also going out in the bush.

Of significant importance to Suputik was the mobility that the land-based learning provided including the change of scenery which was fresh and not littered with toxicity. It was a healthy approach to Inunguiniq for proper child development that was often absent at school or in the community.

Yeah, you're really like, trapped in that, the scene, I don't even know what to call it. Not garbage but the same everything, the stuff that you don't want to be, the unhealthy stuff, it was there. Then when I was doing art or whenever we went out those summers it was like we were away from that, and it was like, you could be a kid.

6.1d) Inunguiniq: Recognition of Potential and Trust from Teachers

Teachers' recognition of Inuit student's struggles, sincere encouragement, trust, acknowledging potential and giving access to resources created a strong response in participants for the love of learning, creativity, and drive to complete assignments. When teachers showed trust and encouragement by giving participants access to the library, books, pencils, and computers, teachers demonstrated *Pijitsirniq*, *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* and *Pillimaksarniq* as part of their role of *Inunguiniq*, and this fostered personal ownership and motivation for their student's learning.

Aputi for instance recalls being given unsupervised access to the library, computer lab, and physical resources to take home so that she could complete her assignment.

So having those spares allowed me to go into the computer lab and ask my computer teacher if I can use the computer to finish whatever assignment. We had a library that was very small but we had a library and at one point the internet was just starting.

Aputi recalls that this trust was fostered through an agreement between her and her teacher that she would look after the materials and bring them back to school when her work was completed. This trust and access to resources motivated Aputi to complete her assignments and return to school.

And for my projects, again I'm going to go back to that poetry project. I'd asked, we obviously didn't have material at the store, but I had asked, can I bring this glue stick home, can I bring these crayons, pencil crayons, I would ask and my teacher would say yes and she'd say as long as you bring them back. So it was the excitement of having these things and that trust from teachers.

When *Pijitsirniq* [serving], *Inuuqatigiitsiaqrniq* [respecting others] and *Pilimaksarniq* [knowledge and skill acquisition] were displayed by teachers and present in the formal education setting, it gave opportunities to nurture the participants' internal and natural qualities such as the love of reading, writing (including in both languages), seeking information, and presenting themselves and their ideas in different ways. Aputi reports that her teacher's sincere enthusiasm for Inunguiniq motivated her and made her interested and engaged in her assignments. Furthermore, she was given the freedom to express herself through her writing which was one of her strengths.

Writing. I really enjoyed writing. I felt like I can express myself verbally best. It was math, it was reading, it was, whatever. I remember being so engaged in the way he [the teacher] explained something to us. And then him, asking us how we can do it on our paper, and it was so interesting that I had the tools to do this.

Though Iqaluk had difficulty identifying positive aspects of his K-12 education journey, having access to the library and books, as well as some teachers who were not terrible, allowed him to continue to learn through reading.

I guess some teachers were good. I liked the library. I read a lot, so I went to the library a lot. Even though it wasn't something I learned from anybody, but I like to read and I

figured that out early on. So I liked going to the library. There was a library right across from my house. I went there in the evenings, took out books. Yeah, it's hard to come up with what was positive.

Furthermore, Iqaluk reflected that reading gave him a sense of escape from being confined to his community and expanded his knowledge base. It exposed him to different cultures and world events that were happening outside of his hometown.

I enjoyed reading. That was probably the main reason, you know, I liked reading fiction and I liked reading the news. Everything that was going on outside of our little town, you know. The ads in the paper from Montreal, all the things you could do, all the things you could buy that you couldn't get in [community]. So, I think that newspaper really did a lot for me.

Kimik recalls that access to books and reading gave him a pathway to free himself from feelings of isolation, it provided him with happiness, and it nurtured his inherent curiosity.

I was always reading as a kid because in some ways I was a bit isolated. I was a bit isolated because I was different, so I found pleasure in books and reading and being curious. I carried that through with me from elementary school to high school. So I always had this desire to learn. Perhaps as an outlet you know, for the other frustrations and feelings.

Kimik also identifies reading as a conduit for learning beyond what he was assigned in school. Furthermore, reading provided way for him to cope with his stressors and he was able to use it as a crutch throughout his K-12 education journey.

I guess I wouldn't call it studying but pursuit of knowledge because I was always reading novels and you know doing puzzles and stuff. I guess that transferred into academic abilities. So while I wasn't disciplined I had this, I guess, gift in a way. I guess, helped me through elementary and into high school.

Kitula identifies herself as a social introvert and as such, recognizes that having access to books was a way she could support her intrinsic yearning for acquiring knowledge.

Intrinsically, yeah, I was just always naturally drawn to reading, always very quiet, and introverted so very drawn to books to learn. So internally very motivated not extroverted, speaking, social validation or anything like that so I sought that through books and learning inwardly.

While other participants found support in books and reading, Suputik reports that extracurricular activities, such as art, life skills, and physical activities played an important role in Inunguiniq and participation in school. It was a form of the Inunguiniq process that incorporated hands-on, applied learning techniques rather than just theoretical aspects that often existed in the classroom setting.

Yes, it made it more worthwhile. It really made you want to learn and to engage. The ones that were more fun to finish were the hands-on things and that was like home economics, it was art, it was gym, like you are actually reading moving where you are doing something.

At a very young age, Kitula became aware that she was cared for by her teachers and was valued enough by them to ensure that she had access to basic necessities that recognized and nurtured her potential and supported her to persevere.

I had really nurturing teachers. I do remember my grade 2 teacher, she's like my favorite teacher, I don't know why. So teachers always saw potential in me. They always really could see what I was capable of but still struggling with my life around family stability. Around making sure we had enough food to eat. You know, that I had my own place to sleep. Like it's crazy to think that young lives that we really still think about basic needs like that. Because they really do interfere with our ability to focus at school.

6.1e) Inunguiniq: Sports & Cadets

For some of the participants, sports and cadets played an integral part in countering systemic racism, including its negative impacts in their K-12 education journey. Not only did these two activities put them on an equal footing with white peers but it gave them structure that made them feel like they belonged, gave them opportunities for leadership roles, fostered their individual talents and forms of discipline that helped them navigate their K-12 education. In addition, these activities gave them mobility by providing exposure to different parts of the country. For Instance, in Ubluriaq's experience despite having to live with the daily stressors of racism and academic struggles, sports were a course in which he could take to ease his mind off of these stressors and focus on his strengths while gaining knowledge and leadership skills.

The one positive aspect was that I was heavily involved in the [sport] team. I did that as soon as I went to jr. high. I did quite well. I went to a lot of tournaments and nationals. Two years, I was captain of the [sport] team. So that was a very positive experience that I had. If I didn't have that, I don't know, but still struggling all the way through. I think it was that, that was something that I identified with, it didn't matter that I was Inuk or I was really skinny at the time too. That was one positive thing that kept me going that there was one thing that I could gravitate to, look forward to, that I did well at.

Kimik recalls that school sports allowed him to focus on these personal growth and strengths as well, "I liked playing sports, that's the only place [school] you can really play sports unless you play hockey. Like, organized sports. I was good at that, and it was at the school that, that stuff happened, eh."

Kimik also recalls benefiting from the structure that sports provided both at school and at the community level. The benefits included building the skill sets required for success as well as increasing his network of friendships and gaining positive social interactions.

Yeah, I guess, you know, there was structure in place that helped me succeed. Without the structure, I think success would have been a lot harder for me. They really provided me with that and understanding of what it takes to succeed. For me, I'm [learning challenge]

personally so I really needed that structure in place to help me. You know, at the community centre there were sporting events that helped me sort of, I guess as well. Not in the academic sense but in a way that allowed me to, I guess, you know, build friendships outside of the classroom, social skills, and all sorts of teamwork and stuff like that.

As an Inuk youth, Kitula struggled for socio-economic reasons that were beyond her control. She often found herself just getting by; however, the structure that cadets provided supported her *Inunguiniq* process by giving her structure, leadership skills, and the experience gave her the skills and confidence to be able to persevere. Furthermore, she found that the cadet program's activities were strongly similar to the Inuit values of working hard at any cost.

Army cadets, and so that provided a lot of structure, a lot of skills around even leadership and organizational skills. So being introduced into those kinds of structured programs and the opportunity that they could provide instilled in me perseverance, hard work, discipline, but also that something that's instilled in us as Inuit that we work really hard. To survive. So just doing what you can to get by.

Suputik also reports that cadets positioned participants as equals with their peers, working together for a common cause. It provided structure, routine, and assigned roles to participants that gave them purpose and their differences and selection for increased levels were recognized through badges rather than through skin colour for example.

I think it gave people purpose. And there was also, so there was structure, there was the routine. Everybody was equal because they all had the same uniform on. The only different thing was your badges.

6.2: K-12 Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Analysis of Affordances Voiced

The presence of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit was found in the affordances that participants identified as supporting their educational experiences. For instance, when a child was called by their Inuktitut name, it showed it not only showed *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* [respecting others, relationships, and caring for people] a deep respect for the individual child, but also motivated the student to attend school and apply *Qanuqtuurniq* [the concept of being resourceful to solve problems] with

focus on their academic learning and not on the stressors. When students had the opportunity to engage in land-based activities, cadets and sports, IQ principles were being practiced. Namely, *Pijitsirniq*, the concept of serving community, *Avatamik Kamattiarniq*, environmental stewardship, and *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* [respecting others, relationships and caring for people] where each person was given a role and responsibility while learning to navigate safely in their environment [*Qanuqtuurniq*]. Trust from teachers fostered *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* and *qanuqtuurniq* which allowed the students to focus on their studies and gain self-efficacy to complete their programs despite the obstacles that were present in a system that was largely racist.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Post-secondary Analysis of Findings - Constraints Voiced

7.1 Structure of Chapter and Emerging Themes

This section of my analysis reports the participants' post-secondary experiences. My analysis uses the Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit lens, identifying where it is present or absent to foster Inunguiniq [creation of an able and enabled human being] at this later stage in their education journey. Similar to the previous section, the themes are presented in the way they unfolded in the interviews. Like the previous section, I begin with a focus on the constraints that were voiced and end with the affordances they shared to complete their post-secondary education journey. I continue to provide an overview of the emerging theme, discuss how the events within the theme affected the participants and support my analysis with their own voices.

7.2 Post-secondary Constraints Voiced

Participants reflect on their transitions into their university programs which began with how they were introduced to the idea of attending post-secondary education. Their constraints included feeling ill prepared by their K-12 experience as well as by the systemic racism and culture shock they experienced once in post-secondary.

7.2a) Journey into University

The participants' stories illuminate how they each found their way into post-secondary education. Through their stories we see that each participant took their own unique paths to their programs and entry into university. For instance, some went directly from high school while others (including myself) entered post-secondary later as mature students. In their reflections, participants recall additional barriers that they had to overcome in order to get accepted into their programs.

Because Suputik was raised by a parent who was a university graduate, she had an idea of what it was; though it wasn't until there was an official visit to her school from a university representative that she really got the concept of what university meant.

Well, my mom went to, [university] and [university] and I kind of knew what that was but I also didn't know what it was. I don't think it was until, so this is where my first memory goes, is when I think it was PSSSP [post-secondary student support program] came to the school and gave a presentation, or it was folks from [university]. I can't remember.

Suputik recalled that it was during middle school that she got formally introduced to the idea of attending university including the financial support that was available to her. She saw it as her escape from the toxic environment that she was exposed to on a daily basis within her community.

And that was when I was in junior high, I think. I think that was the first I'd heard of post-secondary. It was my motivation; it was to get out of [community]. It was like my ticket. This is it. This is my ticket to get out. So, I think it was yeah, knowing my mom went to school but then actually having PSSSP; so the actual funders coming and talking about programs or if it was the university outreach. One or the other or both.

Upon graduating from high school, Suputik recalls applying to several different universities. Despite having graduated from the academic [white/white passing] stream in the K-12 education system in her Inuit region, she quickly learned that her school did not properly prepare her for acceptance into the university program that she was seeking entry to and, "When I applied to universities and colleges, I didn't even get in because my grades weren't good enough. I wanted to study psychology, ahm, there was no way."

Suputik also recalls the anxiety she felt at the prospect of either being accepted or not into a university program and the sense of relief she felt when she finally got accepted. This was to be her first time to be away from home in a significant way.

And then for [name of university], I was 2.6% away from the admission. [...] So if I passed it, I would get in, if I didn't I wouldn't. So it was like, very nerve wracking. It was like my first time aside from army cadets away from home to go to school and whatever. So the pressure was on. I wasn't even in university, yet which is stressful enough but then like, to actually get in was nerve wracking. So I got in, I was so relieved.

