

Inuit Perspectives in and on “Arctic Show Trials”

Sharon Angnakak

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Department of Classics and Religious Studies
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

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Abstract

This dissertation explores two significant criminal court cases, commonly referred to as “Arctic show trials,” which implicated Inuit in Canada in the early decades of the twentieth century. The context of world conflict at the time of the trials and the perceived threat to Canadian Arctic sovereignty reveal a complex interplay of legal, cultural, and historical narratives. The first part examines the 1917 trials of Sinnisiak and Uluksak, the first criminal court case in Canada’s history that required an interpretation between *Inuktitut* and English, and a pivotal direction in Canada’s assertion of Arctic sovereignty with the establishment of Inuit as Canadians subject to British law. It highlights the embellished narratives by Roman Catholic Oblates who portrayed their missionaries, Jean-Baptiste Rouvière and Guillaume Le Roux as martyrs, emphasizing the religious and anthropological aspects that influenced the trial’s perception and aftermath. The second part examines the 1941 Belcher Island murder trials, underscoring the Euro-Christian biases of the original interpreters and how those original biased interpretations skewed the current understanding of those trials. This dissertation emphasizes the necessity of viewing historical events that implicated Inuit from an Inuit perspective to correct misrepresentations and fabrications prevalent in standard historical accounts. Utilizing a strength-based theoretical framework, this study challenges the deficit discourse commonly applied to Inuit history, advocating for a narrative that recognizes the rational and lawful nature of Inuit social structures. By applying *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* and re-interpreting events with a focus on *Inuktitut*, which emphasizes accurate and culturally sensitive interpretations, this dissertation aims to bridge historical knowledge with Inuit cultural understanding, offering a nuanced view of Inuit engagement with Canadian law in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Keywords: Arctic sovereignty, Arctic show trials, interpreter bias, Christianity, historical reinterpretation

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To all Inuit youth: many people often talk about Inuit as a vulnerable people who have lost their culture. *This is not true*. Despite changes, our shared Inuit culture continues to be the context of our lived realities. No longer are Inuit *just* “traditional,” we are modern. The work in this dissertation is meant to demonstrate, especially to my children and their cohorts, to reimagine Inuit history in a way that allows an accurate self-reflection of their shared history. A history that is filled with stories of the incredible strengths of our ancestors, who were the authors of their own lives *if we attempt to understand them by their own frameworks*. By accurate interpretations of Inuit history, the youth today can then imagine an Inuit *futurity* in which they are empowered to make and re-make Inuit culture according to their own priorities and desires, the results of which will always be *Inu-very*. The future is truly yours.

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The perspectives in this dissertation are not a reflection of *all* Inuit. They are my own, and many Inuit may disagree with some of the conclusions. Further, although I have greatly benefitted from the assistance of others to interpret some Inuktitut words, the interpretations made here – some of which are built on my reimagination – are purely my own. As such, any errors made are mine alone.

Introduction

This research examines two pivotal criminal cases involving the Inuit – *R v Sinnisiak and Uluksak* (1917) and the Belcher Island murder trials (1941) – to explore the broader implications of the role of historical legal processes under British-Canadian law, via interpretation between Inuit languages, English, and French, that the Dominion of Canada employed in the pursuit of Arctic sovereignty. By employing a strength-based theoretical framework through *Inuit Qaujimagajatuqangit* (IQ)¹ and Inuit languages, this study challenges the deficit discourse often applied to historical narratives about Inuit. It aims to re-interpret these cases through an Inuit perspective, correcting misrepresentations rooted in colonial legal and religious biases. The dissertation argues that understanding these trials through Inuit cultural and social lenses offers a more accurate depiction of their significance in the context of Arctic sovereignty and Canadian history.

Tucked away in every corner of Nunavut society today, where issues are raised, discussed, and decided are the *tusaajuit*:² the interpreter-translators. The *tusaajuit* listen carefully to what is being said in one language, either English or *Inuktuk*,³ after carefully listening, they then relay the messages to the other language, either consecutively or simultaneously. “*Tusaaji*”

¹ Heather Igloliorte, “Curating Inuit Qaujimagajatuqangit: Inuit Knowledge in the Qallunaat Museum,” *Art Journal*, Summer 2017, 102; Nunavut Department of Education, *Inuit Qaujimagajatuqangit: Education Framework for Nunavut Curriculum*, Iqaluit: Curriculum and School Services, 2007, 23.

² Louis-Jacques Dorais, *Words of the Inuit: A Semantic Stroll through a Northern Culture*, Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2020, 161.

³ *Inuktut* is a collective term that refers to the different dialects of the language spoken by Canadian Inuit in *Inuit Nunangat*. These dialects are *Inuvialuktun* in the Inuvialuit region in the Northwest Territory, *Inuinnaqtun* for the western Nunavut Territory region, *Inuktitut* for the eastern Nunavut Territory region, *Inuktitut* with subdialects *Ivitiimiut* and *Tarramiutut* for the Nunavik region, and *Inuttitut* for the Nunatsiavut region. See webpage “What is Inuktut?” from Inuktut Tusaalanga, accessed online on November 13, 2023: <https://tusaalanga.ca/about-Inuktut>; and see Louis-Jacques Dorais, *Inuit Languages & Dialects: Inuit Uqausiqatigiit*, Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 2017, 12-13.

is the Inuktitut (singular) term for interpreter, one who “listens with intent to understand.” Then, to relay the message heard in either language, the interpreter must also “*uqarti*,” or speak fluently.⁴ *Tusaajuq*, listen with intent to understand/hear,⁵ involves an act of *interpretation*. Interpreting between Inuktitut and English or French has two explicit goals and one implicit; *listening* and *speaking* are the explicit functions, while implicitly, *tusaajuq* is the interpretation of messages to help listeners understand the intended meaning.

In *Inuit Nunangat*⁶ (Inuit Homelands), language fluency alone is insufficient to exchange messages. In addition to the ability to produce utterances, the interpreter is required to have some level of knowledge of their audience’s worldviews, or, at the very least, some level of knowledge related to general topics being discussed between languages.⁷ Each language spoken in Inuit Nunangat – Inuktitut, English, and French – belongs to incredibly complex societies with vastly different worldviews. These different worldviews make it difficult for even the most skilled linguists to wholly decipher and convey the intended meaning. As such, interpreters must make concessions to ensure a fruitful exchange, as some things may not translate well into another language or culture.

The late Inuit linguist, activist, and politician Jose Amaujaq Kusugak, highlighted the importance of worldview in consideration of communication between Inuktitut and English. Kusugak delivered the keynote address to the 14th Inuit Studies Conference of 2004, held that

⁴ Alex Spalding and Thomas Kusugaq, *Inuktitut Dictionary: A Multi-dialectical Outline (with an Aivilingmiutaq Base)*, Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 1998, 172.

⁵ Spalding and Kusugak, 172.

⁶ *Inuit Nunangat* is a Canadian Inuit Inuktitut term that means “Inuit homelands” that encompasses 40% of Canada’s land area and 72% of its coastline. The term includes land, water, and ice. See Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami “About Canadian Inuit,” accessed online on October 15, 2023: <https://www.itk.ca/about-canadian-inuit/>

⁷ S.T. Mallon, “Early Years with the Inuit Interpreters: Recollections and Comments from the Sidelines,” *Meta* 38, no. 1, 1993, 26. Accessed online April 28, 2024: <https://open.unive.it/hitrade/books/MallonInuktitut.pdf>

year in Calgary. Kusugak's abstract highlighted how the Inuit worldview is of critical importance:

The experience of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK – the National Inuit Association of Canada) in communicating its political, environmental, and health messages to Inuit has been via a variety of formal board meetings, community meetings, English and Inuktitut language radio and television interviews, and to a limited extent articles in the written press. *Essential to all is fundamental comprehension of the Inuit worldview in order to ensure the proper transference of information. Mere “translation” of information is no guarantee of communicating intended messages, and in fact may cause alarm, and hinder the communication process depending on the nature of the message (emphasis added).*⁸

As Kusugak noted, proper communication for a unilingual Inuktitut audience from the original English or French requires interpretation with a fundamental comprehension of the Inuit worldview. If the interpreter is unfamiliar with the subject matter or nuances in the language that are unique to the worldview, unintended mixed meanings could be transposed to the unilingual Inuktitut audience. If the interpreter is proficient in speaking Inuktitut but only familiar with a Euro-Canadian worldview, or only partially grasps the Inuit worldview, their interpretations may also result in miscommunication. The same can be said about an interpreter with an Inuk worldview who interprets from Inuktitut to English or French for Euro-Canadian audiences. If the interpreter only partially grasps the Euro-Canadian worldview or lacks knowledge of the subject matter, their interpreted messages may result in miscommunication.

Communication through translation and interpretation also requires the ability to convey tone, which may not interpret well in another language where tone is subjective to the cultural

⁸ Jose Amaujaq Kusugak, “The Case of ITK: The Organizational Perspective of Communication to Inuit,” Friday Luncheon Address, *Proceedings of the 14th Inuit Studies Conference*, Calgary, 2004, 370. Accessed online January 9, 2021: <http://pubs.aina.ucalgary.ca/aina/14thISCPProceedings.pdf#page=388>

background of the speaker.⁹ S.T. Mallon noted an interesting reflection that captures the difficulty in interpreting cultural subjectivities like humour from English to Inuktitut:

And there was the case of the Head of Wildlife who began the evening with an aside to his interpreter, “I always like to start with a little joke, so be sure to translate this. *Ladies and gentlemen, polar bears operate in a very cold environment, but the topic of polar bears is a very hot one, heh-heh*” . . .pause. while the interpreter grappled with this gem. “Go on, translate it.” The interpreter pondered a moment, and addressed the audience, “*This man has tried to say something funny, but it doesn’t make any sense in Inuktitut. So please laugh when I tell you to, now!*” Laughter, and the Head of Wildlife says to his interpreter, “See, I told you that would get them relaxed and receptive” (emphasis in original).¹⁰

Aside from the humorous potential for miscommunication, some misinterpretations can alter meanings with significant impacts. While the interpreter can make concessions on the spot in attempt to interpret tone lost in translation, the translation of written documents is less flexible. This is especially true of documents produced by governments written originally in English and translated into Inuktitut. Translating government documents that contain bureaucratic jargon requires the Inuk interpreter-translator to reproduce the original prose and tone that contain, as Mallon observed, “in many cases, the deliberate attempt to conceal and confuse rather than reveal and clarify.”¹¹ The first task of Inuit interpreter-translators is to understand what the original speaker or writer intended to say. Then, to make the original message understandable to a small Inuit community,¹² the interpreter is required to convey the message’s intent as accurately as possible.¹³

My non-Inuk mother, Patricia, and my Inuk father, Archie, are both fluently bilingual in English and Inuktitut, Inuktitut being the eastern Arctic dialect of Inuktitut where we are from. My

⁹ Mallon, 30.

¹⁰ Mallon, 30.

¹¹ Mallon, 30.

¹² Mallon, 28.

¹³ Inuit social norms are based on an oral culture that assumes the speaker is genuine and speaking sincerely, whether good or bad. See Dorais, *Words of the Inuit*, 1, 85.

father is a professionally trained and certified interpreter-translator with an interpretation career that spans five decades. In one of his interpretation services within his extensive portfolio, he interpreted for one of the Interviewing Inuit Elder oral history series that produced the book *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, edited by Jarich Oosten, Frédéric B. Laugrand, and Wim Rasing. This is a seminal text that I have relied on to present the Inuit perspective on the case studies presented in this dissertation. Although I am not fluent in Inuktitut, I am a “receptive bilingual,” meaning I can (oddly) understand most of what I hear in Inuktitut but unable to produce utterances in that language. I have had the privilege to listen to my father talk about his art of interpreting and his views on the Inuktitut language. I always remember what he stresses: that Inuktitut is a literal language, and interpreters must choose their words carefully.

Inuit interpreters are pillars of our democracy, but they are also the ways in which the non-Inuktitut-speaking world comes to learn and know about Inuit, often through the medium of English or French. During my Master of Arts research, I listened to an oral history cassette from 1979 that demonstrated the intricacies and complexities of interpretation between languages that are the medium through which non-Inuit came to know about Inuit culture and society. Known as the *Idlouk Interviews*, this cassette is a recording produced by unnamed interviewers. Without much detail in records on its genesis and judging by listening to the cassette, I gather that the interviewers are male and potentially anthropologists based on the questions they ask about religion and cultural change.¹⁴

In this cassette, the interviewees are unnamed elders and their number is unknown, but both male and female voices can be heard. The interviewers ask the elders a series of questions

¹⁴ Accession Report: N-1987-009, “Idlouk interview,” courtesy of the Nunavut Archives Program.

that they communicate through an unnamed female interpreter. One elder was an Inuk woman who was born in 1907. We can assume that by 1979 when the interviews were said to have occurred, the elders would have likely been in their seventies.¹⁵ It sounds as though this recording was later used as an interpreter training instrument because other interpreters can be heard imposed over the original recording. These later recordings provide commentary on the original interpretation regarding its inaccuracy and provide their own, new interpretation. The Idlouk Interviews are insightful for illuminating the interviewer/anthropologist's potential to ask leading questions as evident in the dialogue with their assumptions already made about the topic discussed. In addition, the recordings demonstrate the flexibility with which the interpreters employ to convey messages that they either expand, redact, or omit.

For example, the discussion that the interviewer has with one the elderly woman about “the lady who lives under the sea who was in charge of all the fish,”¹⁶ was noteworthy because of the likely inference to *Nuliajuk*, the Mother of the Sea Beasts (commonly known as Sedna). The interpreter only specifies in Inuktitut a reference to fish, which potentially skewed the context considerably, and it is not certain if it was the interviewer or interpreter who solely focused on fish because we can only hear the English interpretation. The elders stated that they had never heard anything about “someone like that” and start to discuss *tuurngait*, i.e. spirits, but this is interrupted by the interpreter trainee voice-over, “here the elders are just talking amongst themselves, and it is not really relevant.”¹⁷ The discussions about *tuurngait* can be quite relevant given the context of *Nuliajuk* and it is interesting that *tuurngait* was not relayed to the interviewer. Further, and the original interpreter also stated that she was not really listening and

¹⁵ Princess Margaret, “Idlouk Interview” digitized from original cassette, courtesy of the Nunavut Archives Program, N-1987-009-0001A, time 06:37.

¹⁶ “Idlouk Interview,” time 18:30.

¹⁷ “Idlouk Interview,” time 20:08.

not able to translate.¹⁸ The omission from both the original interpreter and later voice-over interpreter trainees is significant, especially because it relates to topic *tuurngait*, a major consideration for Inuit religion.

Listening to this recording prompted my interest in the interpretation processes that occur between Inuit and non-Inuit cultures. In the current era, much of what we know about the past is transferred to us through these historical processes that were mediated by interpreters. As demonstrated in the Idlouk Interviews, the interpreters were selective in their interpretation. Perhaps in resistance to engaging in topics deemed too intrusive, such as *Nuliujuk*, they evidently omitted a translation altogether.

I first came across the Idlouk Interviews in 2018 at the time I was reviewing the archives related to the Belcher Island murder trials, one of the case studies of the current study. As I pondered the interpretive processes that allow the non-Inuit world to learn about Inuit culture through different mediums and languages, it inspired me to investigate potential misinterpretations in the Belcher Islands murder trials, especially as this trial was sensationalized as a tragic example of “religious frenzy.”¹⁹ In considering the interpreter as a medium for cross-cultural exchanges in topics of religion and culture, the trial transcripts that contained quotations and reports of what Inuit were purported to have spoken became a driving force for research.

I first came across the Belcher Island murder trials during my Master of Arts research, where I analyzed the conversion of Inuit from *Angakkuuniq*²⁰ (Shamanism) to Christianity as

¹⁸ “Idlouk Interview,” time 20:28.

¹⁹ D.J. Martin, “Eastern Arctic, Ottawa, Ont,” file, April 26th, 1941, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Canada, RG85 Vol 173.

²⁰ For a definition on “Angakkuuniq” see Frédéric Laugrand and J. G. Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity: Transitions and Transformations in the Twentieth Century*, Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010, xvii. Laugrand and Oosten define *Angakkuuniq* “as a form of shamanism,” referring to the northern Eurasian word “sāman.” I define Angakkuuniq as “*in the way of an Angakkuq*,” with Angakkuq defined as “a very

driven by the leadership of Inuit women. While I was unable to include an analysis of the Belcher Islands murder trials in the MA, this dissertation picks up where I left off from my MA research.

The intricacies of interpretation found within the case studies of this current dissertation required a feat of re-imagination, necessitating the re-interpretation of speech acts by Inuit recorded in archival files by non-Inuktit speakers written in English. I was able to re-imagine potential consequences of misinterpretation in two historical court cases that involved Inuit through the aid of historical and current Inuktit dictionaries. In addition, I employed A.I. translators for understanding records in French.

With the assistance of many who responded to my inquiries about potential meanings to words, the work for this dissertation largely stemmed from a re-imagination of the potential consequences of misinterpretation. Discussed in this dissertation are how those original misinterpretations led to miscommunication in these two historical court cases that I argue have skewed our current understanding of those historical events. The current study is inspired by the same motivations that drove my MA research where I aim to feature historical Inuit as having agency, making rational choices, and navigating the arrival of non-Inuit according to their Inuit culture, worldview, laws, and governance structures.

wise and discerning person,” while the suffix “-kuuniq” derives from the noun ending “kkut,” meaning “through/by way of.” See Inuit Uqausinginnik Taiguusiliuqtiit, *Inuktit Uqausiup Aaqiqsuutingit: Inuktit Reference Grammar*, Iqaluit: Pirurvik Centre, 2018, 22, accessed online September 24, 2023: https://uqausiit.ca/sites/default/files/2018-09/Grammar%20Book_Aug2018_download.pdf; Mariano Aupilaarjuk, Tulimaaq Aupilaarjuk, Lucassie Nutaraaluk, Rose Iqallijuq, Johanasi Ujarak, Johanasi, Isidore Ijituuq, Michel Kupaaq, and edited by Bernard Saladin d’Anglure, *Interviewing Inuit Elders 4: Cosmology and Shamanism*, Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 2001, 10.

Re-interpretations of History: the antithesis to deficit-discourse

This dissertation is historically situated in the frontier culture of the Arctic circa 1910-1945 and examines the cultural exchanges between Inuit and non-Inuit recorded in archival records related to two criminal courts cases: *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak* (1917) and the Belcher Island murder trials (1941). There are three main topics covered in this dissertation: 1) Religious discourse within archival records and scholarship about the two criminal court courses; 2) Arctic sovereignty and world conflict; and 3) the genealogy of the concept of an endangered or eroding Inuit culture. The main questions this dissertation attempts to explore are: How did Inuit, implicated in the two case studies, receive and understand messages related to religion and law? What role did interpreters play in the transmission of complex messages? In comparison, how did non-Inuit receive messages from Inuit related to religion and law? This dissertation's focus and method revisits two historical court cases that involved Inuit as case studies. Through critical analysis of archival records, this dissertation strives to reinterpret these historical events through the lens of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ), i.e. Inuit philosophy, and by considering *Inuit Maligait*, i.e. Inuit laws.

Both *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak* and the Belcher Islands murder trials occurred when Canada was fighting a world war. Scholarship for both case studies examined here tends to focus on how the Dominion of Canada exerted power over Inuit through the administration of justice for the purposes of Arctic sovereignty and generally concludes that the events sparked the beginning of decline in Inuit culture and loss of autonomy. While this scholarship is rich and important, the Inuit perspective through examination of Inuit culture and language is sorely lacking.

While I agree that Arctic sovereignty and Inuit culture are interconnected, the current study locates the concept of an endangered Inuit culture as largely (though not entirely) stemming from a distortion of history born out of the misinterpretations that occurred during the early contact between Inuit and non-Inuit. In the analysis of primary sources related to these case studies and in comparing historical and contemporary scholarship, I suggest that primary sources predominantly highlight a Euro-Christian interpretation of the events that omit what historical Inuit figures may have actually intended, creating a biased understanding and narrative of this history found in current scholarship. In addition, scholarship on the historical data available for these case studies minimizes or neglects to examine the role of interpreter-translator biases, promoting an exaggeration of the Christian interpretation presented in archival records. While some scholars²¹ attempt to integrate Inuit philosophy, language, and law into their analyses, they do so without considering the original interpreters' potential Christian biases, further recycling original misinterpretations from the time of the events.

The notion that an Inuit culture is endangered and in need of protection, I suggest, is derived from *deficit discourse* in analyses of Inuit culture that is found in the archival records pertaining to *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak* and the Belcher Islands murder trials. This deficit discourse stems from early *mis*-interpreters of Inuit. Original misinterpretations occurred because of historical interpreters' insufficient fluency in language and/or Christian biases. This Euro-Christian lens, in its application to understanding these historical events, is recycled today in how scholars attempt to identify these historical events as colonial harms inflicted onto Inuit. These colonial harms evolve in scholarship to deficit discourse when presenting analyses of Inuit

²¹ Xavier Blaisel, Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten, "Shamans and Leaders: Parousial Movements among the Inuit of Northeast Canada," *Numen*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (1999), 370; Sidney L. Haring, "The rich men of the country: Canadian law in the land of the Copper Inuit, 1914-1930," *Ottawa Law Revue*. 21, 1989, 5-6.

culture. Many scholars have concluded that the events recorded in these case studies are examples of the tragic collision of cultures, with Inuit losing culture and Canada gaining sovereignty.²²

Opting for an interpretation of this history that strives to understand an Inuit perspective, I employ Inuit philosophy, law, and language to understand how Inuit may have experienced these events and attempt to provide an Inuit-specific interpretation of this history. In this Inuit-focused interpretation, Inuit are not victims of an encroaching foreign culture but are leaders amongst the non-Inuit who arrived at the Arctic frontier. Shown through key Inuit figures discussed in the case studies, Inuit acted as interpreters, guides, peace-makers, and witnesses, the fact is that without their participation the first trial would not have occurred, at least not as it was carried out.

Inuit resistance is also highlighted through an analysis of these events with consideration to Inuit culture and law. In this dissertation, Inuit are concurrently drivers of fidelity to cultural traditions *and* cultural change. The current study also presents Inuit as cultural and technological innovators and astute diplomats, such as Koeha, who was an intervener to violence in one case study discussed: *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak*. In application of Inuit-specific frameworks, the actions of these key historical Inuit figures present an Inuit society that was governed by the Inuit laws of hospitality, with examples provided and examined through the lens of Inuit philosophy, *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ). Dispelling the misinterpretations of this history that led to a

²² R.G. Moyles, *British Law and Arctic Men: the Celebrated 1917 Murder Trials of Sinnisiak and Uluksuk, first Inuit Tried under White Men's Law*, Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1979, 90; Debra Komar, *The Court of Better Fiction: Three Trials, Two Executions and Arctic Sovereignty*, Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2019, 152; McKay Jenkins, *Bloody Falls of the Coppermine: Madness and Murder in the Arctic Barren Lands*, New York: Random House, 2006, 220; William Closson James, *Locations of the Sacred : Essays on Religion, Literature and Canadian Culture*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006, 102; Lawrence Millman, *At the End of the World: Notes on a 1941 Murder Rampage in the Arctic and the Threat of Religious Extremism, Loss of Indigenous Culture, and Danger of Digital Life*, San Antonio, Texas: Terra Firma Books / Trinity University Press, 18.

distorted perspective that Inuit were disengaged bystanders indifferent to the foreigners who arrived, the historical analysis presented in the current study features the reverse. Applying Inuit philosophy, language, and law, this dissertation examines the case studies as examples of Inuit *resistance* to foreigners, sometimes with violence, and emphasizes Inuit fidelity to *Angakkuuniq* despite the arrival of Christian ideologies.

The Case Studies: A Brief Overview

In “Case Study 1: Canadian Sovereignty During WWI and the Inuinnait,” I examine the first case study from 1917 that has two separate but connected criminal court cases: *R v Sinnisiak* and *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak*. This case study represents the first time Canada tried Inuit under British law. *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak* is the second of three cases often cited by scholars as a series of “Arctic show trials”²³ staged by the Canadian government to assert sovereignty over the Arctic and inform the Inuit of their new positions as subjects to the British King.²⁴

Numerous scholars such as R.G. Moyles, McKay Jenkins, Ken Coates, William R. Morrison, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Shelagh Grant, and Greg Poelzer have fully covered the aspect of Arctic sovereignty in relation to these early twentieth century judicial trials in the Arctic.²⁵ While some scholars focus on Sinnisiak and Uluksak (Moyles and Jenkins) others include Sinnisiak and Uluksak to a lesser extent, instead choose to focus research on the

²³ Ken Coates, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, William R. Morrison, and Greg Poelzer, *Arctic Front: Defending Canada in the Far North*, Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2008, 31-32.

²⁴ Moyles, *British Law, Arctic Men*, preface; Coates et al., *Arctic Front*, 31-34; Komar, *The Court of Better Fiction*, 43; Shelagh D. Grant, *Arctic Justice on Trial for Murder, Pond Inlet, 1923*, Montreal, Que: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002, 49.

²⁵ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Kristopher Kinsinger, Ken Coates, and William R. Morrison, *Arctic Show Trial: The Trial of Alikomiak and Tatamigana*, Calgary: Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies, University of Calgary, 2017, iii-v; Coates et al., *Arctic Front*, 31; Komar, *The Court of Better Fiction*, 43-45; Grant, *Arctic Justice*, 129; Shelagh D. Grant, *Polar Imperative: A History of Arctic Sovereignty in North America*, Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 237-238; Moyles, *British Law and Arctic Men*, 90.

landmark capital court case of Tatamigana and Alikomiak due to the fact that it was the first instance in which Inuit men were tried and died by capital punishment.²⁶

My interest in this case study stems from the religious and anthropological interpretations that interlocutors of Sinnisiak and Uluksak's time emphasized during the murder investigation, the trials, and the "afterlives,"²⁷ to borrow a term from Emma Anderson, of Rouvière and Le Roux. Roman Catholics embellished the narratives about Rouvière and Le Roux's deaths at the hands of Sinnisiak and Uluksak to provide moral weight to the Oblates' decades-long endeavor to make the Vatican officially consider Rouvière and Le Roux as Catholic martyrs, an effort that has not yet come to fruition.

In "Case Study 2: Canadian Sovereignty During WWII and the Qikirtamiut," I examine another case study selected for this dissertation: the Belcher Islands murder trials of 1941. The Belcher Island trials occurred much later than those "Arctic Show trials" of Sinnisiak and Uluksak (1917),²⁸ Tatamigana and Alikomiak (1923),²⁹ and Nuqallaq (1923).³⁰ A recent publication by Corah Lynn Hodgson and P. Whitney Lackenbauer are the first to connect the 1941 Belcher Island murder trials as another "Arctic show trial" that link back to *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak*.³¹

²⁶ Coates et al., *Arctic Front*, 34-35.

²⁷ Emma Anderson, *The Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs*, Cambridge, Mass.; Harvard University Press, 2013, 6.

²⁸ Coates et al., *Arctic Front*, 32-33.

²⁹ Coates et al., *Arctic Front*, 34-36.

³⁰ Shelagh D. Grant, *Arctic Justice on Trial for Murder, Pond Inlet, 1923*, Montreal, Que: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002, 164.

³¹ Corah Lynn Hodgson and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *"Religious Frenzy" and the Application of Canadian Law: The Belcher Island Murders, 1941*, Peterborough: Trent University, Trent Centre for the Study of Canada, 2020, xvii.

In the Belcher Islands case study, through my engagement with one community historian and leader in Sanikiluaq (the current-day community on the Belcher Islands), I became aware that community members are untrusting of outsiders who request oral histories of the events. They explained to me that some of the descendants of the convicted in those murder trials were living and still had trauma associated with the aftermath of the trials. As community engagement is important to me, I described my current study to the community historian and requested if they thought a historical research project without conducting oral histories would be acceptable by their community. Their sentiments expressed that, as all the files associated with the events are freely accessible to the public from the Library and Archives Canada, it would be acceptable for me to continue with a historical analysis of the events although declined that any oral history projects on the trials should occur. As some scholars sensationalize the story, it was incredibly important for me to re-interpret the events from an Inuit perspective to show that some of the events associated with the Belcher Island murder trials recorded in history were embellished, grossly misunderstood, and continue to be misunderstood today.

Sources

For *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak*, the archives consulted for this research are primarily drawn from the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA). Since 2018, the PAA is the official repository for Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) records for the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan.³² In 2018, the Oblates gave their archives to the PAA, previously only on permanent loan since the 1970s. Although the PAA titled these records under “Rouvière and Le Roux,” and accessioned the records in 2001,³³ as a whole they appear to be the contents of a

³² Natalia Pietrzykowski, reference manual regarding the deposit and donation of the OMI records from the Provincial Archives of Alberta, personal email communication, October 21, 2022.

³³ Pietrzykowski, personal email, October 2022.

positio, which is the dossier the Oblates likely sent to the Vatican for the *causa*, i.e. the investigative case into the cause of death for Rouvière and Le Roux, to be officially considered martyrs.

The archives are listed under PR2001.0184, titled “Le Roux and Rouvière.” The marginalia of the Oblates’ archives provide insight into how the Oblates defined Shamanism with how they defined shamans. Often referring to Sinnisiak and Uluksak as “les sorciers,”³⁴ the French term for “sorcerers,” i.e. male practitioners of magic. Thus, the Oblates conceptualized Inuit religion as magic and in direct opposition to their Christian faith. The Rouvière and Le Roux fonds are at least one meter in length and represent thousands of pages of documents. As such, consultation of these archives necessitated a visit to the PAA in person.

Other files consulted from the PAA come from criminal court case files listed under accession numbers GR1979.285/695 and one prosecution file GR1972.C780. The contents of these files provided insight into judicial processes, including the Royal North West Mounted Police (RNWMP) investigation report and the so-called “confessions” of the accused. In addition to government archives, the personal records of Crown Prosecutor Charles C. McCaul, listed under PR1976.237, was also consulted for this research and provided insight into the Dominion of Canada’s officials’ rationale and processes adopted in relation to murder trials. In addition, I benefitted from visiting the Library and Archives Canada located in Ottawa in person where I

³⁴ Although there are many examples, especially in marginalia, one archival record that stands out is Gabriel Breynat’s letter to Marcel Champagne about how one of the interpreters for Sinnisiak and Uluksak’s trials, Patsy Klengenber, described the shamans as “sorcerers.” French original: “Patsy [Klengenber] nous dire un jour: ‘Mais vous devez savoir, Monseigneur, qui les Esquimaux ne font jamais rien sans consulter les sorciers.’” English translation: “Patsy [Klengenber] once told us: ‘But you must know, Monseigneur, that the Eskimos never do anything without consulting the sorcerers.’” Gabriel Breynat, correspondence to Marcel Champagne, May 1, 1938, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR.2001.0184 box 2, file 53; see also Emile Petitot, *Vocabulaire français-esquimau: Dialecte des Tchiglit des bouches du Mackenzie et de l’Anderson*, Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1876, 66.

consulted the archives of Uluksak and Sinnisiak's trial transcripts accessioned under RG18 Vol. 2479 and RG13 Vol. 1484.

The Belcher Island murder trials fonds is also quite voluminous and housed at the Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa, Canada, under accessions RG85 Vol. 173 and Vol. 174. The amount of fonds related to the Belcher Island murder trials also necessitated an in-person consultation. The Belcher Islands trial transcripts and police investigations provided insight into government processes, strategies, and policies. One of the central questions related to the Belcher Island murder trials that scholars try to understand is why the Dominion of Canada chose to hold trials on the islands, and for this, other historical research into government-generated annual reports, such as those from the Department of Mines and Resources Lands, Parks, and Forests Branch, provided insight into the potential backstory of the Dominion's strategy to hold trials on Inuit Nunangat.

In addition, the personal letters of the Anglican missionary Reverend George Neilson, accessed from the General Synod Archives of the Anglican Church of Canada, provided insight into the interpretative processes of the Belcher Island murder investigation and subsequent trials and were crucial to provide an alternative understanding of that history. The memoirs of Donald McLaughlan were helpful to understand the military presence in the South Baffin area in WWII. For insights into the pre-WWII period in the Arctic, I benefitted from consulting the Alexander Stevenson fonds N-1992-023, housed at the Nunavut Archives Program in Gatineau, Quebec, Canada, especially a secret-classified Government of Canada report titled *British Sovereignty in the Arctic* written by Thomas L. Cory, a crown solicitor mentioned in some of the Belcher Island murder trials records.

Despite this wealth of primary sources, some gaps remain in archives. Attempts to track archives from the Oblates in Rome related to Rouvière and Le Roux's position were unsuccessful. In addition, within Rouvière and Le Roux's fonds in the PAA, there are files that mention a playwriting contest from 1938 held in Canada and the United States. The PAA fonds only contain plays submitted from Canada. Attempts to locate American contest submissions at the American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives of the Catholic University of America were unsuccessful. Further attempts at locating American play submissions were made to the Phillips Memorial Library at the Providence College for the Blackfriars Guild Collection, also unsuccessful.

Methodology

The primary methodology is historical, drawing heavily on archival records pertaining to two criminal court cases. The limitations of this study stem from the fact that all the records examined were in English or French, and no archival records were recorded in Inuktitut. Although my receptive bilingualism permits me to imagine potential alternative meanings for an Inuktitut audience, limitations still exist because I am not fluent. For some Inuktitut terminology and possible meanings, I benefitted from posting questions and words on social media, where respondents kindly took time to provide potential translations and interpretations. In addition, I benefitted from discussions on potential meanings of Inuktitut words with my father, Archie Angnakak, with my *Attakkuluk*,³⁵ Becky Mike, and from discussions with my grandfather Mike Gardener, a retired Anglican missionary who spent most of his life in Arctic communities and is

³⁵ *Attak* means aunt on paternal side, adding the suffix -kuluk makes it a term of endearment, e.g. "my dear aunt." See Pirurvik, Inuit Uqausinginnik Taiguusiliuqtiit, website word search for "Attak," accessed on May 12, 2024: <https://uqausiit.ca/>

fluently bilingual. As I have benefitted from the input of other Inuit, many Inuktitut interpreters, specialists, and linguists, it is important to assert that the current study does not speak on behalf of all those who have kindly provided ideas and insight into how certain Inuktitut words could have been understood.

The ideas presented are the product of an interpretative approach from reviewing archives, sometimes aided by A.I. language translators for documents in French and aided by historical and contemporary dictionaries for Inuktitut, in addition to consultation with social media networks. A secondary method is ethnohistorical through cross-referencing past and present anthropological work, Inuit oral history, and by reviewing the discussions with Inuit elders recorded by anthropologists Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten with Inuit students at Nunavut Arctic College in the late 1990s through the Interviewing Inuit Elders oral history series.

Theory

The theoretical framework of this dissertation is Inuit-specific. This study has three main theoretical components. The first is employing a “strength-based” theoretical interpretation of history in these case studies that involved Inuit. William Fogarty, Melissa Lovell, Juleigh Langenberg and Mary-Jane Heron describe discourse as “powerful in determining what can and cannot be considered ‘truth,’ and influencing group and individual relationships accordingly.”³⁶ More than perceptions expressed through language, they continue, “it is a ‘system of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of actions, beliefs and practices that shape reality by systemically constructing the subjects and the worlds of which they speak.’”³⁷ In application to

³⁶ William Fogarty, Melissa Lovell, Juleigh Langenberg, and Mary-Jane Heron, *Deficit Discourse and Strength-based Approaches: Changing the Narrative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing*, Victoria, Australia: The Lowitja Institute & National Centre for Indigenous Studies, 2018, 2.

³⁷ Fogarty et al., 2.

the health of Australia's First Peoples, Fogarty et al. define "deficit-discourse" as a "mode of thinking that frames and represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity in a narrative of negativity, deficiency and failure."³⁸ The antithesis of deficit-discourse are "strength-based" approaches that provide alternatives to deficit narratives.³⁹

Often referred to in scholarship on social work, mental health, and education, "strength-based approaches"⁴⁰ are not usually applied as a theoretical framework to interpret history. Deficit discourse, however, is observed in analysis on both case studies. This "deficit discourse," to borrow from Fogarty et al., is not just evident in historical analyses of the trials, but also found in today's current analyses of these events. Thus, the first theoretical component in the current study is the interpretation of the historical Inuit through a strength-based lens. Applying a strength-based lens denounces deficit discourse. Historical deficit discourse employed by non-Inuit often assumed Inuit were so primitive that they lacked social organization, laws, and religion. Instead, this dissertation employs a strength-based lens that presupposes historical Inuit were rational, cultural, lawful, and religious.

Second, as interpretation is a central aspect of inquiry in these case studies, this dissertation questions the role of translation and interpretation between languages by emphasizing the second theoretical component that I apply, *uqattiartuq*.⁴¹ In Inuktitut, if a speaker has a high degree of fluency, they have the quality of *uqattiartuq*, an Inuktitut term that has several different meanings related to each other. In one sense, it can mean to speak well, fluently, and correctly, and in another, it can mean to speak the truth.⁴² The interpretative processes

³⁸ Fogarty et al., 2.

³⁹ Fogarty et al., 9.

⁴⁰ Fogarty et al., 9-15.

⁴¹ Spalding and Kusugak, 189.

⁴² Spalding and Kusugak, 189.

required to communicate between English and Inuktitut at the quality level of *uqattiartuq* imply that in order to speak well, fluently, and correctly, the person speaking must possess the knowledge of the subject that they are interpreting, in addition to possessing fluency in both Inuktitut and English. I employ the Inuktitut term *uqattiartuq* as a theoretical framework to highlight the central area of gaps in scholarship that neglect to consider interpreter biases in the two case studies examined in this dissertation. As a theoretical component, *uqattiartuq* questions the degree of fluency of the speaker and potential biases that may have directed the messages relayed and received.

Finally, as this dissertation aims to understand how historical Inuit experienced the events recorded in these case studies, the third theoretical framework applied to understand them is *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ).⁴³ IQ is a holistic Inuit philosophy that assists us in contextualizing the environment and culture of Inuit at the time of the case studies which allow for an Inuit-specific interpretation of the events recorded in them. *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* for the purposes of this dissertation refers to Inuit philosophy and beliefs. IQ as the philosophy of Inuit is a crucial theoretical component to understand the cultural and social context of Inuit in the early twentieth century, summed up in the structure of Inuit laws. *Inuit Maligait* refers to natural laws, *Inuit Atuagat* refers to cultural laws, and *Inuit Piqujangit* refers to communal laws, also known as IQ Principles.⁴⁴

Initially, IQ did not have a literal translation in English, but was defined as “all aspects of traditional Inuit culture including values, world-view, language, social organization, knowledge,

⁴³ Igloliorte, 102.

⁴⁴ Nunavut Department of Education, 23.

life skills, perceptions and expectations.”⁴⁵ Today, IQ is defined in English through its literal translation, “knowledge that Inuit have always known to be true,”⁴⁶ although the original reference remains the same. In comparison, today Inuit refer to “Western,” or Euro-Canadian knowledge as *Qallunaat Qaujimajatuqangit*, QQ.⁴⁷

Although much of the research on IQ tends to describe it as a resistance to colonial oppression and as the codification of IQ to assist southerners’ integration into Inuit society,⁴⁸ few have discussed the ways that Inuit adopted *Qallunaat Qaujimajatuqangit* (QQ) in cross-application to the Inuit context to solve problems, at least not in a positive, Inuit-affirming sense. Like IQ, QQ has undergone development and change, reflected in historiography’s periodization of historical time through macro-social changes. Characterized by broad social changes, for example, the *Age of Exploration*, the *Age of Discovery*, and the *Age of Enlightenment*, are used to define and emphasize significant social changes in western history. Each term denotes a positive movement towards progressive improvement in the conception of Western history’s successive “Ages” but leave out the fact that these significant social changes were brought on to European societies because of their early contact with Indigenous Peoples across the globe. In conventional conceptions of European history’s progressivism, change is positive and brought on by the agency of the people in reaction to their social contexts.

In contrast, the contact between Europeans and Indigenous Peoples across the globe is conventionally viewed to have negative results for Indigenous populations. In this schema, the North American Indigenous populations are today considered to have only had strong and

⁴⁵ Frank James Tester and Peter Irniq, “*Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Social History, Politics and the Practice of Resistance*,” *Arctic*, Vol 61, Suppl. 1, 2008, 48.

⁴⁶ Igloliorte, 102.

⁴⁷ Tester and Irniq, 52.

⁴⁸ Martin, 190; Lévesque 126-128.

distinct land-based cultures in the past that disintegrated due to the arrival of Europeans. While contact with Indigenous People provided the catalyst for social change and improvement in Europe, for Indigenous Peoples in North America, contact is considered to be the catalyst for an Indigenous apocalypse.

The conception of a disintegrated North American Indigenous culture is the starting point for much of the scholarship on Inuit and Inuit history. Questioning this conventional starting point, this current study applies Inuit-focused theoretical frameworks, such as IQ, *Maligait*, and *uqattiartuq*, to produce a positive-based interpretation of Inuit history. By employing Inuit philosophy, Inuit laws, and Inuktut into analysis of these historical events, we provide a more accurate context that demonstrates the agency of Inuit and the choices they have made, to produce a more nuanced and accurate interpretation of Inuit history.

Case Study 1: Canadian Sovereignty During WWI and the Inuinnait

Introduction

In the summer of 1917, amidst the final years of World War I, the Canadian Dominion Court convened in Edmonton and Calgary to hear the case of two *Inuinnait*⁴⁹ men, Sinnisiak and Uluksak, accused of murdering two Oblate priests in the remote Arctic. This event, seemingly secondary to the global conflict of WWI, was deeply entangled in the larger narrative of Canadian nation-building and sovereignty. The trial not only revealed tensions between Inuit sovereignty and Canadian statehood but also highlighted Dominion officials' understanding of Canada's expansion into the Arctic as continuation of seventeenth Jesuit missionary work that laid the foundation for Canada.⁵⁰

While scholars have focused on the significance of these events as demonstrations of Canada's exertion of power and control over Inuit, this case study explores the intersection of legal, religious, and national forces that transformed the deaths of the priests into a symbolic moment of martyrdom, linked to both territorial sovereignty and spiritual conquest. By examining the roles of key actors – both Canadian officials and Catholic missionaries – this case study uncovers how the deaths of the priests was leveraged as “martyrdom” to provide moral

⁴⁹ Inuinnait are referred to as “Eskimo” or “Husky/Huskies” in archival records. *Inuinnaq* refers to one person, and *Inuinnait* is plural, meaning “people.” A collective term to refer to western Canadian Inuit from the area known today as the Kitikmeot region of the Nunavut Territory of Canada. *Inuinnait* is a plural term that replaces the older, colonial term “Copper Inuit” See Béatrice Collignon, *Knowing Places the Inuinnait, Landscapes, and the Environment*, adapted from the translation of *Les Inuit. Ce qu'ils savent du territoire* by Béatrice Collignon (UHarmattan 1996) (translation and scientific editing by Linna Weber Müller-Wille), Circumpolar Research Series No. 10 Canadian Circumpolar Institute (CCI) Press, 2006, 5. Accessed online from Archive.org: https://archive.org/details/uap_9781772122015/mode/2up For a definition of Inuinnait, see Gwen Ohakok, Margo Kadlun, Betty Harnum, Mabel Ekvana Angulalik, Frank Analok, *Inuinnaqtun to English*, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut: The Kitikmeot Heritage Society and the Nunavut Arctic College, no date, 41. Accessed online on January 26, 2024: http://en.copian.ca/library/learning/nac/nac_dictionary/nac_dictionary.pdf *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 41.

⁵⁰ Charles C. McCaul, “Opening Address of Counsel for the Prosecution,” *R v Sinnisiak*, RG18 Vol 2479.

weight for Canada's dominion over the Arctic, while also shedding light on the often-overlooked agency of Inuit in navigating colonial encounters.

The analysis of this case study aims to illuminate a new perspective currently missing from scholarship: the perspective of Inuit. By revisiting this case study with consideration to *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* and Inuktut from sources available to anyone – Inuit and non-Inuit – scholarship can reimagine the social and historical context of historical Inuinnait to produce new, Inuit-specific understandings of this event. Far from the current narrative that understands Inuit as passive receivers of colonial invasion and violence, these trials reveal the active leadership of Inuit in Arctic sovereignty through their essential roles as guides and interpreters and highlights their leadership status over non-Inuit, many of whom were reliant on Inuit for survival.

Literature Review for Case Study 1

By the outbreak of WWI, the Arctic was still largely unmapped for *Qablunaat*.⁵¹ Although to be sure, Inuit knew their country with remarkable accuracy, and some drew maps for *Qablunaat*.⁵² Euro-Canadian entry into the Arctic, whether for discovery, sovereignty, or scientific pursuit, required the aid of Inuit for navigation and survival. All *Qablunaat* relied on Inuit as guides, interpreters, dog team drivers, hunters, and navigators.⁵³

⁵¹ *Qablunaat* is an Inuinnait plural term that means “white people,” singular term is “Qablunaaq.” See Ohakok et al., *Inuinnait to English*, 74; and see Collignon, *Knowing Places the Inuinnait, Landscapes, and the Environment*, adapted from the translation of *Les Inuit. Ce qu'ils savent du territoire*, 5. I employ the term in this section to refer to any persons of this era that are non-Inuit. For historical reference on the Arctic as terra incognita to non-Inuit, see Special Despatch, “Another Year Exploring: Stefansson Seems to Plan to Cross the Sea to Siberia,” *the Globe*, March 7, 1918.

⁵² H. De Hutorowicz, and B. F. Adler, “Maps of primitive peoples,” *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* 43, no. 9, 1911, 671.

⁵³ Vilhjalmur Stefansson, “‘Living off the Country’ As a Method of Arctic Exploration,” *Geographical Review* 7, no. 5, 1919, 298; Vilhjalmur Stefansson and Rudolph Anderson, *The Stefansson-Anderson Expedition: Preliminary Ethnological Report*, Anthropological Papers: American Museum of Natural History, Vol XIV, Part 1, New York: By Order of Trustees, 1919, 236; Peter Freuchen, *Book of Arctic Exploration*, New York: Coward-McCann, 1962, 215-219, 224; Thomas F. Hall, *Has the North Pole Been Discovered?: An Analytical and Synthetical Review of the Published Narratives of the Two Arctic Explorers, Dr. Frederick A. Cook and Civil Engineer Robert E. Peary, USN; Also a Review of the Action of the US Government*, Boston: Gorham Press, 1917, 314, 318, 379, 378.

For example, the RNWMP hired Inuit guides as “special constables” to carry out their patrols.⁵⁴ While Canadians considered their expeditions as “discovery,” and the RNWMP patrols as the assertion of Canada’s sovereignty made manifest, they still relied on Inuit guides to carry out their activities in the Arctic.⁵⁵ Scholars tend to leave out the aspect of Inuit roles essential in these historical quests for Canadian sovereignty. Instead, they focus on the negative impacts these activities caused, and refer to Sinnisiak and Uluksak’s trials as the second of three “show trials,”⁵⁶ highlighting how Canada used them as a pedagogical exercise to show all Inuit that they were no longer autonomous, but subjects to the British King and henceforth required to abide by British law.⁵⁷

The western Arctic in North America was ‘terra incognita’ for many southern Canadians at the time of Sinnisiak and Uluksak’s trials.⁵⁸ While the Inuit had the technological advances to traverse as far and wide as they pleased and survived from ancient wisdom learned through ancestral traditional knowledge, *Qablunaat* on the other hand, had no such knowledge, and their

⁵⁴ The Royal Northwest Mounted Police often hired First Nation and Inuit guides for their patrols. For example, Ilavinik was hired as an interpreter and Uluksak Mayuk was hired as a guide for the Great Bear Lake Patrol that investigated the disappearance of Rouvière and Le Roux. For mention about Ilavinik and Uluksak Mayuk see Robert Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1915: Printed by Order of Parliament*, Ottawa: J de L Taché, November 17, 1916, 200-201.

⁵⁵ The RNWMP report for 1914 summarizes the reliance on Indigenous guides that the police officers had in carrying out their patrols, “I most strongly recommend the abandoning of the winter patrol to Split Lake from Churchill, I have always great difficulty in obtaining a guide for this trip, last winter the guide was most unsatisfactory. It would be far more convenient to send this patrol to Port Nelson instead, there to connect with the patrol from Regina. It is very important that the Nelson detachment is kept in communication with Churchill as much as possible, and in addition the guide difficulty is done away with.” In addition, the use of the word “guide” is not found in reports from the later portion of the Great War from 1917-1918. For the recommendation to drop the Churchill to Split Lake patrol see Robert Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1914*, Ottawa: J de L Taché, December 2, 1915, 258.

⁵⁶ The first “show trial” is not necessarily a trial but a police investigation into the deaths of Harry Radford and George Street. Scholars connect Radford and Street’s police investigation, which did not result in any convictions, to Sinnisiak and Uluksak, the first actual trial, to demonstrate the progression in Arctic judicial policy as an increase of the Dominion’s intolerance toward Inuit accused of murder. See Lackenbauer and Kinsinger, *Arctic Show Trial*, iii-v; Coates et al., *Arctic Front*, 31; Komar, *The Court of Better Fiction*, 43-45; Grant, *Arctic Justice*, 129; Grant, *Polar Imperative*, 237-238; Moyles, *British Law and Arctic Men*, 90.

⁵⁷ Charles C. McCaul, “Opening Address of Counsel for the Prosecution,” *R v Sinnisiak*, RG18 Vol 2479.

⁵⁸ Rudolph M. Anderson, “Recent Explorations on the Canadian Arctic Coast,” *Geographical Review*, Vol 4 no. 4, October 1917, 256.

Arctic navigation and travel was sorely limited. Many European expeditions resulted in either failure or death due to improper equipment, clothing, and food.⁵⁹ Despite centuries of failure, *Qablunaat* stubbornly held fast to their own Arctic travel techniques until the turn of the twentieth century when explorers Robert Peary⁶⁰ and Roald Amundsen⁶¹ strategically adopted Inuit Arctic survival techniques and technology, a strategy that led to the success of their expeditions.⁶²

As *Qablunaat* learned to rely on Inuit expertise for survival, these earlier encounters were not limited to mere cultural exchange. The engagement of Inuit in these expeditions soon evolved into something much more, as Canada sought to assert its territorial claims in the North. Scholars Ken S. Coates, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, William R. Morrison and Greg Poelzer place Uluksak and Sinnisiak's murder trials within the broader topic of Arctic Sovereignty as early examples of RNWMP "demonstrations of authority," the "making real" of previous symbolic gestures of sovereignty that planted flags.⁶³ Morrison discussed the trials of Uluksak and Sinnisiak as part of a series of events that Canada employed to show Inuit that they were "under the law."⁶⁴ The government understood the "show trials" as a method to teach Inuit about Canadian law and that they were no longer autonomous but now *Canadians*.⁶⁵

Other scholars, such as McKay Jenkins, analyze Sinnisiak and Uluksak's trials as a representation of a tragic 'collision of cultures.' Jenkins clearly misunderstands Inuit culture,

⁵⁹ Vilhjalmur Stefansson, "Some Problems of Arctic Travel: After a Forced Landing," *The Geographical Journal* 74, no. 5, 1929, 416-421.

⁶⁰ Robert E. Peary, *The North Pole: Its Discovery in 1909 Under the Auspices of the Peary Arctic Club*, New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1910, 5-6.

⁶¹ Roald Amundsen, "To the North Magnetic Pole and Through the North-west Passage," *The Geographical Journal*, Vol 29 No 5, May 1907, 500.

⁶² Stefansson, "Some Problems of Arctic Travel," 422-429.

⁶³ Coates et al., *Arctic Front*, 27.

⁶⁴ William R. Morrison, "Canadian Sovereignty and the Inuit of the Central and Eastern Arctic," *Inuit Studies*, Vol 10, no. 1 / 2, 1986, 249-251.

⁶⁵ Morrison, "Canadian Sovereignty and the Inuit of the Central and Eastern Arctic," 249-251.

calling the language of Inuit “Inuit,” a mistake that shows little depth into Inuit worldview and culture.⁶⁶ Jenkins’ title, *Bloody Falls of the Coppermine: Madness, Murder, and the Collision of Cultures in the Arctic, 1913*, speaks to the editorial publication tendency to sensationalize these cultural exchanges of the past between Inuit and non-Inuit. On law, Jenkins recycles Inspector La Nauze’s conclusion that Inuit had no formal laws “save their time-honored customs of shame and excommunication.”⁶⁷

Jenkins went to Kugluktuk for a short visit one summer in 2002 when he made some deficit-focused observations:

The town celebrated the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and the Nunavut Act in 1993, marking the handover of vast amounts of Arctic territory to its original inhabitants. Yet to my eyes there was also a peculiar and unmistakable misery. Suicide continues to be a curse, particularly among the young...The twin demons of North American native people – alcoholism and diabetes, were also in full bloom and seemed, like all the town’s troubles, somehow more despairing for the unimaginable remoteness of the place itself...Bishop John Sperry [Anglican], considers Kugluktuk to be suffering from “urbanization,” an astonishing – but accurate – way to think about a tiny town whose nearest neighbor is hundreds of miles away. Kugluktuk now has all the problems of big cities: a high rate of unemployment; AIDS; cancer; domestic violence; drug abuse; pollution (mostly the result of nuclear fallout and the aerial disposal of PCBs, which are now showing up in the fat cells of caribou and seals); and global warming...⁶⁸

Although Jenkins wrote his observation about Kugluktuk in 2002 and described the ills of “civilization,” he nonetheless found examples of what *he* considered “traditional culture,” that in his assessment of Inuit, was better for Inuit. Jenkins shared his sentiment on the encroachment of

⁶⁶ Jenkins, *Bloody Falls of the Coppermine*, “Author’s Note.”

⁶⁷ Jenkins, *Bloody Falls of the Coppermine*, 117.

⁶⁸ Jenkins’ assumption that the *Nunavut Agreement* marked the transfer of “vast amounts of Arctic territory” is partially correct. In fact, the *Nunavut Agreement* settled lands with two distinct proprietors: Crown lands owned by the Crown and Inuit owned lands owned by District Inuit Organizations; Inuit owned lands are 17.7% of the entire Nunavut Settlement Area and Crown lands equal 82.3% of the Nunavut Settlement Area. Because the Nunavut Settlement Area in its entirety is 20% of Canada’s landmass, small percentage of Inuit ownership is nonetheless significant, despite that it is only 17.7% of the entire settlement area. See *An Agreement Between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area as represented by Tungavik Federation of Nunavut AND: Her Majesty The Queen in Right of Canada*, Article 1, Part 1: “General,” from *The Nunavut Agreement*, Amended version 2018, and see Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated “Inuit Owned Lands in Nunavut,” accessed online on May 11, 2024: <https://www.tunngavik.com/files/2011/03/iolmap.pdf>; McKay Jenkins, *Bloody Falls of the Coppermine: Madness and Murder in the Arctic Barren Lands*, New York: Random House, 2005, 220.

civilization onto Inuit territory, “I thought of the last hundred years, and the degree to which Western culture had, and had not, managed to envelop the people of Coronation Gulf. And I thought of what Denny La Nauze had written.”⁶⁹ Quoting La Nauze to speak for his own contemplations about Inuit and his visit to Kugluktuk, Jenkins agreed with La Nauze, who wrote a century earlier to present their wish for Inuit to remain pure and unadulterated :

Indeed, to us who have had the good fortune to see these people live their strenuous, healthy existence on the Arctic coast, we cannot wish them better fortune than to hope that civilization may ever be kept as arms’ length from them.⁷⁰

Forensic anthropologist Debra Komar attempts a much deeper dive into Inuit culture in her monograph *The Court of Better Fiction: Three Trials, Two Executions, and Arctic Sovereignty*, stating that Inuit had their own conceptions of justice. Though Komar’s analysis is primarily focused on the Alikomiak and Tatamigana capital court case of 1924, specifically producing a forensic analysis, Komar mentions Sinnisiak and Uluksak as a sort of stepping stone in the Dominion of Canada’s evolving policy in how they approached Inuit.⁷¹ Komar presents inaccurate details about Sinnisiak and Uluksak’s killing of Rouvière and Le Roux, stating, “Sinnisiak used his knife to slice each person open from his throat to his navel,”⁷² and discusses the posthumous cannibalism as an Inuit “ritual.”⁷³ Another inaccuracy is how Komar presented the two trials sequence of Sinnisiak and Uluksak, stating, “[N]either the RCMP nor the Department of Justice was prepared to let the case drop. *A few months later*, a second trial was held in Calgary...(emphasis added).”⁷⁴ In fact, both trials were conducted in August 1917, a few days apart.

⁶⁹ Jenkins, *Bloody Falls of the Coppermine*, 220.

⁷⁰ Jenkins, *Bloody Falls of the Coppermine*, 220.

⁷¹ Komar, *The Court of Better Fiction*, 42-44.

⁷² Komar, *The Court of Better Fiction*, 43.

⁷³ Komar, *The Court of Better Fiction*, 43.

⁷⁴ Komar, *The Court of Better Fiction*, 43.

Sidney Haring, writing in 1989, also produced inaccuracies regarding Sinnisiak and Uluksak's trials. "It is sad to report the killing of Uluksak, who has undergone a great deal in his life," Haring began. "After shooting a priest, he became, with Sinnisiak, a public spectacle in Edmonton and Calgary. He was tried twice and sentenced to death by Canadian courts."⁷⁵ In fact Uluksak was tried only once for the murder of Le Roux. Sinnisiak was tried twice. McCaul tried Sinnisiak alone for the murder of Rouvière in the first trial at Edmonton. In the second trial, McCaul charged both Sinnisiak and Uluksak for the murder of Le Roux.

Despite some inaccuracies, Haring is keenly aware that Inuinnait indeed had law, "two distinct legal realities existed on the frontier," and utilized Diamond Jenness and Knud Rasmussen's ethnographic accounts to produce narrative on Inuinnait law.⁷⁶ Although without explicit mention, Haring likely considered the Inuit comprehensive land claims negotiations that largely occurred throughout the late seventies to early nineties as motivation to study the "vitality of native sovereignty."⁷⁷ Arguing for legal pluralism, Haring stated, "Sovereignty, as a legal concept, was preserved in the legal cultures of dozens of distinct native peoples. We need to know more about the legal cultures of these people."⁷⁸ While acknowledging Inuinnait legal existence and "vitality," Haring nonetheless presents a deficit discourse in his analysis:

This paper will focus on one short period of the legal history of one native people, the Copper Inuit people, a period during which Canadian law was imposed by way of a deliberate political process that was specifically intended to destroy Copper Inuit law. The speed and totality of this occurrence is unparalleled in North America.⁷⁹

While Haring rightfully acknowledges the existence and significance of Inuinnait law, his portrayal ultimately reflects a deficit discourse, overlooking the resilience and complexity of

⁷⁵ Sidney L. Haring, "The rich men of the country: Canadian law in the land of the Copper Inuit, 1914-1930," *Ottawa Law Revue*. 21, 1989, 26.

⁷⁶ Haring, 5-6.

⁷⁷ Haring, 2.

⁷⁸ Haring, 2.

⁷⁹ Haring, 4.

Inuit legal systems in favor of a narrative that emphasizes their rapid and unilateral subjugation to Canadian law.

Graham Price, writing in 1991, critiques Haring, observing inaccuracies in both Morrison and Haring. For Morrison, Price observed “Professor Morrison refers to Alikomiak being under arrest for murder of a trader (Otto Binder) when he shot Corporal Doak. In fact, Doak was murdered before Binder, as Alikomiak’s statement clearly shows.”⁸⁰ On Haring, Price points out that “Haring refers T.L. Cory as the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. The Commissioner, W.W. Cory, was T.L. Cory’s father.”⁸¹ Price uses these examples to caution legal historians and remind them the potential issues with both secondary and primary sources: “What do these minor inaccuracies indicate? Only that legal historians, from whatever discipline they approach their subject, must be cautious when relying on secondary sources, and *very attentive to the possibility of inaccuracies in even the primary sources* (emphasis added).”⁸²

Historian Shelagh Grant briefly overviews the case study of Sinnisiak and Uluksak in her study of the contact between Inuit and the Canadian judicial system.⁸³ While focused on the murder trial of Nuqallaq in Pond Inlet in 1923,⁸⁴ Grant’s study includes the Inuit perspective much more than any other of the studies reviewed here. Grant compares and contrasts the Inuit conception of justice by mining the Northwest Territory and Nunavut Territory archives for oral histories that enhance her own Elder oral history project that she conducted in Pond Inlet on the

⁸⁰ Graham Price, “The King v. Alikomiak (aka Alicomiak, aka Alekamiaq),” *Manitoba Law Journal*, 20, 1991, 225.

⁸¹ Price, 225.

⁸² Price, 225.

⁸³ Shelagh Grant, *Arctic Justice: On Trial for Murder, Pond Inlet, 1923*, 1st ed. Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002, 41-49.

⁸⁴ Grant, *Arctic Justice*, 4-5.

Janes case.⁸⁵ Grant's ethnohistory treats the Inuit perspective not as a foreign place that is not worth understanding, but as an essential component when inquiring into Canadian history.

R.G. Moyles' study of the case relies solely on archival records of the trials and the personal memoirs of McCaul. Although thought provoking, it does not go into detail about Inuit conceptions of justice and law. On Inuit perspectives, Moyles expressed his hopelessness in attempting to understand an Inuit perspective and stated in 1979, "It is as pointless as it was for the journalists to keep wondering what Sinnisiak and Uluksak thought of it all. We shall never know."⁸⁶ Despite stating his limitation in understanding how Sinnisiak and Uluksak may have thought about their experience with British law, Moyles nonetheless attempts to present analysis on how Inuit tended to feel intimidated by "white men" and presents a perspective from Hugh Brody that painted Inuit as reliant on colonizers where he introduces the Inuit term "*ilira*:"

There is an Eskimo word that characterizes feelings that whites inspire in Inuit. That word (or root) is *ilira*, and it is not easy to translate. It is a kind of fear, a blend of awe and intimidation... it is the feeling inspired by the trader, the missionary, and the policeman, white strangers who were so obviously powerful, upon whom the Inuit were so acutely dependent and who told people what to do and believe but were not often disposed to listen what Inuit wanted to do and believe...⁸⁷

Moyles analysis is within the realm of deficit discourse that is often applied when in discussion about Indigenous Peoples. In describing Sinnisiak and Uluksak's trials as the beginning of Inuit loss of autonomy and culture,⁸⁸ Moyles paints a pretty grim picture for *all* Inuit whose culture has disintegrated:

It has not been my intention to imply that the trials of Sinnisiak and Uluksuk in 1917 were important enough to be considered the cause of the ultimate disintegration of the Copper Inuit's culture. But it is clear that those trials, the first for any Inuit under the "king's law," were a

⁸⁵ Grant, *Arctic Justice*, xvi-xx.

⁸⁶ Moyles, *British Law and Arctic Men*, 81-82.

⁸⁷ Hugh Brody, quoted in Moyles, *British Law and Arctic Men*, 90.

⁸⁸ Komar, *The Court of Better Fiction*, 152; Jenkins, *Bloody Falls of the Coppermine*, 220.

significant part of the process of neo-colonialism which Hugh Brody so lucidly describes: one can see, in the initial confrontations between Inuit and police, in the threats of John Hornby, in the treatment which Sinnisiak and Uluksuk received, the beginnings of what Brody calls *ilira*. One can see in McCaul's rhetoric, stemming from instruction received from the Ministers of Indian Affairs and Justice, an expression of the Government's determination to extend its colonial boundaries, both geographically and morally (emphasis in original).⁸⁹

Far from Inuit being *ilirahuktuq*, "intimidated,"⁹⁰ as Moyles stated, Sinnisiak and Uluksak's trials reveal the reverse. It was *Qablunaat* who were intimidated by Inuit. Scholarship frequently neglects to provide an analysis of how Inuit actively *resisted*, sometimes by violence, to adapt to *Qablunaat* customs. Moreover, as these murder trials show, numerous *Qablunaat* who did not adapt to Inuit ways of being and living suffered death. Death would come to the newcomer either through their own stubbornness, such as refusal to adopt Inuit Arctic survival methods, or they would be executed at the hands of Inuit hosts for not conforming to Inuit *Maligait*, i.e., Inuit laws.

While the Dominion of Canada evolved its policies in response to Inuit resistance and their growing fear of Inuit, a parallel can be drawn to the global context of WWI, where the assertion of control and survival played out with deadly repercussions in the trenches of Europe. The brutalities of global conflict, combined with the frustration of Canadian men who remained at home, inspired Dominion officials to find alternative ways to contribute to the war effort. They turned their attention to shaping Canada's Arctic frontier. In this effort, exemplified by the murder trials of Uluksak and Sinnisiak, the struggle for survival and sovereignty abroad,

⁸⁹ Moyles description of the Inuinait culture as ultimately "disintegrated" is the tendency of some scholarship to engage with "deficit discourse." Having recently had the opportunity to visit Kugluktuk twice in the year 2023, I can assure all the readers this community and its beautiful culture is not, as Moyles wrote, disintegrated. Far from it. It is a bustling town full of inspirational youth, and incredibly hard-working people who do what Inuit have done for millennia; they hunt, fish, make a living, build their community, practice their unique culture according to their current preferences. See Moyles, *British Law and Arctic Men*, 90.

⁹⁰ Ohaktok et al., *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 36.

epitomized by the phrase ‘Going Over the Top,’ was mirrored in the Dominion’s attempt to secure the Arctic.

Going ‘Over the Top’ to the “edge of the world,” Arctic sovereignty efforts in WWI

In August 1914 Germany invaded Belgium, leading England to declare war on Germany. Canada, as a colony of England, joined the war on August 4, 1914, through an order-in-council in Parliament⁹¹ and the introduction of the *War Measures Act* on August 21, 1914.⁹² Unlike previous wars, the ‘Great War’ (World War I, WWI) followed the industrial revolution that historian Bill Rawling has described as the product of “centuries of technological development in an orgy of violence to which rifles, machineguns, flamethrowers, artillery pieces, tanks, submarines, poison gas and aircraft all contributed.”⁹³ As rockets, grenades, bullets, and poisonous gas flowed overhead, and debris fell into the trenches of the Western Front of France, mobile infantry, many young men witnessed unimaginable horrors and, if they survived, they saw their comrades’ bodies torn apart by technological warfare never seen before.⁹⁴

Dubbed “No Man’s Land,” the Western Front is characterized by the utilization of “trenches,” dugouts in the earth created by soldiers that made combat notoriously hard, if not impossible, leading to millions of casualties and a deadlock of war on the Western Front.⁹⁵ The phrase ‘Over the top’ was an expression by soldiers of WWI engaged in trench warfare that

⁹¹ Michel Rossignol, *Parliament, The National Defence Act, and the Decision to Participate*, Canada: Library of Parliament, Parliamentary Research Branch, August, 1992, record BP-303E, catalogue number YM32-2/303-1992E-PDF, 2-3, accessed online January 13, 2024: <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.564963/publication.html>

⁹² Patricia Peppin, “Emergency Legislation and Rights in Canada: The War Measures Act and Civil Liberties,” *Queen’s Law Journal* 18, no. 1, Spring 1993, 133.

⁹³ Rawling, 3.

⁹⁴ Erich Maria Remarque, A.G. Ullstein, *All Quiet on the Western Front (Im Westen Nichts Neues)*, Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications Inc., 1956, 84; Bill Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918, Second Edition*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018, 3-4.

⁹⁵ Rawling, 217.

described the war strategy of leaving the dugout trenches to engage in military combat with the enemy.⁹⁶ The phrase indicated that soldiers had to enter ‘no man’s land’ and engage in combat vis-à-vis enemy soldiers. This phrase denoted the likely death but also the bravery of the soldier.⁹⁷ ‘Over the top’ also meant that young soldiers were required to engage in extreme violence against other young men,⁹⁸ and these experiences led to psychological trauma in what would become described as “shellshock.”⁹⁹

Of an estimated population of 8,000,000 Canadians at the time of the Great War,¹⁰⁰ approximately 650,000 Canadian men served in WWI, with approximately 66,000 deaths in combat or resulting from injuries sustained in combat.¹⁰¹ More than 172,000 Canadian men returned home wounded,¹⁰² many with debilitating illnesses caused by poisonous gas, amputations, and shellshock.¹⁰³ Soldiers who survived unscathed were required to continue fighting until they would become injured – or die. Newspapers reported on “invalided soldiers” who returned home,¹⁰⁴ and Canadians, faced with the gravity of war, felt it through the loss of

⁹⁶ Robert J Wilson, “Still fighting in the trenches: ‘War discourse’ and the memory of the First World War in Britain,” *Memory Studies*, 2015, 4.

⁹⁷ Empey, chapter XI “Over the Top;” Remarque, 80.

⁹⁸ Remarque, 36-37, 80.

⁹⁹ Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, “Battle for the mind: World War I and the birth of military psychiatry,” *Lancet* 2014; 384. 1708; Magdalena Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek, “The Soldier’s Return—the Canadian WWI Veteran Care System” *Białostockie Teki Historyczne* 15 (2017), 189-190.

¹⁰⁰ Statistics Canada, “Estimated population of Canada, 1605 to present,” archived web content, accessed on November 19, 2023: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/98-187-x/4151287-eng.htm>.

¹⁰¹ Veterans.gc.ca, “First World War: 1914-1918,” website from Canada.ca, accessed online November 19, 2023: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/wars-and-conflicts/first-world-war/>.

¹⁰² Veterans.gc.ca, “First World War: 1914-1918,” website from Canada.ca, accessed online November 19, 2023: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/wars-and-conflicts/first-world-war/>; Statistics Canada, “Number of casualties in the First World War, 1914 to 1918, and the Second World War, 1939 to 1945,” archived web content, accessed on November 19, 2023: https://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb02/1947/acyb02_19471126002-eng.htm; Canadian War Museum, “The Cost of Canada’s War,” accessed online November 19, 2023: <https://www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/history/after-the-war/legacy/the-cost-of-canadas-war/>. The numbers presented in these various sources differ, albeit slightly, the numbers cited in these paragraphs are selected from Veterans.gc.ca but it is important to note the other sources consulted.

¹⁰³ Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek, 187-189.

¹⁰⁴ “BACK FROM THE WAR 46 SOLDIERS ARRIVE: ALL WELCOMED AT STATION BY FRIENDS AND PROMINENT CITIZENS.” *The Globe* (1844-1936), Jan 17, 1917.

their sons, husbands, and fathers who never returned. If they did return, they were severely injured with either external visible injuries or with the 'invisible' illness of shellshock.

With so much loss, the war *had* to mean something for both veterans and their Canadian families left at home. The meaning found in the Great War for individual Canadians conflated with ideas of Canada's nationhood and led to the rise in Canadian nationalism in the post-war period, which continued to the Second World War.¹⁰⁵ Canadians viewed their participation in the Great War as equated to Canada's growth as an independent nation. Canada became the first British colony to become its own independent country from England on July 1, 1867, and later Canadian leaders strongly associated the Great War as Canada's coming-of-age story that enshrined battlefield successes from WWI as demonstrable of Canada's rise to "manhood."¹⁰⁶ Soldiers who enlisted to fight abroad and who 'went over the top' and died on the Front were considered martyrs for Canada.¹⁰⁷

<https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/back-war-46-soldiers-arrive/docview/1354400275/se-2>

¹⁰⁵ Jonathan Scotland, *And the Men Returned: Canadian Veterans and the Aftermath of the Great War*, PhD dissertation, University of Waterloo, 2016, 39-40.