As a high school student, Kitula recalled that she was exposed to the idea of higher learning through an encouraging family she lived with. She also learned the process of applying to university through observational learning from one of the older children in the household. She indicated that the combination of being close to someone with post-secondary academic aspirations, observing the application process and the presence of encouraging adults, strongly influenced her to seek a post-secondary degree.

I lived with a larger family, and they had several children of their own and one of their kids was older than me. So, I saw the reprocess for her on what it was like for her to apply to university. So, I would be with her in the same room as she's going through the application and like all the struggle with it and stuff like that so I think being exposed to someone who was applying and who had the goal and aspiration to go, I think that was really important for me to see that. But also the family encouraging me to do the same. So those two things combined.

Kitula also recalls that as a young student she did not immediately know what post-secondary program she wanted to get into. What she did know was that she had a strong drive within her to acquire a degree. Furthermore, she stated that if it wasn't for the encouragement and support from the family she lived with, the microaggressions and negative messages that Inuit students receive in their K-12 education journey, would have set her back.

I'm not sure if I knew at that time what I wanted to do but I do know it was just a dream for me to go to university or go to college. Growing up you don't really get the messages that you're meant to go or that you should go, you know? Other than that one family. We don't really get those encouragement to attend.

Kitula notes that by the time she graduated from high school, the person she had looked up to and observed had moved away from their small Inuit community to attend university. Upon graduation, she reconnected with her, and by doing so, was able to continue to be guided by her but this time in a post-secondary setting.

I connected with [person] who was living here and going to [university]. She took me on campus and showed me around and took me to a specific college program; a continuing education program for black and indigenous youth - for students to apply called a transition year program. So, she took me to that particular building, and I picked up an application to apply.

Unfortunately, Kitula was not able to get into her university program right away. Her K-12 education system in her Inuit region had not properly prepared her to meet the postsecondary institution's qualifications. Through the support of a specific program, she was able to meet the entry requirements and receive admission to her preferred university program.

It was a dream for me to do that, but it wasn't going to be possible because I didn't have the grades to get in. Like you need probably 70% average to get in but the Transition Year Program allowed for that to happen.

Kimik first heard about post-secondary education from his father who himself was a college graduate. He encouraged Kimik, who already had a desire for higher education that went beyond the confines of high school learning which he reports began with his father: "I guess it was because my father went to college, you know. When he was around that age and he thought it was a pretty good idea, I wanted to pursue further studies and learn more about the world."

Another significant motivator for Kimik to seek a university degree was to leave the environment where he grew up which, in his experience, was not a very fertile place for critical thinking or a positive way of being.

A big part of it for me also in the town that I went to high school in, I wanted to leave the county I grew up in. I didn't see as progressive. I wanted to learn more about the world and sticking at that place wasn't going to allow me to do that.

Kimik's desire for higher learning was cultivated by being in the academic stream at his high school and by organized school visits that introduced the concept of, and processes for, entering into university programs.

I guess we had schools visit our high school to give talks about post-secondary was like and you know that sort of peaked my interest as well. I was in the academic stream in high school so I was a bit more familiar with, I guess, what university life would be like.

Kimik's transition to post-secondary was also challenging. His teachers explicitly discouraged him from applying for university based on their misconceptions of his abilities. However, rather than accepting their predictions, Kimik focused on working harder to acquire the prerequisites necessary for entry to his preferred university-based program.

I guess with my learning difficulties I had some teachers that were trying to push me to more of a college or trade school kind of route. In a way that kind of motivated me to complete the academic track as well and get into universities that I applied to.

To achieve his dream of going to university, Kimik drew on his internal strength and drive to complete the necessary requirements, which he achieved through extending his time in the K-12 system.

Yeah, hopes of post-secondary, you know, the thought of attending university that really motivated me. Persistence was a big thing for me. I did an extra year of high school too, I guess to get my grades up.

Upon completing high school, Aputi thought her learning was complete until a person approached her and suggested that she ought to pursue more education after high school. This prompted her to apply for a college program despite not fully being aware what that program would offer her.

I was working right out of high school. I was 17 and I thought I knew everything. But somebody had said to me, you should go to school and I didn't think anything of it. But I

thought well maybe I should go to school not necessarily that I wanted to but just because it's something to apply to. So I applied to [college program] even though I didn't really know much about the program.

Realizing that the challenges she experienced during college were ones faced by other Inuit students, motivated Aputi to apply for university after her college program.

Because there were all these people, all these Inuit, from [different] regions tell me they are experiencing the exact same thing, it really gave me a purpose. So that's how I decided to go onto postsecondary – like university.

Ubluriaq had known about post-secondary education but did not think it was within reach for him because he did not complete school in the K-12 education system. However, the path that led him to university was through his profession and the support of his employer who provided him education leave to complete a university degree.

I had known about it and it sort of was not attainable or I didn't think about it because I didn't graduate from high school. What happened and it's related to my career, it made sense to me to go to [university program]. [Employer] has an education leave option and so I pursued that, and I was successful in getting education leave with pay to go to [university].

Ubluriaq recalls that he could not get into his program initially, but he first had to prove that he was capable of the demands of the program.

I got accepted to university as a mature student. I could not get into [program] right away. The requirements for [program]... usually you have a degree before that and then you apply, you write the [program's] aptitude test, and the application process for entering [program] is pretty rigorous so I had to show that I could write a paper, that I could go to university and get good marks so I applied to [name of university], English. So the Arts and there was how I learned to write an essay.

Iqaluk learned about post-secondary education through a couple of his childhood friends who completed high school and graduated from college. Upon their return to their home community, Iqaluk noticed the benefits they were reaping from having attended college, while he himself was barely making ends meet.

I knew if from my friends that had gone to [name] College in Toronto, two of my classmates went there, you know we went from elementary through high school and they graduated high school and they went to [name] College and they both had great jobs after 2 years of school, making good money.

Being on the fringes of society strongly motivated Iqaluk to go back to school especially after seeing his friends do well financially as a result of their college diplomas.

So I was always in the back of my head, “that’s probably what I have to do, I have to go onto college to make decent money” and it was being poor was my driver too. You know I worked 2 jobs and I still, you were still broke all the time.

Going to college proved successful for Iqaluk, and he was accepted and able to complete his programs and acquire a job immediately in the field that he was trained for.

So I knew I needed to do something. So that’s when I started applying for programs. Then the next program [name of program] which I liked because it was a lot of writing and you learned different [techniques]. Out of the 12 classmates I had, I’m the only one that actually got a job in the field. Nobody else got a job related to that college program we were in.

It wasn’t long however, before Iqaluk discovered that a college degree wasn’t enough to gain respect among his work colleagues. Knowing that he was just as capable as they were, motivated Iqaluk to continue his studies towards a university degree.

I started to realize that I probably need a university degree now. You know, I thought I had it all with a college certificate but realized later on that pretty quick that to have value in the workforce. In today's workforce, you needed that degree and even then, I looked at those people and said, they're not any smarter than me. I talk to them, they have no fricken ideas and it really clicked that I was shut out because of that lack of degree. That's when I really started to think about going to university.

Iqaluk struggled with applying to university programs both financially and in terms of getting accepted.

And I filled everything out and I sent it off to [name of university] and I only had 60 bucks so I only applied to [name of university]. I wanted to apply to [name of university] but I didn't have enough money. So then I applied, I get a letter back saying, and I think it's kind of standard procedure for [university] is, "we don't know if your language skills will be strong enough to take university level courses" a letter from the registrar's office.

Upon receiving this letter, Iqaluk made his way to the campus to speak with administration to address the issue of their perception of his English language skills, "So I went there with this letter from them that they had sent me. Asking me you know, whether I'm proficient enough in English to be able to go to university."

Although he had checked in at the main desk of his university, Iqaluk recalls feeling invisible: time lapsed and nobody was coming to meet with him. Noon approached, a significant faculty member arrived who heard his story and why he was there and granted his admission.

And then I'm there nobody's like, it's coming near lunch and I'm still waiting in the registrar's office and then I'm waiting over lunch, this lady walks by and then she says "is anybody helping you?" I said, "no, not yet but I have this letter, I applied to go to this school and I have this letter and it's asking me if I'm proficient enough in English to attend and I said, "you know I went to residential schools, they didn't teach us anything but English" and then she took my letter and she said, "I'll be right back" and came back with another letter and said, "welcome to Carleton University". She was the registrar.

7.2b) Systemic Racism and Culture Shock

Systemic racism and culture shock emerged as key themes of the participants' post-secondary experiences. Institutional ignorance of Canadian Inuit culture led participants to feel isolated in many of the classes that they had attended. Furthermore, professors often challenged the Inuit students' knowledge about their own culture or tokenized them. As a result of these and earlier stressors, some of the participants left their programs early to seek support and growth from their families before returning to complete their post-secondary programs. These stressful conditions were largely invisible to their institutions and were not recognized as valid reasons for a student to seek leave from university studies. Participants had to declare their own mental health as a reason for seeking leave rather than being able to identify the context and environment as failing to provide a healthy learning environment.

Transitioning from small communities, the majority of the participants were ill prepared for university life. This section covers the challenges they experienced with racism and culture shock within their respective universities. Culture shock is defined as, "a sense of anxiety, depression, or confusion that results from being cut off from your familiar culture, environment, and norms when living in a foreign country or society. Those experiencing culture shock go through distinct phases of euphoria, discomfort, adjustment, and acceptance." (Segal, 2020).

Coming from a largely homogenous Inuit community, the first culture shock experienced by Aputi, was the overwhelming presence of racism at her university campus. This experience led to her to feel isolated and retreat within herself as a form of self-protection.

I went to university; 1st year was tough 'cause I didn't realize there were so many racists out there. I think growing up in a predominantly Inuk community, even though I was sent away for one semester of school, I literally would just stay in my own little bubble.

The second culture shock was the number of classes Aputi had to attend and the expectation of significant student engagement within these classes. Classes were much larger than the smaller groups she was used to when attending school in Inuit Nunangat or her college. Aputi was also

shocked that, despite being in a social science program which is meant to be progressive, there was still a large presence of racism within the student body.

Being in university was so different because there were lectures and then there was a lot of student engagement, and I was in social sciences so I couldn't believe how many racists there were. Right. So it was very tough.

This intensely foreign and adverse experience drained Aputi of energy and the mental and spiritual fatigue led Aputi to leave her program early before returning to graduate at a later date. And I ended up dropping out in 2nd year. I think I just had one more month to finish the term. I had just the exams to finish the term, but I couldn't do it. I was so mentally drained. I was so culturally shocked, I guess. That I couldn't do it. So, I had to apply to leave university.

Administratively, systemic racism or culture shock were not listed as options to request to leave university, so Aputi indicated that her reasons were personal "mental health" issues. Aputi explained that she needed to be with her kinships, people and traditions who provided stability which was largely invisible and unknown within the post-secondary institution.

I said it was for mental health issues. And I said I needed to be home and I remember writing this exact line: I need to be home to be close to my family who are my strength and my culture which is my understanding. I was so lost in this *Qablunaaq* institution right and to hear this racism about the natives, you know like... Because the system didn't reflect me and who I was and where I was coming from.

In her post-secondary experience, Suputik often had to inform people about her Inuit background and identity. Without really understanding what this meant, people would inadvertently begin to idealize her in an unrealistic way.

I had to tell people I was Inuk. 'Cause when I was home, it was just like, you are. But then when I left, it was totally different. And when I had [left], I did start telling people. That's when it became this romanticizing. It was like, "oh, an actual Indigenous student is here".

If they weren't idealizing her, they expected Suputik to represent and solely focus on Indigenous and Inuit topics and themes, even though she had other interests. She reports that "everything had to be Indigenous related or Inuit related. And it was like, I can't stop being Inuk at the end of the day, but I have other interests."

The culture on campus toward Suputik was to either idealize her or treat her with racist attitudes. As a minority Inuk student, she was often put in roles that she was not necessarily prepared for. If she didn't adhere to their expectations, people would gradually dissipate and if she didn't correct them, the status quo [racist, misinformed or ignorant campus culture] would remain. This often left her feeling isolated.

Like, it's almost like if you don't stay within Inuit specific or Inuit related [issues], people's interest in you decreased. Which was weird. So it was coming to understand the different ways that people: 1. Discriminated against you or racist [attitudes] and then their own ignorance and then it felt really isolating. Because then you were always that tokenized person in the room. Or if you didn't say something you knew that nothing was going to be said. So you were just like, do I have to do this role?

Iqaluk's culture shock came with the recognition that his K-12 education system did not prepare him for the type of writing that is required at the university level. He began to question his abilities but persevered and saw the benefits of his persistence toward second year.

I thought I could write but I couldn't write until I received my marks. Like you got to improve and I, cause I thought I could write but apparently I couldn't write. So it was the first year was really tough and I was wondering why, you know, doubting myself too. And then I just kept at it and I really, you saw an improvement for 1st term in the 2nd semester started to see the work starting to pay off.

Iqaluk also identified a lack of support made available to him as a minority Inuk student at his university. He acknowledged and respected that his university was on First Nations territory, but

the lack of understanding that Inuit are not First Nations was significant enough that Inuit students could not express themselves as well as they could if there was broader institutional understanding.

And then you know I wish we had more support as students. You know when I was at [university] there were 4 Inuit students at the whole school, and we're always lumped into first nations stuff. Of course, this is first nations territory, but we don't support our students enough that they can do their own thing.

Iqaluk also recalls that despite being wrong about identifying Inuit as First Nations, some professors could not be corrected and argued with Iqaluk and tried to convince Iqaluk that as an Inuk, he was indeed a member of First Nations.

You're constantly having to correct your professors on anything inuit related. They still call all native people First Nations, and you have to correct them and they're teaching at a university and I'm going, "you have no idea but here you are teaching me". You know at first, I was kind of pissed off a few times about it, but after a while I just, it's not worth the battle.

Iqaluk provides an example of a negative stereotype about Inuit men that was taught by one of the professors in his class. It was bad enough that Iqaluk was compelled to make a complaint to the faculty.

I did make a complaint about one article we read in anthropology class how Inuit women find their wives, they basically club them and put them over their shoulders and take them home. And it was written in the 70s and there were RCMPs in the communities in the 70s if any Inuk did that they would have been in jail. And I don't think we did that prior to that either.

Despite being asked to reflect on her inaccuracy, Iqaluk's professor would not acknowledge that she was wrong and tried to justify her lecture by stating that the purpose was to reify the Inuit culture and the role that Inuit men played in it.

After I made the complaint the lady goes, "oh that's reification where they take a moment in time and write about it but you're viewing it from today's standards" but I said, "it's still wrong". It's still wrong. So that was the most offensive kind of thing and just the system was not, like even the academic, the professors, they don't know a thing about us. I'm sure there's a few that do like that are experts, considered experts but even the ones that call themselves experts are not up to speed on what they should know.

Given that Kimik grew up largely away from the Inuit culture, he entered university in part to search for his identity as an Inuk through textbooks and study, "I think on a personal level, it was more like, try and find myself in my studies instead of trying to find myself through who I am, if that makes sense." As he matured, and with the fading memories of the differential treatment he received as a K-12 student, Kimik began to take more interest in Indigenous identities and knowledge.

Yeah, I guess it [negative treatment for being Inuk] was kind of gone because I made a point to internalizing that aspect of me. Throughout my K-12 you know journey and then, it was becoming more and more on my radar as we talked about indigenous politics in my general politics class and everything.

However, because the complex nuances of being part of an Indigenous group or community could not be understood or internalized through textbooks and courses, he left his post-secondary program early to gain some life experience that he was not getting at his university. He reflects that "I ended up dropping out about 2.5 years into my degree. And that's actually where I really grew a lot was not being in school".

Kimik also expressed that he was not aware of services on campus that could help him become part of a community or learn more about himself and his Inuit identity. He felt that this had a

significant influence on his decision to leave university before graduating and without making any real plans to return.

In the first two and a half years, while I was aware of these things in the classroom, it wasn't really aware of services that were on campus. That didn't sort of help me, I guess get in touch with myself in different ways. So that was sort of the big reason that I dropped out. I didn't find that there was anything in school for me other than a paper at the end of the road. So that's sort of why I had decided to drop out. I wasn't sure at the time if I was going to be back. I just thought, you know, I need to step back and figure myself out.

Upon leaving university, Kimik found the opportunity that he was looking for to learn more about, grow, and ground himself with his Inuit identity and regain strength from family and the Indigenous community.

At that time, I reconnected with a cousin in [city] where I was living. And she's actually [Indigenous] from [province] and she had pushed me to reach out to the urban Indigenous community in [city] to get me to go to sweats and helped me get in touch with the community and gain some employment skills and eventually ended up in an NGO [non-governmental organization] that allowed me to work full time with Indigenous communities.

This experience allowed him not only to become grounded but contribute to the community which in turn fostered his interest in returning to school to complete his degree.

So in that sense, like I really, I guess, I don't know, I found myself in that job. It was fun because I was able to teach sports to kids and work with the athletes, and you know, I had a paycheck so I saw what life could be like if I had a degree. And that sort what motivated me to go back to school.

Having grown up in a small community in Inuit Nunangat, Kitula recalls the experience of moving to and adapting to a new city environment to attend school as overwhelming.

Yeah, like I said, it was definitely a huge shock and shift from moving from a very small town I grew up into this city here. Even though this is a smaller city. It was still like a big shock to adjust to this new place.

Although the Inuit population in Inuit Nunangat is the majority population, in southern Canada, Inuit often feel invisible and displaced as Kuluta explains in her experience of being an Inuk in a southern city.

You're always the only ever Inuk wherever you go here in [city]. Especially in this city we have maybe 4-500 Inuit in the entire area that we know of. So, there's this real sense of isolation and struggle with feeling represented or feeling visible.

Kitula expressed that the impact of the foreign southern environment with very little Inuit cultural scripts, contributes to the erosion of Inuit ways of being and doing and "it just feels like it continues the loss of your identity". Furthermore, Kitula explains that the demand on her to be successful in a post-secondary education was higher due to the combination of poor education received in Inuit Nunangat in K-12, the weight of having to adjust to a new city, and daily interactions with people who do not understand where you are coming from.

I just have a lot more work to do than other students in terms of adjustments because we come from a rural and remote area with our education not being great. Like we have additional burdens of adjusting to the urban area or to academic culture and people not really knowing anything about who we are. Yeah I just really felt out of place. Because people were talking about things that you have no ideas about and you have to learn really fast.

Ubluriaq recalls that he and his Indigenous peers often knew more than the professors who were teaching them about Indigenous issues and people. For Ubluriaq, this was a positive experience because the Indigenous students were able to discuss ideas and issues with each other and it validated his -as an Inuk student- existing knowledge about contemporary issues being discussed in his program.

But the Aboriginal [program], was changing yearly. Sometimes quarterly, we knew more than professors about aboriginal [program] because we're Indigenous, we paid attention, we talked about it. So we often did know more than the professors when it became aboriginal [program] and what is happening with Indigenous people. So that was very positive.

Despite the positive experience of having a large Indigenous cohort and together knowing more than his professors about the indigenous issues being discussed, Ubluriaq struggled with meeting the academic requirements largely due to his previous low quality and toxic educational experience in Nunangat that did not prepare him adequately for university studies. He did very, very poorly in the first year: "I failed an exam. I actually failed the course contracts. I was almost asked to leave law school because my GDP was too low." This put Ubluriaq at a risk of having to leave his program early had he not received support from his professors.

So that was a very big wake-up call and the professors were very helpful in the way that they did a grade review and I just needed one more ½ mark and I would not drop below the GDP where I would be forced to withdraw and apply again.

Ubluriaq recalls that the experience of nearly failing his first year could have cost him his job and pride as everyone knew what his goals were. There was a lot of pressure on him to adjust and make it through the first year of university.

This was devastating because I was, everyone knew I was in [program]. My employer knew, my family, and friends and here I had failed. So I didn't tell anybody. I didn't tell anybody because it was so shameful and the prospect of me paying back all the education leave, and failing and going back home, possibly losing my job, it was very damaging.

Ubluriaq acknowledges that the close call of failing first year significantly affected his psychological well-being. Furthermore, he was largely going through his program on his own initiative and could have done more to seek assistance from his faculty and professors to improve his score.

I was depressed, my mental health wasn't very well. So, I made it through the first year. Barely. Just barely. I thought I could do it myself. I was old enough, I was smart enough, this kind of thing. I wasn't. I mean, what I didn't do is I didn't take advantage of the resources that were available. I didn't meet with my professors to say, "where did I go wrong? What is the problem here?" I didn't use the tutoring. I thought I could do it all on my own. My marks showed that I could not.

7.3: Post-secondary Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Analysis of Constraints Voiced

The significant absence of IQ principles and values applied within the K-12 education system made the transition into post-secondary education difficult. Though constraints encountered through the participants' postsecondary lived experiences were fewer than those they had experienced in their K-12 journey, their stories show that there was still a significant absence of IQ at this level. With the exception of family and employer support, many of the participants felt that they were ill-prepared for university-level study that was required or the demands that post-secondary education would bring. This shows an absence of *Pijitsirniq* on behalf of the educational system in Inuit Nunangat including for the single participant who attended school in the south. In fact, some educators went so far as discouraging Inuit students from applying for university instead of offering solutions and support through *Qanuqtuurniq*. The absence of this IQ was a precursor to other constraints that the Inuit students would face. For instance, the majority of the students had to discover on their own through *Qanuqtuurniq* that they had to improve their academic standing or improve their writing skills in order to get accepted or continue in their programs. The university institutions also showed an absence of *Pijitsirniq* and *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* as students had to navigate through racism from their peers and professors, ignorance of Inuit culture from professors, and administrative ignorance on the ways in which Inuit experienced systemic procedures and practices within the university. Adding to this was the culture shock felt by the students leaving them feeling isolated and without the skills to navigate the system or to seek help and support within the institution.

7.4 Post-secondary Affordances Voiced

Following their reflections on their entry into post-secondary education and constraints that they had experienced, the participants recalled the affordances that supported them to complete their post-secondary education journey. Emerging themes included the Aboriginal transition programs, applying their learning and assignments to their lived experiences, the desire to acquire a degree to serve their communities, and with the exception of one graduate, financial support that was made available to ensure that they could solely focus on their studies without the burden of finding regular income sources. Furthermore, in their darkest moments they turned to family and their Inuit values and spirituality to seek support and encouragement to complete their university studies.

7.4a) Aboriginal Transition Programs

Aboriginal resource centres and transition programs played an important role in helping the participants to successfully enter university and complete their programs. Aboriginal centres helped to absorb some of the culture shock and assisted the Inuit students in their transition to university life and culture. There was more representation of Inuit within these spaces, and they had exposure to other Indigenous students and teachers, which helped them to form relationships and support systems that they could rely on throughout their post-secondary education journey.

Suputik recalled that had it not been for the Aboriginal transition program in her university, she would not have entered university at all. It also enabled her to settle in before classes commenced.

So at least for [university], they have an aboriginal transition program. I don't know if it's still going but that's the only reason I got in. So that was, I think 2-3 weeks before school actually started.

Ubluriaq recalled the Aboriginal resource centre at his campus helped significantly with his transition in his first year of university. It provided resources such as access to technology so that they could complete and print their assignments.

It was very beneficial that the university had the Aboriginal resource centre. It was a place for indigenous students to come together to use computers and print and this kind of thing but it was also an opportunity to mix with other indigenous, mostly First Nations students.

Furthermore, he remembered that although the majority of the Indigenous students in this space were First Nations, there were a handful of Inuit students that he could connect with. This space provided him with an important opportunity to form relationships and network with Inuit and other Indigenous students, which was particularly helpful at the start of his first year as a university student.

When I went in, I think there were only a few Inuit students. But having that cultural connection and positive place to go was definitely a beneficial factor when I was in the beginning portion of my post-secondary studies.

Ubluriaq also recalls that this supportive environment made it easier for him as an Inuk university student. Within this post-secondary environment, there was less racism compared to what he had experienced in the K-12 system in Inuit Nunangat.

I'd say that the challenges of being an Inuk are quite diminished in post-secondary life where it doesn't matter if you're Inuk or black or another cultural group. I'd say, that counter to what I had said earlier as being an Inuk in Kindergarten to grade 12 is that shift had changed very positively, being an Inuk in university.

Kitula recalled that while the new environment was a challenge to adapt to, the Aboriginal Transition program on her campus made the environment seem somewhat familiar. She states that "It was still like a big shock to adjust to this new place but the transition year where I went is a really great program because it already has indigenous teachers and black teachers teaching in those programs." Being surrounded by both Indigenous teachers and teachers from other minority groups made her feel less invisible as "you already see yourself represented and you feel good about that.". Kitula also recalled that because of their cultural backgrounds, Indigenous and black teachers were more empathetic to the challenges that Inuit students faced and were

more able to provide them with the appropriate support. Kitula remembers that it was because of that, she was able to have an extremely successful first year and “I graduated at the top of my class that year.”

With support from the Indigenous service at his university, Kimik’s transition into post-secondary school was relatively smooth. The support helped to alleviate some of the anxiety of finding a place where he could be comfortable and create a social network in his new post-secondary environment.