¹⁰⁶ Scotland, *And the Men Returned: Canadian Veterans and the Aftermath of the Great War*, 39-40; Stewart Lyon, "HOW CANADIANS ANSWER LAST CALL---BATTLEFIELD STORIES: DIE AS BRAVELY AS THEY FIGHT HOW CANADIANS MEET GREATEST TEST OF MANHOOD HAVE NO SELF-PITY THOUGHTS OF HOME AND OF THE FOLK THERE, ESPECIALLY OF THE MOTHER, ARE OFTEN THE LAST IN THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS," *The Globe* (1844-1936), Apr 14, 1917, <https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/how-canadians-answer-last-call-battlefield/docview/1350674636/se-2>.

¹⁰⁷ Suzanne Evans aptly states "Not only were soldiers as exemplars of Christian sacrifice, they were also often depicted as peace-loving men forced into action by the aggressor. This quality of pacifism is reminiscent of a more traditional understanding of martyrs as gentle souls who do not want to hurt anyone;" and as Tim Cook points out, the Canadian Corps widely believed the rumored witness of a Canadian soldier's Christ-like crucifixion in the Battle of Ypres of 1915 that was a powerful and enduring image recanted between Canadian soldiers and retold to new soldier recruits. The Great War was often dubbed a "war for civilization" for Canadian soldiers, mostly Christian, who fought against the "barbaric Huns." See Suzanne Evans, *Mothers of Heroes, Mothers of Martyrs World War I and the Politics of Grief*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007, 43-44; Tim Cook's chapter "Black-Hearted Traitors, Crucified Martyrs, and the Leaning Virgin: The Role of Rumor and the Great War Canadian Soldier," In *Finding Common Ground*, Jennifer D. Keene, and Michael S. Neiberg, *Finding Common Ground New Directions in First World War Studies*, Leiden; Brill, 2011, 31-33.

While the Great War provided Canadians with a sense of nationalism and maturity, it also led to a firming of geopolitical boundaries. Brandon Dimmel described the pre-war experience of many Canada-U.S. border towns as “fluid,” where residents of either country could cross freely between the Canada-U.S. border to visit stores, baseball stadiums, and factories on a daily basis without thinking twice or having to plan to do so.¹⁰⁸ At the onset of the Great War, the Canada-US border solidified, and both countries restricted the movement of their respective citizens with newly stationed immigration officials who quite suddenly enforced stringent requirements for border crossing.¹⁰⁹ The increased concern over geopolitical borders felt in southern Canadian border towns extended across Canada and up toward the Arctic. While the Great War reshaped global geopolitics, similar forces were at work in Canada’s northern frontiers. Shortly after the outbreak of WWI, the Dominion of Canada ordered the Royal Northwest Mounted Police (RNWMP)¹¹⁰ to increase their number of members¹¹¹ and conducted a recruitment campaign for new men from August 8 to September 22, 1914.¹¹¹

By 1915, the “call to arms” was so strong that, despite Prime Minister Borden’s explicit forbidding for RNWMP members to enlist in the fight overseas, and despite the force’s recruitment campaign, they lost one-fourth of their service members toward the war efforts.¹¹² Prime Minister Borden commended the police members’ desire to enlist, though prohibited it,

¹⁰⁸ Brandon R. Dimmel, *Engaging the Line: How the Great War Shaped the Canada-US Border*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2016, 14.

¹⁰⁹ Dimmel, *Engaging the Line: How the Great War Shaped the Canada-US Border*, 14-18.

¹¹⁰ In November 1919, an Act was passed in Parliament to amend the Royal Northwest Mounted Police Act that merged the Royal Northwest Mounted Police (RNWMP) with the Dominion Police at which time they changed their name to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). As this historic court case predates 1920, the reader will notice that the police force is referred to here as the Royal Northwest Mounted Police and abbreviated with “RNWMP.” See J.A. Calder, *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Year Ended September 30, 1920*, Ottawa: Thomas Mulvey, 1921, 5, accessed online November 18, 2023 from RCMP Veteran’s Association: https://rcmpva.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/1921v57i8p28_1584.pdf.

¹¹¹ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1914*, 25.

¹¹² Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1916*, 8.

stating “service...to the Dominion and to the Empire is not less important than that which they would perform if actually serving at the front...the Prime Minister has found himself unable to consent to the retirement from the force of many officers...”¹¹³ With notions that the enemy was close, the Dominion of Canada was on constant alert and internal sovereignty measures, such as RNWMP patrols through Canada’s hinterlands,¹¹⁴ were equated with battles fought by Canadian soldiers overseas in Europe.

The increased numbers of police force made in 1914 was rationalized for “adequate protection” of the Germans and Austrians living on Canadian soil as “enemy aliens.”¹¹⁵ This changed in 1916, however, to investigations, internments and paroles of landed immigrants¹¹⁶ that the RNWMP enacted through “powers conferred by the Order in Council,” undoubtedly a reference to the newly legislated *War Measures Act*, that “have not been arbitrarily or harshly exercised.”¹¹⁷ The progression of heightened fear and anxieties of the earlier years of WWI is clear in the RNWMP’s reports that record an increase in stringent measures enacted on landed immigrants.

Amidst the tightening control over Canada’s southern borders, a lesser-known but equally significant narrative unfolded in the Arctic. Canadian lawmakers, tasked with the protection of the newly formed Canada felt it necessary to show strength at home and also initiated new

¹¹³ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1916*, 8.

¹¹⁴ One of the primary tasks of the RNWMP was to complete boundary line patrols to prevent smuggling of alcohol from the United States and the newly formed Government of Canada sent its first patrol from the east at Dufferin westward on reconnaissance to “the north-west provinces and Indian territories of the Dominion.” In 1905 the RNWMP opened a new police district, “Athabasca,” designated “N” division that encompassed the northern region of the Northwest Territories. See Arthur Lincoln Haydon, *The Riders of the Plains: A record of the Royal North-West Mounted Police of Canada, 1873-1910*, London: The Copp Clark Co. Ltd., 1910, 13-31, 277.

¹¹⁵ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1914*, 8.

¹¹⁶ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1916*, 9.

¹¹⁷ Robert Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1916: Printed by Order of Parliament*, Ottawa: J de L Taché, 1917, 9.

RNWMP patrols in more remote regions.¹¹⁸ In addition, the Dominion of Canada sent out explorers to the Arctic from Department of Interior's International Boundaries Board to "discover" land unexplored by non-Inuit in the Arctic.¹¹⁹

It was within this context of heightened geopolitical tension that news of the mysterious deaths of two Oblate priests in the Arctic begun to unfold. One explorer, an English-born man named D'Arcy Arden,¹²⁰ travelled across Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories in 1914 to meet two Oblate of Mary Immaculate (OMI)¹²¹ priests named Jean-Baptiste Rouvière and Guillaume Le Roux,¹²² with plans to stay at their cabin.¹²³ The Oblates had sent Rouvière from Fort Norman to Great Bear Lake in 1912 and in 1913 dispatched Le Roux to join him where they built a small mission house¹²⁴ to embark on converting the Inuinnait living in the area.

However, when Arden arrived in August 1914, he met "a band of Indians" (the Dene) who told him the priests were killed by "Huskies" (the Inuinnait), a statement that Arden initially disbelieved,¹²⁵ his opinion being that the priests had frozen to death.¹²⁶ Arden travelled with Dene sometime later that month of August when he came face to face with the "Eskimo," whose

¹¹⁸ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1916*, 10.

¹¹⁹ Robert Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1915: Printed by Order of Parliament*, Ottawa: J de L Taché, November 17, 1916, 204.

¹²⁰ Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, "History," Authority Record – D'Arcy Arden, Northwest Territories Archives, no date, accessed online on May 11, 2024: <https://gnwt.accesstomemory.org/arden-darcy> .

¹²¹ Robert Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1995, 1-27.

¹²² Jean-Baptiste Rouvière was a native of diocese of Mende, in Lozère, France. Guillaume Le Roux was a native of the diocese of Quimper, in Finisterre, France. See Pierre Jean-Baptiste Duchaussois, *Mid Snow and Ice: The Apostles of the North-west*, translated by Thomas Dawson, Buffalo, NY: Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, 1937, 365-367

¹²³ D'Arcy Arden, statement, Fort Norman, July 15, 1915, from: Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1915*, 204; D'Arcy Arden, correspondence to J.K. Cornwall, January 1915, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR2001.184 Box 1 file 34.

¹²⁴ Gabriel Breynat, translated by Alan Gordon Smith, *Bishop of the Winds: Fifty Years in the Arctic Regions*, New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1955, 137-138; Charles C. McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 1919, unpublished manuscript. Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR 2001.184, box 1, file 30, 43.

¹²⁵ Arden, statement, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1915*, 204.

¹²⁶ D'Arcy Arden, correspondence to J.K. Cornwall, January 1915, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR2001.184 Box 1 file 34.

presence in the vicinity left the Dene “in a great state of abject fear.”¹²⁷ The first report about Rouvière and Le Roux come from Arden who notified one of his employers in January of 1915 that he was unable to carry out exploration plans on account of the Inuinnait and that he learned the priests were dead, and reported:

...I asked him [a Dene man] if he knew where the priests were, and he replied that the Huskies said that they were dead. My hope of getting information from the fathers died right there. This Indian [the Dene man] also said that the Huskies had killed the priests for they had all their things wit [sic] them. As he [the Dene man] was very much scared and excited I did not take him seriously. However he begged so strongly for me to go back with him that I did so arriving at the camp three days later. Here I met the funniest sight I have ever seen. I found some 34 Huskies camped with six families of Indians. Some of the Huskies were in the priests clothes. One of them wore a cassock.¹²⁸

What began as a seemingly isolated report from Arden to his employer soon escalated into a national investigation, with the RNWMP playing a crucial role. Later in March of 1915, RNWMP Inspector Charles Rheault obtained information that in 1914 a Dene man named La Moelle was travelling with a group of Dene, and as they approached the priests’ cabin, they saw Inuinnait who ran away once the Dene arrived. La Moelle saw two of the Inuinnait dressed in priests’ cassocks, one of the cassocks had a hole the size of a knife and around the hole dried blood could be seen. Rheault stated that no other information could be obtained and sent his report to the Officer Commanding “N” Division of the RNWMP on March 7, 1915.¹²⁹

Arden’s news that the two priests had possibly succumbed to death he also reported to the Oblate missionary Father Ducot in 1914 whose opinion was that the priests’ disappearance was not a matter for the RNWMP to investigate.¹³⁰ Two other *Qablunaat* went missing during the

¹²⁷ Arden, statement, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police*, 1915, 205.

¹²⁸ Arden, correspondence to Cornwall, January 1915, PR2001.184 Box 1 file 34.

¹²⁹ Charles Rheault, “Appendix P., Inspector C.A. Rheault, Fort Fitzgerald to Fort Simpson and Return,” August 13, 1915, from: Robert Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1915: Printed by Order of Parliament*, Ottawa: J de L Taché, November 17, 1916, 200.

¹³⁰ Arden, statement, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police*, 1915, 208.

same timeframe as Rouvière and Le Roux: Harry Radford and George Street.¹³¹ Although Ducot did not want to alert the police in 1914 to the potential deaths of Rouvière and Le Roux, when news began to spread about the priests' disappearance in 1915, the Oblates reversed their original stance on disclosure of their missing priests and requested an investigation, appealing directly to Prime Minister Robert Borden.¹³² The RNWMP, acting on Prime Minister Borden's orders, dispatched an official investigation of the Great Bear Lake Patrol in 1915.¹³³

Arden's statement to the RNWMP in 1915 is reported in their investigative report of the missing priests in which he stated that he informed how the Oblates stationed at Fort Norman, Father Ducot, was reluctant to involve the police to investigate Rouvière and Le Roux's potential death:

Next day I was very much surprised to see two of the Huskies in the priests' cassocks...The Indians told me that the Huskies had killed the priests; they had seen the Huskies with all the priests' things...My opinion of the missing priests is that, judging by their condition of health when they left their houses, they have become sick and died somewhere on the Coppermine river...I did not report to the police as I had no grounds for saying the priests were dead, but only my private observations. I informed the priests at Norman and gave them my opinion as to how they might be dead. I told them I thought it was a matter for the police to take up. But Rev. Father Ducot said that it was not in the interest of the missionaries to do that.¹³⁴

Father Ducot's opinion was that the fathers were still alive, while Father Frapsauce believed that the two priests had died.¹³⁵ It is conceivable that in order to secure a successful causa for Rouvière and Le Roux's martyrdom, the Oblates had to control the narrative surrounding their deaths. The initial barring of information in their purported disappearance to the police, as Arden's statement recorded, is evidence of Oblate censorship.

¹³¹ Gabriel Breynat, correspondence to Lawrence Fortescue, April 28, 1915, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR.2001.184, box 1 file 19.

¹³² Robert Borden, correspondence to Gabriel Breynat, May 25, 1915, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR.2001.184, box 1 file 19

¹³³ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police 1915*, 13.

¹³⁴ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1915*, 205-208.

¹³⁵ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1915*, 204.

In addition, the Oblates controlled the narrative through their roles in the official RNWMP investigation as interpreters for the police. Father Frapsauce interpreted for Inspector La Nauze, head of the Great Bear Patrol investigating the priests' disappearance, and provided an interpreted statement from a sixteen-year-old Dene boy named Harry:

They [Rouvière and Le Roux] had spare cassocks in their house on Bear lake...I saw the Eskimos one day the following summer before Mr. Arden came to Dease river...A few of these men I had seen before and most of the others were strangers to me. The ones I knew I had seen with the priests, but the two brothers who were to accompany the priests on their trip to the coast I did not see. We asked them if they had seen the priests and they all said they had not. My mother did the talking and they talked by signs. An Eskimo whom I had seen before had the priest's rifle (Father Rouvière's)... We asked them where they got the rifle and they did not answer...and then that Husky went away. Two or three weeks before this I was at Caribou point and when I came back to our house on Bear lake where the priests' house was which I was looking after, I found that all the houses had been broken into...A lot of stuff had been taken out of the priests' house...Many blankets had been taken, cartridges, candles, handkerchiefs, files, stockings, three Cardigan jackets, pocket-knives and cassocks. One cassock was left lying on the floor...they took the altar vestments used for mass. They took the chalice...The chief told us that he and six men had taken this stuff...These were the same men that Mr. Arden saw and they would not tell us where they got the priests' rifle from. I have seen this man before, every summer, and he knows the priests well...I think the priests were frozen to death somewhere, but I do not know where.¹³⁶

Despite the growing testimony that the priests were dead, Father Ducot stated to the RNWMP that he thought the priests were alive and would return in the following summer:

When I heard the report of the Huskies having been seen in the priests' gowns I was not afraid. The fathers had a change of gowns with them and as strange Eskimo were reported to have come from the east, I think it likely that they stole the fathers' spare gowns they had left behind them. I still believe that the priests are safe and that they will come back this summer. In the last letters I had from the fathers they spoke very highly of the Eskimo who were to accompany them, speaking of their politeness and good nature. The Indians who have met these Eskimo, also spoke well of them, but now, since they stole from them and since they think that the Eskimo have killed the priests, they are afraid of them.¹³⁷

Father Frapsauce, although stating that he thought the priests were dead, reported, "I have heard the fathers [Rouvière and Le Roux] speak about the Eskimo and they spoke of them very

¹³⁶ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1915*, 208-209.

¹³⁷ The inclusion of the motive for the Dene's fear of the Inuinnait is inconsistent with Vilhjalmur Stefansson's report that outlined a broader and more general fear. See Vilhjalmur Stefansson and Rudolph Anderson, *My Life with the Eskimo*, New York: Macmillan Company, 1913, 217-219. Accessed from Archive.org on January 21, 2024: <https://archive.org/details/mylifewitheskimo00stef/mode/2up> ; Father Ducot, "The Rev. Father Ducot states as follows," July 15, 1915, from: Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1915*, 210.

highly...I do not remember much about the equipment the fathers took to Bear lake [sic] with them. They had probably a spare cassock each.”¹³⁸ Evidently, “spare” cassocks were a noteworthy point of interest for all those reporting to La Nauze through Oblate interpreters. The cassocks are mentioned only in the statements from the Oblates, aside from Arden, who first reported to the Oblates that he saw an “Eskimo” man in a cassock. It is also conceivable that, because the Oblates did not want an investigation into the priests’ death, they attempted to spin the story of the Inuinnaq man found with a blood-stained cassock as a result of petty theft, not potential violence against the priests.

The following spring in 1916 was much more successful in La Nauze’s Great Bear Lake Patrol investigation. On May 7, 1916, La Nauze met Constable Bruce, who travelled with an Alaskan Inupiat interpreter, Special Constable Ilavinik, and spent one evening at Cape Lambert in the Dolphin and Union Straits (north of the Coronation Gulf) where Ilavinik talked with the Inuinnaq in camped in that area. One of them was Natkusiak, one of Vilhjalmur Stefansson’s main informants, who also knew Ilavinik through Stefansson’s connection.

Ilavinik “thought he could find out something from these people,” and they were escorted to an igloo where La Nauze “sat back and let Ilavinik do the talking,” when they learned that two Inuinnaq men, Sinnisiak and Uluksak, had possibly killed the priests:

I heard him [Ilavinik] question them closely and I could see him trembling. I saw that something was happening, but I never moved, and in about five minutes he turned to me and said “I got him, the priests were killed by Husky, all right; these men very, very sorry...” I told Ilavinik to go ahead while I went out for Corpl. Bruce and when we got back Ilavinik said “Now you write down these two names Uluksak and Sinnisiak, you got that? Now I find out some more...” Ilavinik ordered only one man to speak at once, and they said Koeha had better speak as he knew all... From what information we could gather here and at other villages it had been a cruel and bloody murder. The priests had accompanied the Eskimos to the coast about November, 1913. They had only stopped a few days at the mouth of the Coppermine, and had started back alone. Two nights after they had left, two men named Sinnisiak and Uluksak started to follow them, telling the people they were going to help the people still on the road from Dismal lakes. A few nights after they returned carrying the priests’ rifles, and had told the people they had murdered

¹³⁸ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1915*, 210-211.

the priests near the Bloody Falls. The man Uluksak had told the tale of the murder to all present, and said he had been urged to assist in the crime by the man Sinnisiak. Father Le Roux had been stabbed in the back by Sinnisiak and finished off by Uluksak, and Father Rouvier had made a dash for the sled where his rifle was. Sinnisiak evidently was too quick for him and he started to run away when he was shot by Sinnisiak... Upon being asked why they did not tell of this before, they said that they were afraid; they wanted to tell it to Arden and Hodgson but no one they met there could understand their language. They had heard of Ilavinik from Natkusiak, and were not afraid now. They had carried this in their heads a long time. They were afraid to tell it to the men at the Igloopuk as there were so many there, and Hornby had told some of them if they killed white men the white men would kill them all.¹³⁹

Following the statements gathered by Ilavinik, the patrol learned that Sinnisiak was camped somewhere near Victoria Island [Bernard Harbour], and Uluksak was east of the Coppermine River. Another man also named Uluksak (not the accused), volunteered to guide the patrol to locate Sinnisiak, arriving there on May 14th, 1916:

We entered and our man [Sinnisiak] was sitting down engaged in the manufacture of a bow. He appeared to be stunned with fear, and I learnt afterwards that he expected to be stabbed right then. He told me his name according to their custom, and he was formally arrested and searched by Corporal Bruce. Hidden under the deer skins at his back was a loaded .22 automatic rifle and two large knives. Ilavinik told me afterwards that the first words he said to Uluksak was, "What do you men want?" Uluksak said, "The white men here want you to go with them." Sinnisiak said, "If the white men kill me I will make medicine and the ship will go down in the ice and all will be drowned."¹⁴⁰

At Bernard Harbour, the RNWMP patrol gained a new interpreter, sixteen-year-old boy Patsy Klengenberg, who had been working for Diamond Jenness.¹⁴¹ Patsy knew what Uluksak looked like and travelled with the patrol to the mouth of the Coppermine River, reaching there on May 22nd, 1916:

He [Uluksak] was immediately recognized by Patsy and as Constable Wight and myself approached him he ran forward holding up his hands and saying "Goana Goana" (Thank you. I'm glad.) I asked him if he knew what we had come for "Oh, yes, he knew well; were we going to kill him? The other two white men hit me over the head, will you do this?" I told him carefully that he had nothing to fear and he was formally arrested by Constable Wight. We explained that he had to come with us, "Oh, yes" he said he would come, he would go wherever we wanted him to go, but his wife was making him water boots, and would we wait until they were finished? He seemed a very different character from Sinnisiak, and the only weapon he had was a bow and a few arrows.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police 1916*, 199-200.

¹⁴⁰ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police 1916*, 200-201.

¹⁴¹ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police 1916*, 202.

¹⁴² Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police 1916*, 202.

After arresting Sinnisiak and Uluksak in the spring of 1916, the RNWMP conducted preliminary hearings and then brought Sinnisiak and Uluksak as prisoners for charge of murder, first bringing them to Herschel Island,¹⁴³ where they were held in custody until the summer of 1917, when the RNWMP transported the prisoners to stand trial in Edmonton.¹⁴⁴

After the trials in 1919, Professor Maurice Hutton penned the foreword for Charles Coursolles McCaul's unpublished manuscript titled *Arctic Tragedy*.¹⁴⁵ Both a personal memoir and an amateur ethnography, *Arctic Tragedy* detailed the first of two murder trials, *R v Sinnisiak* and *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak*, both held in August of 1917, when McCaul served as Crown prosecutor. Although there is evidence in the manuscript of other chapters that details the second trial held in Calgary, they are not found in the archival record.

Hutton, who was married to McCaul's sister Annie Margaret,¹⁴⁶ described the RNWMP patrol that led to the arrests of Sinnisiak and Uluksak as a heroic journey through the Arctic wilderness comparable to soldiers, who, “‘*went over the top*’ as other Canadians at the same time were doing in another way but in a similar cause in France and Flanders, and reached their objective not less surely and not less patiently (emphasis added).”¹⁴⁷ Hutton's use of the term “over the top,” a phrase deeply associated with the horrors of trench warfare during WWI, presents a striking parallel between the Canadian soldiers' experience in Europe and the

¹⁴³ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police 1916*, 221.

¹⁴⁴ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police 1916*, 12, 197; Kenneth Chipman, correspondence to Gabriel Breynat, November 15, 1916, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR.2001.184 box 1, file 19; A. Bowen Perry, correspondence to the Deputy Attorney General of the Province of Alberta, April 12, 1917, “Sinnisiak and Uluksak case files,” courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, GR.1972.0026, C780.

¹⁴⁵ Maurice Hutton, “Foreword,” Charles C. McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 1919, unpublished manuscript. Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR 2001.184, box 1, file 30.

¹⁴⁶ Vancouver West End History, “McCaul, Charles Coursolles (1838-1928),” accessed online from West End Vancouver website, November 18, 2023: <https://westendvancouver.wordpress.com/biographies-a-m/biographies-m/mccaul-charles-coursolles-1838-1928/>.

¹⁴⁷ Hutton, “Foreword,” PR 2001.184, box 1, file 30.

RNWMP's pursuit of Sinnisiak and Uluksak. By invoking this military imagery, Hutton not only elevates the police patrol to a heroic status akin to that of wartime soldiers, but also subtly frames the Arctic as a new battleground in Canada's assertion of sovereignty. This comparison suggests that for Hutton and others, the trial of these two Inuinnait men was not merely a legal proceeding to bring Inuit under control of Canadian law, but part of a broader campaign to secure and control the northern territories, much like the battlefields of Europe were vital to securing national interests.

Moreover, Hutton's use of the phrase "over the top" alludes to a perspective that the Arctic is similar to "No Man's Land," a dangerous place where enemies abound; only in this instance it is the Inuit who are Canada's enemies not the Germans. In the context of the Great War with the perceived threat to national security and fear of Inuit, the Dominion of Canada found an opportunity to assert their British-Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic through the administration of justice they forced unto Sinnisiak and Uluksak, the first Inuit to ever be tried in a Canadian court.¹⁴⁸ The trials of Sinnisiak and Uluksak was not only a legal proceeding but also a means for Canada to demonstrate its sovereignty over the Arctic. This was evident through the actions of the RNWMP officers, whose patrols to investigate the priests' disappearance led to the arrest and imprisonment of two Inuinnait men in their own land. The presence of RNWMP in the Arctic administering the Crown's justice as heroic exploit for Canada is an overarching theme found within the archives related to this case study.

After spending the winter at Herschel Island the RNWMP brought Sinnisiak and Uluksak to Edmonton to stand trial. Crown prosecutor McCaul's strategy was to try Sinnisiak and

¹⁴⁸ Moyles, *British Law and Arctic Men*, preface.

Uluksak separately on murder charges for the priests in August of 1917.¹⁴⁹ The first trial, *R v Sinnisiak*, was held in Edmonton and lasted for four days. McCaul's performance in this trial was dramatic with a lengthy opening address to the jury in which he stated the trials overarching sovereignty objective: "The long arm of British Justice has reached out to the shore of the Arctic Ocean, and has made prisoners of two of the aboriginal inhabitants of the Arctic Shore, suspected of committing a crime in question."¹⁵⁰ McCaul also called on several witnesses, regardless of the fact that there were no witnesses¹⁵¹ to the murders aside from the statement of Sinnisiak obtained from La Nauze through interpreter Ilavinik.¹⁵²

Defence lawyer for the accused, James Wallbridge, called many objections, and his performance was more measured and methodical than McCaul particularly when he fought hard to object McCaul's entry of Sinnisiak's statement as "confession" into evidence.¹⁵³ Despite McCaul's theatrical courtroom performance that aimed to scare the jurors into a guilty verdict described as a duty to make the Arctic more safe from the "cannibal" Inuinnait, the jury acquitted Sinnisiak for culpable murder of Rouvière.¹⁵⁴ Although we cannot know the jurors' reasons with certainty, McCaul wrote an affidavit to the Dominion Department of Justice

¹⁴⁹ Charles McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, unpublished manuscript, 1919, page 148, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR.2001.184. Box 1, file 30.

¹⁵⁰ Charles C. McCaul, "Opening address of counsel for the Prosecution," courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG18 Vol 2479, 6.

¹⁵¹ K.G. Chipman, correspondence to Breynat, November 15, 1916, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR2001.184 box 1 file 19; Edmund Leslie Newcombe, correspondence to A.G. Browning, December 21, 1917, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, GR1972.0026 file C780.

¹⁵² James Wallbridge, Denny La Nauze, and Ilavinik, trial transcripts for *R v Sinnisiak*, day 2 of trial, August 15, 1917, 127-132, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG18 Vol 2479.

¹⁵³ Charles McCaul, correspondence to E.L. Newcombe, October 31, 1917, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR2001.184 Box 1 file 17, 2-3.

¹⁵⁴ Trial transcripts, *R v Sinnisiak*, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG18 Vol 2479, 245.

expressing that he felt the Edmonton jury was influenced by external pressures and requested for a second trial for both Inuinait men to be held in Calgary; his request was granted.¹⁵⁵

The second trial, *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak*, was held in Calgary and lasted for only three days. In this trial McCaul kept it short, aimed less for dramatics, and highlighted the historic implications of the trial. Wallbridge's performance in the second trial seemed less engaged, and after less than an hour of deliberation the jury returned with a guilty verdict for Sinnisiak and Uluksak in the charge of murdering Le Roux.¹⁵⁶

When deliberating the outcome for Sinnisiak in the first trial held in Edmonton, the jury likely perceived difficulties to a guilty verdict possibly because of the scarcity of evidence and the fact that there were no eyewitnesses aside from the accused's statements. In McCaul's closing address on day four of the first trial, he attempted to emphasize to the jury that although no witnesses to the murders existed aside from the two accused, the Crown had a solid case on its own. "My friend [Wallbridge] says we could not have convicted without the confession," McCaul began his appeal to the jury, "Nonsense. There is a perfectly absolutely circumstantial case without the evidence of the prisoners at all. I would not be afraid to go to any Jury and expect to get a conviction on the evidence in that case."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Charles McCaul, correspondence to E.L. Newcombe, October 31, 1917, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR2001.184 Box 1 file 17, 3-4; Charles C. McCaul, record of oath, "IN THE MATTER OF THE CRIMINAL CODE, AND IN THE MATTER OF SINNISIAC AND ULUKSUK COMMITTED FOR TRIAL ON THE CHARGE OF MURDERING one ILOGOAK (FATHER LE ROUX); AND IN THE MATTER OF ULUKSUK, COMMITTED FOR TRIAL ON THE CHARGE OF MURDERING one KULEAVIK (FATHER ROUVIERE)," courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, GR1983.0001 Box 64 Item 5748.

¹⁵⁶ Trial transcripts, *R v Sinnisiak*, RG18 Vol 2479, 128.

¹⁵⁷ See McCaul, trial transcripts, Day four of *R v Sinnisiak*, August 17, 1917, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG18 Vol 2479, 226.

The jurors were also likely less inclined to deliver a guilty verdict because of the automatic capital punishment that came with the capital offence of murder at the time,¹⁵⁸ especially in light of Wallbridge's portrayal of Sinnisiak from a 'primitive race,' who, unaccustomed to British law, could not have known the gravity of his offence.¹⁵⁹

It is also quite possible that the Roman Catholic Oblate Bishop of the Mackenzie District, Gabriel Breynat, influenced the Edmonton jury. When McCaul requested to change venue to Calgary he did so in an affidavit in which he spoke to one jurymen, a Roman Catholic named H. Milton, who told McCaul that their "Archbishop" had been talking to them and they did not think the "Eskimos" should be punished. Also in the affidavit, McCaul notes that H.A. Conroy, "Indian Agent," had tampered the jury panel.

H.A. Conroy appears to have somewhat of a close relationship with the Oblate Bishop Gabriel Breynat and prior to the trials wrote to Breynat on October 9, 1916, to tell Breynat that he "fulfilled" his "promise" to Breynat in entreating the Dominion Minister of Justice to let Sinnisiak and Uluksak free with "sentencing" the Inuit to an Oblate northern mission as a "more practical method of putting a stop to the lawlessness among these people."¹⁶⁰ Although we cannot know the exact reasons why Bishop Breynat felt he needed to influence the jury, it is evident that he desired to have the two Inuinnait men as pupils.¹⁶¹ Perhaps if Sinnisiak and

¹⁵⁸ Horace Harvey, "Charge to the Jury," trial transcripts for *R v Sinnisiak*, Day four, August 17, 1917, 241, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG18 Vol 2479.

¹⁵⁹ James Wallbridge, Trial transcripts, *R v Sinnisiak*, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG18 Vol 2479, 61-65.

¹⁶⁰ See H.A. Conroy, correspondence to Breynat, October 9th, 1916, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR2001.184 Box 1 file 19; and see McCaul, record of oath, "IN THE MATTER OF THE CRIMINAL CODE," courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, GR1983.0001 Box 64 Item 5748, 3-4.

¹⁶¹ K.G. Chipman wrote to Breynat earlier in 1916 and expressed "I regret that Mr. Newcombe and Mr. Scott did not feel they should turn the men over to you – but I feel that this is a question in which you may have further to say." K.G. Chipman, correspondence to Breynat, November 15, 1916, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR2001.184 box 1 file 19; Gabriel Breynat, correspondence to L. Du Plessis, December 16, 1916; courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR2001.184 Box 1, file 19.

Ulksak converted, their conversion would potentially seal the deal for Rouvière and Le Roux's 'Couronne du martyre,' Crown of martyrdom.

Unable to take such legal liberties as the Canadian Dominion Court, however, the Vatican remained silent on the Oblate *causa*, i.e. cause, submitted for the "martyrdom"¹⁶² of Rouvière and Le Roux.¹⁶³ Breynat likely submitted Rouvière and Le Roux's cause sometime after 1921 when Pope Benedict XV removed the fifty-year rule from death to beatification to expedite Saint Thérèse de Lisieux's cause.¹⁶⁴ The Oblates speculated that Rome's silence was due to a lack of proof and testimony.¹⁶⁵

To generate the "glorification" of Rouvière and Le Roux as "martyrs,"¹⁶⁶ the Oblates held national playwriting contests in 1938 and 1939 in Canada and the United States.¹⁶⁷ Rouvière and Le Roux's story, "once in dramatic form," one Catholic Theatre newspaper reported, "should be an inspiration to theater-goers who will see depicted before them the Fathers' heroism for God."¹⁶⁸ Perhaps inspired to supplement the absence of witness testimony, the plays submitted in the contest when performed on stage provided Catholics an opportunity to 'witness' the

¹⁶² Emma Anderson has emphasized that "martyrdom is always an interpretation of a given set of facts," and not a fact in itself, and cautions that people can easily assume without analysing the theological implications that such a term carries, such as the guiltless nature of the martyr in opposition to their aggressors. See Emma Anderson, *The Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013, 8-9.

¹⁶³ Marcel Champagne, Marcel Ferragne, Andre Dorval, "Les RR.Rouviere et LeRoux, O.M.I. Sont-ils Martyrs? Texte de la conférence donnée le 28 août 1938, à la maison de campagne, "La Blanche," devant la communauté réunie," August 28, 1938, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR2001.184, box 1 file no. 25, page 13.

¹⁶⁴ Walter Peters, *The Life of Benedict XV*, Milwaukee : Bruce Publishing Co., 1959, 228-229. Accessed from Archive.org on February 18, 2024: <https://archive.org/details/lifeofbenedictxv0000pete/mode/2up>

¹⁶⁵ The OMIs held a conference to present a study submitted to the Roman Catholic Church in the Vatican on the Cause for Rouvière and Le Roux in the hopes that the Church would one day the canonize the two Oblates as they did the Jesuits. See Marcel Champagne, Marcel Ferragne, Andre Dorval, "Les RR.Rouviere et LeRoux, O.M.I. Sont-ils Martyrs? Texte de la conférence donnée le 28 août 1938, à la maison de campagne, "La Blanche," devant la communauté réunie," August 28, 1938, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR2001.184, box 1 file no. 25, page 2 and 13.

¹⁶⁶ Romeo Juneau, *Martyrs Aux Glaces Polaires*, Chambly-Bassin, P.Q., 1938,13.

¹⁶⁷ Mary E. Clancy, "Catholic Theatre," *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, January 5, 1939, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR2001.184, box 2 file 53; Juneau, *Martyrs Aux Glaces Polaires*, 9-13.

¹⁶⁸ Clancy, "Catholic Theatre," PR2001.184, box 2 file 53.

martyrdom of Rouvière and Le Roux. The scarcity of evidence and witness testimony in Rouvière and Le Roux's deaths proved to be a source of difficulty for both British and Canon law.

Many scholars today contend that Sinnisiak and Uluksak's trials had the dual purpose of demonstrating Canadian sovereignty over the Arctic to the global stage while serving a pedagogical avenue to show that British Sovereignty also applied to Inuit and tend to focus primarily on the development of Arctic policy.¹⁶⁹ While I align with the contributions of previous research, my research on Sinnisiak and Uluksak's case study takes a different approach, primarily focusing on the religious dimensions that these trials had for Canadians during the Great War and for Roman Catholics spanning several decades up to WWII.

While the legal implications of the trial were clear, the religious narrative surrounding the martyrs took on a life of its own, particularly in the Catholic Church. By examining the rhetoric from key individuals of the Dominion of Canada and the Oblates, I suggest that both groups felt that martyrdom was a precursor to sovereignty over land. Archives related to this story – from both the Dominion of Canada and the Oblates – disclose that those involved in the case saw martyrdom as interconnected with terrestrial sovereignty. The political context of WWI and its gruesome reality, combined with the concept that it was the Great War for Christendom, are crucial contexts that provide evidence of the religious motivations behind the historical actors involved in this story.

The trials of Sinnisiak and Uluksak were not only instrumental in establishing Canadian legal authority in the Arctic, but they also helped to shape the religious identity of the Oblates.

¹⁶⁹ Komar, *The Court of Better Fiction*, 43; Moyles, *British Law and Arctic Men*, 90; Coates and Morrison, “‘To Make These Tribes Understand,’” 221; Coates et al. *Arctic Front*, 31-32; Lackenbauer and Kinsinger, *Arctic Show Trial*, iii-iv; Grant, *Arctic Justice on Trial for Murder*, 39-41; Grant, *Polar Imperative*, 237-238.

At the same time, these events provided figures like McCaul and Hutton with a religious narrative through which they developed their sense of Canadian national identity. While McCaul and Hutton likened the RNWMP's pursuit of Sinnisiak and Uluksak to trench warfare, depicting the Inuinnait as hostile aggressors toward Canada, the Oblates framed Sinnisiak and Uluksak as enemies of God and their mission. This portrayal cast Sinnisiak and Uluksak as not just adversaries of the state, but also "aggressors" to the faith.

Fear/*ilira* and First Contact: The Great Bear Lake Oblate Mission

The Roman Catholic Oblate historian Pierre Duchaussois wrote that in the spring of 1911, Oblate Bishop Gabriel Breynat heard about the Inuit who spent summers around the Great Bear Lake and decided to send Oblates to evangelize them.¹⁷⁰ The Inuit along the western Arctic that Breynat targeted for spiritual harvesting have many different vast territories that correspond to their terms of self-identity related to their place of birth, with the suffix "-*miut*," but collectively call themselves Inuinnait.¹⁷¹ Historically, *Qablunaat* called them the "Copper Eskimo" as a description of the copper tools commonly found among them.¹⁷²

Breynat heard about the western Inuinnait from an English-born explorer and Arctic nomad named John Hornby, who wrote to the bishop on December 28, 1910:

¹⁷⁰ Oblates of Mary Immaculate, *Missions De La Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats De Marie Immaculee* 52nd Annee No 205, Rome : Maison Générale, 1914, 94. Accessed from Archive.org on January 20, 2024: <https://archive.org/details/missionsdelacong52obla/page/n5/mode/2up?view=theater>

¹⁷¹ Ohakok et al., *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 41. *Inuinnaq* is singular noun meaning "a real Inuk; an Eskimo person" in the Inuinnaqtun dialect of *Inuktitut*, the collective term for all Inuit language dialects of the Canadian Inuit. The term Inuinnait is plural to mean three or more people. See Béatrice Collignon, *Knowing Places the Inuinnait, Landscapes, and the Environment*, adapted from the translation of *Les Inuit. Ce qu'ils savent du territoire* by Béatrice Collignon (UHarmattan 1996) (translation and scientific editing by Linna Weber Müller-Wille), Circumpolar Research Series No. 10 Canadian Circumpolar Institute (CCI) Press, 2006, 5. Accessed online from Archive.org: https://archive.org/details/uap_9781772122015/mode/2up

¹⁷² See Kitikmeot Heritage Society, "Inuinnait and Contact," from the webpage: <https://www.kitikmeotheritage.ca/inuinnait-and-contact> accessed online on January 20, 2024.

To the Reverend Father Ducot, R.C. Mission, Fort Norman: We have met a party of Eskimos who come every year. This summer there were eight men, six women, and some children. Mr. Stevenson [evidently Stefansson], who came here with three Eskimos from Herschell Island, told me there was another band of them quite near. The Eskimos come at the end of August and leave when the first snow falls. They seem very intelligent...The Eskimos and Indians are frightened of each other and it would be dangerous for Indians to try to meet Eskimos without having a white man with them, because the Eskimos have a bad opinion of the Indians. If you intend sending someone to meet the Eskimos, we shall be please to give you all the help we can. Signed: J. Hornby.¹⁷³

Hornby wanted to establish a trading post, and when he heard that Inuinnait “had no single article of white man’s manufacture,” and that they wore clothing of caribou and muskox fur, he saw an opportunity to enter a new market for trade.¹⁷⁴ Hornby had also spent considerable time with the Dene in the Great Bear Lake region.¹⁷⁵ Although Hornby’s motive for a trading post is hard to ignore, it is possible that appealing to the Oblates was the strategy of the Dene Chief of Fort Franklin, Jimmy Soldat, who Stefansson recorded as being the brains behind the request for the Oblate bishop to send a mission to the Inuinnait.

According to Stefansson, it was Soldat – not the Oblates – who first told the Inuinnait about Roman Catholic religion and requested their conversion.¹⁷⁶ Soldat intercepted Vilhjalmur Stefansson and his Alaskan guide Natkusiak on the Dease River near Great Bear Lake in the summer of 1911. Since Stefansson had made friends with Inuinnait and spent a few years with them, Soldat told Stefansson that Hornby requested him to keep an eye out for him so that he could arrange a meeting between Soldat and the Inuinnait, a request that Stefansson, who relied on Inuinnait and valued maintaining a good relationship with them, reluctantly obliged.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Gabriel Breynat, translated by Alan Gordon Smith, *Bishop of the Winds: Fifty Years in the Arctic Regions*, New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1955, 136-137.

¹⁷⁴ Whalley, *The Legend of John Hornby*, 38.

¹⁷⁵ George Whalley, *The Legend of John Hornby*, London: William Clowes and Sons Ltd, 1962, 7. Accessed from Archive.org on February 24, 2024: <https://archive.org/details/legendofjohnhorn0000geor/mode/2up>

¹⁷⁶ Stefansson and Anderson, *My Life with the Eskimo*, 217.

¹⁷⁷ Stefansson and Anderson, *My Life with the Eskimo*, 217.

Stefansson described the meeting in detail and noted the high tension and fear between those Inuinnait and Dene.¹⁷⁸ Stefansson recorded that Soldat invoked Hornby's name to get him to agree to set up a meeting between the Dene and Inuinnait:

... They [the Inuinnait] said that they themselves had never had anything to do with the Indians; that their ancestors had had but rare contact with them, and that this contact had never been friendly; that sometimes Indians had killed some of them and sometimes they had killed some Indians, and that now no doubt these Indians had treacherous intentions in wanting to be introduced into camp... The next morning after breakfast the Indians invited the Eskimo to accompany them down to their lodges. Finally when the feast was over and the Eskimo were apparently in the best of spirits, *Jimmie brought forward a package of pictures of saints and holy men, and made a little speech in which he asked me to tell the Eskimo that he was an ambassador of a bishop of the Roman Catholic Church, and that the bishop said that if they were good men and never killed any more Indians and abjured their heathenish practices, he would come and build a mission among them and would convert them to the true faith...* It turned out that Jimmie had had no commission from Hornby, and that he had merely, from overhearing Melvill's and Hornby's conversation, found out that I was a friend of theirs, and he had used this knowledge in a confidence game of his own, the object of which was to become the first Indian who had been in friendly contact with the Eskimo, that he might thereafter pride himself on that fact, and *might be able to represent himself to the bishop as having been a pioneer in the spread of the faith among the Eskimo...* I have since heard that the Roman Catholic Church sent in missionaries at once, who arrived among the Eskimo soon after we left them, and whose work in that field will no doubt continue indefinitely (emphasis added).¹⁷⁹

Several details are remarkable in Stefansson's account. For one, it is inferred that the Oblates sent missionaries to Inuinnait shortly after Stefansson introduced his Inuinnait friends to Jimmy Soldat, who was a Dene Chief.¹⁸⁰ Second, although it is hard to ascertain Soldat's true motive, it nonetheless illustrates that the Dene potentially perceived the Inuinnait to be dangerous.

It is also hard to ascertain how accurate Stefansson is on Soldat's reason for wanting to meet the Inuinnait was really for fame. According to Stefansson's account, Soldat desired that Inuinnait convert to Christianity to make them less dangerous to the Dene. Either way, the fear

¹⁷⁸ The Inuinnait and Dene have had historic feuds over copper, and the first recording of such conflict was from Samuel Hearne in 1771 when he witnessed his Dene guides massacre upwards of twenty Inuinnait in their sleep. Subsequently, Hearne named the area of the massacre, a water fall along the Coppermine rivers as "Bloody Falls" Inuinnait call this area *Qurluqtuq*. See Emilie Cameron, *Far off Metal River: Inuit Lands, Settler Stories, and the Makings of the Contemporary Arctic*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015, xviii, 3, 104.

¹⁷⁹ Stefansson and Anderson, *My Life with the Eskimo*, 217-219.

¹⁸⁰ The Délı̄nɛ Remediation Office Délı̄nɛ First Nation, *Denison Road Traditional Knowledge Study*, Délı̄nɛ Renewable Resources Council and SENES Consultants Ltd, 2012, 8.

that the Dene had of the Inuinnait was explicitly recorded, and this fear was likely considered a barrier to trading and conducting business with the Inuinnait.

Shortly after the initial invitation from Soldat to Inuinnait to convert to Roman Catholicism, Bishop Breynat went to Fort Good Hope in July 1911 and approached Father Jean-Baptiste Rouvière, who had spent the last four years with the Dene, and gave him a new mission to the Great Bear Lake area and promised that he would send him a companion as soon as he could find one.¹⁸¹ Rouvière's mission was to travel northeast from Great Bear Lake to Dismal Lakes and there he initially stayed with Hornby who was already established in the area to trade with Inuinnait.¹⁸² Sometime after Rouvière also made acquaintances with Jimmy Soldat,¹⁸³ and for Hornby and Soldat, things were beginning to fall into place for their trading mission. Hornby wanted to make it for the Coronation Gulf in the Arctic Ocean, but Rouvière had other plans. Rouvière wanted to settle near a place where the Inuinnait fished inland and wanted to find an Inuinnait family to stay with him to teach him their Inuinnait language.¹⁸⁴

On August 25, 1911, Rouvière met Inuinnait for the very first time, in which he gave the Inuinnait “medals” to wear around their necks and reported that he had difficulty trying to explain that he had come to stay with them.¹⁸⁵ From the summer of 1911 to early 1912, Rouvière studied Emile Petitot's “Tchiglit”¹⁸⁶ dictionary and noted in a letter to his superior, Father Ducot,

¹⁸¹ Gabriel Breynat, translated by Alan Gordon Smith, *Bishop of the Winds: Fifty Years in the Arctic Regions*, New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1955, 137-138.

¹⁸² George M. (George Mellis) Douglas, *Lands Forlorn: A Story of an Expedition to Hearne's Coppermine River*, New York: G.P. Putnam's & Sons, 1914, 50-51.

¹⁸³ Douglas, *Lands Forlorn*, 250.

¹⁸⁴ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 36; George Whalley, “Coppermine Martyrdom,” *Queen's Quarterly*, Vol. 66. Kingston, Ont: Quarterly Committee of Queen's University, 1959, 597.

¹⁸⁵ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 36; Whalley, “Coppermine Martyrdom,” 598.

¹⁸⁶ Petitot's dictionary was based on the “Mackenzie Inuit,” now known as the Siglit of the Inuvialuit. See Murielle Nagy, “Inuvialuit ethnonyms and toponyms as a reflection of identity, language, and memory,” Inuvialuit Cultural Centre Digital Library, accessed January 28, 2024, <https://inuvialuitdigitallibrary.ca/items/show/6669>.

the founding missionary of Fort Norman St. Thérèse mission,¹⁸⁷ that the language and communication with the Inuinnait was difficult, but nonetheless he reported that he found the language written in Petitot's dictionary to be "extraordinarily alike" to Inuinnaqtun.¹⁸⁸ Rouvière had visits from Inuinnait throughout September and October 1911 and noted again the difficulty he had in communication with them.¹⁸⁹

The following spring in April 1912, Breynat sent Oblate missionary Guillaume Le Roux to report to Rouvière and join his mission.¹⁹⁰ Le Roux was reported to be a skilled linguist and he spent the summer spending time with Inuinnait as much as he could to learn the language. By September 1912, to Rouvière's amazement, some Inuinnait made the sign of the cross that he had taught them the previous summer.¹⁹¹ As the fall approached, an increasing number of Inuinnait prepared to make their annual journey to sea ice,¹⁹² where they hunted seals as their main source of food and heat in winter – a journey required for survival.¹⁹³

By the time of fall, when the Inuinnait prepared to leave for the sea ice, the missionaries felt their progress was slow and desired to have an Inuinnaq man stay with them for the winter, and they proposed to pay this unnamed Inuinnaq man with a 40-44 carbine rifle.¹⁹⁴ Despite the promise of a highly prized hunting tool, the Inuinnaq man refused, likely because he felt that staying in the summer camp areas away from seals at the sea ice might lead him to starvation. Thus, the two missionaries reported that they experienced obstacles in finding an Inuinnaq to

¹⁸⁷ Duchaussois, *Mid Snow and Ice*, 255.

¹⁸⁸ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 36.

¹⁸⁹ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 40.

¹⁹⁰ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 43.

¹⁹¹ Whalley, "Coppermine Martyrdom," 603; McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 46.

¹⁹² McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 46.

¹⁹³ Vilhjalmur Stefansson and Rudolph Anderson, *The Stefánsson-Anderson Arctic expedition of the American Museum: Preliminary Ethnological Report*, New York: the American Museum of Natural History Trustees, 1914, 50. Accessed from Archive.org on January 28, 2024:

<https://archive.org/details/stefnssonander00stef/mode/2up>

¹⁹⁴ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 46.

help them learn the language, making it difficult for them to make headway in learning Inuinnaqtun.¹⁹⁵ Le Roux reported to Breynat in a letter that with time in learning the language, they will eventually be able to tell the Inuinnait that they are not traders nor other *Qablunaat* who have come to their land just for exploration, but would be able to tell them their true occupation and desires to convert them to the Roman Catholic faith.¹⁹⁶

By August 1913, Le Roux spent three weeks with the Inuinnait, performed for them the Sacrament, and used an illustrated catechism created by Oblate missionary Albert Lacombe to convey that they were priests.¹⁹⁷ During this time, the missionaries received a letter from Captain Joseph Bernard, a freelance trader, who told them that an Anglican missionary named William Henry Fry was making inroads towards the Coronation Gulf,¹⁹⁸ threatening the terrestrial sovereignty that the Oblates wished to establish in the area for the Roman Catholic faith. Bernard wrote to Breynat and expressed that he thought it was a good time for the Roman Catholic mission to set up in Coronation Gulf and that he would be willing to assist the Oblates by giving them space on his ship and other support, free of charge. He also noted in his letter that he refused to assist the Anglican missionaries who requested assistance to travel to the area and preferred that the Oblates do so.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 48-50.

¹⁹⁶ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 48-50.

¹⁹⁷ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 54.

¹⁹⁸ Jean-Baptiste Rouvière, correspondence to Albert Ducot, August 26, 1913, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR.2001.184, box 1, file 3; McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 55.

¹⁹⁹ Author unknown, "Extract – Codex Historicus – Ft. Norman Pere Rouvière et Père Leroux," 1912-1918, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR.2001.184, Box 2, file 38.

While it is unknown what Bernard's motives were in appealing to the Oblates to set up a mission in the Coronation Gulf, it is possible that his Acadian²⁰⁰ and Roman Catholic heritage,²⁰¹ shaped his desire to do so. Bernard donated several pieces of Inuinnait material belongings he collected to different academic institutions, including Loyola College, a Roman Catholic Jesuit institution in Montreal in 1923, without making a profit.²⁰² This potentially suggests that his motives are a connection to his Roman Catholic heritage. On the other hand, it is also possible that Bernard, an astute businessman in Arctic trade,²⁰³ likely knew that the Anglican Church was closely associated with the Hudson's Bay Company²⁰⁴ and perhaps did not want to see the establishment of English traders in an area where Bernard, an Acadian and freelance trader, held a monopoly. Another motive could have been that, like Soldat, Bernard thought that if Inuinnait converted to Christianity, it might have helped develop the trading industry he wished to establish in the area.

The news of Fry's encroachment provoked a sense of urgency for Le Roux and Rouvière, and quite suddenly, they felt it necessary to follow the Inuinnait on their annual journey to the

²⁰⁰ C.B. Bernard, *Chasing Alaska: A Portrait of the Last Frontier, Then and Now*, Guilford, Connecticut: Lyons Press, 2013, 253-254. Accessed from Archive.org on January 27, 2024:

<https://archive.org/details/chasingalaskapor0000bern/mode/2up>

²⁰¹ I am making the assumption that Joseph Fidele Bernard, who was from Tignish, PEI, Canada, was a Roman Catholic because his family was, though to be sure, membership and family association to a church does not mean commitment or similar belief system. Joe Bernard was cousins with Lieutenant-Governor Joseph Alphonsus Bernard, who was an active member of the Roman Catholic Church. For a biography on Joseph Alphonsus Bernard see <https://www.peildo.ca/islandora/object/leg:25507> accessed on January 27, 2024, and for connection to Joseph Fidele Bernard (Captain Joe Bernard) see Bernard, *Chasing Alaska*, 253.

²⁰² Author unknown, "Captain Bernard," Loyola College Review, Montreal: the Rock-Island Overall Company, June 1923, 21. Accessed from Archive.org on January 27, 2024:

https://archive.org/details/Loyola_College_Review_1923/mode/2up

²⁰³ Neil A. Matheson, "Across the Island: Stirring Tales Told By Native Of Tignish," *The Guardian*, Charlottetown, October 13, 1966, courtesy of Robertson Library, UPEI, courtesy of the Matheson family and The Guardian. Accessed online January 27, 2024:

<https://islandnewspapers.ca/islandora/object/matheson%3A306?search=Bernard>

²⁰⁴ Robert Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1995, 166.

Arctic Ocean to spend winter with them.²⁰⁵ The knowledge of an Anglican missionary expanding northwest had both spiritual and practical ramifications. The Anglican missionary Fry could potentially convert the Inuinnait to Protestantism and thus for Catholics, a heretical religion, and practically, Fry's reach to the Northwest regions of the Arctic Ocean could render the area out of reach for the Oblates' plan to establish the region with Roman Catholicism. Although the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) treated Roman Catholics and Protestants "equitably," Roman Catholic Oblates had to request the HBC's permission to set up a mission in a given area, and in certain instances where a Protestant missionary had already set up a mission, the HBC refused the Roman Catholic's request to enter a new area.²⁰⁶ The HBC's control over the area went above trade terrestrial sovereignty, but also controlled terrestrial sovereignty for Roman Catholic and Protestant missionary Churches. In addition, the close association of the HBC and their power over Churches produced the appearance to Inuinnait that the Church was not separate from the trading companies but part of their corporate structure.

As Robert Choquette has astutely observed, "In their "civilizing" motivation, the missionaries were no different from the traders, merchants, soldiers, or teachers."²⁰⁷ It would have been difficult for Inuinnait to differentiate between missionaries and traders.²⁰⁸ The only time that the Inuinnait saw the priests was when they were in company of traders like John

²⁰⁵ Jean-Baptiste Rouvière, correspondence to Albert Ducot, August 26, 1913, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR.2001.184, box 1, file 3.

²⁰⁶ Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, 166.

²⁰⁷ Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, 234.

²⁰⁸ Although the distinct clothing of the Oblate priests in long black coats would have made their appearance different from traders, the fact that Inuinnait at this time had only experienced meeting a handful of outsiders meant that they did not have enough references to determine the differentiation of outsiders based on clothing. In fact, Inuit dress codes and styles were distinct from each other, and Inuit could tell where someone was from based on their clothing style. With this point of reference, the Inuinnait likely thought that, like Inuit, non-Inuit dressed differently because they were from different groups, not necessarily differentiated by vocation. For a reference on Inuit clothing styles distinction by region, see Lisa Qiluqqi Koperqualuk, "Artistic Representations of Inuit by Inuit: From Past to Present," In *People, Places, and Practices in the Arctic*, 1st ed. Routledge, 2023, 242.

Hornby, and the Inuinnait performed as messengers for Captain Joseph Bernard and hand delivered his letter sent to the Oblates that requested they set up a mission amongst Inuinnait,²⁰⁹ suggesting that the handful of *Qablunaat* that Inuinnait knew would have all appeared to be traders. Although Stefansson claimed to trade nothing with the Inuinnait and that they accepted him as one of their own,²¹⁰ Hornby supplied Stefansson with items that he could trade with the Inuinnait,²¹¹ suggesting that all *Qablunaat*, even explorers, ethnologists, and missionaries traded in some shape or form.

Moreover, when Rouvière was with in the company of the trader John Hornby he offered a rifle, likely procured from Hornby, to an unnamed Inuinnaq man. Rouvière's offer of the rifle to the Inuinnaq man further established his social ranking to Inuinnait as a trader. It is Rouvière and Le Roux's connection with Hornby and their indistinctive statuses that presented challenges to Rouvière's mission.

Hornby, like his Dene friends, feared Inuinnait. In the RNWMP crime report, an Inuinnaq man named Hupo, speaking through interpreter Ilavinik, stated:

Sinnisiak wanted to kill Hornybeena [Hornby] in the summertime. Sinnisiak and Kosuktuk went to Bear Lake with Hornybeena. Hornybeena dropped a sealskin line and Sinnisiak picked it up and wanted to keep it. Hornybeena saw him with it and took it back from him and Sinnisiak wanted to kill him.²¹²

Ohomik, another Inuinnaq man interviewed by the police, is recorded in the RNWMP crime report to have said through interpreter Ilavinik: "I also knew a white man named "Hornybeena"

²⁰⁹ The statement by Ohomik recorded by La Nauze stated, "A long time ago I carried a letter for the white man "Joke" (Captain Joe Bernard) and gave it to the Indian Towier at Bear Lake." Ohomik, interpreted by Ilavinik, recorded in "Crime Report re: The Murder of the Missing Priests Rev Fathers Rouvière and Le Roux," Great Bear Lake Patrol, Cape Lambert, N.W. T., May 8, 1916, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, GR.1972.0026 C780 "Sinnisiak and Uluksak Case files."

²¹⁰ Stefansson and Anderson, *My Life with the Eskimo*, 2.

²¹¹ Whalley, *The Legend of John Hornby*, 49.

²¹² Hupo, statement interpreted by Ilavinik, recorded in "Hupo (Eskimo)," courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, GR.1972.0026 C780 "Sinnisiak and Uluksak Case files."

(Hornby) who stopped at Imaerinik. We were afraid of Hornybeena because he might think we had killed the two white men and then he would kill us.”²¹³ Another Inuinnaq man named Uluksuk (not the accused, another man with the same name), stated: “Hornybeena (Hornby) had told me once that if the Eskimos killed one white man the white man would come and kill every one of the Eskimos.”²¹⁴ The mutual fear between Inuinnait and Hornby was evident, and the only time Inuinnait saw Rouvière and Le Roux before the pair decided to follow them to the Arctic Ocean was when they were with Hornby.

Hornby later told his friend Charles Bullock that he lived in the same “village” as Sinnisiak and Uluksak and got into dispute with Sinnisiak when Sinnisiak stole Hornby’s rifle. According to Bullock, Sinnisiak threatened Hornby’s life, so Hornby decided to enter Sinnisiak’s tent and retrieve the rifle that Sinnisiak had stolen, despite fearing for his life. Bullock stated that Hornby was unable to sleep for a few days because he feared the Inuinnait would take his life.²¹⁵

Although the fear between Hornby and Inuinnait was mutual, Rouvière and Le Roux did not seem to display this kind of fear. Other Inuinnait, on the other hand, took a liking for the missionaries, although admittedly did not know what a missionary was or that Rouvière and Le Roux were in fact priests that had come to convert them. Koeha, an Inuinnaq man, expressed that he thought that Rouvière and Le Roux were traders.²¹⁶ Despite the uncertainties that Inuinnait had about Rouvière and Le Roux’s occupation and motives for making contact with them, and despite the difficulty in communicating with each other, they nonetheless had enough contact for

²¹³ Ohomik, statement interpreted by Ilavinik, recorded in “Crime Report re: The Murder of the Missing Priests Rev Fathers Rouvière and Le Roux,” Great Bear Lake Patrol, Cape Lambert, N.W. T., May 8, 1916, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, GR.1972.0026 C780 “Sinnisiak and Uluksak Case files.”

²¹⁴ Uluksuk Mayuk, statement interpreted by Ilavinik, “Uluksuk, Alias Mayuk,” courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, GR.1972.0026 C780 “Sinnisiak and Uluksak Case files.”

²¹⁵ Whalley, *The Legend of John Hornby*, 95-97.

²¹⁶ Koeha, interpreted by Patsy Klengenber, trial transcripts for day three, August 16, 1917, from Rex Vs Sinnisiak, August 14, 1917, 181, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG18 Vol 2479.

the Inuinnait to give the missionaries names, as is the custom of Inuit across the Arctic to refer to their visitors in their own language.²¹⁷

The Inuinnait referred to Rouvière as “Kuleavik,” and Le Roux as “Ilogoak.” While it is not known exactly what the Inuinnait meant by “Ilogoak,” in Inuinnaqtun, *ilu*²¹⁸ means “frost formed in the interior,” and the suffix *-rjuaq*²¹⁹ means “tall; big; superior (in size, importance, strength),” suggesting that the Inuinnait possibly considered Le Roux to think that he was superior and potentially thought that he had a frosty, or cold, demeanor. As for “Kuleavik,” this could be *quliriik*, meaning “(relationship of) those in order one above the other,”²²⁰ perhaps suggesting that the Inuinnait observed the relationship of Rouvière as Le Roux’s superior. Alternatively, the name could have meant *kubvivik*, meaning “funnel for pouring liquids,”²²¹ perhaps a reference to the Chalice that the priests likely had with them. Because the original spellings are incorrect, we are unable to know the exact pronunciations; thus, it is impossible to say what the Inuinnaqtun names of the priests were intended to mean.

Rouvière and Le Roux also spent enough time with Inuinnait for the priests to teach them how to make the sign of the cross and for the priests to perform for them the Holy Sacrament,²²² the Catholic rite of communion when the priest consecrates the wafer and wine into the body and

²¹⁷ Valerie Alia, *Names, Numbers, and Northern Policy Inuit, Project Surname, and the Politics of Identity*, Halifax, N.S: Fernwood, 1994, 27; E.J. Peck, Jarich Oosten, François Trudel, and Frédéric Laugrand, *Apostle to the Inuit the Journals and Ethnographic Notes of Edmund James Peck, the Baffin Years, 1894-1905*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006, 10.

²¹⁸ Ohakok et al., *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 37.

²¹⁹ Ohakok et al., *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 11.

²²⁰ Spalding and Kusugaq, 121.

²²¹ Spalding and Kusugaq, 47.

²²² Hupo, statement interpreted by Ilavinik, recorded in “Hupo (Eskimo),” courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, GR.1972.0026 C780 “Sinnisiak and Uluksak Case files.”

blood of Jesus for the recipient to commune with Jesus through the ingestion of the wafer and wine.²²³

For Rouvière and Le Roux, their motivation to follow the Inuinnait to the Arctic Ocean and spend the winter with them was precisely to improve their fluency in Inuinnagtun so that they could explain that they were not, as the company they kept, traders, or merchants, but missionaries whose mission was to convert them to the Roman Catholic religion.²²⁴ During the years of 1912-1913, Rouvière and Le Roux were busy setting up their cabin when Hornby fell ill and Le Roux expressed in a letter to Breynat that he tended to Hornby's illness and this prevented him from making the progress they desired to learn the language:

Mr. Hornby's condition was such that it prevented me from deriving the full benefit that I could have otherwise obtained from the visit of the Esquimaux and prevented my visiting them more frequently...If Mr. Hornby had been feeling well I could have learned a little more of the Eskimo language but I would not have been much better acquainted with the Eskimo. I could not speak much to them when they came to see us but anyway I could see them, and all the same little by little I am learning to know them better.²²⁵

Le Roux seemed to have an abrasive demeanor to those around him. George Whalley, writing some decades later, noted that the Douglas brothers (authors of *Lands Forlorn*) remarked they were struck at how Le Roux treated Rouvière and behaved as though he was in command of the mission, despite being his lower-ranking junior.²²⁶

In Rouvière's letter to Ducot, he reveals the tension between himself and Le Roux: "...The Father [Le Roux] is aware of his own quick temper and is striving to subdue it. He has never tried to hurt my feelings. I like to think that our good relations will not be soon disturbed."²²⁷ Later in the trial held at Calgary, *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak*, Uluksak remarked

²²³ Marie-Joseph Nicolas, *What is the Eucharist?*, New York: Hawthorn Books, 1960, 39-41. Accessed online at Archive.org on February 24, 2024: <https://archive.org/details/whatiseucharist0052nico/mode/2up>

²²⁴ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 50.

²²⁵ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 49-50.

²²⁶ Whalley, "Coppermine Martyrdom," 602-603.

²²⁷ Whalley, "Coppermine Martyrdom," 605.

that Kuleavik [Rouvière] was a good person, while Ilogoak [Le Roux] he expressed was not good.²²⁸ Perhaps, like John Horby, Le Roux had an attitude problem given that many who met him did not speak very highly of him.

The last letter that Rouvière sent to Ducot was dated August 26, 1913, and revealed much more hope and enthusiasm. Rouvière said that he and Le Roux's missionary work with Inuinnait was progressing slowly but certainly. In the letter Rouvière remarked Fry's encroachment:

What is it proposed to do this coming winter. [sic] Nothing is yet fixed precisely...Perhaps the upshot will be to decide to follow the Eskimo this winter in order to check the zeal of the Famous Fry...It decides me almost to follow the Eskimos this winter to the sea in order to arrest a little the zeal of Mr. Fry who comes to sow the bad seed in our fields.²²⁹

With fear abound, especially of the thought of the Protestant incursion, Rouvière and Le Roux found themselves dependant on and in the company of Inuinnait who did not know their purpose, and unable to fully understand each other, set out for the Arctic Ocean in the fall of 1913 following them to their annual winter sojourn to the sea ice at Coronation Gulf where the Inuinnait survived the winter by harvesting seals, a staple in their winter diet.²³⁰ Spending winter with the Inuinnait, the priests reasoned, would allow them more time to learn the language.²³¹ However, like many failed non-Inuit Arctic explorers before them, the priests would soon learn that they lacked survival skills necessary for Arctic travel, turning their mission into failure.

²²⁸ Uluksak, speaking through interpreter Patsy Klengenber, day three of *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak*, August 24, 1917, trial transcripts, 63-64, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG18 Vol 2479.

²²⁹ Rouvière's correspondence to Ducot, August 26, 1913, translated by Pierre Duchaussois, trial transcripts, day one of *R v Sinnisiak*, Edmonton, August 14, 1917, 33-34, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG18 Vol 2479.

²³⁰ Stefansson and Anderson, *The Stefansson-Anderson Arctic expedition*, 41-52.

²³¹ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 46-50.

“Disappointment from the Eskimaux:”²³² The Last Days

The Inuinnait territory extends across a massive geographical location, encompassing 700,000 km² from Victoria Strait southwest to Contowayo Lake and northwest to the Banks Island, largely above the treeline.²³³ The difficulties of Arctic navigation for non-Inuit in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries meant that the Inuit in this region did not meet many non-Inuit, with the only exception being some Northwest Passage explorers, including John Franklin. The Inuinnait remained largely unfamiliar with non-Inuit until Vilhjalmur Stefansson travelled there in 1908, and then again with Diamond Jenness when they travelled as part of the Canadian Arctic Expedition (CAE) and made their way through Inuinnait territory from 1913 to 1918.²³⁴

Both Sinnisiak and Uluksak were in their early thirties when they met Rouvière and Le Roux who were both natives of France, also in their early thirties.²³⁵ Uluksak and Sinnisiak were likely both an *Angatkuq*,²³⁶ the Inuinnaqtun term to mean “shamans,”²³⁷ though we can’t be sure because they did not publicly identify as one. When Sinnisiak was arrested, he threatened to use

²³² Jean-Baptiste Rouvière, diary excerpt from circa October 15, 1913, translated by Pierre Duchaussois, 1917, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR.1976.237 box 1, C.C. McCaul fonds.

²³³ Lisa Beiler, Master of Arts thesis, *Alikomiak and Tatamigana: Justice and Injustice in the Canadian Arctic*, University of Waterloo, 2016, vii-viii. Accessed online on February 10, 2024: https://uwspace.uwaterloo.ca/bitstream/handle/10012/11076/Beiler_Lisa.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

²³⁴ Knud Rasmussen, *Intellectual Culture of the Copper Eskimos, Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition 1921-24: The Danish Expedition to Arctic North America in Charge of Knud Rasmussen*, translated by W.E. Calvert, Copenhagen, Denmark: Glydendalske Boghandel, 1932, 70-72.

²³⁵ Diamond Jenness, *Report of the Canadian Arctic Expedition 1913-18, Volume XII: The Life of the Copper Eskimo*, Ottawa: Printer to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, January 12, 1922, 93; Diamond Jenness, *Report of the Canadian Arctic Expedition 1913-18, Volume XII, Part B: Physical Characteristics of the Copper Eskimo*, Ottawa: Printer to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, May 23, 1923, B15 & B23; Gaston Montmigney, O.M.I., translated by James Beggan, “Oblate Victims in the Far North,” *Oblate Heritage Series: 11*, Rome, Italy: O.M.I. General Postulation, 1998, 14; Louie Lejeune, “Concours Rouvière et Leroux, OMI,” courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR2001.184, box 2, file 53, 2, circa 1937.

²³⁶ Ohakok et al. *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 11.

²³⁷ Ohakok et al., *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 11; see also Mariano and Tulimaaq Aupilaarjuk, Lucassie Nutaraaluk, Rose Iqallijuq, Johanasi Ujarak, Isidore Ijituuq and Michel Kupaaq, edited by Bernard Saladin d’Anglure, *Cosmology and Shamanism*, Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 2001, 10; for a note on singular/dual/plural Inuinnaqtun terms, see Arthur Thibert, OMI, *English-Eskimo Dictionary*, Revised Edition, Ottawa: Saint Paul’s University, 1969, 154.

his power to capsize the RNWMP's ship.²³⁸ It is quite plausible that Inuinnait, including Sinnisiak and Uluksak, regarded Rouvière and Le Roux not just as traders, but also as foreign, 'white,' i.e. European, *Angakkuit*.²³⁹

Winter was beginning to crisp the air, freezing the edges of lakes around October, and the negative temperatures would gradually decrease further until March, only to subside in April. The sea ice did not fully form until mid to late November, and the days grew short and dark; October and November were especially challenging months for Inuinnait when access to seals, a necessity of life for food, fuel, clothing, and shelter, was scarce due to the lack of proper ice.²⁴⁰

To gain more time with Inuinnait, Rouvière reasoned that they would need to follow Inuinnait to their winter territory on sea ice, *tariuliaqtuq*,²⁴¹ where they would spend the winter.²⁴² During this period of liminality between seasons, *ukiaq*,²⁴³ autumn, and *ukiuq*,²⁴⁴ winter, when ice was just forming, *hikuaqtuq*,²⁴⁵ and too thin for hunting, Inuinnait found themselves with two extra mouths to feed, undoubtedly an additional and unwelcome stress.²⁴⁶

²³⁸ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 128.

²³⁹ For examples of how Inuit identified missionaries as other Angakkuit, i.e., shamans, see Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism*, 37, 61; Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit, Oblate Missionaries, and Grey Nuns*, 17, 29; and Cornelius H.W. Remie, and Jarich Oosten, "The Birth of a Catholic Inuit Community. The Transition to Christianity in Pelly Bay, Nunavut, 1935-1950," *Études Inuit* 26, no. 1 (2002): 112.

²⁴⁰ In our age of comfort with electricity and heated homes, we can forgo thinking about how difficult life would have been during the challenging months of fall in the Arctic. The days grow very short and during the phases of a waning moon and the evenings of a new moon, the Arctic is extremely dark. Sea ice that is not fully formed or snow that has not fully covered the ground makes for an especially dark night. See Stefansson and Anderson, "Arctic Expedition, Anthropological Papers of American Museum of Natural History," New York, 1919, 41-52.