So, the Indigenous student office at [university] where I attended for my undergrad was really helpful in getting me a spot in residence and that was one of the biggest things I was worried about going to university is that, you know, the residence spot would allow me to make friends and make connections.

Iqaluk and Aputi did not identify the Aboriginal transition programs in their interview. Their focus was on accessing resources to support themselves and applying meaning to their studies.

7.4b) Applied Learning

An emerging theme across the participants was the recognition of the first two years at university being experienced as an adjustment period and it was not till towards the middle and end of their studies that they began to personalize their academic work. In this section we see the participants digging deep and finding the capacity to take control of their own learning journeys, despite the very difficult experiences they’ve had throughout their K-12 journey. This section also makes one wonder how many Inuit students are driven away from university study within the first two years, without the capacity to return and find their space.

Aputi recalls for example that in the first two years, you were assessed on what you are able to retain in terms of information presented to you at lectures. There was not really any form of inquiry built into these earlier courses.

I don't know if I had any highlights. I really didn't like, I read but it was all gibberish to me, like I understood but I thought it was all stupid. Maybe the volume of things and how I wasn't necessarily graded in what I knew. All my exams were all scantrons. What did I remember as opposed to what did I learn?

Where it became more meaningful for Aputi was in the third and fourth year when she could take ownership of her learning and apply what she had learned to research questions that reflected her Inuit worldview.

So, I don't think I really had any highlights until maybe the 3rd or 4th year when I started taking projects and just making them my own. I remember being in an anthropology religion class and we were studying all these different religions and looked through an anthropological lens and I thought well, I can't remember what the project was, but I didn't like it so I went up to my professor and said well, I want to do an essay, I'll still give you something to grade, but I want to do an essay in relation to my culture.

With approval from her professor, Aputi was able to tailor her anthropology project to an Inuit-specific research question on Inuit spirituality.

The time that Kimik took to do some soul searching and gain some life experience paid off and he began to regain interest in returning to university to complete his program.

I found myself in that job. It was fun because I was able to teach sports to kids and work with the athletes, and you know, I had a paycheck so I saw what life could be like if I had a degree. And that sort of what motivated me to go back to school.

Following this work experience, Kimik began to reconnect with academics and apply some of his work and research interests to his Inuit culture and homeland. Completing this research work, Kimik re-applied to his university to complete his program.

After I finished that job, I was able to start with a 2- or 3-month contract with a professor at [university] who was doing [research in Inuit region]. And that's how I reconnected with

my [Inuit] family. I might also add that I was able to walk ancestral grounds, reconnect with the land, experience the North in a way I had not before. Following this, I returned to school and finished my degree.

Toward the end of her degree, Kitula also began to tailor her learning and research to engage with higher learning from Inuit experiences and worldview. She recalls that “my values toward the end shifted toward like cultural restoration and reconnecting with the land because that’s what my focus was on.” Her research focus led her to be immersed in the natural world in Inuit Nunangat, which in turn helped to unlock a lot of the pain that had been trapped deep within her as a result of hardships from her past.

When I did that like I said there was a lot of healing that happened with letting go of all the negative ideas that were absorbed into my mind and my body. So when I got out onto the land, it just, the land took care of me, it’s a healer.

Upon interviewing Inuit elders to seek deeper understanding and knowledge, Kitula learned about what Inuit understand about the power that nature, as a living entity, has over human beings and what it is able to offer our knowledge and development.

Yeah, like when I was talking with Inuit about the land, what I learned is that the land has developed us prior to contact to even prior to settlements. The land made us very emotionally intelligent. The land has given us our language, right so that we also use a lot of body language.

Kitula learned from Inuit elders how the natural world - the land in particular - is able to influence, inform and interact with us on many different levels, including spiritually and through its healing powers.

So, I think naturally as Inuit, we’re very empathic and very intuitive and I think that the land has taught us about the spirit world and energy and how that works and how to help

each other. The land is a living conscious being. Right. That when we're with her, within it, I think that, oh my gosh, that so much healing could happen.

Suputik recalls that having the option to shape her academic learning toward her own interests enabled her to take ownership of her learning and not simply to acquire a grade.

I think one of the big highlights comes from the changing of degrees. It was changing of majors and it was like, "no, I don't like this. This is fun", I think it was the fine arts degrees. It was like, "I do not want to do this for a grade", so thinking about that, I wanted psychology and then when I went to archeology that changed everything and I bring up the things that, "no, that didn't work out, that didn't work out" the ability to do that was very empowering. It was like, "I can choose what I want to do". And that was so nice.

Though there were times when she had doubts about tailoring her learning to her own interests, Suputik listened to her instincts, and she didn't have to trade her joy over something that would not have been as satisfying or rewarding.

Sometimes you were like, "I just gotta finish it" and I'm like, "sometimes you just don't need to finish it. You can go and find the thing that really calls you". And I think that's so important. It was one of the, it was a conversation with one of my friends. She was like, "you're not happy" and I was like, "yeah, why sacrifice your happiness for something that isn't working out?" so it was learning that and I was like, "okay I can do this".

Having trusted her instincts, selecting a program paid off and she was recognized for her work and her accomplishments at a high level in her university. She graduated with Honours and this in turn impacted her self-confidence and self-efficacy.

The others was, ahm, I won a really awesome scholarship and I got to pay for my final year with it. So, I got to finish my Honours and that's like, I was like, "yes! I can do this". Ahm, and then making the Dean's list. I remember coming home one day and I was like, "I got on the Dean's list!" I did that two years in a row. I was super proud of myself.

Reflecting deeply back on this experience, Suputik recalls there were times she was really unsure of herself and that she had nearly given up because of all the challenges she had faced. She was determined to succeed and upon completion, had acquired enhanced self-confidence in her own knowledge and abilities.

And that was just like, going back to the early years when I was very much struggling, that's why changing the degrees to me is such a big highlight because I think back on those years and it was like I just could not get into it. And I didn't know what the heck I was doing. I stuck it out to that point. And sometimes I don't know how. Ahm, but now I'm sitting here and talking with you about it. So my only self, ahm, what do I call it? Very prideful about that.

Ubluriaq also tailored his learning to his interests. As a result of it being very specialized and easily recognizable, I have opted to leave his quotes out of this section of my analysis. His interests in his academic degree are strongly linked to his field of work and his quotes may identify him. For Iqaluk, his concentration of studies was very focused on his interest in human behaviour and society including his own position as an Inuk who was often pushed aside. As such, I put his reflections in the "personal drive and life goals" section of my analysis.

7.4c) *Pilimaksarniq*: Internal Motivation and Life Goals

Another emerging theme was the participants' individual agency and motivation to complete their post-secondary degree were strongly linked to their life goals. In particular many were motivated by a commitment to give back to the Inuit community. Aputi recalls that her earlier life and educational experiences helped to shape her life goals. Her understanding of the challenges that Inuit students face provided strong motivation, but she had to ground herself first with the strength of her family and culture before she could continue to complete her program.

But I also had through my experience at [college] and that reflection that I had a goal now. That really is what pushed me. So even though I had walked away 2nd year, I'd come back

‘cause I knew and I always knew I was going to come back but I needed to strengthen myself.

Aputi states that her academic career has not stopped with a Master’s degree as she is interested in pursuing a PhD once there is more funding available for Inuit students to reach this level, and when she has income stability.

My goal has always been to work for Inuit in one way or another. And if my personal life stabilizes to the point where I don’t necessarily need to worry about finances, then I want to pursue a PhD in my field.

Having a better understanding how the system works and in particular, how it has been failing Inuit youth and Inuit in general, Aputi is determined to pursue a doctoral degree to equip herself with increased knowledge and tools to make the necessary changes that will benefit the Inuit community.

I want to change the system, but also, I want to serve my people in a different way and I have this idea for a PhD that hopefully would be a practical like it would translate into a more practical into every day but again that’s only if my situation stabilizes to the point where I don’t need to worry about money.

Iqaluk did not give up and applied *Qanuqtuurniq* [the ability to be resourceful] relying on his personal drive and seeking support needed to improve his academic performance. He “just kept at it and, I really, you saw an improvement for 1st term in the 2nd semester - started to see the work starting to pay off.”

Iqaluk relied on his social skills and took advantage of the resources that were made available through his university. He was able to overcome the fact that he was an older student compared to the professors who were teaching him, as well as the teaching assistants who were typically younger than he was. The stakes were high, because unlike the other participants in this study, Iqaluk had no financial support and was paying for his post-secondary education. As such, the goal to access these resources and complete his degree were for his personal success, for his own family and to achieve a better position in society.

I would try and use all my, use the TA's use the professors, they were my age, my professors, you know what I mean? They were my age. The TA's were younger than me. So I knew how to talk to people and I knew how to ask for support and help and advice and I used them. 'cause I'm paying for this, I'm there for me.

For Iqaluk, getting a post-secondary education was about survival and human dignity in contemporary Inuit society. As noted in earlier sections of my analysis, this was largely because in his experience with racism. From his perspective, there were and continue to be competing interests where Inuit are often ostracized or pushed into the fringes of society if they have not acquired a post-secondary degree.

'cause I knew I could do it. I know it just required hard work. I knew I needed that degree for the future of my family. To ensure that we have a good future, and I knew that it would pay off even though I owe 33 thousand still in student loans. I knew it would pay off and it did. As soon as I graduated.

Suputik's personal drive to complete her degree was also strongly rooted in the possibilities of giving back to the Inuit community. Though she is still uncertain of how she will achieve this goal, she has ideas about how information can be shared with Inuit to better understand the predicament of Inuit students and to make improvements.

I wanted to give something back. Just thinking about, and I don't feel like I've done it yet. But thinking about the school system and what wasn't there and what should have been. And I'm still not sure how to do that yet. 'Cause it's one thing working in [field of work] and wanting to make available information.

One option Suputik is considering is to make information about Inuit widely available to them for free and from an Inuit lens, rather than from the lens of white ethnographers. Suputik views this as a right for Inuit to have access to information that is about them.

The big thing was, so much of who we were was captured in the books and the journals and the ethnographies of white people and it was like, “I want to do that” and I also want to make it available. I want people to be able to access a journal article and not have to pay like 50 bucks for it when it’s about us and contains information about us. Like we shouldn’t have to pay for that. it is ridiculous to me.

Furthermore, Suputik emphasized that there are different forms of education and ways of transferring knowledge. She argues that adjusting the education system to incorporate more than just the existing Eurocentric lens would create more of an equilibrium that supports higher education. Though she is not quite sure yet how she will achieve this, it is on her radar.

And just, there’s so many different ways to learn and so many different ways to pass on knowledge and, I guess for me I wanted people to have equal opportunity to learn about our history, our culture, our language, and to have different types of resources because people learn things differently. So it was like, how can I do that and how can I do that still? I still think about that.

Reflecting on what her future looks like, Suputik is considering the possibility of entering a PhD program. She is a bit ambivalent about it right now but understands that as an Inuk university graduate and possibly with a PhD, she can be a role model for the future generations.

I’ve had people ask me if I would go and do a PhD. Just thinking about everything I went through and getting to this point it was like, “I don’t really want to think about this” but then is that something I want to do? Basically, it would be like someone, a woman has already completed their degree, and able to be a mentor.

In recalling her education journey up to this point, Suputik feels that an Inuk mentor and a network of Inuit academics would have been really helpful to keep her motivated and to provide her with some guidance and support in addressing the challenges that come with obtaining a university degree.

As you go through yours and to help you with networking or to increase like, your opportunities. I remember always wanting someone like that. So, I think that would have been really amazing. I remember when I first learned about it and I was like, “ah, that would be cool” ‘cause then I think like, that would help with that understanding of what we go through to get those degrees.

Kimik also recalled that not having a better understanding of what was ahead and the path to get there caused some anxiety. However, leaving his university program prematurely to gain work and life experience illuminated his path and assisted in identifying his calling to support and help meet the needs of Inuit and indigenous youth and communities.

In the times that when you’re not sure what’s coming next, you know that uncertainty is quite unsettling in a way. So what allowed me to sort of see the light at the end was knowing that there was going to be, you know that there’s going to be stuff to do on the other side. When I was working, I was able to see, “you know what, there’s a need”.

Kimik recognized that he did not need a post-secondary education to be employed in that service, but it did contribute to his desire to return to school and complete his degree which he was able to do. Now that he has completed it, he is once again uncertain of where the employment path will take him, but he does know that he can assist youth in reaching their goal, wherever that may be.

I guess I didn’t need a degree to do that job, but it was a factor that helped me look forward to the end and now with my masters, like I’m sort of in that space where it’s a bit unsettling again but you know I know that there’s good work to be done out there. So I think the biggest thing for myself and I imagine for others is knowing what’s on the other side.