²⁴¹ *Tariuliaqtuq* means, "goes towards the sea." Ohakok et al., *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 97.

²⁴² Jean-Baptiste Rouvière, correspondence to Father Ducot, 26 August 1913, Fort Confidence, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR2001.184, box 1, file 3.

²⁴³ Ohakok et al. *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 96.

²⁴⁴ Ohakok et al. *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 96.

²⁴⁵ Ohakok et al. *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 39.

²⁴⁶ We are uncertain as to whether or not the priests brought their own food, we do know that Inuinnait at this time would either would not eat non-Inuinnait food, or that they just preferred their own country food. See Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1915*, 205; and Stefansson and Anderson, *My Life with the Eskimo*, 103.

Rouvière and Le Roux, in their hastily made plans, likely did not thoroughly consider the scarcity of food in the Arctic and the Inuit Traditional Knowledge required for survival prior to their decision to pursue that course. The missionaries likely relied on Inuinnait hunters for food, shelter, and protection,²⁴⁷ which the hunters, experiencing their own brushes with starvation, would not tolerate for long.²⁴⁸ The last journal entry in Rouvière's diary, translated by Duchaussois, revealed the desperate situation the priests found themselves, written about the 20th of October 1913 or shortly thereafter:

Arrived at the Coppermine River
(some) families already gone.
Disappointment from Esquimaux
Threatened with starvation
And do not know what to do.²⁴⁹

According to the police report and trial transcripts, Rouvière and Le Roux found themselves in conflict with an *anguhuqtuq*,²⁵⁰ a skilled hunter, who was identified as Kormik,²⁵¹ apparently over a rifle. Apparently, either Le Roux had promised Kormik a rifle and did not follow through which upset Kormik,²⁵² or, other village members thought that Le Roux was going to kill Kormik and shoot everyone in their camp, prompting Kormik to want to kill Le Roux.²⁵³ The elderly man Koeha, who later went to Edmonton as a witness for court proceedings, stopped Kormik and assisted Rouvière and Le Roux to leave their camp, because,

²⁴⁷ In the police investigation report of 1915, the Oblate father Frapsauce stated that he did not know about the equipment that Rouvière and Le Roux brought, only mentioning that "they [Rouvière and Le Roux] had probably a spare cassock each," see Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1915*, 210-211.

²⁴⁸ Anthropologists recorded many stories of famine and starvation and noted that the fall was a critical period of food scarcity due to the sea ice not being fully solid. See Jenness, *The Life of the Copper Eskimo*, 41-43, 97, 188; Stefansson and Anderson, *Expedition*, 54, 130, 184, 191, 239, 388.

²⁴⁹ Jean-Baptiste Rouvière, translated by Pierre Duchaussois, OMI, "Diary of Father Rouvière," courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR1976.237 Box 1, C.C. McCaul fonds, 1917.

²⁵⁰ Gwen Ohakok et al. *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 12.

²⁵¹ Hupo, police statement interpreted by Ilavinik, GR1972.0026 C780

²⁵² Koeha, trial transcripts *R v Sinnisiak*, August 16, 1917, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, RG18 Vol 2479, 175.

²⁵³ Koeha, trial transcripts *R v Sinnisiak*, August 16, 1917, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, RG18 Vol 2479, 177-178.

Koeha reasoned, he did not want to ignite a blood feud with *Qablunaat*.²⁵⁴ Sinnisiak and Uluksak left the following day and crossed Rouvière and Le Roux on the Coppermine River.²⁵⁵

Unaccustomed to travelling the Arctic without guidance and creating confusion amongst their hosts that incited fear, the missionaries found themselves outcasts on the wintry tundra and in a state of desperation for survival by the time Sinnisiak and Uluksak arrived.

Le Roux promised to pay Sinnisiak and Uluksak with fur traps²⁵⁶ if they would pull their sled, which was unreasonably heavy as they did not know how to pack for Arctic travel.²⁵⁷

Sinnisiak and Uluksak put on the harnesses and began to pull, although it was slow going, the weather deteriorated to blizzard-like conditions. At this time things started to turn tense:

The next day we started back and the priests were going ahead. It started to storm and we lost the road. After that the dogs smelt something and Uluksuk went to see what it was and I stayed behind. Uluksuk found that it was a cache of the priests and told me to come over. As soon as we came there the priests came back, Ilogoak [Le Roux] was carrying a rifle, he was mad with us when we had started back from their camp and I could not understand their talk. I asked Ilogoak if he was going to kill me, and he nodded his head. Ilogoak said “Come over to the sled” and he pushed me with his hand. The priests wanted to start again, and he pushed me again and wanted me to put on the harness, and then he took his rifle out on the top of the sled, I was scared and started to pull. We went a little way and Uluksuk and I started to talk and Ilogoak put his hand on my mouth. Ilogoak was very mad and was pushing me. I was thinking hard and crying and very scared and the frost was in my boots and I was cold. I wanted to go back but I was afraid. Ilogoak would not let us. Everytime the sled stick, Ilogoak would pull out the rifle. I got hot inside my body and everytime Ilogoak pulled out the rifle I was very much afraid.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ Koeha, police statement interpreted by Ilavinik, GR1972.0026 C780

²⁵⁵ Sinnisiak, “Statement of Sinnisiak,” May 1916, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, GR.1972.0026 C780.

²⁵⁶ Sinnisiak, “Statement,” May 1916, GR.1972.0026 C780.

²⁵⁷ While it is not certain what the priests were carrying, that their dogs were unable to manage the load and that they requested Sinnisiak and Uluksak to assist in pulling suggest that the sled was heavy. We do know that Rouvière obtained a *qamutiik*, a sled, made by Inuit and that they had travelled “heavily laden.” See Whalley, *The Legend of John Hornby*, 83, 98.

²⁵⁸ The Oblates frequently travelled with rifles. Later, the Oblates would state that for the Inuinnait’s attempt to take the priests rifle amounted to “Quel que fût le protocole indigène, qui prescrit de ne point refuser ce que l’on vous demande, les missionnaires ne pouvaient tolérer ce dernier larcin : se risquer sans fusil dans ces pays, c’est, pour un blanc, se condamner à mourir de faim. L’arme fut donc reprise par son propriétaire.” English: “Whatever the indigenous protocol, which prescribes not to refuse what is asked of you, the missionaries could not tolerate this latest theft: to risk oneself without a gun in these countries is, for a white person, to condemn oneself to die of hunger. The weapon was therefore taken back by its owner.” See Duchaussois, *Aux Glaces Polaires: Indiens et Esquimaux*, 450-451; and Breynat, *Bishop of the Winds*, 154-155; Sinnisiak, “Statement,” May 1916, GR.1972.0026 C780

Curiously, Uluksak had a very similar statement, though some inconsistencies are apparent in terms of how the relationship between the missionaries and them deteriorated:

On the first day the priests were not angry with us, we camped with them one night and we did not reach the trees. We made a small snow house for the priests. The next day the priests were angry and said “If you will take us to the woods we will give you traps”. We started. I was ahead pulling the sled. Sinnisiak was close to the sled and the two white men were behind. I wanted to speak and Ilogoak [Le Roux] put his hand over my mouth. I wanted to talk of my wife sewing clothes for Ilogoak in the Fall. Kuleavik [Rouvière] gave Ilogoak a rifle and a knife and Ilogoak pointed a gun at us. I was afraid and I was crying. Everytime I wanted to talk, Ilogoak came and put his hand over my mouth.²⁵⁹

As both Sinnisiak and Uluksak felt their lives in danger, they decided to plan their escape as relayed by Uluksak: “We went on and Sinnisiak said to me “We ought to kill these white men before they kill us” and I said ‘They can kill me if they want to, I don’t want to kill any people’. Sinnisiak then said ‘I will kill one of them anyway. You had better try and be strong too’....”²⁶⁰

Sinnisiak’s statement of when they decided to plan their escape was more elaborate:

I said to Uluksuk “I think they will kill us I can’t get back now” I was thinking I will not see my people any more, I will try and kill him. I was pulling ahead of the dogs. We came to a small hill. I took off the harness quick and ran to one side and Ilogoak ran after me and pushed me back to the sled. I took off my belt and told Ilogoak I was going to “relieve” myself as I did not want to go to the sled.²⁶¹

Sinnisiak said that he did not actually need to “relieve” himself, but used that time as an opportunity to attack the priests:

I did not want to “relieve” myself. Then Ilogoak turned around and saw me, he looked away from me and I stabbed him in the back with a knife. I then told Uluksuk “You take the rifle” Ilogoak ran ahead of the sled and Uluksuk ran after him. The other white man wanted to come back to the sled. I had a knife in my hand and he went away again. Uluksuk and Ilogoak were wrestling for the rifle and after that Uluksuk finished up Ilogoak. I did not see Uluksuk finish him. The other man ran away when he saw Ilogoak die, I asked Uluksuk “Is he dead?” and he said “Yes already”. I then said to Uluksuk “Give me the rifle”. He gave it to me. The first time I shot I did not hit. The second time I got him. I went after him with a knife. When I was close to him he got up again, both of us were together. I had the knife in my hand and I went after him when he got

²⁵⁹ Uluksak, “Statement of Uluksuk alias Avingak,” May 1916, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, GR.1972.0026 C780

²⁶⁰ Uluksak, “Statement,” May 1916, GR.1972.0026 C780.

²⁶¹ Sinnisiak, “Statement,” May 1916, GR.1972.0026 C780.

up again. Uluksuk told me “Go ahead and put the knife in him” I said to “Uluksuk, “Go ahead you, I fix the other man already”. The father fell down on his back. Uluksuk struck first with the knife and did not strike him. The second time he got him. The priest laid down and was breathing a little, when I struck him across the face with an axe I was carrying. I cut his leg with the axe. I killed him dead.²⁶²

Uluksak’s account of the killing is much shorter:

Ilogoak turned round and Sinnisiak stabbed him with from behind in the back. Ilogoak then hit me with a stick and I stabbed him twice with a knife and he dropped down. I took the rifle from on top of the sled and threw it down on the snow. The other white man Kuleavik started to run away but Sinnisiak picked up the rifle and missed him the first shot. The second shot he wounded him and the priest sat down. Sinnisiak dropped the rifle and took an axe and a knife. I had a knife and we ran after him. When we got up to Kuleavik, Sinnisiak told me to stab him again. I did not want to stab him first. Then Sinnisiak told me again to stab him and I stabbed him again in the side and the blood came out and he was not yet dead. I did not stab him again and Sinnisiak took the axe and chopped his neck and killed him.²⁶³

As no other people witnessed the killings, Sinnisiak and Uluksak’s statements were the only narratives of how they killed the priests.²⁶⁴ The RNWMP police investigator obtained these statements through the interpreter and Special Constable Ilavinik, an Inupiat man from Kotzebue, Alaska,²⁶⁵ 1200 km west of the Coppermine River.

After Sinnisiak and Uluksuk killed the priests, Sinnisiak suggested that they should open up the deceased bodies and each consume a piece of the livers:

After they were dead I said to Uluksuk “Before when white men were killed they used to cut off some and eat some”. Uluksuk cut up Ilogoak’s belly. I turned round, Uluksuk gave me a little piece of the liver. I eat it. Uluksuk eat too. We covered up both bodies with snow when we started to go back.²⁶⁶

²⁶² Sinnisiak, “Statement,” May 1916, GR.1972.0026 C780.

²⁶³ Uluksak, “Statement,” May 1916, GR.1972.0026 C780.

²⁶⁴ It appears that the word “priest” shows up in the Inuinnait statements because of Ilavinik, the interpreter for the police investigation and later for part of the first trial held in Edmonton. Wallbridge asked in court when Koeha was being called to the witness stand, “The interpreter is using the word “priests” I don’t suppose the witness is.” Later on in the same trial, Wallbridge asked Koeha who was recalled to the witness stand, through interpreter Ilavinik, “Did you know the first time you saw Ilogoak that he was a priest? Do you know what a priest is?” to which Koeha answered, “No.” Wallbridge followed up for certainty, “Did you know Kuleavik was a priest?” to which Koeha replied, “I didn’t know.” When Sinnisiak was recalled to the witness stand, Wallbridge, this time interpreted by Patsy Klengenberg, asked, “Did you know these men [Rouvière and Le Roux] were priests, teachers of religion?” Sinnisiak replied through interpreter Klengenberg, “I don’t know,” Wallbridge followed up, “What did you think they were? What did you think they were doing there?” Sinnisiak replied, “I don’t know, maybe they were trading, I don’t know.” See *R v Sinnisiak* trial transcripts, Edmonton, August, 1917, 113, 181, and 220, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG18 Vol 2479.

²⁶⁵ Stefansson and Anderson, *My Life with the Eskimo*, 328.

²⁶⁶ Sinnisiak, “Statement,” May 1916, GR.1972.0026 C780.

Uluksak's account of eating the livers of the priests is somewhat different:

Sinnisiak said to me "You better cut him open." I did not want to". He told me again and I cut open his belly and we eat a piece of the liver each. We then left Kuleavik on the top of the snow and went back to the other man Ilogoak and I cut him open when Sinnisiak told me to and we eat a small piece of his liver also.²⁶⁷

After they killed Rouvière and Le Roux, Sinnisiak and Uluksak returned to camp with only the priests' rifle and some cartridges, and their first course of action was to enter Kormik's tent and awoke him to tell him they killed the two *Qablunaat*.²⁶⁸ This last point is an interesting admission by Sinnisiak because of its sequence in events and demonstrates the stature of Kormik from the perspective of Inuit culture in relation to the *ataniq*,²⁶⁹ i.e. leader, who was always the best hunter, an *anguhuqtuq*.²⁷⁰

After two years of hearing no words from Rouvière and Le Roux the Oblates decided to formally declare the missionaries missing and requested the RNWMP to investigate.²⁷¹ The reasons why the Oblates waited so long appear intentional, and the records compared with the Oblate literature contradict each other. The Oblates desired to control the narrative of their missionaries' deaths, desiring to make them martyrs for the faith. The less facts collected on Rouvière and Le Roux's deaths by the RNWMP would lead to greater flexibility required for the Oblates' construction of Rouvière and Le Roux's hagiography.

Arden had first heard about the potential deaths of Rouvière and Le Roux in 1914, one year after their sojourn to the sea ice with the Inuinait in 1913, which Father Ducot stated to Arden that he thought the priests' disappearance was not a matter for the police to investigate. According to Arden, Ducot's response to Arden's suggestion for the police to investigate was

²⁶⁷ Uluksak, "Statement," May 1916, GR.1972.0026 C780.

²⁶⁸ Sinnisiak, "Statement," Interpreted by Ilavinik; Uluksak, "Statement," interpreted by Ilavinik, , GR1972.0026 C780.

²⁶⁹ Ohakok et al. *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 18.

²⁷⁰ Ohakok et al. *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 12.

²⁷¹ Breynt, correspondence to Fortescue, April 28, 1915, PR.2001.184 box 1 file 19.

“that it was not in the interest of the missionaries to do that.”²⁷² The following year, RNWMP Inspector Rheault heard about Inuinnait wearing priests’ cassocks, one with a blood-stained hole, and sent this report to the Commander of the “N” Division on March 7, 1915.²⁷³

Curiously, on April 18, 1915, Lefebvre Duchaussois sent a telegram²⁷⁴ from Edmonton to Breynat while in Montreal on church business, stating: “Eskimos with whom two fathers are gone never came back yet fathers said when leaving would follow Eskimos as far as they might go and might be absent for two years.”²⁷⁵ Breynat then sent a letter to the RNWMP on April 28, 1915:

Hearing that you have gone to the West, I take the liberty of sending you herewith, a copy of the telegram received from Rev. F. Lefebvre, telling about our two missing missionaries. I must add that they had directions to spend one winter with the Esquimos, and when they wrote to me just at the time of their leaving with the Esquimos, they told me they would do so. I cannot imagine they would not have found any way of sending a few lines to me since then. However, according to the telegram, there seems to be a little, very little hope. May I suggest that this should not delay the sending of a few policemen to make an investigation in the case?²⁷⁶

R.G. Moyles suggests that Ducot and Breynat did not worry about the priests because they had expressed they would be gone for two years and that news coming from the remote area of the Arctic sea ice would travel “slow.”²⁷⁷ While this might be true, it is difficult to reconcile the fact that the Arden told Ducot as early as 1914 about how he heard about the potential deaths of the priests, to which Ducot declined to get the police involved. In addition, in Breynat’s letter to Fortescue for the RNWMP dated April 28, he stated that he gave directions to the priests to be

²⁷² Arden, from Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1915*, 208.

²⁷³ Charles Rheault, from Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, 1915*, 200.

²⁷⁴ Judging by appearance, and in comparison to other telegrams found within the criminal court files, in addition to the fact that there is no company name found on the document it appears to be a forged telegram.

²⁷⁵ Lefebvre Duchaussois, telegram to Breynat, April 18, 1915, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR.2001.184, box 1, file #19.

²⁷⁶ Breynat, correspondence to Fortescue, April 28, 1915, Edmonton, PR.2001.184, box 1 file 19.

²⁷⁷ Moyles, *British Law and Arctic Men*, 7.

gone for one year. In fact, even in Rouvière's last letter, it is uncertain how long he planned to be away with Le Roux, even stating that they might return for Christmas festivities.²⁷⁸

While the motives for the Oblates' initial refusal to notify the RNWMP seem suspicious, their motivation to later send letters to request an investigation is equally puzzling. Regardless, the Oblates appear to carry a lot of political weight in these files, whether directly corresponding with the Prime Minister, appealing to jurors, or interpreting for the police. The Oblates evidently controlled much of the narrative. The gruesome details of the deaths especially Sinnisiak and Uluksak's confession of posthumous cannibalism are narratives that have made this story sensational. The aspects of cannibalism would be a major point of focus for McCaul's trial strategy and a focal point in *Arctic Tragedy*. Similarly, Sinnisiak and Uluksak's confession of post-humous cannibalism would become a focus in Roman Catholic narratives about the deaths of Rouvière and Le Roux.²⁷⁹ While external narratives, such as those constructed by McCaul, focused on the more sensational aspects of the case, Inuit perspectives on law and justice, especially regarding hierarchical authority and *Maligait*, present a different context through which these actions might be interpreted.

²⁷⁸ McCaul, *R v Sinnisiak*, trial transcripts, RG18 Vol 2479, 33.

²⁷⁹ Emma Anderson describes a similar theme of remembrance within North American Catholics' recollection of the Jesuit North American Martyrs' death that occurred in the seventeenth century at the hands of the Haudenosaunee in New France, a recollection that includes the image of the Haudenosaunee's postmortem cannibalism of the Jesuit missionaries. See Anderson, *Death and Afterlife*, 243.

Murder and *Maligait* – Inuit Laws and unequal distribution of power in Inuit society in the early twentieth century

In Inuinnaqtun, to command someone is *pitqujaa*,²⁸⁰ which corresponds to the Eastern Arctic dialect *piqujaq*, which is part of *Inuit Maligait*, i.e. Inuit law.²⁸¹ *Piqujaq* is the community members' requirement to abide by society's rules, imparted on them by authorized people, such as the *ataniq*, which translates to "leader."²⁸² *Piqujait*, the plural form of *piqujaq*, is the faculty of law that refers to obligatory actions one must do because a person of authority requested it.²⁸³ As soon as Sinnisiak returned to their camp after killing Rouvière and Le Roux he entered Kormik's tent to inform him that they killed the "white men."²⁸⁴ Sinnisiak's first course of action in informing Kormik is likely because Kormik was a man of stature, an *ataniq*, and potentially Kormik sentenced Rouvière and Le Roux to death through delivering a *piqujaq* to Sinnisiak and Uluksak to kill the priests. Thus, an alternative understanding of Sinnisiak and Uluksak's killing of the priests can be understood as their deliverance of Kormik's law in the execution of the two priests who violated the laws of the *ataniq*, in this case Kormik.

Only one leader existed for each camp, and they had considerable power as they achieved *ataniq* status by a combination of their hunting abilities and birthrights, but most importantly, through their success as hunters among the group.²⁸⁵ Everyone in the camp, including the *Angakkuit*, had to abide by the *ataniq*'s laws.²⁸⁶ The same laws were applied to *Qablunaat*, who

²⁸⁰ Ohakok et al., *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 72.

²⁸¹ Mariano Aupilaarjuk, Jarich Oosten, Frédéric Laugrand, and Wim Rasing, *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, interpreted by Archie Angnakak, Iqaluit, Nunavut: Language and Culture Program of Nunavut Arctic College, 1999, 1.

²⁸² Ohakok et al., *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 18; Aupilaarjuk et al. *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, 91.

²⁸³ *Piqujaq* is translated to "customary law," see Aupilaarjuk et al. *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, 1.

²⁸⁴ Sinnisiak, "Statement," Interpreted by Ilavinik; Uluksak, "Statement," interpreted by Ilavinik, GR1972.0026 C780.

²⁸⁵ Aupilaarjuk et al. *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, 128.

²⁸⁶ Aupilaarjuk et al. *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, 102-115, 120.

often mistakenly assumed that Inuit had no laws or hierarchy²⁸⁷ and wrongly assumed that, as ‘civilized white men,’ they were in charge.

For example, in 1911, Harry Radford, an American scientist, and George Street, his Canadian partner, hired Inuinnait guides from Bathurst Inlet to travel to the Arctic Ocean by dogsled. In 1912, one of his Inuk guides’ wives fell on ice and was hurt, so the guide refused to travel with Radford, instead wanting to tend to his wife. Radford had a violent temper and resorted to whipping the man (named Ka-la-ak and/or Kaneak in the police report) in an attempt to force him to continue to travel and guide him. As a result, Ka-la-ak/Kaneak and another Inuinnait man named Ame-gral-nik, attacked Radford and Street, and killed them both. Inuinnait described Radford as having a quick temper, and when travelling with him, described him as prone to angry outbursts.²⁸⁸

Danish ethnologist Knud Rasmussen travelled through Bathurst Inlet in 1923 and spent one month with the two Inuinnait men who killed Radford and Street. Rasmussen recorded the two men closer to their Inuinnait pronunciation, spelled Hagdlagdlaog and Qanijaq, and was careful not to call them “criminals” or “bad men,” instead referred to them as “man-killers.”²⁸⁹ Rasmussen said that Radford and Street’s killers were “pleasant and extremely helpful men, who were very devoted to us and left with us only the best memories,” and stated that Radford “undoubtedly had himself to blame.”²⁹⁰ Kaneak (Qanijaq) was described as the “best hunter”²⁹¹ and so when Radford assumed that he was the boss and attempted to enforce obedience by

²⁸⁷ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 135.

²⁸⁸ Borden, *Report Royal Northwest Mounted Police Report 1916*, 344-357.

²⁸⁹ Rasmussen, *Intellectual Culture of the Copper Eskimo*, 18.

²⁹⁰ Rasmussen, *Intellectual Culture of the Copper Eskimo*, 17-18.

²⁹¹ Borden, *Report Royal Northwest Mounted Police Report 1916*, 352.

violence, he committed a violation against the Inuit *maligaq*, i.e. law, of the *ataniq*,²⁹² because it was Kaneak who was the *ataniq*, not Radford, who was utterly dependant on the Inuinnait.

Murder, *inuaqsiniq*,²⁹³ was not condoned, and Inuit had a *piqujaq*, i.e. customary law, which meant that everyone was obliged to follow.²⁹⁴ If someone were to commit a premeditated murder, the victim's relatives could avenge their death by killing the murderer.²⁹⁵ This was a *maligaq*, i.e. law, and thus, the act of killing a murderer was differentiated from a premeditated murder and was considered legal.²⁹⁶ When people were unwilling to accept the direction of the *ataniq*, i.e. leader, they became a liable threat to the entire community.²⁹⁷ In these instances, the *ataniq* could kill the potential offender without breaking the *maligaq* of murder as the killing was justified to ensure the safety of others.²⁹⁸ Similarly, like Kormik, the *ataniq* could obligate someone else in the community of lower-ranking to carry out the execution.

In the early twentieth century, Inuit also had laws in handling the dead body of a murdered person that required special care, as differentiated from the dead body of someone who died of natural causes. If someone was murdered in Inuit Nunangat by another Inuk, the murderer would place rocks to cover the entire body in an effort to bar the murdered spirit from avenging their untimely death.²⁹⁹ If someone died of natural causes, the deceased was only covered with rocks around the body, but not over it, to ensure that the spirit had access to depart

²⁹² Inuit elder Lucassie Nutaraaluk, speaking from interpreter Archie Angnakak, explained that leaders had judicial authorities in the camps that they led, and that leaders obtained their authority through their abilities to hunt. As leaders, all in the camp were required to follow their lead and decisions. See Aupilaarjuk et al., *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, 5, 91, 102.

²⁹³ Aupilaarjuk et al. *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, 160-161.

²⁹⁴ Aupilaarjuk et al. *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, 22.

²⁹⁵ Aupilaarjuk et al. *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, 21.

²⁹⁶ Inuit elder Imaruittuq, speaking from interpreter Archie Angnakak, when asked if avenging a murderer by killing them was a "*maligaq*," explained that "If someone took revenge on another for committing a murder, there was nothing the community could do against the person who took revenge." See Aupilaarjuk et al. *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, 48.

²⁹⁷ Aupilaarjuk et al. *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, 109.

²⁹⁸ Aupilaarjuk et al. *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, 7, 109.

²⁹⁹ Aupilaarjuk et al. *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, 21.

its deceased body.³⁰⁰ In addition, the murderer sliced different parts of the body to ensure that the spirit would not be physically able to take revenge on its murderer, usually at the joints and body areas essential for life,³⁰¹ likely a reason why Sinnisiak hacked Rouvière on his face/neck and leg.

Writing in the early 1910s, ethnologist Diamond Jenness reported that the Inuinnait informants he spoke to told about numerous tales of people dying, being buried, and returned from the dead: “Tales of people dying and coming back to life again are so common among these Eskimos that one is almost tempted to believe that catalepsy [neurological condition characterized by muscular rigidity] may not be at all infrequent.”³⁰² Thus, cutting the body along the joints of the dead body of someone murdered, as Sinnisiak and Uluksak described they carried out on Rouvière and Le Roux, ensured the person did not come back to life.

Jenness reported that the mortality of the Inuinnait was almost always due to “natural causes, either old age or the perils that are inseparable from life in the Arctic; an occasional murder added to the number.”³⁰³ He contradicts his own report and stated that murder was “always frequent,”³⁰⁴ and provides tantalizing evidence that the Inuinnait also had the *piqujaq* of murder, of which the *maligaq*, i.e. law, was death:

It is clear, therefore, that the maintenance of order in a Copper Eskimo community rests purely and simply on a basis of force. No man will commit a crime, save in the heat of passion, unless he believes that he can make good his escape until the affair blows over, or else that his kinsmen will support him against any attempt at revenge. Detection is certain; there is so little privacy in their lives that all the possessions and actions of a man are known to everyone around. Until recently, when firearms and steel knives and other articles of civilization were introduced, there was little inducement to steal, for practically all their possessions could be made or acquired without much labour. Murder, however, with its corollary, the blood-feud, has always been frequent, and

³⁰⁰ Aupilaarjuk et al. *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, 21.

³⁰¹ Aupilaarjuk et al. *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, 21-22; Knud Rasmussen, *The Mackenzie Eskimos: After Knud Rasmussen's Posthumous Notes*, edited by H. Ostermann, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1942, 58.

³⁰² Jenness, *The Life of The Copper Eskimos*, 173; Stefansson and Anderson, *My Life with the Eskimo*, 373.

³⁰³ Jenness, *The Life of The Copper Eskimos*, 42.

³⁰⁴ Jenness, *The Life of The Copper Eskimos*, 96.

nothing but external influence can prevent it. The natives came into conflict with civilized law for the first time in 1916, when a patrol of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police arrested and deported the murderers of the two French missionaries. They learned then that the murder of a white man would inevitably lead to their paying the penalty at some time or another; but life will never be secured or progress possible to these natives unless swift and exemplary punishment is meted out for assassination within their own groups.

Sinnisiak and Uluksak both expected the RNWMP to kill them immediately on the spot when the RNWMP showed up for their arrests.³⁰⁵ Koeha, the Inuinnaq man that the RNWMP brought down to Edmonton to sit as a witness for Sinnisiak and Uluksak's trials, said that he stopped Kormik from killing the priests to avoid a blood-feud with the *Qablunaat*.³⁰⁶

Jenness reported that the Inuinnaik of Bathurst Inlet, farther east from Kugluktuk (formerly Coppermine), after the death of Radford and Street avoided the area where it occurred, "fearing the white men's shades that still lingered their death place."³⁰⁷ Although Radford and Street did not kill any Inuit, the Inuit explained to the RNWMP investigators that they were afraid that Radford would kill one of them.³⁰⁸ Given his propensity for angry outbursts and the violent beating he gave to his guide with a dogwhip, it is likely that Inuit considered his killing justified and not murder. The Dominion of Canada seemed to have agreed with the Inuinnaik:

Under instructions of the Government... In March, 1917, the patrol set out and returned to its base in January, 1918, having successfully performed its mission. Inspector French reports that the result of the inquiry was to establish that Messrs. Radford and Street were killed by the natives on the shores of Bathurst inlet in June, 1913, and that there was great provocation. In accordance with the instructions of the Government, he did not arrest the actual offenders. The following were the instructions: "It will be your duty to get in touch at the earliest possible moment with the tribes said to be responsible for the deaths. You will make inquiries and take such statutory declarations as may seem necessary in order to obtain a full and accurate account of the occurrence. From information received, it is assumed that there was provocation. If this is found to be the case, it is not the intention of the Government to proceed with prosecution. If, however, there was found to be no provocation, the Government will consider what further action is to be taken." After completing his investigation, Inspector French proceeded as far west as

³⁰⁵ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 134.

³⁰⁶ Koeha, "Koeha (Eskimo)," GR.1972.0026 C780.

³⁰⁷ Jenness, *The Life of The Copper Eskimos*, 174.

³⁰⁸ Borden, Report 1916, 356.

Bernard inlet, visiting the different tribes en route to whom he explained the “white man’s” laws and customs.³⁰⁹

Similarly, the RNWMP investigator La Nauze suggested that the priests may have been responsible for their own deaths after he arrested Sinnisiak and Uluksak:

The unfortunate priests may have been the victims of a pre-meditated murder for the possession of their rifles and ammunition, or [sic] may have brought on the crime by their own untactfulness. We have only the murder[ers] own statements as to the latter, and the unfortunate victims will never tell on this earth of the former.³¹⁰

La Nauze’s theory, outlined in his report, suggested that the priests deserved their deaths due to their own “untactfulness.” This perspective was later raised by defense lawyer Wallbridge during the first trial held in Edmonton, *R v Sinnisiak*.³¹¹ The Canadian legal system demonstrated a notable degree of leniency in these early cross-cultural encounters that contradicted not just their own law but also Inuit law, as seen in the Dominion’s decision not to pursue legal action against the Inuit in the case of Radford and Street. Similar to La Nauze’s interpretation that the priests’ deaths were a result of their tactlessness, this type of justification was used in the Dominion’s decision not to prosecute the Inuit involved in the killings of Radford and Street.

The Dominion of Canada sent Inspector French to investigate Radford and Street’s death with the explicit instruction only to proceed with a prosecution if he found that there was “no provocation” on the part of the Bathurst Inuit, if there was reason to believe the killings were provoked, the Dominion instructed that no prosecution take place. Instead of prosecution the Dominion instructed French to visit all the “tribes” and explain to them “white man’s laws and

³⁰⁹ Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police For The Year Ended September 30, 1918*, J. de Labroquerie Taché, 1919, 14-15.

³¹⁰ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 135.

³¹¹ Trial transcripts, *R v Sinnisiak*, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG18 Vol 2479, 163.

customs.”³¹² To Inspector French’s method in explaining “white man’s laws” to the various tribes of Inuit that he met through happenstance, we shall never know, nor will we know who would have interpreted for French as this information is not included in the report. What we do know, however, is that Radford did not have an interpreter and the RNWMP found this to be one of the reasons for his death.³¹³

As these deaths suggest, the inability to communicate with Inuinnait led to tense confusion. In both instances for Radford/Street and Rouvière/Le Roux, they wrongfully assumed they had the higher ranking than Inuinnait. In both instances, *Qablunaat* used force and violence to compel Inuinnait to *follow them*, contradicting the Inuit law that required a leadership based on skills and abilities to survive the Arctic. As Radford/Street and Rouvière/Le Roux attempted to force their status as leaders, it threatened the survival of the Inuinnait communities who hosted them, thus breaking the *Maligait* of the *Ataniit*. Here the *Qablunaat* refused to acknowledge and recognize their utter dependence on their Inuinnait hosts and challenged their authority by refusing to conform to Inuit laws of the *Ataniit*. The *Ataniit*, as the most skilled hunters, required obedience from their camp members, those who did not follow the *Ataniit* law could suffer death as a result.

As Inuit *Maligait* helps to elucidate the motives of Sinnisiak and Uluksak for killing the priests, its application to understand the sensationalized topic of their post-humous cannibalism provides alternative interpretations to understand this event. “Ritualistic cannibalism,” as suggested by the Canadian legal system at the time, oversimplifies the complex relationship Inuit

³¹² Robert Borden, *Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police for the Year Ended September 30, 1918*, J. de Labroquerie Taché, 1919, 14-15.

³¹³ Borden, *Report of Royal Northwest Mounted Police: 1916*, 355.

held with laws concerning blood, hunting, and the body. To fully grasp the significance of Sinnisiak and Uluksak's actions, it is essential to explore Inuit beliefs surrounding human blood and its potential to pollute hunters, as well as broader cultural practices around life and death. In addition, the framework of *uqattiartuq* highlights the role of misinterpretations between languages and provides a broader context to understand why Sinnisiak and Uluksak ate the pieces of livers from Rouvière and Le Roux.

Arnäkapsha'luk and Human Blood: The potential to pollute hunters

McCaul considered Sinnisiak and Uluksak's act of posthumous cannibalism as a practice of "ritualistic cannibalism" derived from what he erroneously viewed as a cannibalistic culture of the Inuinnait.³¹⁴ While both historical and contemporary scholarship do not share the same view as McCaul on the purported cannibalistic culture of Inuinnait, the current understanding of Sinnisiak and Uluksak's act of posthumous cannibalism on Rouvière and Le Roux is still considered to have origin in Inuit culture, although from the aspect of practices in harvesting animals, not in killing humans.³¹⁵ Ironically, this view neglects to consider the cannibalistic undertones of the Christian Eucharist, especially if interpreted in another language without the cognitive or utterance fluency required for communication.

A closer look at historical Inuinnait perspectives and practices surrounding women's bodies reveal a crucial context of Inuinnait culture at Sinnisiak and Uluksak's time that viewed human blood as a potential for pollution to hunters that ultimately could impact the community's ability to harvest animals, thus threatening their survival. In this historical context, women who

³¹⁴ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 10-12.

³¹⁵ Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit, Oblate Missionaries and Grey Nuns in the Keewatin*, 86; Komar, *The Court of Better Fiction*, 42; Jenkins, *Bloody Falls of the Coppermine*, 114; Moyles, *British Law and Arctic Men*, 52; Edwin Keedy "A Remarkable Murder Trial: Rex Vs Sinnisiak," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, October 1951, Vol 100, no.1, 61; Thomas Ricchio, *Ilira*, Onassis International Prize in Playwriting, Winner, 2006, 2, 58, 71.

were menstruating were required to quarantine from hunters to mitigate contamination of human blood to their hunters. This Inuinnait legal perspective surrounding human blood provides us the historical social context to understand why Sinnisiak and Uluksak ate a piece of Rouvière and Le Roux's livers. Knud Rasmussen's observations further illuminate the importance of human blood in consideration of Sinnisiak and Uluksak's posthumous cannibalism.

Rasmussen met many Inuinnait in 1923, a decade after the Roman Catholic missionaries met their death, and collected many ethnographic stories of *pittailiniq*, "taboos,"³¹⁶ especially in relation to human blood. Rasmussen recorded that the Inuinnait had many taboos prescribed to them from *Arnäkap^sha luk*, "the big bad woman."³¹⁷ *Arnäkap^sha luk* is a regional epithet specific to the Inuinnait for the Mother of the Sea Beasts³¹⁸ who is the origin of all taboos in which she was especially "touchy about unclean women."³¹⁹ The "mightiest" spirit, Inuinnait especially feared *Arnäkap^sha luk* in the winter when they relied on seals for survival. Because seals belonged to *Arnäkap^sha luk*, society had to follow laws to ensure not to offend her for fear she would board up all the seals in her underwater abode hidden away from the hunters, an act that could potentially lead to starvation for humans.

Often, it was women who had to confess their transgressions that offended *Arnäkap^sha luk*, and *Angatkuq* were the ones in the community to decide what remedial actions were needed. Early twentieth century Inuit heavily depended on hunters and their ability to

³¹⁶ For an example of *pittailiniq* (things that one must not do, taboo) in relation to women's bodies, see: Victor Tungilik, Rachel Uyarasuk, Jarich Oosten, Frédéric Laugrand, Alexina Kublu, *Inuit Perspectives of the 20th Century, Volume 1: The Transition to Christianity*, Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 1999, 15.

³¹⁷ Rasmussen, *Intellectual Culture of the Copper Eskimos*, 24.

³¹⁸ *The Mother of the Sea Beasts* is Rasmussen's term to refer to an extremely powerful deity in Inuit pre-settlement culture, often referred to elsewhere as "Sedna." She has many different names and variations of her myths exist across the circumpolar Arctic. The Inuinnait referred to her as *Arnäkap^sha luk*, "the big bad woman." See Knud Rasmussen, *Intellectual Culture of the Copper Eskimos*, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel 1932, 24.

³¹⁹ Rasmussen, *Copper Eskimos*, 24.

procure animals for surviving winter. The Inuinnaqtun word *Angunahuaqti*³²⁰ and its eastern Arctic cognate *Angunasukti*³²¹ are terms that mean “hunter.” Although the English language and meaning of “hunter” does not capture the unique qualities associated with *angunahuaqti*. An *angunahuaqti* was someone who did not *just* ‘hunt.’ Rather, the entire community contributed to the success of their hunters. Through living a good life in following Arnäkap^sha’luk’s rules, and being forthcoming with confessions of human transgressions, the entire community contributed to the successes of their hunters:

Should it happen that people break their taboo – she is especially touchy about unclean women – she gathers up all the women’s sewing things and the men’s work and covers the seals over with them so that they cannot get out. All the sea beasts can be hidden under her side-platform, and they are shut up there when a taboo has been broken, the space under the side plat-platform then being blocked up with the work that was done under taboo. This does not mean literally the sewing materials or the implements or tools that the men have worked with, but simply the souls of these things. The materials remain with the people and they do not notice that their souls are being piled up in the house of the Sea Woman. But suddenly hunting fails, and then the people can only be saved if a shaman forces Arnäkap^sha’luk up to the top of the sea.³²²

Arnäkap^sha’luk controlled the animals in which Inuinnaqtun relied for food, shelter, clothing, and heat. She chose to release her animals to hunters based on their communities’ correct practices and observance of laws. The *Angatkuq*, i.e., shamans, were religious specialists for their communities and the only ones among them that could embody Arnäkap^sha’luk. Through collective hymn signing, they invoked Arnäkap^sha’luk’s possession in the shaman’s body through the performance of séance that brought her in contact with the community to determine the remedy. Rasmussen witnessed a séance with the Inuinnaqtun and recorded:

They continued to repeat these words [the hymn] until at last the shaman announced that Arnäkap^sha’luk was approaching, and that all the men in the qag^sje should hold him. They immediately threw themselves upon him, for now the Sea Woman had beset him, that is to say her soul had taken up residence in his body, and she now spoke in a deep voice through the

³²⁰ Ohakok et al., *Inuinnaqtun to English*, 12.

³²¹ Pirurvik, *Inuktit Uqausiliurut : Inuktit Affix Dictionary*, Iqaluit: Inuit Uqausinginnik Taiguusiliuqtiit, 2020, 46. Accessed online March 12, 2023: <https://www.taiguusiliuqtiit.ca/en/file-download/download/public/191>

³²² Rasmussen, *Copper Eskimos*, 24.

shaman. As a rule she would tell them that the bad hunting was the result of some taboo having been broken, and that the constantly bad weather was due to people's indifference to the traditions of their ancestors. Scarcely had she launched these accusations when the woman in their fear began to confess the breaches of taboo they had committed, the men meanwhile fighting desperately with Arnäkap^sha'luk, who had quite taken possession of the shaman's body. He writhed in pain, struck out with his fists and moaned incessantly... They were afraid that the Sea Woman would level the qag^sje with the ice and let loose fierce storms, and this was certain to happen if the shaman merely raised his head a little. Then, as soon as women and men had confessed all, the shaman cried in a loud voice that Arnäkap^sha'luk's lamp was once more turned the right way up – indicating that as long as bad hunting lasted the lamp always stood bottom upwards, extinguished and dark. Shortly afterwards the shaman, who was still fighting with the Sea Woman, shouted that now her hair was smooth and clean again; for as long as all sins are not confessed her hair is usually in the wildest disorder. Only when everything has been put in order again does Arnäkap^sha'luk return to her house by the same route as she has come.³²³

Rasmussen's observations that he recorded demonstrates how, for Inuinnait, during times of crisis and famine, the *Angatkuq* gave up their bodies for Arnäkap^sha'luk to possess despite the associated pain and acted as her interpreters to find out why she held animals from hunters.

Although Rasmussen noted that the taboos surrounding women during menstruation and childbirth are “mild,”³²⁴ he nonetheless expressed that Arnäkap^sha'luk was especially “touchy about unclean women,”³²⁵ indicative that the blood related to women's biological cycle made them “unclean,” and thus had the potential to transgress Arnäkap^sha'luk's laws. That women were the first to confess their sins during the séance to appease Arnäkap^sha'luk recorded by Rasmussen also suggests a stronger correlation between women and transgressions against Arnäkap^sha'luk than men in the community.

Just as the community relied on following their laws to appease Arnäkap^sha'luk thought to ensure their survival through success in hunting, so too did specific practices involving the body, particularly the liver, play a crucial role in maintaining the spiritual balance between the

³²³ Rasmussen, *Copper Eskimos*, 25-26.

³²⁴ Rasmussen, *Copper Eskimos*, 42.

³²⁵ Rasmussen, *Copper Eskimos*, 24.

hunters and their prey. The liver, regarded as the seat of the soul, *tarniq*, held significance in hunters' laws in relation to treating their harvested animals, where its consumption was believed to influence future hunting success. For Inuit, the liver was the location of the soul, *tarniq*, in both animals and humans.³²⁶ Rasmussen recorded that the aspect of eating an animal's liver is based on mutual offerings to guarantee future success in hunting, not insurance against the resurrection of the animal.³²⁷

On cannibalism, Rasmussen's only mention in *Intellectual Culture of the Copper Eskimos* is when he noted that the Inuinnait group called the *Umingmaktôrmiut* described the *Kangerjuarmiut* (from Prince Albert Sound, current day Uluhaktok) in "a more than fantastical manner" as: "bloodthirsty folk who often fought amongst themselves with bow and arrow, and that cannibalism was not uncommon among them. They often had frozen corpses to eat just as they have seals."³²⁸ As Diamond Jenness noted in his ethnography, Inuinnait he spoke with provided a more rational explanation for the story, likely because they heard the story closer in time to the actual event than the Inuinnait that Rasmussen interviewed a decade later:

In the evening, Taqtu imitated the peculiar intonation of the *Kanghirjuarmuit* Eskimos: both men and women there are said to pronounce their words in a strange and ludicrous tone, the women differently to the men. Long ago too, when pressed by famine one winter and unable to procure seals, they ate their dead, chopping them up with axes like caribou. The Eskimos here are horrified at the thought. They had heard too that white men had ate Eskimos long ago far away to the south, but I assured them this was not true.³²⁹

³²⁶ Frédéric Laugrand and J. G. Oosten, *Hunters, Predators and Prey: Inuit Perceptions of Animals*, New York: Berghahn Books, 2016, 39.

³²⁷ Rasmussen, *Copper Eskimos*, 107.

³²⁸ Rasmussen, *Copper Eskimos*, 69.

³²⁹ Diamond Jenness and Stuart E. (Stuart Edward) Jenness, *Arctic Odyssey: The Diary of Diamond Jenness, Ethnologist with the Canadian Arctic Expedition in Northern Alaska and Canada, 1913-1916*, Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1991, 427.

That the Inuinnait had a reaction of horror to the thought of cannibalism suggests that this was not a common practice. It is conceivable that Sinnisiak and Uluksak also, at one time or another in their lives, practiced the mitigation required of hunters to avoid contact with human blood out of reverence for Arnäkap^sha·luk's laws.

In examining the actions of Sinnisiak and Uluksak, it becomes clear that the external legal and religious interpretations, particularly those advanced by McCaul, oversimplified the complexities of Inuit cultural and spiritual practices. While McCaul fixated on cannibalism as a sign of “ritualistic” violence, Inuit beliefs surrounding blood, death, and the body were deeply intertwined with survival in the harsh Arctic environment. The consumption of human liver by Sinnisiak and Uluksak was an anomaly, inconsistent with the cultural norms surrounding blood pollution and spiritual purity, suggesting a different source for their actions external to Inuit culture.

“Superstitious Cannibalism,” an enduring misattribution in the Canadian Arctic

Sinnisiak and Uluksak’s confession of posthumous cannibalism stirred the imagination of the Dominion Court public servants who viewed cannibalism as a practice of “superstition” common to people who are “primitive.”³³⁰ The common perception at the time of the trials was that primitive societies focused solely on “taboos” and feared “spirits.”³³¹ Scholars continue to frame Sinnisiak’s confession of cannibalism as a product of Inuit *Angakkuuniq*, though not to the extent that it is seen as stemming from a cannibalistic culture, but a practice related to harvesting animals.³³² Aside from the Dominion officials’ perspective that Inuit were cannibals, Catholics would later focus on the scene of “ritual cannibalism” in their dramatic plays as a display of their temporal war against Evil, in which Catholics remembered the deaths of Rouvière and Le Roux as acts of “martyrdom.”³³³ While the confessions of Sinnisiak and Uluksak sparked immediate fascination, they also reflected broader misconceptions of Inuit culture that were shaped by both colonial and religious-anthropological perspectives of the time.

In his opening address to the jury in the first trial, McCaul described the Inuit as cannibals and stressed the importance of bringing Inuit under the authority of Canada, foreshadowing the confessions of the Inuinnait men who had told the police that they both ate the

³³⁰ James E. Wallbridge, “Address to the Court and Jury by Mr. Wallbridge,” Calgary trial transcripts, *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak*, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, RG18 Vol 2479, 85; Charles McCaul, “Closing Address,” Calgary trial transcripts, *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak*, courtesy of LAC, RG18 Vol 2479, 105-106.

³³¹ Wyndham Valentine Bruce, Edmonton trial transcripts, *R v Sinnisiak*, courtesy of LAC, RG18 Vol 2479, 66-68.

³³² Laugrand, and Oosten, *Inuit, Oblate Missionaries, and Grey Nuns in the Keewatin*, 86; Keedy “A Remarkable Murder Trial,” 61; Jenkins, *Bloody Falls of the Coppermine*, 220; Komar, *The Court of Better Fiction*, 43.

³³³ Pierre de Granpré, “Une Drame Chez les Innoits: Récit de Martyre des Rouvière et Le Roux,” *Martyrs aux Glaces Polaires*, Chambly-Bassin, P.Q.: O.M.I., 1938, 143; Claude Chatillon, “Une Drame Aux Glaces Polaires,” from file titled “Concours I,” OMI Collection, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta; PR.2001.184 box 2, no. 52.

livers of the priests they had slain, a focus of the narrative he would later strive to bring out in court:

These remote savages, really *cannibals*, the Eskimo of the Arctic regions have got to be taught to recognize the authority of the British Crown, and that the authority of the British Crown and the Dominion of Canada, of which these countries are apart, extends to the furthest limits of the Frozen North. It is necessary that they should understand that they are under the Law (emphasis added).³³⁴

However, what really fascinated McCaul, he wrote in his unpublished monograph *Arctic Tragedy*, was his theory that Sinnisiak and Uluksak came from a cannibalistic tribe who had killed and eaten men from the ill-fated John Franklin expedition of 1845.³³⁵ McCaul's first chapter in *Arctic Tragedy* is an ethnohistorical survey of the Inuinnait, that he refers to as "Copper Eskimos," as they were called by explorers and other non-Inuit at the time,³³⁶ and emphasized that the Englishmen of the Franklin Expedition were "ever seen alive again by any white man, and they are supposed to have succumbed to cold and starvation (underline in original)."³³⁷

In 1854, Dr. John Rae surveyed the western shores of the Arctic Ocean in an effort to map the area for the Hudson Bay Company when he learned from Inuinnait that they had seen men dragging a boat near King William Island. Rae reported to the British Admiralty that they came across a site of human remains and cooking kettles:

From the mutilated state of many of the corpses, and the contents of the kettles, it is evident that our wretched countrymen had been driven to the last resource – cannibalism – as a means of prolonging existence.³³⁸

³³⁴ McCaul, "Opening Address of Counsel for the Prosecution," *R v Sinnisiak*, RG18 Vol 2479.

³³⁵ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 10-12.

³³⁶ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 2.

³³⁷ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 5.

³³⁸ Roger W. Byard, "Death in the Arctic – the Tragic Fate of the Franklin Expedition (1845)," *Forensic Science, Medicine and Pathology*, 2020, 17: 161-166. Accessed online July 31, 2022: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s12024-020-00305-5.pdf>, 163.

The Rae report, informed by Inuinnait, would be the first description of cannibalism in the Franklin Expedition saga and became an enduring fascination for many interested in the history of the Arctic.

This fascination with cannibalism as a defining characteristic of Arctic survival was further entrenched by the statement obtained from Sinnisiak and Uluksak who “confessed” to eating the priests’ livers, as captured in the RNWMP investigative report. Constable Charles La Nauze obtained a “confession” from Sinnisiak through the interpreter Ilavinik where he stated that he and Uluksak had killed the two missing Oblate priests.³³⁹ Sinnisiak also said that after killing the priests, he and Uluksak each cut off a piece of the deceased priests’ livers and consumed it, because, they rationalized, “before when whitemen were killed they used to cut off some and eat some.”³⁴⁰

Later, during the first trial held in Edmonton, Sinnisiak contradicted his statement given during the police investigation. The courtroom crowded over with mothers and their children, “jostled” in to see the “Eskimos” in person,³⁴¹ when Sinnisiak confessed to eating the livers of the missionaries,³⁴² he contradicted the previous police statement and said that it was a practice he learned from his “grandfather.”³⁴³

Wallbridge: Why did you eat a piece of the dead man’s liver?
Sinnisiak: Because I heard from my grandfather – I heard about it from my grandfather.
Wallbridge: Did you know what it was going to do for you to eat the liver?
Sinnisiak: The man might get up again if I didn’t eat his liver.³⁴⁴

³³⁹ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 130-134.

³⁴⁰ Sinnisiak, “Statement,” May 1916, GR.1972.0026 C780.

³⁴¹ Author unknown, “ – Procès des Eskimaux – Extraits de Journaux a ce Sujet,” extract from the *Edmonton Journal*, August 15, 1917. Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR.2001.184. box 1 file 33.

³⁴² Sinnisiak, via interpreter Patsy Klengenberg, trial transcripts, day three of *R v Sinnisiak*, August 16, 1917, 217, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG18 Vol 2479.

³⁴³ Sinnisiak, day three of *Rex vs Sinnisiak*, August 16, 1917, 217, RG18 Vol 2479.

³⁴⁴ Wallbridge and Sinnisiak, via interpreter Patsy Klengenberg, trial transcripts, day three of *R v Sinnisiak*, August 16, 1917, 217, RG18 Vol 2479.

In the second trial held in Calgary, the questions and answers about the consummation of the liver differed somewhat and is the exchange that McCaul would cite in *Arctic Tragedy*. The contradiction between “whitemen” and Sinnisiak’s “grandfather” McCaul viewed as “evidence” to support his theory that the Franklin crew were cannibalized by Inuinnait.³⁴⁵

Now a very curious little bit of evidence cropped up in the course of the trial of Sinnisiak and Uluksuk giving apparently some ground for suspicion that many of Sir John Franklin’s men were actually killed by the Eskimo. In connection with the eating by the murderers of a portion of the liver of each of their victims (superstitious cannibalism) Sinnisiak said in his confession, “After they were dead I said to Uluksuk “before when white men were killed they used to cut off some and eat some;” later on when giving oral testimony on his own behalf, he was asked “Why did you eat a piece of the live?” he replied “I heard it from my grandfather.” Q. “If you eat the liver the whiteman cannot get up again?” A. “Yes.” Q. “You got that from your grandfather did you?” A. “Yes.” Sinnisiak’s grandfather would in the natural course of things have been contemporary with Sir John Franklin and his crew, and it is difficult to conceive of any other “whitemen” that he could have been referring to. Accordingly I think that Sinnisiak’s words – undoubtedly a careful literal translation – “before when whitemen were killed they used to” etc., are at least, very significant in connection with the fate of the crews of the Erebus and Terror (underline in original).³⁴⁶

McCaul called Sinnisiak and Uluksak’s act of eating the livers as “superstitious cannibalism,”³⁴⁷ but the discrepancy in Sinnisiak’s confession of eating the livers from his statement to the RNWMP to his testimony in the courtroom was not necessarily a difference, but more of an elaboration. From McCaul’s perspective, Sinnisiak ate the livers of the priests he had slain because he incorrectly attributed it as a traditional Inuinnait practice that Sinnisiak learned from his “grandfather.” A closer examination of Sinnisiak’s confession recorded in the investigation in relation to the courtroom testimony within the framework of *uqattiartuq*, in this case highlighting the context of Inuinnait, provides alternative interpretations from which to gain a new understanding of this discrepancy and provides further evidence to suggest that

³⁴⁵ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 11-12.

³⁴⁶ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 11-12.

³⁴⁷ McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 11.

Sinnisiak and Uluksak ate the slain priests' livers posthumously as a practice they learned from the priests.

The Eucharist in Context: Missionaries in the Arctic during early twentieth century

When Rouvière and Le Roux travelled through Great Bear Lake in 1912-1913, another Oblate missionary also made headway 1200 km east of Rouvière's cabin at Chesterfield Inlet. In 1911, Oblate Bishop Ovid Charlebois dispatched the Oblate Missionary Arsène Turquetil and Armand-René Le Blanc to the newly designated Keewatin District. Turquetil reached Churchill in 1911, and the following year, in 1912, travelled to Chesterfield Inlet and set up a mission.³⁴⁸

Similar to Rouvière and Le Roux, Turquetil and Le Blanc also performed the Eucharist for Inuit in 1912.³⁴⁹ Like Rouvière and Le Roux, Turquetil and Le Blanc were anxious to tell Inuit that they were not merchants. For Turquetil and Le Blanc, after their first Eucharist performed for the Inuit, Turquetil attempted to tell the Inuit that they are missionaries, not traders, and that they had arrived in the Arctic to teach the Inuit about the Christian religion:

The mass then begins, celebrated by Father Le Blanc, while his superior draws the most harmonious accents from the small harmonium that they brought with them. Then he tries to make people understand, in a mixture of Eskimo words seasoned with English terms known to a few men, how the priests had not come like the people of the fort to have their furs, or to trade with them, but to teach them to live well and thereby deserve to go to heaven, the common homeland towards which everyone must strive.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ A.G. Maurice, *Monseigneur Turquetil, Oblat De Marie-Immaculée Apôtre Des Esquimaux et le Miracle de ses Missions*, Winnipeg: Juniorat des O.M.I. Saint-Boniface Manitoba, 1935, 82-85, accessed online February 10, 2024 from Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec:

<https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/2021935?docref=ZUXQPpmeZGNEE1Jg1XZZfg>

³⁴⁹ Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit, Oblate Missionaries, and Grey Nuns*, 26-27.

³⁵⁰ From the French original: "La messe commence alors, célébrée par le P. Le Blanc, pendant que son supérieur tire les accents les plus harmonieux du petit harmonium qu'ils ont apporté avec eux. Puis celui-ci essaie de faire comprendre, dans un mélange de mots esquimaux assaisonnés des termes anglais connus de quel-ques hommes, comment les prêtres n'étaient pas venus comme les gens du fort pour avoir leurs fourrures, ou faire le commerce avec eux, mais pour leur enseigner à bien vivre et par là mériter d'aller au ciel, la patrie commune vers laquelle chacun doit tendre." See Maurice, *Monseigneur Turquetil*, 96.

Despite their best efforts, Inuit did not know that Turquetil and Le Blanc were missionaries but considered them *Angakkuit*,³⁵¹ i.e. shamans:

These poor people take us for sorcerers and believe that we can kill them if we are not satisfied. When they see the illuminated altar, the ornaments, the priest who prays, chants, sprinkles or censes, the small lamp that is always alight in the chapel, when they hear us say the rosary, recite the litanies...they think we are casting spells and they are afraid, not knowing which spirit we address.³⁵²

Writing a few decades later, Oblate missionary Franz Van de Velde commented on the similar social position of the *Angakkuit* and the missionaries:

In the Eskimo mind, the priest occupies the eminent place formerly held by the sorcerer. Is not the Catholic priest an “alter Christus” and, for this reason, is he not a mediator between God and men? Was not the sorcerer also a similar link between the spirits on one side and the Eskimos on the other? I think that to the Eskimo mentality there is a very close link between their conception of the sorcerer and the priest and that the acceptance of the priest in place of the sorcerer is usually easily accomplished, either consciously or unconsciously. A missionary, an expert on the Eskimo language, one day said that the true translation of the word priest should be “angakok,” that is sorcerer, and not “iksirardjuar” the expression actually used and which, when literally translated means “the great writer.”³⁵³

Ethnohistorians Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten wrote a thorough and comprehensive ethnohistory about Turquetil’s mission and noted how Turquetil “had lost his first nickname of Umilik (bearded one), to gain a new one that denoted more affection, *Atâtatsiar* (“our grandfather”) or *Ataatatsiaraaluk* (“our big grandfather”).”³⁵⁴ Laugrand and Oosten also provide an interesting perspective from an Inuk name named Ajaruaq who described Turquetil’s ministry to his community, notice how Ajaruaq referred to Turquetil as “our grandfather:”³⁵⁵

Here is what I remember about *our grandfather* [Turquetil] ... I know very well that, from the beginning, he was the saviour of the Eskimos. Even before there were baptized Eskimos, he always rendered great services to all the Eskimos. At that time the mission was very poor, and yet he shared the little that he had with the Eskimos. His small boat, almost a canoe, named the Charlebois, was always available for everyone, either for hunting, or to go to various hunting

³⁵¹ *Angakkuit* is an eastern Arctic dialect plural term for *Angakkuq*, a “wise and discerning person,” commonly translated as “shaman.” See Mariano et al., *Cosmology and Shamanism*, 10.

³⁵² Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit, Oblates Missionaries, and Grey Nuns*, 63.

³⁵³ Remie and Oosten, “The Birth of a Catholic Inuit Community,” 112.

³⁵⁴ Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit, Oblate Missionaries, and Grey Nuns*, 35.

³⁵⁵ Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit, Oblate Missionaries, and Grey Nuns*, 35.

grounds. It happened that *our grandfather* travelled to the white man's country; and each time he would place his small boat at the disposal of all the Eskimo who did not have a boat and all this for free. No other White ever treated the Eskimos that way. He never asked payment for the use of this boat, and he acted like that because he loved the Eskimos . . . When he was about to leave for the white man's country, he once gave to the Eskimos whole bags of 98 pounds of flour; he never even said: "You'll pay when you can." He was giving absolutely for free. As for myself, I know him since childhood, 7 or 8 years after my father and mother passed away (emphasis added).³⁵⁶

In addition, the Oblates especially noted in their literature how Inuit called Turquetil *Ataatasiar*: "Then he disembarked with Father Turquetil, who was greeted with the joyful cries of *Atatasiar!* my grandfather! while the new arrival was taken for his brother, by the Eskimos who delighted to no longer be orphans."³⁵⁷

In fact, many Oblates were known either as *ataata* or *ataatsiaq* – father or grandfather.³⁵⁸ Rouvière and Le Roux, travelling in the Arctic around the same time as Turquetil likely identified themselves as "ataata" or "ataatattiaq," as they learned the language and introduced themselves to the Inuinnait, especially wanting to relay to the Inuinnait who they really are, *priests*, and especially to differentiate themselves from traders. In general, the Oblate missionaries did not want to be considered traders or shamans and identified themselves according to words closest to their titles. Thus, Oblates commonly appropriated the titles *ataata*, "father," and *ataatattiaq*, "grandfather."

Sinnisiak said during his courtroom appearance that he learned the practice to eat the liver of the priests from his "grandfather," an admission that contradicted from the RNWMP investigation where he stated that he learned to eat the liver from "white men." *Attatatsiaq*, or

³⁵⁶ Ajaruaq, quoted in Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit, Oblate Missionaries, and Grey Nuns*, 35.

³⁵⁷ From the French original: "Puis il débarque avec le P. Turquetil, qui était salué des cris joyeux de *Atatasiar!* mon Grand'père! pendant que le nouvel arrivé était pris pour son frère, par les Esquimaux ravis de n être plus orphelins." See Maurice, *Monseigneur Turquetil*, 122.

³⁵⁸ This is shown through how many of the Inuit referred to Oblates, such as *Ataata Vinnivi*, *Ataata Papion*, *Ataata Vilai*. See Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit, Oblate Missionaries, and Grey Nuns*, 61, 80, 337.

grandfather, however, is also the name of many other Oblate missionaries who travelled the western Arctic at the same time, and likely how Rouvière and Le Roux would have introduced themselves to the Inuinnait.

In fact, we do know that Rouvière and Le Roux performed the Eucharist for their Inuinnait novitiates. Assuming that Rouvière and Le Roux were clergy trained in the Oblate fashion, they would have ascribed to the Roman Catholic theology of *transubstantiation*, the belief of the radical transformation of the bread wafers and wine through blessing and prayer that turn the bread and wine into the *actual* body and blood of Christ.³⁵⁹ By consecrating the bread and wine through prayer, the priest performing the Eucharist becomes one with the priesthood of Christ, *in persona Christi*. In remembrance of Christ's last supper, the priest's prayers change bread and wine into the substantial body and blood of Christ, while retaining bread and wine in appearance only.³⁶⁰ Despite not being officially baptized, Oblate missionaries performed the Eucharist for Indigenous Peoples across the world as a matter of missionary praxis derived from their founder Eugene de Mazenod who said, "Don't you know that it is the very means of forming, of Christianizing them? Advance cautiously, granted; but to exclude them in general is too extreme."³⁶¹

There is no evidence to suggest that Inuit practiced cannibalism as part of their *Angakkuuniq* religion. Human blood was considered "unclean" that was to be avoided at all costs and contact with human blood was thought to impact the success of hunting, costing the entire community potential starvation. Significant preventive measures were implemented. On the other

³⁵⁹ Cyril Vollert, "The Eucharist: Controversy on Transubstantiation," *Theological Studies* 22, no. 3 (1961): 392.

³⁶⁰ Mission Lab, "What takes place when a priest speaks the words of Eucharistic consecration?" January 12, 2018. Accessed online March 11, 2023: https://afc.org/fc_question/what-takes-place-when-a-priest-speaks-the-words-of-eucharistic-consecration/ .

³⁶¹ Unknown author, "Eucharist," from the OMI website, accessed March 4, 2023: <https://www.omiworld.org/lemma/eucharist/>

hand, Rouvière and Le Roux, in their novice attempts to converse with Inuinnait, spoke a different dialect learned from Petitot's dictionary, and with their limited fluency, taught the Inuinnait how to make the sign of the cross and performed for them the Eucharist.

Hupo, an Inuinnaq man that the RNWMP interviewed as part of their investigation said of Rouvière and Le Roux:

These two men were telling us about the land above the skies. They showed us coloured pictures of Heaven and they said that after we died we would go there. They used to sing just like the Eskimos when they make medicine. They held our hands and taught us to make the sign of the Cross and they put a little bread sometimes in our mouth. The white men could talk our language very well.³⁶²

Although Hupo said that Rouvière and Le Roux could speak their language "very well," it did not necessarily mean that they could understand each other. Another Inuinnaq men interviewed by the RNWMP, named Koeha, McCaul's chief witness, also said of Rouvière and Le Roux: "both men could talk good in our language, when we talked together we could not understand them."³⁶³ While it is clear that the missionaries spoke words that were intelligible enough to make an impression on the Inuinnait, they still had difficulties understanding each other, as intimated by Koeha and the missionaries themselves in their correspondence to their Oblate superiors.

Understanding how Inuinnait received these messages from Rouvière and Le Roux requires an understanding of how the Eucharist would have been performed for Inuinnait, including the language used. Inuktut is a literal language, and the Oblates performance of the Eucharist could have easily been misconstrued by some Inuinnait as advocating for actual

³⁶² Hupo, "Hupo," GR.1972.0026 C780.

³⁶³ Koeha, interpreted by Ilavinik, recorded in "Koeha (Eskimo)" courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, GR.1972.0026 C780.

cannibalism if the Oblates incorrectly interpreted the Eucharist into another Inuktitut language. Especially considering that the Oblate missionary at the time would have said, as he offers the bread and wine, “take this *my* body... take this *my* blood.”³⁶⁴

Despite Rouvière and Le Roux’s best efforts, Inuinnait speculated that Rouvière and Le Roux were possibly shamans,³⁶⁵ and potentially Rouvière and Le Roux identified themselves as “grandfathers.” In this light, perhaps Sinnisiak and Uluksak’s confession to the police of their consumption of the priests’ livers posthumously as a practice they “learned from whitemen” is in reference to the priests. Sinnisiak’s contradiction in court where he said he learned the practice from his “grandfather” is better understood as an elaboration and another reference to the priests. Given the complex religious exchanges between the missionaries and the Inuit, Sinnisiak’s reference to his ‘grandfather’ could indicate not a literal family member but a symbolic figure, such as a priest, who introduced these new rituals.

³⁶⁴ Fabio Ciardi, “Eucharist,” from the O.M.I. website, accessed March 12, 2023: <https://www.omiworld.org/lemma/eucharist/>. “Father Joseph Ladié who died in 1990 showed himself to be a faithful heir of this tradition when, at the end of his life, he wrote: “I am living and discovering the Eucharist in a special way. I usually say Mass seated in the community chapel [...] Well, then, at the consecration when I say: “This is my body, that is, my life given for you”, I say to myself: But I am part of the Mystical Body of Christ; I can, then, truly offer myself, offer my life for the Church, the world, the Congregation, the Province, people who are dear to me, etc. Similarly, “This is my blood..””

³⁶⁵ Hupo, “Hupo (Eskimo),” GR.1972.0026 C780.

Making Martyrs³⁶⁶

After the deaths of Rouvière and Le Roux, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate from the Mackenzie diocese started to collect any and all circumstantial evidence on their two missionaries who, according to them, died as “martyrs.”³⁶⁷ The Oblates were certain in their faith that Rouvière and Le Roux died a martyr’s death, and judging by the volume and expansiveness of the Oblate fonds specific to Rouvière and Le Roux housed at the Provincial Archives of Alberta in Edmonton, those specific files are likely the result of the Oblates’ creation of a *dossier*, called a *positio* in Latin.³⁶⁸ The dossier, or *positio*, is the collection of documentation and literature written by initiates on the deceased’s life and claimed virtues that is submitted to the Congregation of the Causes of the Saints³⁶⁹ for official decision on the cause of the death.

The Vatican’s bureaucratic process for canonization has a long history stemming from Augustine, who, as Annemaré Kotzé has noted, constantly reiterated the phrase *non poena sed causa*, meaning, “only a person who died for the right and just cause could come to be regarded as a martyr.”³⁷⁰ In other words, as Paul Middleton has emphasized, “it was the cause, and not the

³⁶⁶ This title is a paraphrase of Kenneth L. Woodward’s title from his excellent book titled *Making Saints*. Woodward’s book provided much insight into the Saint-making process and those who want to learn more about the Roman Catholic bureaucratic process of canonization should see Kenneth L. Woodward, *Making Saints: How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes a Saint, Who Doesn’t, and Why*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996,

³⁶⁷ Gabriel Breynat, correspondence to Marcel Champagne, May 1, 1938, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, OMI Fonds, PR2001.184, box 2, file 53.

³⁶⁸ Based on the files as a collective whole, including their content such as lists of pilgrimages to Rouvière and Le Roux’s death site, maps, collected files, Codex Historicus drafts, news and magazine articles, writings of Rouvière and Le Roux, hagiographies written by other Oblates about Rouvière and Le Roux, I am making an assumption that the files represent a dossier. The OMIs have not responded to email inquiries sent in October 2022 to the Missionari Oblati di Maria Immacolata in Rome that sought information for the potential Rouvière and/or Le Roux causa. For a reference on a Roman Catholic “dossier,” see Lawrence S. Cunningham, “Martyrdom in Roman Catholic Perspective,” In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Christian Martyrdom*, Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2020, 363; Kenneth L. Woodward, *Making Saints: How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes a Saint, Who Doesn’t, and Why*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996, 102.

³⁶⁹ Cunningham, 363.

³⁷⁰ Annemaré Kotzé, “Augustine and the Remaking of Martyrdom,” in Paul Middleton, ed. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Christian Martyrdom*, Hoboken, New Jersey; Wiley Blackwell, 2020, 136.

punishment that made martyrdom (*non poena sed causa facit martyrem*),” an idea that stemmed from Augustine, enshrined in the Vatican who retained “the power to determine what did and did not qualify as an appropriate cause.”³⁷¹

The responsibility of gathering evidence for the dossier lies in the local bishop, in Rouvière and Le Roux’s case this would have been Bishop Gabriel Breynat, who was then required to submit the dossier to Rome. From that point, if Breynat’s dossier was considered to have enough evidence for his argument towards Rouvière and Le Roux’s martyrdom cause,³⁷² the Congregation of Rites (the former name of the Congregation of the Causes of the Saints)³⁷³ would then have submitted the dossier to the Pope who had the ultimate authority to accept or reject the submitted cause.³⁷⁴

Breynat started to collect documentation for Rouvière and Le Roux’s dossier likely after he learned of Rouvière and Le Roux’s deaths. The creation of the dossier, including control over its contents that required all available documentation, could have been a possible reason why the Oblates preferred that no police investigation take place for the priests’ disappearance, despite learning from Arden’s report about their potential deaths in 1914. An official police investigation, written in a methodological report outside of Oblate control, could potentially discredit any of the hagiographic literature that Breynat would have preferred. The Oblates expressed their conflicting feelings on “Rome’s silence” to their cause,³⁷⁵ indicating that they

³⁷¹ Middleton, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Christian Martyrdom*, 25.

³⁷² Woodward, *Making Saints*, 1996, 101-103.

³⁷³ Alexander McQuoid, Rachel M McCleary, and Robert J Barro, “The Economics of Sainthood (A Preliminary Investigation),” In *The Oxford Handbook of the Economics of Religion*, Oxford University Press, 2011, 196.

³⁷⁴ McQuoid et al., 196.

³⁷⁵ Marcel Champagne, Marcel Ferragne, Andre Dorval, “Les RR.Rouviere et LeRoux, O.M.I. Sont-ils Martyrs? Texte de la conférence donnée le 28 août 1938, à la maison de campagne, “La Blanche,” devant la communauté réunie,” August 28, 1938, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR2001.184, box 1 file no. 25, page 2 and 13.

potentially had concerns that their evidence for their cause submitted to the Vatican for Rouvière and Le Roux was insufficient.