For Kimik, the ability to contribute back to the community and to be able to afford a proper livelihood for himself and his family fueled his drive to return to school. Having grown up with

limited financial resources, he understood the stress that can bring on families, so he wants to be in a better position for his future.

So that's one thing that really, I guess motivated me in a way and this value of you know, you want to be there for those people around you. I guess in one way ensuring that I can get certain certifications so that I can provide for my family was something that really motivates me because I didn't really have all the means. My dad didn't have the means when I was growing up. I guess the persistence is still there. A heightened sense of family was one of the biggest things. Working alongside the Inuit is something that I've wanted to do for a while.

Finally, looking forward, Kimik aspires to acquire a PhD in order that he may design his own research work, which will ultimately help him contribute back to the Inuit community in ways in which he envisions.

I came here with the intention to go into a PhD program but the need, contact with the community, has pushed me to work for a few years before I do a PhD but that's certainly the end goal. I want to reach and do my own research.

Ubluriaq's degree is tied to his employment and way of life. In this sense, it was tied to his career goals that equipped him with the tools and knowledge that he needed to contribute back to Inuit society. There were times he was about to give up, but he did not thanks to the support from other Indigenous students in his program who understood the challenges.

So, it was quite a rocky journey but I'm glad I persevered and I almost quit a number of times. Actually, I was at that point where I was like, "that's it, I'm done. I don't care, I can't do it". I felt that I couldn't. There, I was saved by other Indigenous students and other upper year [program] students who went through the same thing.

This supportive environment fostered a sense of community and a desire to give back to the community. Since then, one of his commitments has been to help other Indigenous and Inuit students to complete their post-secondary education.

They said that they were helped by other [program] students and other Indigenous friends and colleagues. So, I continue to do that and help out other Inuit students or any other students who are struggling; because it helped me and saved me so I do not hesitate to reach out and to assist other Indigenous, especially Inuit who are struggling or seeking advice or reassurance because I did go down that same route.

In his reflection, Ubluriaq is thankful for his choice of career path. He acknowledged that he initially thought completing the program would come easily. However, he recognizes that there was a combination of supports that helped him to complete his degree. These included personal will and strength, as well as external support from other Indigenous students, professors and resources at his university.

Because you know, I had come from a good career. I should be able to do it but I wasn't. It was a combination of the internal as well the external. But you know, I did persevere, I did make it and feel very fortunate that I had those supports and did go through this whole process even though it was traumatizing at times.

7.4d) Funding

All but one of the participants received funding throughout their undergraduate and masters' programs from their land claims regions, parents, Indigenous-specific scholarships or employers. Although the other conditions such as racism and poor preparation from their K-12 experience presented significant challenges, having access to funding allowed them to focus on their studies when they were able to. One participant, Iqaluk did not have access to funding and in this section, I focus on the impact that the lack of funding had on Iqaluk.

Iqaluk recalls that despite being a beneficiary of his Inuit land claim regions, he did not qualify for funding as a result of living in the south. He was forced to apply for scholarships from First Nations bands which he, as an Inuk, did not identify with. The fact that he had to abide by a

different cultural group's scripts angered him but at the same time, his land claim region was not willing to fund his university studies. This situation made him feel like he had to abandon his Inuit identity further to get a university degree.

I was not in [Inuit region] when I started my university journey. And again, you know having to apply to [First Nations specific scholarships], and signing a paper saying I will abide by council's directives of my band, [First Nations agency] " when I saw that I thought, " I shouldn't have to fucken sign this, he's not my fricken chief and council and why do I have to sign this" and it felt like I was betraying my own people but I had no other option, I had to fricken sign it if I wanted to get funding.

Iqaluk recalled how the government bureaucracies prevented him from getting financial aid to access post-secondary education. From his perspective, these barriers came from white bureaucrats who controlled the education system within his Inuit region.

Then the bureaucratic bullshit in the [Inuit region] which is, you know, prior to [Inuit region], those were the guys running the education system, and basically the same guys running the [Inuit region] education system, same mentality "they know best" and then of course they always fix it somehow to have free university but an Inuk guy that was born in the [Inuit region], no. you're fucked. So a lot of barriers and artificial barriers that don't need to be there really, at the end of the day.

Iqaluk had to spend what little money he had on books. This often left him eating rice on a regular basis while other students were able to have more substantial meals including take-out. He also lamented why books, that are requirements for studying, had to cost as much as they did.

I got a student loan to go to school because I was too late to apply to [Indigenous scholarship], I knew I have to pay this money back, I'm here this is my money, so I used the resources that were around and getting ripped off by fricken books, why is this 120 bucks? Why? And then you know, [government loan] didn't give you very much money. We were fricken broke and all my fellow students would be eating subway and McDonalds and I'm bringing fricken rice.

Iqaluk also noted the significant difference between the financial supports made to Inuit by their land claims regions, versus other Indigenous students who received support from their Band offices. He recalled with some pain and perhaps some envy when he observed other Indigenous students thriving while he had to think ahead about what and how he would be feeding his family.

Later on when you start meeting the Indigenous students, you saw the [First Nations] students and have some of the First Nations bands they're very well-funded; they're eating out every lunch, you could see them, they're not worried about money. I'm worried about what I'm going to feed my kids tonight at home. And they're like eating out, you know the [First Nations] students had [significant funding].

Iqaluk recalled that other Indigenous students were provided with a safe place to live while they were away from home to study. Their band offices had negotiated with various landlords to establish this accommodation system, because they found that First Nations students leaving their homes to study in the city were being turned away from rental apartments as a result of racism. This left him feeling resentful because they were better looked after by their band leaders than Inuit were by their leaders.

Plus, an apartment, that the [First Nations] authority leases for them. They didn't even have to interview with landlords 'cause they found there was racism towards them when they were trying to lease apartments so they took that out and they leased the apartments for them. And making four times as much money as me so it was very unfair. There's no equitable funding or support for Inuit when they leave the territory.

Iqaluk tried his best to balance his studies, raise a young family and acquire post-secondary funding. He tried several times with different agencies but was turned down at almost every turn. What he did get was barely enough for him and his family to survive on.

You know [scholarship] is still not enough money, you know they haven't changed the rates in 10 years or something so the first year was [student loan] the second year I got funded by [Indigenous scholarship] now. So, the 2nd year was funded again very little money. I was too late to reapply for my 3rd year by a couple of days 'cause I was doing consulting work too; trying to feed my fricken family. So, they denied me.

As a result of these financial barriers, Iqaluk decided to move back to Inuit Nunangat to regain residency, make a decent income, and as a beneficiary receive the funding that he is entitled to. However, this also did not work out because of a clause that existed within the terms. As an Inuk, you could be deemed as a person who does not originate from that Inuit region despite being an Inuk who worked in that region.

I decided to take a job up north to build up some cash, so I took a 2 year contract to go to [community] and I got a job there to train [in the business] which was good cause I was in the student mode anyway so now I'm learning financial reporting, learning how to budget for a [business] good skills to have. So, I applied and I got it. And then I did that for 2 years and then I got a loan from the [Inuit region] government before I left but I was deemed, "non-indigenous aboriginal".

As a result of this clause, Iqaluk had to repay the loan. From his perspective, this is a colonial framework that is once again, rewording policy documents that prevent Inuit from access to financial aid for education, "You see that's a colonial reframing of us. So I'm still paying back that student loan too."

7.5: Inunguiniq: Family and Inuit Values and Spirituality

Throughout their education journey, participants found inspiration and strength from their families and as well as from Inuit values and spirituality. During periods of deep despair and significant lack of motivation to go to school, participants were able to ground themselves within this fabric of support in order to persevere.

Aputi recalls that when she had left school before graduating her parents were gentle but firm on insisting that she finished school away from her home community - away from the bullying and the suicides which had drained her of her energy.

I dropped out and my parents were always very, I want to say pushy but not in the negative way. They kept on trying to push my education and it just wasn't happening for me so eventually I was sent out from home and that's how I finished my grade 12. So I think just what kept me going were my parents.

As she matured, Aputi realized that her parents had spent energy and resources in order for her to be successful in school, even if it meant not seeing her or being immediately available in person to help her when she needed it.

I think I just wanted to make my parents proud. In the end. Like, when they sent me out, that showed that they really cared for like, like they care for me regardless, right but when they sent me out it showed that they cared for my education so much that they were willing to spend money and have their teenage daughter go to a city that they had no access to her for me to finish the education. I needed to graduate but it wasn't necessarily for me it was just because my parents put so much effort into me graduating.

The attributes that Aputi's parents demonstrated come from our Inuit culture and values. In my analysis, these attributes are strongly reflective of *Pijititsirniq*, *Qanuqtuurniq*, and *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* but Aputi goes further to show that by sending her away, her parents were teaching her that they trusted her to gain competency and self-efficacy. In essence to learn to practice these IQ principles on her own in order for her to take ownership of her growth.

I think it comes from just the way that inuit culture is. When you look at, 'cause all my life, from my parents and my grandparents, "Isumangik, Isumangnik"[use your mind, use your mind] like it was like I needed to figure it out on my own and so they weren't there to scold me, to tell me what to do, they were just telling me basically opening up the world to me and having me challenged through that way – challenge myself. So I think that is a

definite strength that Inuit have is to put that trust in a child from the very beginning. To say *Isumangnik*. I don't even know how old I was when I first heard it. And to go, "Haah, just tell me what to do" and they'd say, "no, *Isumangnik*"

This recollection brought Aputi to an even earlier memory of being taught self-efficacy by her grandmother. At a pre-school age, she had expressed to her grandmother that she was hungry for bone marrow from a caribou and her grandmother insisted that she get the caribou leg and a tool herself so that she could eat.

I remember, as little of a story this one is, to me it's like burned in my memory. I must have been about four years old, and I wanted patiq [bone marrow]. I told my granny that I wanted patiq and she says, "well get it yourself" in Inuktitut of course. And I was just a kid, right but I needed to figure out that way to get the patiq. And so I went into their backroom and I found a hammer and there was no concern that this little four year old was trying to hammer a piece of leg right on their kitchen floor.

Her grandparents didn't simply leave her to that task. They observed her as she attempted to break the bone so that she could get at the meat and when she would question herself or look doubtful, they would gently insist that she needed to use her thoughts to solve the problem and they were there to see it through.

They were just saying like, figure it out. And so I think those little instances like that growing up are told, "*isumnganik*" or figure it out had really fostered that, I need to challenge myself to flourish, challenge, make decisions on my own and live with the consequences.

Later in her post-secondary career, Aputi recalled that there was yet another suicide that was pulling her to leave school, to go home and be with her family. This time her family insisted that she needed to focus on her studies because as with the other suicides, this too was beyond her control. Her family insisted that what was in her control was to finish her exams. The term her parents used was, "ajurnarmat" which in my translation means, "it [situation/event] cannot be helped" that it was a situation or event that is beyond our control.

I think it was my 3rd year, during exams. Very tragic suicide. And I wanted to go. I literally wanted to drop everything and go. I had my first exam the next day. But I called home and I was told, “*ajurnarmat*” [some things are beyond our control and cannot be helped]. And again, there’s no real translation for that, yes there is a translation but to be basically being told, “*ajurnarmat*” was so powerful to me.

Being told, “*ajurnarmat*” and to focus on her studies, Aputi found a deep inspiration which told her she was meant to be in school for an important cause. This illuminated her path towards self-actualization and gave her the motivation she needed to finish her post-secondary education.

Like my family telling me that was so powerful for me because it told me that, it indirectly told me that I was here for a reason. Right. So what’s done is done. And I have purpose and I need to continue seeking out that purpose. So that beacon just grew brighter. So I think just having that beacon in me and to have the understanding from my family that I was there for a reason, we had a death.

Kitula recalled that during her K-12 education journey she was gently prodded and encouraged by a set of parents that she was close to. They had noticed she had certain abilities that their child did not and brought this to her attention and they encouraged her to pursue a post-secondary education.

In high school specifically one of the [place] had a large family so their children were struggling, they weren’t as academically inclined so then they saw the comparison between their son struggling and me and that gave them extra motivation for me to say, “oh you have this extra ability that my son doesn’t” so you really need to pursue this.

They also informed her that unlike their child, she was in a superior position to access scholarships to attend university, so she was made aware of “the opportunities that I had and can take advantage of them.”

For Kitula the adults around her recognizing her potential played a key role in influencing to continue on the track toward higher education. This was especially helpful when she had the burden of carrying life disrupting issues as a child. Kitula also noted that close friendships were

important as well as teachers who assisted in ensuring that she got the concepts of her final course in order to get the mark and graduate grade 12.