Whereas the Dominion of Canada had to hold two trials in separate cities to secure a guilty verdict for culpable homicide by Sinnisiak and Uluksak, the Vatican's Sacred Congregation of Rites, itself based on penal law,³⁷⁶ was unable to manoeuvre with such nimbleness due to the different approaches of each trial: the Dominion versus the Vatican. Whereas the Dominion relied solely on the confessions of Sinnisiak and Uluksak at trial to secure a guilty verdict, the Vatican on the other hand also had to consider their confessions in their trial for Rouvière and Le Roux's martyrdom cause.³⁷⁷ The Oblates expressed that, from their perspective, problems surrounded Rouvière and Le Roux's cause because there were no witnesses to the murders, except from the accused Sinnisiak and Uluksak who freely confessed to the murders. Their perspective omits the fact that Sinnisiak and Uluksak's confessions to killing the priests presented details that they provoked their own deaths, a hard line drawn for a death's cause to be considered martyrdom.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁶ Jenny Ponzo, "The case of the "offering of life" in the causes for canonization of Catholic Saints: The threshold of self-sacrifice," *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law-Revue internationale de Sémiotique juridique* 33, no. 4, 2020, 984.

³⁷⁷ Woodward, *Making Saints*, 101-103.

³⁷⁸ Woodward states on Saint Stephen, the first martyr: "Stephen's arrest, testimony of faith, and death directly parallel the arrest, testimony, and death of Jesus...Again like Jesus, he incites the enmity of Jewish elders and scribes. They have him arrested and tried, during which he gives a long and eloquent account of his faith. At the close, he is taken outside the city and stoned. He dies begging God's forgiveness of his executioners...What is crucial is that the Christian community was able to recognize Stephen as a saint only by way of analogy with the story of Jesus' passion and death. The story of Stephen is the story of Christ all over again. To be a saint, then, was to die not only for Christ but like him. Or, what amounted to the same thing, to be a saint was to have the story of one's death remembered and told as the story of Jesus. From the very beginning, therefore, sanctity and martyrdom were indistinguishable in the Christian consciousness. Just as Jesus was obedient to the Father "unto death," so the saint was one who died for the sake of Christ. Just as baptism signified incorporation into the body of Christ, so martyrdom signified a dying with Christ and rising again into the fullness of life everlasting. Martyrdom was the seal of a saint's total conformity to Christ. In this regard, it is worth noting that even the twin pillars of the apostolic church, the apostles Peter and Paul, were eventually hailed as saints not because of their leadership within the communities of Christians, but because, in the end, they were martyred." See Woodward, *Making Saints*, 73.

The Oblates held a conference to present their study on Rouvière and Le Roux's potential martyrdom, likely included in the dossier for their cause, with hopes that the Church would one day canonize the two Oblates as they did the Jesuits: "Difficult study, however, but possible and necessary study, if we want the Church to canonize, one day, these 2 oblates, as it did for the Jesuits of 1649, victims of the Iroquois in Huron country."³⁷⁹ In their conclusion, the Oblates Champagne, Ferragne, and Dorval, surmised that "Rome's silence" was possibly because of a lack of proof and testimony: "Whatever happens, only the Church can decide the question and one day solemnly declare them martyrs of Christ. She alone has the right to do so. It may also happen that Rome remains silent about their case, for lack of certain proofs, of authentic testimonies, and the rest."³⁸⁰

The details surrounding the circumstances of the priests' deaths were widely covered in the media and recorded in trial transcripts. Despite their best efforts to keep the priests' deaths from the police, the subsequent published documentation on the deaths spiraled out of Breynat's control. Overall, the available documentation for Rouvière and Le Roux's cause is fraught with snippets of information that suggest the priests provoked their death, not because they were witnesses to their faith and love for Christ, but because of their tactlessness in their attempt to

³⁷⁹ From the French original: "Étude difficile, cependant, mais étude possible et nécessaire, si l'on veut que l'Eglise canonise, un jour, ces 2 oblats [Rouvière and Le Roux], comme elle l'a fait pour les jésuites de 1649, victimes des Iroquois en pays huron." See Marcel Champagne, Marcel Ferragne, Andre Dorval, "Les RR.Rouviere et LeRoux, O.M.I. Sont-ils Martyrs? Texte de la conférence donnée le 28 août 1938, à la maison de campagne, "La Blanche," devant la communauté réunie," August 28, 1938, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR2001.184, box 1 file no. 25, page 2 and 13.

³⁸⁰ From the French original: "Quoiqu'il en soit, il n'y a que l'Eglise qui puisse trancher la question et les déclarer solennellement un jour martyrs du Christ, Seule, elle en a le droit. Il peut se faire aussi que Rome se taise sur leur cas, faute de preuves certaines, de temoignages authentiques, et le rests." See Champagne et al., "Les RR.Rouviere et LeRoux, O.M.I. Sont-ils Martyrs?" PR2001.184, box 1 file no. 25, page 2 and 13.

force work out of Sinnisiak and Uluksak. Even Bishop Breynat wrote that it was difficult to say with certainty that the priests died “pro Christi nomine,” for the name of Christ.³⁸¹

Oblate Marcel Champagne sent Bishop Gabriel Breynat a letter outlining the course that he was planning to teach at his school that was based on the martyrdom of Rouvière and Le Roux. Champagne asked Breynat several questions to assist with his planning:

I had the good idea to divide my subject into three points, according to the title itself: “Les Peres Rouvière et Le Roux, O.M.I. Are they martyrs?” to know:

1. What is martyrdom in general, its father Saint Thomas and Benedict XIV (theological and canonical notions of martyrdom)
2. Narration detailed in the massacre itself
3. Are they formally martyrs?

This question is not the easiest to resolve, at least with regard to the sources that we have, mainly, “Aux Glaces Polaires” by P. Duchaussois, O.M.I., and “Parliamentary Documentation,” or the report of Inspector La Nauze. By searching these mines, I was unable to find the real reason for their massacre, if they really died in the faith - There are indeed the depositions of Sinnisiak and the Uluksak, but can we figure it out?³⁸²

Breynat was delighted to hear that Champagne was planning to focus on the topic of Rouvière and Le Roux and felt that the dedication would add to the “glorification” of the “martyrs.” He answered Champagne shortly after, writing on May 1, 1938:

... Until now we have no written document which allows us to affirm with absolute certainty that the two Fathers are formally martyrs. The sources you have in your hands as well as the statements of the two murderers do not allow us to draw a definitive conclusion on this point. However, here is what I can personally add to the sources you mention:

... in the company of a trader named Patsy Klingenberg, whom I had known for a long time, and who had lived in the Arctic since his youth, having married an Eskimo and knowing himself even

³⁸¹ Gabriel Breynat, correspondence to Marcel Champagne, May 1, 1938, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR.2001.184, Box 2 file 53.

³⁸² Marcel Champagne, correspondence to Gabriel Breynat, April 2, 1938, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR2001.184, box 2, file 53. Translated from handwritten French, note some words in the handwriting were unreadable to this author: J’ai eu bon de diviser mon sujet en trois points, d’après le titre meme: “Les Peres Rouvière et Le Roux, O.M.I. sont-ils martyrs?” a savoir: 1. Qu’est-ce que le martyre en general, sa pres saint Thomas et Benoit XIV (notions theologiques et canoniques du martyre) 2. Narration s’étaillee de massacre lui-meme 3. Sont-ils martyrs formellement? Cette questions n’est pas des plus faciles a trancher du moins quant aux sources que nous somme, principalement, “Aux Glaces Polaires” du P. Duchaussois, O.M.I., et “Documentation parlementaire,” ou le rapport de l’inspecteur La Nauze. En fouillant ces mimes, je n’ai pu trouver le veritable motif de leur massacre, s’ils sont morts vraiment en laine de la foi - Il y a bien les depositions de Sinnisiak et l’Uluksak, mais peut-on s’y fier?

all the Eskimos of the Arctic and being recognized by them as one of their own, was thereby not only aware of their language, their customs, their customs, but had been aware of the murder of our two missionaries, had heard about it shortly after it took place and had heard the Eskimos talking about it among themselves.

On several occasions, Father Duchaussois and I questioned Patsy Klingenberg in order to obtain from him unprecedented and first-hand information on the murder of our two Fathers. In particular, we pressed him with questions in order to know if we could have from him any light on the fact, i.e., what was the reason, according to having discussed this question several times, we heard Patsy say to us one day: "But you must know, Monseigneur, that the Eskimaux never do anything without consulting the sorcerers." 2. The wife of Komik, the guide of the Fathers, subsequently declared to Bishop Fallaize that, before the departure of the two murderers following the Fathers, there had been a meeting of sorcerers. 3. Finally, after the two murderers were dead, an Eskimaux who was aware of the whole affair declared to Father Trocellier (or Father Delande) that the murderers would have gone in pursuit of the Fathers "on the mandate of the sorcerers." (We were unable to verify or corroborate this last testimony). These, my dear Brother, are the only indications of any importance that I can send you. No doubt they do not yet give absolute certainty, but they are not without importance; the testimony of Patsy Klingenberg will we ever be able to shed full light on this crucial point? I do not despair, and I have within myself the intimate conviction that our two Fathers were put to death "pro Christi nomine."³⁸³

In Breynat's letter he attempted to frame Uluksak and Sinnisiak as shamans, and their killing of Rouvière and Le Roux as a temporal battle and "evidence" of Rouvière and Le Roux's

³⁸³ Gabriel Breynat, correspondence to Marcel Champagne, May 1, 1938, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, OMI Fonds, PR2001.184, box 2, file 53. Translated from the French: "Jusqu'ci nous n'avons aucun document ecrit qui nous permette d'affirmer avec une certitude absolue que les deux Peres sont martyrs formellement. Les sources que vous avez entre les mains aussi bien les depositions des deux meurtriers ne nous permettent pas tirer une conclusion definitive sur ce point. Cependant, voice ce que je puis ajouter personnellement aux sources que vous mentionnez: En 1930, je fis avec le R.P. Duchaussois le voyage d'Aklavik a Coppermine sur le "Baychimo," vaisseau de la Cie de la Baie d'Hudson qui ravitaillant les postes de l'Arctique. Nous eumes la bonne fortune de faire ce long voyage en compangnie d'un traiteur nomme Patsy Klingenberg, que je connaissais de longue date, et qui ayant vecu dans l'Arctique depuis sa jeunesse, s'etant marie a une esquimaude et connaissant lui-meme tous les Esquimaux de l'Arctique et etant reconnu par eux comme un des leurs, etait par le fait meme non seulement au courant de leur langue, leurs usages, leurs moeurs, mais avait eu connaissance du meurtre de nos deux missionnaires, en avait entendu parler peu apres qu'il eut lieu et avait entendu les Esquimaux en parler entre eux. A plusieurs reprises, le P. Duchaussois et moi questionnemes Patsy Klingenberg afin d'avoir par lui des renseignements inedits et de premiere main sur le meurtre de nos deux Peres. En particulier, nous le pressames de questions afin de savoir si nous pourrions avoir par lui quelque lumiere sur le fait, c.a.d., quelle etait la raison, selon avoir aborde plusieurs foie cette question, nous entendimes Patsy nous dire un jour: "Mais vous devez savoir, Monseigneur, que les Eskimaux ne font jamais rien sans consulter les sorciers." 2. La femme de Komik, le guide des Peres, declara dans la suite a Mgr Fallaize que, avant le depart des deux meurtriers a la suite des Peres, il y avait eu une reunion de sorciers. 3. Enfin, apres que les deux meurtriers furent morts, un Eskimaux qui etait au courant de toute l'affaire declara au P. Trocellier (ou au P. Delande) que les meurtriers seraient alles a la poursuite des Peres "sur mandat des sorciers." (Nous n'avons pu verifier ni corroborer ce dernier temoignage). Ce sont la, mon bien cher Frere, les seules indications de quelque importance que je puis vous envoyer. Sans doute ils ne donnent pas encore une certitude absolue, mais ils ne sont pas sans importance; le temoignage de Patsy Klingenberg nous rons-nous jamais a faire toute la lumiere sur ce point capital? Je ne le desespere pas, et j'ai en moi-meme la conviction intime que nos deux Peres ont ete mis a mort "pro Christi nomine."

cause of death for the faith. Breynat curiously omits noting that Patsy Klengenber (referred to in Breynat's letter as Klingenberg) interpreted for the criminal court proceedings, instead says that Patsy only spoke to Inuit about it afterward. In addition, Breynat largely glossed over the widely covered trials that detailed how Le Roux had provoked Sinnisiak and Uluksak who felt the priests held them at gunpoint and demanded they pull the priests' sled. These are hardly the conditions that could be considered a martyr's death, if defined by the way they died facing an aggressor who hated their faith in Jesus.³⁸⁴

The deafening silence of the Vatican on Rouivere and Le Roux's martyrdom was not due to a lack of effort. After all, the Oblates collected thousands of documents: some 3000-3500 pages of records related to Rouvière and Le Roux's death.³⁸⁵ These records provide details that outline some of the significant efforts made by the Oblates. For instance, the Oblates erected a cross at the supposed death spot on Bloody Falls with the inscription "In memory of R. Fathers Rouvière and Leroux, O.M.I., killed by the Eskimos during a voyage of exploration for the extension of the gospel."³⁸⁶ Other efforts included pilgrimages, hagiographic writing, and playwriting contests. It was also a momentous time for saint-making in North America, which might explain some of the enthusiasm gleaned within these combined efforts.

³⁸⁴ Lawrence S. Cunningham, "Martyrdom in Roman Catholic Perspective," In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Christian Martyrdom*, Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2020, 360-361.

³⁸⁵ The primary sources for the claim made here are housed at the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA), in Edmonton. The records pertaining to Rouvière and Le Roux are part of the larger OMI fonds, from the PAA, "The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) are a Roman Catholic congregation of men founded in Aix-en-Provence, France in 1815 by St. Eugène de Mazenod. The OMI records have been housed at the Archives since the 1970s on a permanent loan. In August of 2018, OMI Lacombe Canada officially donated these records and those housed at Foyer Lacombe in St. Albert, rendering the Archives the official OMI repository for OMI records for the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan." When I first requested to view records on Rouvière and Le Roux the PAA notified me that the extent of OMI records related to Rouvière and Le Roux are 1 meter and PAA estimated around 3000-3500 pages (personal email communication from Natalia Pietrzykowski, archivist with the PAA, June 25, 2020).

³⁸⁶ Author unknown, extract from "L'Apostolat," April 1938, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, file PR.2001.184, Box 2, No. 53. The original French: "A LA MEMOIRE DES R. PERES ROUVIERE ET LEROUX, OMI, TUES PAR LES ESQUIMAUX DURANT UN VOYAGE D'EXPLORATION POUR L'EXTENSION DE L'EVANGILE."

On August 14, 1921, Pope Benedict XV was personally interested in Thérèse de Lisieux's cause (she had died only twenty-four years prior) and removed the canon law that required a fifty-year's delay between the death of a candidate and the time their cause could be officially examined.³⁸⁷ Thérèse de Lisieux's connection to North America is through Arsene Turquetil, who was also from Lisieux.³⁸⁸ In 1917, Turquetil received an envelope containing soil from Therese de Lisieux's coffin. Turquetil's colleague, Brother Prime Girard, took some of the soil and sprinkled it on some of their visiting Inuit's hair, an act that Turquetil claimed resulted in the miraculous attendance of many Inuit in church the following Sunday that led to Inuit desiring to be baptized.³⁸⁹ After Thérèse de Lisieux's canonization in 1924, Turquetil sent a formal petition collecting signatures from bishops across the globe to declare Lisieux as the Patron Saint of Missions, which was included in her title in 1925.³⁹⁰ In addition to helping Lisieux achieve fame and glory, Turquetil was appointed as the first Apostolic Prefect of Hudson Bay, a new district the Oblates created in 1925.³⁹¹

Perhaps Turquetil's success and gained status through his efforts towards Lisieux's amplified afterlife title inspired Breynat to secure his own foundations within the Roman Catholic Cult of the Saints. Alternatively, the Pope's enthusiasm for Lisieux potentially overshadowed Breynat's efforts for Rouvière and Le Roux's cause. In either case, Breynat felt that the world had forgotten about Rouvière and Le Roux and attempted to bring their hagiography in focus to the broader Roman Catholic collective memory.

³⁸⁷ Walter Peters, *The Life of Benedict XV*, Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1959, 228-229. Accessed from Archive.org on February 18, 2024: <https://archive.org/details/lifeofbenedictxv0000pete/mode/2up>

³⁸⁸ A.G. Maurice, *Monseigneur Turquetil*, 11.

³⁸⁹ Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit, Oblate Missionaries, and Grey Nuns*, 33.

³⁹⁰ A.G. Maurice, *Monseigneur Turquetil*, 149; see also "The Oblate Connection : St Therese," accessed online May 6, 2024 from the OMI Canada website : <https://omilacombe.ca/oblate-connection-st-therese/>

³⁹¹ A.G. Maurice, *Monseigneur Turquetil*, 149-150.

Catholic Playwriting Contests and the Glorification of Rouvière and Le Roux

This section explores the ways in which Catholic playwriting contests in the 1930s attempted to glorify the deaths of Rouvière and Le Roux. In hopes to generate a consensus on the cause for the martyrdom of Rouvière and Le Roux, the Oblates drew parallels with the canonization of North American martyrs in 1930. The following sections will first provide historical context, then analyze the specific role of the Oblates and the National Catholic Theatre Conference in attempt to advance their cause.

Just three years before the launch of the playwriting contests, the Vatican canonized the first North American martyrs in 1930.³⁹² With sanctuaries in Auriesville, NY, and Midland, ON, the sites contain relics and gravesites of eight canonized Jesuits who died in the seventeenth century. René Goupil, Isaac Jogues, Jean de la Lande, Antoine Daniel, Jean de Brébeuf, Gabriel Lalemant, Charles Garnier and Noël Chabanel, originally natives of France, died at the hands of their Haudenosaunee captors and their deaths are remembered by Catholics as the Tertullian “seed” of Christianity in North America.³⁹³

The Oblates, inspired by the North American Martyrs, attempted to drive recognition and legitimacy of Rouvière and Le Roux’s cause as martyrs, directly referencing the “Holy Canadian Martyrs”³⁹⁴ in their published text on selected plays from their playwriting contest held to

³⁹² Arnaldo Cortesi, “8 Jesuit Martyrs Proclaimed Saints: First From North America are Canonized in St. Peter’s, with Pope Pius Presiding,” *The New York Times*, Jun 30, 1930.

³⁹³ Emma Anderson, *The Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs*, 4, 21, 138.

³⁹⁴ Roméo Juneau, O.M.I. Editor, *Martyrs Aux Glaces Polaires*, Chambly-Bassin, P.Q.: Les Editions de L’Apostolat, 1938, 13. French original: “Puisse-t-il contribuer à la diffusion du culte de ces apôtres afin qu’un jour, s’il plait au Ciel, notre Mère la Sainte Eglise joigne leurs noms à ceux de Nos Saints Martyrs Canadiens.”

“contribute to the spread of the veneration of these [Rouvière and Le Roux] Apostles.”³⁹⁵ Many of the submitted plays focused on the image of cannibalism that imagined Sinnisiak and Uluksak as “monsters” who ravaged over the pieces of the priests’ liver like animals.³⁹⁶

In 1934, the Oblate missionary Arthème Dutilly went on a pilgrimage to the presumed death sites of Rouvière and Le Roux. His pilgrimage fell between one of his regular summer visits to the Arctic to collect and study the flora. Dutilly carried out the pilgrimage with five others; Oblates Bishop of Mackenzie Pierre Fallaize, Fathers Biname, L’Helgouach, Buliard and an Inuinnait guide named Peter. Dutilly, an avid Arctic explorer, made many trips to the Arctic during the summer months to collect and study arctic flora, amassing 13,500 specimens of Arctic plants and lichens.

In 1936, he began work as a research associate for the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., working in the fields of Arctic bibliography and botany, eventually creating the Arctic Institute of the American Catholic University. Following his pilgrimage to the death sites of Rouvière and Le Roux, Dutilly’s efforts extended beyond commemoration; he also played a pivotal role in connecting the martyrdom narrative to the burgeoning Catholic theatre movement. This connection was solidified when the National Catholic Theatre Conference adopted the cause in its agenda. It was at the Catholic University that Dutilly influenced the National Catholic Theatre Conference in 1939 to host a national U.S. playwright competition celebrating the 25th anniversary of Rouvière and Le Roux’s deaths as martyrdom.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁵ Juneau, *Martyrs Aux Glaces Polaires*, 13.

³⁹⁶ Pierre de Granpré, “Une Drame Chez Les Innoïts,” *Martyrs Aux Glaces Polaires*, Chambly-Bassin, P.Q.: Les Éditions de L’Apostolat, 1938, 143; Claude Chatillon, “Une Drame Aux Glaces Polaires,” courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR2001.184, box 2, file 52, 2, circa 1937; author unknown, “La croix sanglante,” *Petits Annales de Miss. O.M.I.* Paris, typed copy, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR2001.184, box2, file 56, 248-251.

³⁹⁷ Mary E. Clancy, “Catholic Theatre,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, January 5, 1939. Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR2001.184.53 box 2. Unfortunately, the Catholic University of America does not

The National Catholic Theatre Conference posed the question “what is a Catholic play?” in 1937, answering that the newly convened conference on Catholic theatre hoped to develop fundamentals towards what they conceived as a “Catholic Theatre Movement.”³⁹⁸ The Catholic theatre movement was meant to counter secular theatre in which Catholic parents wanted to protect their families from the “crass commercialism of Broadway.”³⁹⁹ On the other hand, the Catholic community in Philadelphia viewed theatre as a “powerful weapon,” as stated in their notice of supporting and attending the National Theatre Conference.⁴⁰⁰

The National Catholic Conference held their first meeting at the Loyola Community Theatre in Chicago of June 1937, and then a second conference held at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., August of 1937.⁴⁰¹ It was in the second conference held in Washington that Dutilly pushed for the glorification of Rouvière and Le Roux’s deaths by approaching the National Catholic Theatre organizers in providing cash prizes to incentivize novice playwrights to write about Le Roux and Rouvière’s *martyrdom*.⁴⁰²

After convening two Catholic Theater conventions, the newly formed Catholic Theatre Conference described itself in 1937 as “a frail yet determined element of American Catholic Action” that required stewardship from Catholics “who see in Catholic Theatre the salvation of the American Theatre and an instrument of inestimable value for the spread of Christ’s kingdom

have the archives of the National Catholic Theatre Conference, these were transferred to the Blackfriars Guild Archives at Phillips Memorial Library, Providence College, and requests to access archives related to the playwright contest came up empty.

³⁹⁸ Francis McDevitt, ed. “A New Name, Same Deal,” *Catholic Theatre*, Vol 2, no. 1, November 1938.

³⁹⁹ Mary Michael Keefe, “The National Catholic Theatre Conference: Its Aims and Its Achievements” Dissertation, 28.

⁴⁰⁰ American Catholic Historical Society, “National Theatre Conference,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, Vol. 48, no.3, September 1937, 324.

⁴⁰¹ American Catholic Historical Society, 323-324.

⁴⁰² Artheme Dutilly, correspondence to Romeo Juneau, March 14, 1938, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR.2001.184 box 2, file #53.

on earth.”⁴⁰³ According to the National Theatre Conference, the intent of their work was to produce drama that would be the “show-window of truth and justice,” of which we can presume judging by the correspondence, news releases, and promotional posters, extended to the playwriting contest about Rouvière and Le Roux’s death. Moreover, American Catholic clergy viewed Catholic plays as another form of Mass, and like the priest who *performs* the Mass is a “Dramatist of Palestine,” so too is the Catholic playwright, who both derived “fruitfulness and supernatural worth” from Jesus Christ, in comparison, the playwright was also divinely inspired and guided.⁴⁰⁴

The Oblates believed their playwriting contest was divinely inspired, and told playwrights that Rouvière and Le Roux would bless those who submitted plays towards the “glorification” of their story.⁴⁰⁵ The Oblates believed the world had forgot about Rouvière and Le Roux,⁴⁰⁶ and one can glean from the general tone in correspondence related to the National Playwriting contest that the Oblates might have thought a playwriting contest was a way to generate interest and consensus on what they believed was their comrades’ death as *success* of their mission and a martyred death that led to later conversions of the Inuit.

In fact, by the announcement of the playwriting contest, one media source promoting the contests concluded for readers that Rouvière and Le Roux’s death *was* “martyrdom,” and noted the Inuinnait motivation for killing Rouvière and Le Roux stemmed from the “ritualistic dances

⁴⁰³ E. Francis McDevitt, ed. “Convention,” *Catholic Theatre*, Vol II, no. 1, November 1938, 4. Courtesy the Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR2001.184.67 box 4.

⁴⁰⁴ Unknown author, “The Catholic Theatre Conference,” *The American Catholic Historical Society*, source: Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, Vol 48 no 3, September 1937, 323-325.

⁴⁰⁵ Unknown author, “Voici la liste de autres concurrents par order alphabetique:” courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR.2001.184.53 Box 2, 5; Mary E. Clancy, “Catholic Theatre,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, January 5, 1939, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR.2001.184.53 box 2.

⁴⁰⁶ Mary E. Clancy, “Catholic Theatre,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, January 5, 1939, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR.2001.184.53 box 2.

conducted by the sorcerer-medicine man who inflamed the local inhabitants to fierce hatred against the white missionaries.”⁴⁰⁷ Once “in dramatic form,” the author continued, it would become an opportunity for “theatre-goers who will see depicted before them, the Fathers’ heroism for God.”⁴⁰⁸ In other words, the plays on Rouvière and Le Roux, when performed live, become an opportunity for Catholic theatre-goers to “witness” the deaths of Rouvière and Le Roux, and in a manner similar to *transubstantiation*, the plays’ writers become divinely inspired by the Holy Ghost, while inspired write plays that provide a “truth-window” to witness the deaths of Rouvière and Le Roux as *pro Christi nomine*.

In 1938, a year after the playwright contests, the Oblates published a monograph of selected play submissions from Canada and the United States titled *Martyrs Aux Glaces Polaires*. To consider Rouvière and Le Roux martyrs without the official stamp of approval from Rome, however, would conflict with Pope’s infallibility, who, at this time, remained silent on the cause of Rouvière and Le Roux’s martyrdom. In order to circumvent contesting the Pope’s infallibility while still building their case for the martyrdom of Rouvière and Le Roux, the Oblates added a disclaimer page in *Martyrs Aux Glaces Polaires*, on the second page that stated the authors claim no knowledge or anticipation of the “infallible” decisions of the Church.⁴⁰⁹

The Oblates considered the playwriting contest a success, and afterward, the Oblates held a meeting with three of their members, titled the meeting “RR.PP. Rouvière et Leroux O.M.I. Sont-ils martyrs? [Meaning, “Rouvière and Leroux – are they martyrs?”].”⁴¹⁰ The meeting

⁴⁰⁷ Mary E. Clancy, “Catholic Theatre,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, January 5, 1939, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR.2001.184.53 box 2.

⁴⁰⁸ Mary E. Clancy, “Catholic Theatre,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, January 5, 1939, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR.2001.184.53 box 2.

⁴⁰⁹ Les Editions de L’Apostolat des O.M.I., « Declaration, » *Martyrs aux Glaces Polaires*, Chambly-Bassin, Quebec, Canada, 1938.

⁴¹⁰ Marcel Champagne, Marcel Ferragne, Andre Dorval, “Les RR.Rouviere et LeRoux, O.M.I. Sont-ils Martyrs? Texte de la conférence donnée le 28 août 1938, à la maison de campagne, “La Blanche,” devant la

minutes, presumably verbatim judging by the style, mention the play writing contest and express that despite Rome's silence in the case of Rouvière and Le Roux's martyrdom, their personal conviction on the matter is no less profound.⁴¹¹

While the Oblates celebrated the success of their playwriting contest, other parties, such as Crown prosecutor McCaul, had already begun shaping the martyrdom narrative within the legal proceedings of the Sinnisiak and Uluksak trials. His argument, which positioned the deaths of Rouvière and Le Roux within a broader colonial framework, echoed similar themes found in the playwright submissions. For the Oblates, like with the North American Martyrs, they considered the deaths of Rouvière and Le Roux as the Tertullian "seed"⁴¹² in the earth, the martyrdom that would lead to the conversion of the Inuit to the Roman Catholic faith.

Once seeped into "heathen" land, the blood of the martyrs provided the gemination required to blossom into the land of Christians. Like the Oblates, McCaul in Sinnisiak and Uluksak's trials had also interpreted Rouvière and Le Roux's death as martyrdom. In his animated theatrical performance on the opening address to the first trial, *R v Sinnisiak*, McCaul outlined his facts of the case, and labeled the deaths of Rouvière and Le Roux as *martyrdom*:

It was whilst struggling to extend the knowledge of the Gospel to these Eskimos that these priests, Roman Catholic missionaries, Father Rouvière and Father LeRoux met their death: a homicide with which the prisoners are charged. It was there and under those circumstances that they became martyrs to their faith.⁴¹³

communauté réunie," August 28, 1938, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR2001.184, box 1 file no. 25

⁴¹¹ Marcel Champagne, Marcel Ferragne, Andre Dorval, "Les RR.Rouviere et LeRoux, O.M.I. Sont-ils Martyrs? Texte de la conférence donnée le 28 août 1938, à la maison de campagne, "La Blanche," devant la communauté réunie," August 28, 1938, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR2001.184, box 1 file no. 25.

⁴¹² Anderson, *The Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs*, 138.

⁴¹³ McCaul, "Opening Address," 8.

McCaul linked Rouvière and Le Roux's deaths to a longer tradition of colonial martyrdom beginning with the North American Martyrs,⁴¹⁴ a connection that the Catholic playwrights made two decades later.⁴¹⁵

Hard on the footsteps of explorers in North America, have always followed the Roman Catholic missionaries. Our own Canadian history furnishes us with many examples of their courage, their fortitude and martyrdom. The Jesuits, in the early days of North America and Canada were conspicuous for their missionary zeal...⁴¹⁶

Beyond the spiritual implications, the narrative of martyrdom also intersected with contemporary political concerns. For McCaul and other representatives of the Dominion, the deaths of the missionaries were not only tragic but also symbolic of Canada's struggle for sovereignty in the Arctic.

What is implicitly suggested in the two passages from McCaul's jury address is that Christian martyrdom is a necessary precursor to Canadian sovereignty over land.⁴¹⁷ Just as the Blood of the Martyrs is required for Indigenous conversion to Christianity in the Oblate belief, early twentieth-century Canadians viewed bloodshed as a necessary requirement for building Canada's nationhood, either with the countless 'martyrs' of Canadian soldiers who 'went over

⁴¹⁴ McCaul notes in his unpublished manuscript that the Oblates are organized like a military and familiarizes the reader to the Jesuits Le Jeune, Brébeuf, Jogues, Du Perron, Lalemant, Nicolet and "many others" to understand what "missionary travel" is like and "must of necessity mean." McCaul, *Arctic Tragedy*, 19.

⁴¹⁵ Paul Levesque, "Martyre des Pères Rouvière et Le Roux," *Martyres Aux Glaces Polaires*, Chambly-Bassin, P.Q.: OMI, 1938, 201.

⁴¹⁶ McCaul, "Opening Address," 8.

⁴¹⁷ A few decades later during the Cold War, the Jesuit Father Daniel Lord would use examples of Jesuit missionary martyrs as "pioneering purveyors of civilization and Christianity" in his anti-Communist play *Salute to Canada!* that aimed to make the narratives of the North American Martyrs relevant to their post-war reality. Historian Emma Anderson analyzed Ford's play that presented a double meaning on the word "red" in which the villain, a "blood thirsty Iroquois medicine man" stripped his costume to reveal another costume of a "Red Army soldier," and that Ford, the Jesuit play director, "invited them [the audience] to consider whether they would have the courage, like the Canadian martyrs of long ago, to lay down their lives 'for Canada and God.'" See Emma Anderson, *The Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs*, Cambridge, Mass.; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2013, 145-146.

the top' and died on the Western Front, or by appropriating Roman Catholic martyr narrative as part of their constitutional history.

A central facet of land sovereignty is the right to govern, make laws, and manage resources within that territory. In the case of Sinnisiak and Uluksak, Canada's Dominion government felt it necessary to show the world that they had control over the Arctic. Martyrdom, while not an essential requirement for contemporary understandings of 'sovereignty,' usually involves sacrificing one's life for a cause or belief, often seen by a specific group as an act of heroism or the ultimate expression of commitment to a particular cause. As Emma Anderson emphasized, "martyrdom is always an interpretation of a given set of facts," and not a fact in itself, and cautions not to make assumptions without analyzing the theological implications that such a term carries, such as the guiltless nature of the martyr in opposition to their aggressors.⁴¹⁸

In the context of Sinnisiak and Uluksak's killing of two Oblate priests, the newly formed Canada was engaged in a perceived struggle for territorial integrity during WWI, and McCaul's repeated emphasis on Rouvière and Le Roux's deaths as "martyrdom" suggests that, at least for McCaul, symbolically tied to the cause of land sovereignty. McCaul's reiteration of Rouvière and Le Roux's martyrdom as part of a longer history of Canadian martyrdom during the trials point to his inner beliefs that martyrdom served to strengthen Canada's resolve and legitimacy in claiming Arctic sovereignty, as the memory of martyrs can serve as a call to arms,⁴¹⁹ and an attempt to instill the Dominion's cause with moral weight and emotional significance.

While the Dominion saw Arctic sovereignty in relation to the geopolitical borders of physical land and environment, especially in relation to the future ability to extract resources, the

⁴¹⁸ Anderson, *The Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs*, 8-9.

⁴¹⁹ Anderson, *The Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs*, 361; Middleton, *Martyrdom: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 28-30.

Oblates, on the other hand, fought to extract souls and saw sovereignty more in relation to the metaphysical. Though to be sure, the Oblates also saw Rouvière and Le Roux's deaths as martyrdom in relation to temporal geopolitical borders, i.e. the Mackenzie District, but these temporal borders still connected to the metaphysical borders of Heaven and Hell. Rouvière and Le Roux, in this sense, engaged in spiritual warfare and Catholics memorialize them as fallen victims in an attempt to spread their faith.⁴²⁰

Ultimately, the interpretation of Rouvière and Le Roux's deaths depends on the lens through which one views these events. While the Canadian government saw them as victims of murder, the Oblates viewed them as martyrs, and from the Inuinnait perspective, their deaths were the result of a violation of *maligait*, i.e. Inuit law. These contrasting interpretations reveal the complexity of historical narratives, particularly in the context of colonial and Inuit encounters.⁴²¹

⁴²⁰ Father Lemer wrote about Rouvière and Le Roux's deaths in 1950, stating, "La conclusion de cette meditation sur le martyre de Saint-Etienne ne devoile-t-elle pas encore le secret presentiment de l'holocauste supreme auquel Dieu l'appellera alors qu'apotre accompli il se sentira arme pour les plus belle conquetes: "Quel est le genre de mort que j'ambitionne?: "...Et en victime parfaitement aimante et resignee il termine: "Belle mort que celle de Saint-Etienne..." D'ailleurs, a la mort il s'efforcera d'etre toujours pret, car pareille pensee lui est familiere, semble-t-il; "Dieu a cache, note-t-il, l'heure de notre mort afin que nous y pensions toujours." English : « Does not the conclusion of this meditation on the martyrdom of Saint-Etienne still reveal the secret presentiment of the supreme holocaust to which God will call him while an accomplished apostle he will feel armed for the most beautiful conquests: "What is the kind of death that I aspire to?: "...And as a perfectly loving and resigned victim he ends: "Beautiful death than that of Saint-Etienne..." Moreover, at death he will strive to always be ready, because such thoughts are familiar to him, it seems; "God has hidden," he notes, "the hour of our death so that we always think about it. » See Louis Lemer, OMI, unpublished manuscript, *Chutes du Sang*, 1950, 16, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, PR.2001.184, box 1 file 31.