So again, dealing with the mental health issues you just kind of struggle to stay afloat and get by and to the best that you can. I was lucky enough to have a friend who helped me get that pass for that specific class that I struggled in and the teacher as well.

As she grew, Kitula also began to search for a new meaning in life. She knew deep down that she was not just the sum of her difficult experiences.

After being in depression for most of my lifetime, including through childhood, I was tired of suffering emotionally, tired of self-apathy, self-loathing, I needed to learn to move beyond that, while also allowing them to move through me, but not being stuck there. I knew and deeply felt that I wanted something more, knew there was something more than these feelings that were exerted onto and within me.

Situated away from her Inuit culture and often living in strenuous life circumstances, Kitula began to have a deep spiritual awakening. She was introduced to various spiritual teachings and this exposure eventually led her back to her Inuit values and spirituality.

I always reached for the next thing that would help me. I watched Oprah, she had her own awakenings, and I would surround myself with positive uplifting thoughts and people when I was ready. Oprah introduced me to spiritual teachers, which then began my own spiritual remembering and study, which included remembering Inuit ways of understanding.

Her awakening included being aware that we are very much interconnected with something larger and beyond our control; one in which is not easily explained by science or western epistemology. The closest definition would be an existential experience and way of being that is different from socialization. It is a way of seeing and communicating with the world, our immediate surroundings and people. As Kitula explained, this is a realm which Inuit have drawn upon for many centuries that has slowly been eroded.

Just being guided or living some sort of purpose beyond what you can comprehend or that seems logical. I think about that. I think there's something bigger than me sometimes guiding me that I didn't realize when I was younger. That there is something someone protecting you that you're staying on your course on your journey and it's only I started praying and getting into ceremony and working with elders that they taught me that. That for much of our life because of colonization we're being, we're forgetting that we do have a lot of spiritual and emotional and ancestral guidance and support.

Suputik reflected that her family unit, her mother and her siblings, played a key role in supporting each other. In addition to her family support, Suputik identified that having close friends who had sincere interest in her educational success was extremely important and was beneficial not only for educational success but for her overall wellbeing.

But I, I think besides from the education, that's something that probably became more emphasized was friends. So those support circles. And they're so important. Especially ones that want to see you succeed. But then also those ones that encourage your interests. Two different things to me but it's so important for your well-being and your health.

Suputik gave examples of the words expressed by friends. In observing her struggles, some of her friends indicated that they were happy that they did not pursue the same goal as her while others encouraged her to see the finish line. She found that these words of encouragement were extremely helpful in order for her to continue. During her graduate degree program, Suputik questioned her presence in such a colonial program. She turned to her friends to express her distress and they insisted that she can meet the challenge despite not fully understanding the weight she was carrying.

And particularly in my masters, there were times where I was like, "I don't know what the heck I'm doing here." Ahm, it's such a colonial discipline but I remember having conversations with friends and they were like, "don't quit, just make through and..." and it was like, "you don't know what I'm going through while I'm going through it though" but they're you know people get it.

Ubluriaq also found that some members in his university understood the realities of contemporary issues and ways of living but also the continuum of the interconnectedness of Inuit the animals and the land. He found that this understanding from others on campus was beneficial for his education journey.

So there, it was a positive thing to be Inuk and where I'm from and what's going on and connection to the land and hunting. People at the university embraced it and it was unique and was almost beneficial to be an Inuk going to university there. And so I would say that my first formal education is on the land and through the environment in Nunavut. And that was beneficial in helping me persevere through the harder times.

7.6: Post-secondary Inuit Qaujimaqatigiit Analysis Affordances Voiced

The affordances voiced in the post-secondary education journeys demonstrated a significant presence of IQ principles that helped my participants navigate through the stressors, challenges and barriers that they encountered. For instance, the presence of the Aboriginal transition programs showed *Pijitsirniq* [concept of serving] and *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* [respecting others, relationships and caring for people] to assist the students with *Qanuqtuurniq* [being resourceful for solving problems] in their academic studies and to help to minimize their culture shock. Other areas of IQ presence were in their *Pilimaksarniq* [knowledge and skill acquisition] or their internal drive and aspirations to be university graduates which they envisioned would equip them to contribute back to their communities and other Inuit students. *Pijitsirniq* from post-secondary student funding was also highlighted as a valued IQ principle that allowed, with the exception of one participant, to complete their degrees without added stress. Finally, IQ principles were present in families and close friends who demonstrated *Pijitsirniq* and *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* toward supporting the student's educational success throughout the difficult times in their entire education journeys.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Discussion: Synthesis of Findings

Using *Inunguiniq* (the creation of an able and enabled human being) as my ontology, the main objective of this study was to identify the ways in which Inuit post-secondary graduates navigate the tensions of two competing worldviews (Inuit and Western) as they participated in education systems initially in Inuit Nunangat and subsequently, in the South in order to successfully complete their K-12 and post-secondary education journeys. Starting from their earliest memories, I asked participants to recall and describe their education journeys from K-12 to post-secondary. Rather than predefine for them what their affordances and constraints were, I allowed their unique narratives to guide my inquiry. My analysis also considers the presence of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles evident in the recollections of their lived experiences and the role IQ played in their educational success.

The research questions guiding this study ask in what ways each participant has drawn on IQ principles to navigate and succeed through their K-12 educational journeys in Inuit Nunangat and subsequently in university and colleges in the south. In articulating the stories of each participant, I document the challenges they faced and the conditions that supported their success.

In the discussion that follows I respond to these questions through discussion of findings in relation to the scholarly literature, the current education system, and the power dynamics operating across Inuit Nunangat. Findings from my study include conditions that are not evident in the published literature and so serve to extend knowledge around the educational journeys of Inuit. The discussion that follows speaks first to the constraints and challenges experienced by participants through their education journeys and then addresses how each participant drew on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Principles to enable them to navigate and ultimately succeed as undergraduate and graduate students.

8.1 Challenges to Inuit Students' Participation and Success in Education

This research identifies six harmful obstacles (absence of IQ principles and values) that the participants had to overcome in order to complete their K-12 journey including: systemic racism,

segregation, lateral violence, microaggression, the effects of suicides including a lack of mental health services, and finally a lack of support leading to inadequate preparation for entry into post-secondary education.

The participants' stories reveal the existence of systemic racism commencing as early as Kindergarten and continuing through elementary, secondary and post-secondary education. While much of the published literature focused on Inuit education identify the negative impacts of Eurocentric curricula and call for change in this area (e.g., Berger, 2009; Rodon et al, 2015) there is an absence of literature that speaks directly to the systemic racism as experienced and reported by the participants in this study. In one of the Inuit land claims regions (Nunavut) racism in the education system is identified explicitly in the land claim agreement as something that the region must be mindful of and guard against (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2018). The participants educational experiences across different regions of Inuit Nunangat demonstrate that racism underpins the very structure of education across Inuit Nunangat, beginning with the allocation of children to classes based on skin colour. The participants' stories and anecdotal evidence of systemic racism in media interviews with Inuit students (Nunatsiaq News, 2019) suggests that this systemic racism continues to be a barrier to Inuit students gaining access to educational opportunities afforded other Canadians.

Most of the participants in this study describe their K-12 journey as extremely difficult. Their stories demonstrate that as Inuit children they entered a system of apartheid where the quality of their education was determined by the hue of their skin and the degree to which they could be deemed to be “white passing” in skin tone and behaviors. Their experiences of segregation are consistent with the literature that a colour line exists in Canadian school systems as well as in the United States which stratify human beings into lower socio-economic categories if their skin is darker and if their behaviour is not consistent with what the dominant group sees as acceptable (Dubois, 2011; Brady, 1996; Henry, 2019; Nunatsiaq News, 2019).

Consistent with other Inuit students' experiences reported in the scholarly literature (Berger, 2009; Nunatsiaq News, 2019) my participants' stories demonstrate that many Inuit children enter school, not as a safe space but as a space where they are told they are ‘less-than’ if they have

darker skin, are less than fluent in the English language and not immersed in Western ways of behaving. They experience exclusion from higher academic and extra-curricular opportunities and are pitted against their friends and as a consequence experience ongoing lateral violence from Inuit peers and community as well as microaggressions from white teachers and students. If they are white passing, they are streamed away from the opportunities of taking Inuktitut classes (if these classes existed at all) and thus enhancing their skills and proficiency in their own language. These systemic exclusions lead to a continual internal struggle with identity as they are taught that being Inuk is inferior to Western ways of being and doing (Nunatsiaq News, 2019; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2018). In addition to struggling with their own identity and questioning where they belong, most of the participants have experienced the devastating and ongoing effects of loss of family members and friends to suicide, on a number of occasions, without ever receiving counselling which is also consistent with scholarly literature and reports cited in the media (Nunatsiaq News, 2019; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2018; Statistics Canada, 2019).

These findings clearly point to the absence of responsibility of *Inunguiniq* (the creation of an able and enabled human being) from educators as well as an absence of Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit Principles throughout the participants' elementary and secondary education in the North.

8.2 Systemic Racism - Absence of IQ Principles

Systemic racism involving children shows a failure of adult responsibility of *Inunguiniq* (creating able and enabled human beings). Preferential treatment of individuals based on the colour of their skin or cultural behaviour (segregation) is an absence of IQ's *Pijitsirniq* which is the concept of serving community and fostering growth through education. It also demonstrates the absence of *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq*, which is the concept of respecting others, relationships and caring for people. Segregation and preferential treatment respects and cares only for a certain type of people, those who are white-passing, which ultimately is experienced as continual microaggressions - repeated interactions that tell Inuit children that they are "less than" if they are not "white passing".

The negative effect of systemic racism accumulates and impacts the children's interactions within the education system and with each other beyond the confines of the school classroom.

Lateral violence creates barriers for Inuit students to practice *Qanuqtuurniq* (concept of being resourceful to solve problems) in their academic learning. Instead, the participants in my study resort to using *Qanuqtuurniq* first to navigate the lateral violence and microaggressions from teachers and peer (both white and Inuit). They draw on *Qanuqtuurniq* in order to just survive in school and in their community rather than to support learning their academic subjects. It also affects their ability to *Inuuqatigiitsiqrniq* (respecting others, relationships and caring for people) as they find themselves belonging to neither group – the white peers in their academic classrooms, nor their Inuit peers with whom they have lived and played in community since they were born. The racism and segregation set Inuit against Inuit, fosters lateral violence and resentment and results in physical altercations amongst children and youth who up until the enforced segregation were friends and even for some, siblings. A recent investigative report by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) revealed that there is increased violence in Nunavut schools suggesting that this is still happening in some of the Inuit regions perhaps even at a larger scale than in the past. For instance, the report indicates, “In the 2019-2020 school year, there were more than 1,000 violent incidents in Nunavut's schools” (Murray, 2021, para. 1).

Despite these significant constraints, the participants managed to successfully navigate the K-12 system but at a huge cost in terms of time, emotional and mental wellbeing and questions of identity. Rather than just being children allowed to learn and socialize in a safe environment, they had to, as young children, find their way through isolation, rejection and continual reminders that in order to succeed they had to suppress and deny their heritage and identity as Inuit. Since they passed as white, they had to try and be white - a goal that is unsustainable in reality and places in direct conflict, what they know and believe as Inuit with what they must perform outwardly as students aspiring to graduate high school. It fractures the integrity of their inner selves and their outward facing selves.

As the participants moved from secondary into post-secondary studies the systemic racism that impacted them in northern schools followed them to the southern college and university settings. This racism, manifested through institutional procedures and practices was compounded by the significant culture shock experienced by each participant. Participants met challenges navigating the large, unfriendly and generally unwelcoming institutions where students, professors and staff

seemed largely ignorant of Inuit histories, knowledges and ways of being and there was a lack of awareness or application of IQ principles.

As a result of lack of preparation from K-12 for entry into postsecondary culture, the majority of the students experienced culture shock. Coming from smaller communities in Inuit Nunangat, they felt disoriented, and resources were not immediately obvious or available to them. Despite being around thousands of other students, they often felt alone and isolated. The institutions did not take their responsibility of *Inunguiniq* (creating able and enabled human beings) to the extent that they could at this level, nor did they practice *Pijitsirniq* (serving community and fostering growth through education) toward Inuit students as well as they could have, in order to support, reduce stress, or enable the transition of Inuit students into university life.

Examples of systemic racism experienced by participants included their professors giving wrong information about Inuit that further created stereotypes and prejudice toward Inuit. Rather than understanding that there are three distinct (First Nations, Metis, and Inuit) Indigenous Peoples that are constitutionally recognized as distinct peoples, some professors argued with Inuit students stating that Inuit were First Nations. Professors and different student groups failed to acknowledge their own lack of knowledge, demonstrated a lack of humility and openness to learn from students, and rather, continued to advance preconceived ideas and biases that they knew better than Inuit students and what it meant to be Inuk. This demonstrates an absence of the responsibility of *Inunguiniq* by the professors and absence of *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* from the student body.

Institutional ignorance about the experience of culture shock, racism and the amount of weight that Inuit students already bear when entering into the university system is virtually unknown to university administration and was not reflected in the types of support that Inuit students need or can access. University administrators lacked an understanding of how to apply *Pijitsirniq* in order to support Inuit students. Resources that could address the types of stress that Inuit students experience were not reflected in administrative documents and protocols.

Inuit students were being told by others through elementary, secondary and post-secondary what it means to be Inuit, who is Inuit and what their status is within Canada – based largely on misconceptions, prejudice and myths. Thus, reinforcing to the Inuit participants in my study that their identities and place within both the northern and southern education systems were defined by others, and not through their own heritage, families and ways of knowing. In the face of so many barriers it is important to identify where and how Inuit participants, as young children and then young adults, found ways to navigate largely hostile systems. In the discussion that follows, I highlight the affordances that were voiced by the participants in their education journey and the role the presence of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles and values in the participants' education success.

8.3 Inuit Students' Participation and Success in Education

Participants in this study drew IQ principles and values that fostered their growth and provided support along their often-difficult education journeys. These five affordances include: culturally rooted (deep respect for Inuit identity, spirituality and land-based) education, trust and recognition of potential from some teachers, extracurricular activities (arts, sports, and cadets), family and close friend support systems, and personal drive (internal curiosity led to reading and writing). While it is clear that these principles were not consistently present in the participants' lived educational experiences, there were moments, throughout their education, that enabled them to continue, to know they could succeed and to support their ongoing participation in education.

The benefits of culturally based education, trust from teachers, and family support systems are indicators of educational success and consistent with the Scholarly literature (Rodon et al, 2015; UNESCO, 2012). The participants expressed that culturally based education not only gave them opportunities to learn skills and knowledge from elders, but when present, gave them mobility to explore their land and be away from a sedentary life in the often-toxic school and community settings. Exposure to elders and land-based education cultivated *Inunguiniq* in healthy ways. For instance, my analysis reveals that such activities fostered the development of all seven of the IQ principles and in so doing, anchored the students within their Inuit culture and reinforced their belonging.

Culturally based education gave teachers and the students the opportunity to practice *Pijitsirniq* (concept of serving and providing for family and the community) through *Piliriqatigiingniq* (collaborative relationship for a common goal) and *Ajiiqatigiingniq* (decision making through consensus) by being assigned roles and responsibilities that contributed to the goals of the group. It also fostered *Pilimaksarniq* knowledge and skill acquisition for students through *Avatamik Kamatsiarniq* where they were given the opportunity to become familiar with, safely navigate and be stewards of the land and animals. The presence of these IQ principles also fostered self-efficacy through *Qanuqtuurniq* (the concept of being resourceful to solve problems). Thus, when such opportunities were open to them, participants were able to reinforce their own identity and place as Inuit and to further develop skills that spoke to them as culturally-located Inuit with connections to place and people.

Similarly, extracurricular activities provided the space where participants' talents could shine regardless of their race. The participants indicated through their interest in the arts, sports, and writing for example they were able to showcase their talents without being seen in a negative stereotypical lens. Such opportunities made being in the school environment more engaging and fostered the same IQ principles and values that were present in culturally based activities, providing affirmation of the participants' skills, knowledge and contributions.

Trust and recognition from teachers also played a significant role in the participants' success in their education journey. Trust and recognition demonstrated the presence of *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* (respecting others, relationships, and caring for people) and *Pijitsirniq* (serving others and community) from educators toward the students which made them feel valued and not "less than" when it was present. When teachers explicitly recognized a participant's potential and that they had trust in the student, the student responded through taking ownership of their learning and were able to utilize the tools and space provided by their teacher to engage actively in their assigned tasks and complete their assignments. This again fostered self-efficacy and a sense of belonging and possibility.

Families and close friend support systems played an important role during some of the participants' most difficult times and transition periods. Families and friendship networks served to validate the students in the face of continual challenges and helped the participants to embrace their Inuit identity and skills in a positive way. This support system allowed them to pass through some of the more difficult obstacles such as the impact of racism and suicides. Support from families and close networks is a necessary condition identified in the research literature as important in ensuring graduation from K-12 (Rodon et al, 2015) and this was reinforced in this study.

During their K-12 journeys within northern school systems across Inuit Nunangat participants recalled that they had personal drive and an internal curiosity that helped them in their moments of isolation and not belonging. These internal qualities helped them to explore other forms of knowledge acquisition and expression such as reading to learn about the world and writing about their experiences. Reading also helped them to escape their hard realities such as bullying or exclusion. Writing and art allowed them to express themselves and be present for school and teachers, without having to experience negative criticisms from their peers at school.

Upon transition to post-secondary institutions in the south the participants found themselves without the close family supports they had ready in-person access to in their own communities through elementary and secondary school. While family and friendship networks could be accessed from a distance, Inuit students found themselves drawing immediate support from Aboriginal transition programs, internal motivation, funding, applied learning, and social support systems near and close by comprising family, close friends and peers.

Aboriginal transition programs applied *Pijitisirniq* (serving others and community) and supported *Inunguiniq* (creation of able and enabled human beings) of the students. They helped to alleviate some the culture shock and provided resources, tools, and space where peers could connect and support each other in their academic programs and learning. It helped to alleviate some of culture shock and barriers by providing space that was familiar to the students despite being away from home. Aboriginal transition programs were spaces where the participants were able to connect with other Inuit and indigenous students and by providing a presence of other

students like them who were or had experienced similar realities. They were able to exchange knowledge and information and support each other both socially and academically, thus fostering *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* (respecting others, relationships, and caring for people) among peers, enabling them to apply *Qanuqtuurniq* (being resourceful to solve problems) toward their studies rather than in countering their stressors. Furthermore, within the Aboriginal transition programs, they learned about available resources and were able to gain access to them such as critical support to improve their writing skills at the post-secondary level given their secondary preparation was found so inadequate.

Related to accessing resources was their internal drive to succeed. Having graduated high school, transitioned to the south and gained access to a post-secondary institution, only to be faced with being told their hard work to date did not prepare them well enough could have been a cause to return north and forgo post-secondary studies. However, the experience of almost failing as a result of not being properly prepared for post-secondary education motivated the Inuit students to draw on *Qanuqtuurniq*, to be resourceful and find assistance to improve their marks.

Post-secondary funding was highlighted as significant affordance by participants which demonstrated *Pijitsirniq* (serving of and providing for others and community) from the Inuit land claim regions and First Nations Institutions that provided scholarships for Inuit students who did not qualify for funding from their land claims regions. All but one participant had post-secondary funding in both their undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Given that the participants were already carrying other stressors, having post-secondary education funding ensured that access to funding for school was not an added stress for the majority of the participants. However, for the one participant who did not receive funding, it was a notable stress as he had to work and study at the same time in order to feed his family. He would rely on rice for example while other students ate more nutritious foods.

Applied learning was also an important condition in the participants educational success. Once they passed the first two years of their undergraduate studies and also in their master's programs, participants were able apply *Pilimaksarniq* (knowledge and skill acquisition through practice)

and to customize their research projects to areas of personal interest and lived experiences. This personalized their learning and created self-efficacy.

Finally, because the students had the burden of carrying a lot of stress as a consequence of systemic racism and suicides that the university administrations have not considered, they relied on family, close friends, and peer support to address their emotional needs that were distracting them from their studies. In addition to their personal drives, Families and close friends presented all the IQ Principles that afforded the students to become successful post-secondary graduates.

8.4 Limitations

This study tells the authentic stories of six Inuit who successfully navigated education in the north to eventually succeed in undergraduate and graduate studies in southern universities. The study is limited not in the depth and richness of these six people's experiences but in scope. As an MA thesis it allowed me to tell only six stories, of which there are many more. I do not claim the lived experiences of the six participants speak to the experiences of every Inuk in the north, however I am confident that the stories will resonate with all Inuit who went through K-12 in Inuit Nunangat and particularly with those who then went on to study in southern universities. Tragically, the stories will also resonate with the many Inuit who were systematically excluded from K-12 education, some as early as kindergarten, and therefore were never encouraged, nor provided the opportunity to aspire university or college education. Given the statistics presented in Chapter 1 of Inuit graduations, I suggest that these six stories may not actually be typical of Inuit as they represent the small number of Inuit who drew on family support, IQ, and inner strength to succeed in spite of segregation and systemic racism present at every level of education. Thus, the limitation to draw attention to in this study is the limited scope and resources that allowed for inclusion of just a small group of participants when all evidence suggests that there are many other, just as compelling Inuit stories yet to be told.

CHAPTER NINE

Conclusion and Researcher Reflection

Consistent with the conversations evident in the scholarly literature, this research shows that Inuit students enter a K-12 education system that supports learning outcomes and behavioural norms in students that benefit the dominant society's industrial capitalist economic system which is very different from the Inuit worldview and ontology of *Inunguiniq* and pedagogy that is more egalitarian (Berger et al, 2006; Berger 2009; Brady, 1996; Gatto, 2003; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2019; Soysal & Strang, 1989; Tester et al, 2013). Economic power is held by colonial frameworks and K-12 education is predominantly implemented by white people who themselves have been largely educated through a pedagogy that reinforces their prejudices and their cultural references. This translates to how educators from the south discriminate against Inuit students in K-12 and post-secondary. The K-12 education system in Inuit Nunangat is largely controlled by non-Inuit who then attempt to reproduce the values and behaviours of the dominant society by segregating Inuit students and favouring those who are "white passing" in skin colour, demonstrate linguistic fluency in English and/or acceptable behaviour norms (Brady, 1996; Nunatsiaq News, 2019; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2019).

Systemic racism is a bi-product of power and the need for the dominant culture to control, reproduce, and benefit from the economic and education systems (Diangelo, 2018; DuBois, 2011; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2019). In, "Question of the Color Line: Race and Class in the Age of Globalization", Dubois (2011) observes that the darker a person's skin, the lower employment status he or she had and the lighter the skin, the higher employments and social status the person receives. In Canada, systemic racism and segregation of darker skinned students has been observed also in southern schools (Henry, 2019) and my participants' lived experiences through the K-12 educational system shows that it is present across Inuit Nunangat.

Segregation is a form of systemic racism. It is toxic and divisive and has been legislated against in post-slavery USA and post-apartheid South Africa yet continues to be practiced in 2021 in Canada - in schools across Inuit Nunangat under the guise of applied and academic streams that enable white-passing Inuit children academic opportunities but exclude all other Inuit children from similar opportunities. Yet, as you can see from the stories of my six participants the cost to

the child throughout his/her life journey is tragic. Systemic racism leads students to be isolated from peers within their own communities, estranged from their Inuit identities. The participants in my study struggled with their own identity and determining where exactly they fit within the school, community and society at large as a direct consequence of how they were segregated as early as kindergarten based on their skin color, physical appearance, and behaviour. They spent time focusing on and recovering from, microaggression, lateral violence and impacts of suicides; time that could have been spent on enjoying social relations with their peers and advancing their studies. In 21st Century Canada, such systemic practices are shameful and must be addressed at every level.

Receiving high quality education is directly correlated with socio-economic and health outcomes (ESRC-UKRI, 2014; Easterbrook et al, 2016; Harding, 2019). Statistics show that Inuit have the highest drop-out rates from K-12 and further education, suicides rates that are eleven times that of the non-Inuit population, unemployment rate roughly 54%, and access to food, housing and health services is not equitable to other Canadians (Bougie et al, 2013; Senécal, 2006; Statistics Canada, 2011; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2016). If we are prevented from meeting our highest potential as a result of systemic racism within our education system then there is a need to draw a link between systemic racism, segregation, and our socio-economic and health outcomes.

In spite of experiencing systemic racism throughout their education journeys, my participants channeled their adverse experiences into goal-oriented pursuits grounded in *Inuit Qaujimaqatunqangit* Principles. IQ is foundational for *Inunguiniq* creating human beings that are equal, capable, and enabled regardless of their race. Their success is not, as often sometimes poetically attributed to the resilience of Inuit having traditionally lived in the harshest of environments. Rather, the success of the participants in my study, and indeed of myself about to complete this master's thesis, lies in our capacity to draw on IQ principles in the face of systemic and ongoing barriers placed in our way by a discriminatory education system constructed to exclude Inuit.

Inuit are often said to be and celebrated for being resilient but what does that exactly mean and why should Inuit have to be resilient from harmful systemic policies and practices that ought be

transformed through policy and action, such as racism, segregation, microaggression, lateral violence and suicides. Celebrating resiliency ignores if not devalues those who have not been able to overcome these existing systemic obstacles.

Kirmayer et al (2011) note that the metaphorical definition of resilience is often drawn from physical materials, “Based on experience with physical materials, the metaphor of resilience suggests the ability to return to an original state after being stressed, perturbed, or otherwise bent out of shape. The implication is that, for a resilient system, the perturbation leaves no lasting change” (Kirmayer et al, 2011, p.85). However, Kirmayer (2011) and his colleagues also note that this definition is “too static and ahistorical” (p.85) and does not accurately capture the traditional definitions ascribed by Indigenous people in Canada nor does it cover the changes that impact individuals as a result of past and present colonial practices such as the effects of systemic racism that indigenous people have endured (Kirmayer et al, 2011).

Madeline Alakariallak’s story best illustrates the inflexibility and gatekeeping of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) as institution that continues to force Inuit journalists to be resilient in their employment. Ms. Alakariallak is a renowned Inuit journalist who recently left her post at CBC. During her tenure, she had on many occasions made attempts to educate her non-Inuit colleagues and bosses within the system that Inuit report and tell stories very differently than white people and called for changes and more resources to establish a genuine Inuit method of reporting. However, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was unable or unwilling to yield to her efforts of transforming the institution to Inuit ways of reporting and storytelling. For instance, in a CBC interview, Ms. Alakariallak indicated that despite these differences in reporting and telling stories, and the strains put on Inuit journalists to adapt their reporting style to white standards, the institution did not provide her and her Inuit colleagues with the necessary resources to be a genuine Inuit journalist in their own homeland. In its farewell article, CBC remained inflexible in its ability to adapt to Inuit methods of reporting and storytelling and continued active suppression through bureaucratic control of journalism across Nunavut. For instance, Marvin Brass, CBC North’s senior managing director stated that, “There is a plan to recruit and develop Inuk journalists, [...] It includes a training producer who is helping to develop journalism and broadcasting skills with newly hired Inuk journalists.” (Last,

2020, para. 19.). This statement alone, indicates that future Inuit journalist will have to continue to be resilient under the umbrella of the corporation, despite their location in Inuit homelands. It also validates what Kirmayer (2011) and his colleagues state about individuals not returning to an original state but rather, changing their circumstances, as Ms. Alakariallak did by moving from an institution that was unwilling to change.

The stories of my participants demonstrate that an IQ Framework is essential to Inuit Education Systems and to ensure access, participation success in Education for Inuit. With the presence of IQ, my students were able to prevail in an education system that was set out to exclude and disenfranchise them. It is important to note that in spite of its critical and foundational role in Inuit education (McGregor, 2012), formal implementation of IQ is currently being eroded in Nunavut. The most recent example was the proposed changes to the 2008 Nunavut Education Act: Bill 37. While the amendment stated that curricula would still apply *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* into teachers' lesson plans (although no explication of how the teaching population, who are overwhelmingly graduates of southern teacher education institutions, would be educated in this curriculum development was included), the true intent of the Bill was to take down the Inuit Language Protection Act and remove Inuit conceptual frameworks from the legal framework of the government. This proposal came on the heels of "consultations" that ruled that Inuit conceptual frameworks do not fit well within the Western governance system that Inuit have adopted (Bill 37, 2017; Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, 2017; Special Committee, 2015).

The educational journeys of my six participants and myself identify the way forward for policy makers, educational leaders, and those responsible for education of Inuit children and youth. To begin, education leaders across Inuit Nunangat must recognize and name the presence of systemic racism across our schools. Only when this is done, can it be properly addressed. Learn from the United States and South Africa to enact policies that prevent segregating Inuit and white students.

There is evidence within my research that it is critical that IQ Principles are formally integrated into the education system's curriculum, policies and practices. To achieve this within northern schools, pedagogical approaches underpinned by IQ Principles must be included in the teacher

education of Bachelor of Education Students who will be teaching Inuit students and that teachers taking up positions in the north undertake professional preparation that reinforces their central role as educators and their ethical responsibility of *Inunguiniq* of all students not just a select few.

In addition to training and professional learning addressing appropriate curriculum and pedagogy, there are also many lessons from my participants for current and future educators, that would assist in countering the racism and isolation of Inuit students within elementary and secondary schools across Inuit Nunangat. Ensuring educators are aware of and have deep respect for Inuit practices such as calling Inuit students by their spiritual namesakes and use of *Tuq&urarniq* in the school system. Inuit Elders assert that this will reduce violence in schools as it acknowledges the spirit of the student and the responsibility of the educator to that child from an Inuit perspective. Introducing land-based programs as part of the mandatory curriculum in schools across Inuit Nunangat to provide balance between in-class lessons and lessons out on the land. This provides students with mobility in otherwise often sedentary and toxic environments and reinforces a positive relationship between teachers and students with specific roles to fulfill in their contribution to teacher/student relationships and serving the community as whole.

Grounding Inuit education in the Inuit worldview will enable Inuit self-determination. Students will be bilingual and bi-cultural. They will understand where the Western education system and economic systems come from and decide for themselves the way of life that they will accept for themselves and future generations.

Researcher Reflection

At the start of my Masters, I was very excited to dig deep into the conditions that have helped Inuit students to complete high school and post-secondary education. I was expecting to hear so many great and happy details that would help pave the way for other Inuit students to succeed. I pictured this as being an easy process; however, partly because of my own lived experience and my participants' deep recollections, it became a deeply personal and emotional process. The participants' stories turned out to reflect a lot of my own experiences and so this journey of writing my MA thesis has been a painful and difficult one.

The participants' stories draw attention to the legacy that an education system, dominated by white supremacy and institutional racism, has given us as Inuit. The stories of the participants and myself demonstrate clearly that it is time for Inuit knowledge, Inuit ways of being and particularly IQ to take its place as shaping and implementing education systems in Inuit Nunangat. I am not calling for rejection of current curriculum and knowledge, but rather the opportunity to teach children and youth knowledge through an Inuit lens. I believe that as Inuit we can be bi-lingual and bi-cultural, adopting the best practices of both Western and Inuit worldviews.

I use myself as an example to illustrate this. There is often fear that if Inuit go to university that we are being "colonized" even further. I have to argue that this has not been the case for me. Rather, when I attended my major in psychology and minor in sociology and my MA I was able to compare and contrast what was being taught at this level with my Inuit knowledge as taught to me by my mother (and extended Inuit family) and my own lived experiences. In this sense, I feel I was grounded in my Inuit values while learning about the Western methods and why the West has taken certain approaches to education and economic practices, and how these are linked.

In writing my thesis, I did have to unlearn the colonial process and was challenged to incorporate Inuit methods into this process. I often questioned whether I was doing it justice and to this moment, I continue to feel it could be strengthened.

As a student, you are also a son, a daughter, a sister, a brother, a partner, a mother, a father - who has other obligations such as work, personal relationships, and parenting responsibilities. As such, the last few years I had to carry emotional mental baggage that interfered with my ability to write on a regular basis. I transitioned jobs, the Covid-19 pandemic hit, I lived through some toxic relationships, some I would argue were rooted in lateral violence and others that were quite racist in nature that became mentally and physically draining. It felt like I was failing at all levels. Added to this was the participants' very difficult education journeys that resonated so closely with my own educational experience through K-12 and post-secondary. In doing this masters research I have re-lived and re-experienced physically and emotionally, my own educational journey and all its aggressions, barriers, and racisms while also seeking to convey as authentically as possible the journeys of my participants. This process has brought me to re-live my own trauma alongside the trauma of others. While I celebrate the success of my participants, I know what this success has cost them in terms of mental and physical well-being, employment progression and wealth. I thank them for sharing their deeply personal experiences and I hope together, we can make the necessary changes so that Inuit currently within the education system, and those yet to come, can benefit from the stories shared.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol Guide and Questions

I am an Inuit Masters student who is looking to interview four to six Inuit University Graduates from each of the four Inuit land claims regions. Please see the brief description of my research project. Because of the limited number of participants, interviews will take place on a first come, first served basis.

Interview Protocol Project: Inuit Students' Journeys from High School to Postsecondary Education.

Date: Insert Date

Interviewer: Heather Ochalski, MA(Ed), University of Ottawa

Interviewee: Participant Name

Position of interviewee: postsecondary student/graduate

Community: E.g. Baker Lake

Region: E.g., Kivalliq, Nunavut

Brief Project Description

Given that Inuit students across Canada's Arctic are significantly behind in attending school regularly, in graduating, and in entering and completing post-secondary programs compared to the rest of the Canadian population, this case study will to help to identify important factors that that may support the initiation and maintenance of regular school attendance, graduation, and entry as well as integration into postsecondary programs. The goal is to develop our understanding of the lived experiences and meanings that postsecondary Inuit graduates and their perceived realities of their social-cultural context and their education journey to postsecondary success.

Questions

Interview One: K-12 Education Journey

Interview Two: Post-Secondary Education Journey

Interview Three: Joint Analysis of Participant's Narrative.

Appendix B: Detailed interview Questions

Research Question guiding the study:

In what ways have Inuit students, who have successfully completed post-secondary education, navigated the different contexts and experiences of education in the north and the south?

Interview I: K-12 Educational Journey

1. What do you see when you recall your education journey starting at elementary school?
 - a. Prompt: What do you recall about your earliest educational experience?
2. What positive memories do you have of elementary/high school?
3. Are there images of any negative experiences or challenges that you recall?
 - a. What kept you going to school during these difficult times?
4. What thoughts and feelings motivated you to attend high school regularly?
5. What would you say was your strength when it came to studying and finishing assignments?
6. What were some of the external conditions that helped you with studying and finishing assignments?
7. What was your vision for completing high school?
8. What values would you say helped you to complete high school?

Interview II: Post-Secondary Education Journey

1. How did you hear about post-secondary education?
 - a. Why did you want to go to post-secondary?
2. Talk to me about the transition from high school to post-secondary. Can you tell me some stories from those first weeks in college/university?
 - a. What are the highlights looking back?
 - b. What were the challenges?
 - c. How did you overcome these challenges?
 - d. Do you think any of the challenges were specific to you being Inuk?
3. Throughout your education journey, what factors (internal and external) helped you to complete K-12 and Post-secondary education?
- 4.
5. In this stage of your journey, what were the values that motivated you to complete your degree?
6. What do you hope to do with your academic success?
 - a. Where to next?

Interview III: Joint IQ Themed Analysis of Participant's Narrative

Today I am seeking to talk about the ways in which the narrative represents your educational journey and how you understand your journey. When you read over your narrative, how does it speak to you? What meanings emerge? What further stories need to be included?

We are also going to look at how I interpreted your narrative through *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ) an Inuit Traditional Knowledge framework. I would like us to discuss this together so I can be sure I am representing your story in an honest and authentic way.

1. Looking back on your narrative as I have constructed it, what changes, additions/deletions should we make?

2. What do you see, within your story of your educational journey that you believe is particular to you being Inuk?
 - How do you think it might have been different had you not been Inuk?
 - What does this mean to you?
 - What messages lie in your story for other Inuit? For non-Inuit?
3. If you wanted to relate the key learnings you would like people to take from your story what would they be?
 - For other Inuit students?
 - For Inuit leaders?
 - For teachers?
 - For those responsible for education systems?

According to Inuit worldview, there are four big laws used to guide child development into a capable and contributing human being. In reviewing my transcription and your narrative, I draw parallels of some of your experiences to *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ) Inuit Traditional Knowledge framework that I would like to talk with you about to check that you agree with my analysis.

IQ’s Four Big Laws:

1. Work for the common good
2. Respect all living things
3. Maintain harmony and balance
4. Continually plan and prepare for the future.

IQ’s Principles:

<i>Pijitsirniq</i>	The concept of serving: serving and providing for family or community, or both.
<i>Ajiiqatigiingniq</i>	Decision making through discussion and consensus.

<i>Pilimmaksarniq</i>	The concept of knowledge and skills acquisition: development of skills through practice, effort and action.
<i>Piliriqatigiingniq</i>	The concept of collaborative relationships: working together for a common purpose.
<i>Avatimik Kamattiarniq</i>	The concept of environmental stewardship: respect and care for the land, animals, and the environment.
<i>Qanuqtuurunnarniq</i>	The concept of being resourceful to solve problems: being innovative and resourceful.
<i>Inuuqatigiitsiarniq</i>	Respecting others, relationships, and caring for people.