⁴²¹ Emma Anderson concluded a similar finding in her historical analysis of the North American Martyrs cultural contact with the Haudenosaunee in the seventeenth century. See Anderson, *Death and Afterlife*, 52-53.

Case Study 2: Canadian Sovereignty During WWII and the Qikirtamiut

Introduction

The intricate dynamics of World War II not only reshaped global politics but also significantly impacted the strategic importance of the Arctic. As tensions between world powers heightened, the discovery of nuclear fission marked the beginning of a technological race that would forever change warfare and international relations. This section examines the pivotal role Canada played in the Arctic, in supporting the U.S. nuclear ambitions during the war, while also balancing its sovereignty concerns. Through an examination of uranium mining, Canadian-American military collaborations, and the geopolitical implications of the era, this analysis underscores how scientific discovery intertwined with wartime urgency to influence Canada's Arctic policies and the broader historical narrative of the time.

The context surrounding the atomic bomb and the safeguarding of uranium is crucial, as it underscores the strategic significance of the Northwest Territories (NWT) and the role of R.A. Gibson and the NWT Council in exercising control over key affairs. This demonstrates the region's importance to both Canada and the United States. Additionally, the irony of Judge Plaxton's address to his Inuit audience, emphasizing the sacredness of human life as God's creation, stands in stark contrast to the atrocities being committed during the same period – Germany's planned extermination of a people based on their faith, the brutalities of war where soldiers died at one another's hands, and the global race to develop weapons of mass destruction. This juxtaposition highlights the moral complexities of the time. Moreover, this wartime context

reveals how nations employed their judicial systems to exert control over Inuit populations, driven by concerns over land sovereignty and the evolving conceptions of territorial authority.

The section focuses on the 1941 Belcher Island murders, where the deaths of several *Qikirtamiut*⁴²² sparked an RCMP investigation. The event is framed within the context of Canada's efforts to assert Arctic sovereignty during World War II. The murders, which the Dominion of Canada embellished as having arose from a "religious frenzy" instigated by Inuit leaders purported by RCMP reports as claiming to be divine figures, were interpreted through a flawed cross-cultural lens. Non-Inuit interpreters imposed their own worldviews when they acted as interpreters for the investigation, leading to biased interpretations of the *Qikirtamiut*'s beliefs and actions.

The trials concluded with several convictions, although the supposed "religious" motivations behind the killings were largely shaped by misinterpretation of Inuit cultural and spiritual practices. This section critically examines the role of these Christian interpreters under the framework of *uqattiaruq* and demonstrates how their interpretations overshadowed Inuit perspectives, highlighting the lingering influence of these interpretations in both legal and historical narratives.

⁴²² The *Qikirtamiut* are a group of Inuit who live on the Belcher Islands in the Hudson Bay. Arthur Twomey, *Needle to the North*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1942, 184; John J. Honigmann, *Social Networks in Great Whale River: Notes on an Eskimo, Montagnais – Naskapi, and Euro-Canadian Community*, Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources Canada, *National Museum of Canada*, Bulletin No 178, Anthropological Series No. 54, 1962, 1; Lukassie Novalinga, "The 'People of the Islands' need Nunavut's help," *Nunatsiaq News*, June 21, 2002, accessed online on May 28, 2023: https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/the_people_of_islands_need_nunavuts_help/. Lukassie Novalinga, originally from Sanikiluaq says that he prefers that people from Sanikiluaq, the present-day Nunavut community on the Belcher Islands be referred to as *Qikirtamiut*, "people of the islands," a preference over *Sanikiluarmiut*, "people from Sanikiluaq;" Douglas Nakashima, "Inuit Women's Knowledge of Bird Skins and its Application in Clothing Construction, Sanikiluaq, Nunavut," *Material History Review* 56, Fall 2002, 21.

Literature Review for Case Study 2

Many analyses of the murders of the Belcher Islands *begin* with a Christian religious lens. The Christian lens is likely due to the fact that the original sources of the case files are largely built from the RCMP's 1941 police investigation that grossly glossed over Inuit *Angakkuuniq* and relied on the insufficient interpretation from Anglican missionary George Neilson, pinning the motives for murders from an Inuit misinterpretation of the Christian bible.⁴²³ In contrast, the analysis on the Belcher Islands killings presented in this section contextualizes interpreters as having a specific Euro-Christian understanding of the Inuktut language, while contextualizing the Qikirtamiut's *Angakkuuniq* understanding of biblical messages.

The philosophical concept of *Inuusiq*, Inuit life cycle, is a foundation for analysis and replaces traditional scholarship that understands the Belcher Islands killings as a tragic example of Inuit trying and failing to integrate Christianity into the *Angakkuuniq* religion. Instead, the analysis on the Belcher Islands killings emphasizes the apparent difficulties related to interpretation-translation between English and Inuktut and provides examples in which the Dominion of Canada's judicial officials may have misinterpreted and misunderstood Inuit. Through its judicial agents, the Dominion of Canada imposed a Euro-Christian centered understanding of the events and completely omitted *Angakkuuniq*, Inuktut, and Inuit philosophy, resulting in the embellished narrative of "religious frenzy" that historians continue to take at face value.

⁴²³ DJ Martin, "Alleged Murders – Belcher Islands, N.W.T.," R.C.M.P. Division File No 41-G-636-1, April 30, 1941, p 1, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Canada, RG85 Vol 173

Hodgson and Lackenbauer link the Belcher Island murder trials within the broader series of “Arctic Show trials” that began with Sinnisiak and Uluksak, but do not provide much analysis because their aim was to make available selected archival documents related to the case. The current study also bridges these two trials together. However, unlike other scholarship, the research presented in this section extends analysis to include examination of the comparative contexts of the world war and religion.

William Closson James (who met Peter Sala in the early 80s on an unrelated research topic) wrote a chapter titled “Sacred Death” that detailed the Belcher Island murders. For James, the Belcher Island murders are an example of a tragic and unsuccessful attempt of Inuit to “bridge two worlds:” the Inuit religion and Christianity.⁴²⁴ James categorized the Belcher Islands murders as a smaller scale of “the People’s Temple, the Branch Davidian, and...the Solar Temple and Aum Shinrikyo and Heaven’s Gate.”⁴²⁵ While James’ description of the killings he considers “logical,” his synopsis on the origin of logic behind the killings he links to Inuit “cultural loss:”

The immense difficulties for a smaller and weaker minority to maintain its traditions in the face of a more powerful dominant culture are illustrated here by the Belcher Islands Inuit...the eruption of a cultural crisis necessitates an innovative combination of inherited practices of indigenous...origin with European Christianity...Most of those killed were women and children, innocent victims of the tragedy. Some of them could even be claimed to be Christian martyrs who died for their faith. But the tendency was to regard these Inuit deaths as occurring entirely within a sphere apart from our own, involving people unlike us. Seen in other terms the Belcher Islands murders are a comprehensible and even logical reaction to cultural loss, something more than an outbreak of hysteria or madness. At the very least these events illustrate for us a manifestation of contact with the sacred when the resources and devices of everyday life are experienced as lacking or having failed.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ William Closson James, *Locations of the Sacred: Essays on Religion, Literature and Canadian Culture*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006, 102.

⁴²⁵ James, *Locations of the Sacred*, 102.

⁴²⁶ James, *Locations of the Sacred*, 102-103.

Citing René Girard's religious violence as the "heart and secret soul of the sacred,"⁴²⁷

James sees the Belcher Islands killings as a catalyst for the arrival of the Canadian judicial system, in what he describes as a new form of "sacralised violence" that was devastating to Inuit, a notably deficit-based analysis:

In Girard's terms, the disequilibrium experienced among the Belcher Islands Inuit in the winter of 1941 broke into their midst with the force of an unknown disease in a sacred and dehumanized form. The subsequent Inuit deaths were in a sense sacrificial killings, directed towards checking or countering the impersonal violence unleashed among them. Into this situation of "primitive" sacrificial killing came the Canadian government with its "civilized" apparatus of the legal punishment to exact further reprisals and to strike the last blow in the effort to redress and end the previous violence. For the Inuit this remedy was the experience of a new form of sacralised violence, systemic, judicial, and total in its devastating effects.⁴²⁸

Anthropologists Xavier Blaisel, Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten steer away from deficit discourse and provide analysis on the Belcher Islands killings through more nuanced and positive interpretation. Opting to analyze the events of the Belcher Island killings from the perspective of Inuit culture, Blaisel et al. interpret the events as "patterns of leadership and competition in Inuit society."⁴²⁹ Compiling the Belcher Islands killings along with other similar cases of reported violence in Inuit society that also contained elements of Christianity, Blaisel et al. are careful to acknowledge how the "negative assessment"⁴³⁰ of the cases resulted in a distorted understanding of the events. Employing the assistance of Inuit elders, Blaisel et al. attempt to present a more nuanced interpretation of this event as: "an important chapter in the history of Inuit religion and played an important part in the acceptance of Christianity as the combination of Christianity and shamanism turned out to be unsuccessful."⁴³¹

⁴²⁷ James, *Locations of the Sacred*, 28.

⁴²⁸ James, 128.

⁴²⁹ Blaisel et al., "Shamans and Leaders," 370.

⁴³⁰ Blaisel et al., "Shamans and Leaders," 370.

⁴³¹ Blaisel et al., "Shamans and Leaders," 370.

Analyzing eleven different Inuit-specific case studies, Blaisel et al. employed the Christian term, “Parousia”⁴³² to describe the many different events that included violence to highlight two common themes in all eleven case studies. One theme the scholars observed is the “presence of Christ,”⁴³³ and the “imminent end of the world,”⁴³⁴ thus, the term “Parousial rather than messianic”⁴³⁵ was chosen to describe the events to highlight “the leader of the cult.”⁴³⁶ Despite the attempt to understand the events through Inuit culture with the assistance of Inuit elders, the term “Parousia” is a Hellenistic Greek term with various meanings that include “the presence of persons or things, the position of planets, arrival, coming, advent, and visit,”⁴³⁷ but many theologians and scholars have interpreted it as a technical term to mean the “end-time coming of the Lord,”⁴³⁸ predominantly an interpretation based on the Gospel Matthew in the New Testament.⁴³⁹ In Christian theology, developed over millennia, the current conception of Parousia is the “Second Coming of Christ” in which Jesus returns to earth to collect all faithful Christians to bring them back to the Kingdom of God.⁴⁴⁰

Employing the Christian term “Parousia” to describe the events of the Belcher Islands case study prevents the possibility of questioning the biases of the interpreters through which this story came to be known because it effectively agrees with the initial interpretation. Blaisel et al.

⁴³² Blaisel et al., “Shamans and Leaders,” 370.

⁴³³ Blaisel et al., “Shamans and Leaders,” 371.

⁴³⁴ Blaisel et al., “Shamans and Leaders,” 371.

⁴³⁵ Blaisel et al., “Shamans and Leaders,” 371.

⁴³⁶ Blaisel et al., “Shamans and Leaders,” 371.

⁴³⁷ Joseph Plevnik, *Paul and Parousia: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation*, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 1997, 4.

⁴³⁸ Plevnik, *Paul and Parousia*, 4.

⁴³⁹ Plevnik, *Paul and Parousia*, 4-5.

⁴⁴⁰ John T. Carroll, Alexandra R. Brown, Claudia J. Setzer, and Jeffrey S. Siker, *The Return of Jesus in Early Christianity*, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 2000, 1-6.

cite the police investigation and William Kinmond and fails to question the interpretations provided to the RCMP and Kinmond, reciting the story as constructed and recorded in 1941.⁴⁴¹

Despite the utilization of the Euro-Christian term “Parousia,” Blaisel et al. provide important analysis that highlights the leadership of Charley Ouyerack and Peter Sala,⁴⁴² which is an important aspect to consider when striving to understand this event. Also taking a positive interpretation, scholars P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Corah Lynn Hodgson describe the Belcher Islands murder trials as an avenue to analyze the evolution of Canadian government policy in the Arctic regarding Inuit, stating that the trials produced dialogue within government circles that questioned the applicability of southern judicial punishments on Inuit populations.⁴⁴³ In addition, Lackenbauer and Hodgson contend that within the archives related to the Belcher Islands murder trials, the Dominion’s policy on Inuit demonstrate a “commitment to the maintenance of traditional Indigenous economies in the North.”⁴⁴⁴

While Hodgson and Lackenbauer’s focus is to link the Belcher Islands murder trials as another sequence in “Arctic show trials” that date back to *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak*, the genesis of British law in the Arctic, thus situating their work in the broader category of Arctic sovereignty, they do not address the broader context of the Second World War. The connection between *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak* and the Belcher Islands murder trials is warranted; however, the lack of focus on the context of world war *and* religion in the literature related to both cases overlooks the potential of such a theory to understand how Canada’s perceived threats to their

⁴⁴¹ Blaisel et al., “Shamans and Leaders,” 392-395.

⁴⁴² Blaisel et al., “Shamans and Leaders,” 395.

⁴⁴³ Corah Lynn Hodgson and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *“Religious Frenzy” and the Application of Canadian Law: The Belcher Island Murders, 1941*, Peterborough: Trent University, Trent Centre for the Study of Canada, 2020, iii-iv.

⁴⁴⁴ Hodgson and Lackenbauer, *“Religious Frenzy,”* xxv-xxvii.

geopolitical borders provided the impetus for employing religious discourse in the administration of justice to Inuit. The reasons why the Dominion of Canada chose to hold the trials on the Belcher Islands remain to be examined, and a thorough analysis of archival records related to these case studies, with a focus on both World War and religion, is crucial to understanding the historical context for both Inuit and Canadian historical actors.

Oppenheimer, WWII, Canada-US Relations, and the Arctic

In 1938 the theoretical discovery of nuclear fission, the chemical process when an atom splits and releases enormous amounts of energy, which in turn split more atoms causing a “chain reaction,” led scientists across the world to caution the theoretical possibility of weapons of mass destruction: the atomic bomb.⁴⁴⁵ By 1939, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and Japan all had their own scientists working out the theoretical and practical applications of nuclear fission. Chemists tested the nuclear fission of several elements; however, uranium (the heaviest element known at the time) proved to be the most capable of producing the highest amount of energy.⁴⁴⁶ At the time, the U.S. military obtained intelligence that Germany was close to building an atomic bomb, which sparked an international arms race to be the first to invent nuclear weapons.⁴⁴⁷ The U.S., a leading contender in the arms race, did not have a uranium source at the time and relied on Canada’s Eldorado Port Radium mine in the Northwest Territories to secure it, which was considered a rare commodity and a necessary component for the atomic bomb.⁴⁴⁸ Because nuclear fission was a new scientific discovery, Eldorado mining

⁴⁴⁵ Vincent C. Jones, *The United States Army in World War II Special Studies – Manhattan: The Army and the Atomic Bomb*, Washington D.C.: Center for Military History for the United States Army, 1985, 7.

⁴⁴⁶ Jones, 7.

⁴⁴⁷ Jones, vii, ix, 8.

⁴⁴⁸ Jones, 8, 25, 62.

executives, unaware of uranium's new potential uses, considered uranium a useless by-product of radium and built up a stockpile of uranium pitchblende waste.⁴⁴⁹

The Northern Transport Route took uranium ores from Port Radium on Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories to Fort McMurray, Alberta, where it was then shipped by rail to Port Hope on Lake Ontario, just outside Toronto, where uranium was refined⁴⁵⁰ and then shipped to Los Alamos in the U.S. for the Manhattan Project.⁴⁵¹ The Port Radium uranium ore was the product that later became part of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.⁴⁵²

After the Manhattan Project's first successful atomic bomb test, Robert J. Oppenheimer, the director of the Los Alamos laboratory, is recorded to have recited a line from the Hindu scripture the *Bhagavad Gita*, "Now I am Death, Destroyer of Worlds." Oppenheimer's interpretation of the *Gita* provided him with the philosophical sustenance he needed to create the most destructive invention known to humankind. It is suggested that he focused on three tenets of the *Gita*: duty, fate, and faith. Without Oppenheimer's unique interpretation of *Gita*, Japan might not have suffered from atomic bombs. However, at the time, Oppenheimer felt that it was his duty to direct the invention of a weapon of mass destruction: its fate was out of his control, and he had faith that future outcomes were not his concern.⁴⁵³

⁴⁴⁹ Sarah M. Gordon, Chapter 2: "Narratives Unearthed, or How an Abandoned Mine Doesn't Really Abandon You," from editors Arn Keeling and John Sandlos, *Mining and Communities in Northern Canada: History, Politics, and Memory*, Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2015, 62.

⁴⁵⁰ Brian Geddes, Chris Wenzel, Michael Owen, Mark Gardiner, and Julie Brown, "Remediation of Canada's Historic Haul Route for Radium and Uranium Ores – The Northern Transportation Route," *Proceedings of the ASME 2011 14th International Conference on Environmental Remediation and Radioactive Waste Management ICEM2011*, September 25-29, 2011, Reims, France, 2-3; Jones, 62.

⁴⁵¹ Gordon, 62-63.

⁴⁵² Arn Keeling and John Sandlos, "Introduction: The Complex Legacy of Mining in Northern Canada," *Mining and Communities in Northern Canada: History, Politics, and Memory*, Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2015, 22.

⁴⁵³ James A. Hijiya, "The Gita of J. Robert Oppenheimer," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 144, No. 2, June 2000, 123-127.

The discovery of nuclear fission and the potential energy of uranium prompted scientists to push their governments to safeguard known global uranium deposits.⁴⁵⁴ The U.S. prepared military plans and thought that in the event that the Germans took over England, British colonial Canada would be handed to Germany and the enemy could become their next-door neighbour. Thus, the U.S. strove to protect all the raw materials used to make munitions and military equipment and patrol their shipping routes. The U.S. considered the Hudson Bay region, an identified shipping route to the Atlantic, to be vulnerable to German submarines and warships. In April 1941, the U.S. considered the German threat to Arctic waters to be real and possibly imminent and stressed the need for the U.S. to patrol Hudson Bay, a proposal that the Canadian Chief Naval Officer refused, stating that Canada considered the Hudson Bay as “internal waters” to Canada within Canada’s sovereignty, as such, no other state should patrol it.⁴⁵⁵

In addition, the patrol of Arctic waters was the role of the Eastern Arctic Patrol, which had cruised through Hudson Bay and adjacent waters all along the Arctic every summer since 1922. In terms of safeguarding uranium deposits, the Dominion of Canada considered that their Department of Mines and Resources Lands, Parks, and Forests Branch was well positioned to carry out patrols of the Hudson Bay as demonstrations of their sovereignty while it controlled uranium production at Eldorado Mines. The Department of Mines and Resources also considered it their responsibility for the administration over the lives of Inuit⁴⁵⁶ in *Inuit Nunangat*.⁴⁵⁷

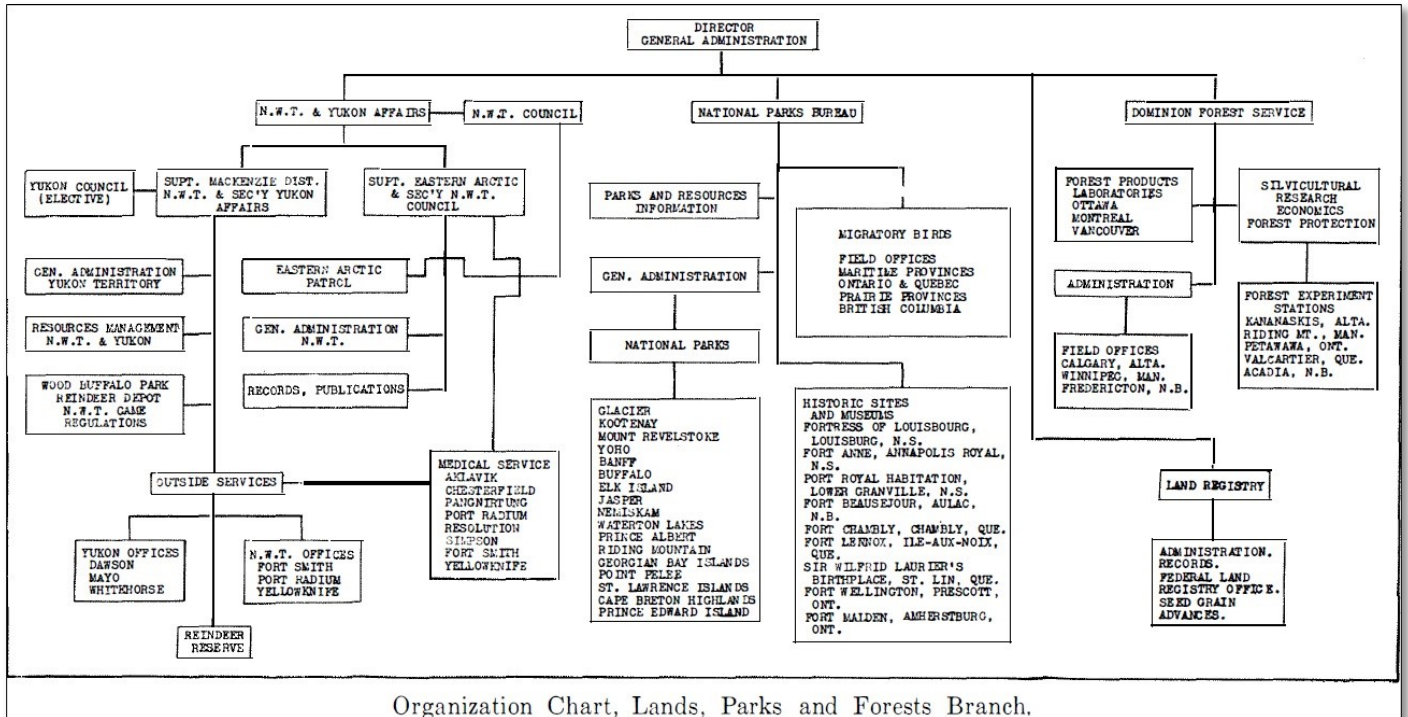
⁴⁵⁴ Jones, 14.

⁴⁵⁵ Colonel Stanley W. Dzuiban, *Military Relations Between the United States and Canada 1939-1945*, Center of Military History, Washington D.C.: United States Army, 1990, 192-196.

⁴⁵⁶ Roy A. Gibson, *Report of Lands, Parks, and Forests Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1940*, Ottawa: Department of Mines and Resources, Lands, Parks and Forests Branch, Ottawa: 1941, 61-62.

⁴⁵⁷ *Inuit Nunangat* is a Canadian Inuit Inuktitut term that means “Inuit homelands” that encompasses 40% of Canada’s land area and 72% of its coastline. The term includes land, water, and ice. See Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami “About Canadian Inuit,” accessed online on October 15, 2023: <https://www.itk.ca/about-canadian-inuit/>

During WWII, members of the Northwest Territories Council (NWT Council) were Commissioner Charles Camsell and Deputy Commissioner R.A. Gibson with council members A.L. Cumming, K.R. Daly, H.W. McGill, O.D. Skelton, S.T. Wood; and D.L. McKeand was Secretary. Major D.L. McKeand was also the Superintendent for the Eastern Arctic Patrol and Officer in Charge.⁴⁵⁸



Screenshot of the Organization Chart for the Lands, Parks and Forests Branch from 1941, under Director R.A. Gibson, who was based in Ottawa. This Organization Chart shows the extent of administration that the NWT Council had over the Arctic in WWII.⁴⁵⁹

R.A. Gibson opened his annual report for 1940-41 by acknowledging the outbreak of world war and hinted at the newfound value in uranium by mentioning “the development of promising properties:”

⁴⁵⁸ Gibson, Report, 1940, 62.

⁴⁵⁹ Gibson, “Report of Lands, Parks, and Forests Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1940. 1941.” Department of Mines and Resources, Lands, Parks and Forests Branch, Dominion Forest Service, 1941. Reproduced with the permission of the Department of Natural Resources, 2023.

The disturbing conditions that preceded and continued after the outbreak of war had an unsettling effect on general prospecting operations in the Northwest and Yukon Territories. However, companies that were already mining in the Territories proceeded steadily to increase production, and the interest of experienced and adequately financed operators lent aid and encouragement to the development of promising properties.⁴⁶⁰

Gibson also reported that:

Production continued at the pitchblende-silver property of Eldorado Gold Mines, Limited, at Labine Point, Great Bear Lake, where nearly 100 men are employed. The concentrating mill on this property treated about 100 tons daily and produced during the year approximately 1,000 tons of concentrates. Most of these concentrates were shipped to the company's refinery at Port Hope, Ontario, for treatment.⁴⁶¹

Despite the government war-measures shut-down of non-essential businesses in Canada to ensure a labour-supply for essential items, Eldorado stayed open in the summer of 1940 and profits rose in 1941 as the company continued to export uranium and radium, with the U.S. as their largest consumer. Canadian policy by 1942 was against investments on Canadian soil by another government. In 1942, Eldorado mines owner Gilbert LaBine sold all his shares to the Dominion of Canada in a secret transaction and LaBine stayed on as president where he continued to purchase available shares to sell secretly to Canada. By 1942, the Dominion of Canada became the largest shareholder and assumed immediate control over the mine, a control that they shared with Allied forces such as Britain and the U.S., who each ran nuclear physics projects.⁴⁶²

The U.S. military frequently visited Eldorado at Port Radium and Port Hope just outside Toronto where Eldorado's refinery was located. The patrol of the mines and the refinery was one of the many joint Canada-US war projects. As the U.S. military presence grew in Canada,

⁴⁶⁰ Northern Forestry Centre, "Report of Lands, Parks, and Forests Branch," 61.

⁴⁶¹ Northern Forestry Centre, "Report of Lands, Parks, and Forests Branch," 65. Pitchblende is a radioactive uranium-rich mineral and ore that contains small amounts of radium and the Great Bear Lake source contained large quantities of uranium as mining by-product. See Robert Bothwell, *Eldorado: Canada's National Uranium Company*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984, 81.

⁴⁶² Bothwell, 123-12.

especially in the years 1940-41, the two countries worked out many joint efforts and operations of their militaries, though not without tension as R.A. Gibson noted in his 1943 report:

Pursuant to an exchange of notes between the Governments of Canada and the United States, the United States undertook as a defence project the construction of a military road from Dawson Creek, British Columbia, to Fairbanks, Alaska... Similarly, as a war project, the United States undertook a program for increased production of oil in the Northwest Territories and the construction of a pipeline... These defence construction activities in the Yukon and Northwest Territories have caused many new problems in local government and in natural resources administration...⁴⁶³

The influx of the U.S. military onto Canadian soil drove tension in terms of jurisdictional authority for both militaries, and Canada was concerned about its sovereignty.⁴⁶⁴ The Dominion of Canada's caution over sovereignty is also evident in Canada's reluctance to grant the U.S. patrol of Hudson Bay, stating that it was "internal waters" to Canada and pressed that it should not be patrolled by another state.⁴⁶⁵ Despite Canada's reservations, the U.S. requested and received Canada's permission to build weather stations in the Arctic with code names Crystal I (Kuujjuaq, formerly Fort Chimo, Nunavik), Crystal II (Iqaluit, formerly Frobisher Bay, Nunavut), and Crystal III on Padloping Island (decommissioned, Nunavut). Site surveys across the Arctic, including Nunavik (Northern Quebec), were started in July 1941, and construction began in September 1941.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶³ Roy A. Gibson, *Report of Lands, Parks and Forests Branch for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1943*, Department of Mines and Resources, Ottawa: Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1944.

⁴⁶⁴ Dzuiban, ix.

⁴⁶⁵ Dzuiban, 194.

⁴⁶⁶ Robert V. Eno, "Crystal Two: The Origin of Iqaluit," *Arctic*, The Arctic Institute of North America, March 2003, Vol. 56, No. 1, 64-65; Dzuiban, 184. I live one kilometer from the former U.S. military base in a subdivision called the "Plateau" situated near "Upper Base" and frequently walk my dogs on the roads that the Americans built. Along the walk you can see discarded oil drums with "USA – OMC" imprinted on the lids, although weathered and oxidized, some areas still present the green paint that the military is known for. The U.S. military built the foundation for Frobisher Bay that would eventually become Iqaluit.

Donald McLauchlan was an RCMP officer stationed in Lake Harbour (now Kimmirut) during WWII. In his memoir dated for July 1941, McLauchlan noted that the entire U.S. army base at Frobisher Bay was built in a matter of “days” and recorded:

In July 1941, several Inuit came into the detachment all excited. A BIG boat was at the mouth of the harbour. We put on our red serge and went out aboard the Lake Harbour, the RCMP boat, to investigate. We flagged the visiting ship down. It was an American destroyer and we were invited aboard. Upon meeting the captain we asked if he had permission to come up the harbour. When he said he didn't know he needed permission, we told him that it had to be cleared with Ottawa. He wasn't very pleased when we said it might take a day or two but he said he would cruise around Hudson Strait until we came out and flagged him in. Because we were at war no foreign ship was allowed to enter Canadian waters without permission...we heard a few sparks flew around Ottawa as it was their first inkling that an American destroyer was in Canadian waters.⁴⁶⁷

The U.S. military's expedient development of their infrastructure across the Arctic was listed as a joint U.S.-Canada war effort, Canada still had to balance their sovereignty concerns over remote regions of the Arctic, especially in reference to the Hudson Bay. The Canadian caution over Arctic sovereignty in Hudson Bay was not without basis. Years earlier the Americans had questioned the status of the Hudson Bay and considered it an “open sea.”⁴⁶⁸ As late as 1925, the Parliament of Canada discussed a bill to assert Canada's claim to Arctic sovereignty through a new measure that required all scientists to obtain licenses to conduct studies in the Arctic, a measure enshrined in legislation to enforce foreigners who entered the Arctic would do so only with explicit permission from Canada. Discussing the legislation, the Minister for the Department of the Interior stated that Canada claims “right up the North Pole,” a claim that the Americans considered “not justified.”⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁷ Donald McLauchlan, personal memoir, courtesy of Margaret McLauchlan.

⁴⁶⁸ Thomas Willing Balch, “Is Hudson Bay a Closed or an Open Sea?” *The American Journal of International Law*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Apr. 1912), 459. Balch argued that for the sake of world trade and peace, Canada and international powers should consider the Hudson Bay as an “open sea,” free for anyone to traverse, trade, and exploit.

⁴⁶⁹ T.L. Cory, *British Sovereignty in the Arctic*, report compiled for the Northwest Territories Council, June 3, 1936, to Honorable T.A. Crerar, Minister to the Department of the Interior, Canada, courtesy of the Nunavut Archives Program, N-1922-023.37.4, Alexander Stevenson fonds, pp. 41-42.

By WWII, the Canadian Arctic had not yet been fully mapped, with some Arctic islands still being newly “discovered” by the geodetic surveyor and biologist Thomas Henry Manning in 1941.⁴⁷⁰ The Canadian government was concerned that their sovereignty claims to the Arctic, demonstrated by patrols, scattered Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) posts, and through various scientific expeditions, would not hold up in international law.⁴⁷¹ In 1936, T.L. Cory, solicitor for the Northwest Territories Office of the Department of the Interior,⁴⁷² posed questions regarding Arctic sovereignty in a report he wrote for the department’s Minister that Cory titled *British Sovereignty in the Arctic*:

There are stretches of water and ice separating many of the islands that far exceed the distances set down by international law as territorial waters. What then is the position?...Occupation in the last analysis is the requirement insisted upon by the authorities. Needless to say occupation as is understood in the thickly populated parts of the World could not apply to the numerous islands in the Arctic sector. This being impossible what next would be looked upon by the authorities as sufficient occupation? What can Canada do further than she has done that will extend her active jurisdiction in these isolated Arctic islands lying to the north of her mainland?⁴⁷³

The requirement for states to demonstrate sovereignty in the earlier decades of the twentieth century now had to go beyond “discovery” and the demonstration of sovereignty required “effective possession” over land through “occupation” in which international law recognized occupation through the administration of justice:

...laid down the rule that a State must take effective possession of a territory when it wants to occupy it, that is to say, it must bring the territory under its control and administration. It must be willing to maintain order, organization, and administration of justice.⁴⁷⁴

The sparsely populated Arctic meant that Canada did not meet the threshold for “sufficient occupation,” a reality that concerned the Dominion of Canada as their RCMP posts,

⁴⁷⁰ Andrew H. Macpherson, “Thomas Henry Manning (1911 – 1998)” *Arctic*, Vol. 52, No. 1, March 1999, 104–105.

⁴⁷¹ Cory, 10.

⁴⁷² K.S. Coates and W.R. Morrison, ““To Make These Tribes Understand””: The Trial of Alikomiak and Tatamigana,” *Arctic*, Vol 51, No 3, 1998, 224.

⁴⁷³ Cory, 68.

⁴⁷⁴ Cory, 22.

scattered across the Arctic, could be considered insufficient in an international court of law should other states demonstrably claim sovereignty over the Arctic. A large portion of Cory's report was devoted to understanding how *other* nations viewed State sovereignty more generally.

Citing the Norwegian author Smedal, Cory quoted Norwegian acknowledgement:

Canada not only exercises control from the permanent land stations, but has also to some extent, carried out supervision by means of a patrol vessel. Craig mentions, as an interesting instance, that a crime committed in these regions had been cleared up by Canadian police, that the offenders had been arrested, and that they would be sentenced by a Canadian court of justice which it was intended to send northwards in the summer of 1923. ... There is no reason to deny Canadian sovereignty over the territories which Canada has in this way really brought under its control and jurisdiction. The sovereignty does not, however, extend to the neighboring territories, which are not submitted to control (underline in original).⁴⁷⁵

To satisfy international legal requirements, state legitimacy in sovereignty claims had to go beyond the mere presence of *law and order*, such as Canada's Eastern Arctic Patrol and the sparsely scattered RCMP posts. According to Cory, the *administration of justice* was required to legitimize state sovereignty claims. And what better way to demonstrate the administration of justice in the Arctic than a criminal trial of the Arctic inhabitants?

Deaths Reported on Belcher Islands, 1941

An opportunity arose for the Dominion of Canada authoritatively to demonstrate Arctic sovereignty in Hudson Bay in the early spring of 1941, when, R.A. Gibson learned about suspicious deaths of Inuit who identify as the Qikirtamiut, "the islanders,"⁴⁷⁶ in the Belcher Islands situated in the Hudson Bay, the approximate area and land located in the Hudson Bay

⁴⁷⁵ Cory, 25-26.

⁴⁷⁶ Arthur Twomey, *Needle to the North*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1942, 184; John J. Honigmann, *Social Networks in Great Whale River: Notes on an Eskimo, Montagnais – Naskapi, and Euro-Canadian Community*, Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources Canada, *National Museum of Canada*, Bulletin No 178, Anthropological Series No. 54, 1962, 1; Lukassie Novalinga, "The 'People of the Islands' need Nunavut's help," *Nunatsiaq News*, June 21, 2002, accessed online on May 28, 2023: https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/the_people_of_islands_need_nunavuts_help/; Douglas Nakashima, "Inuit Women's Knowledge of Bird Skins and its Application in Clothing Construction, Sanikiluaq, Nunavut," *Material History Review* 56, Fall 2002, 21.

where Canada felt it urgent to demonstrate their sovereignty.⁴⁷⁷ The deaths sparked a RCMP police investigation in April 1941 which led to criminal trials held on the Belcher Islands later that summer. These trials are now widely referred to as the “Belcher Islands Murder Trials” and scholars have recently included them into the broader scope of historic “Arctic Show Trials.”⁴⁷⁸

Just before the Americans requested access to patrol Hudson Bay in April 1941, the Hudson’s Bay Company in Great Whale River telegraphed the RCMP on March 14, 1941, to notify them about three deaths that occurred on the Belcher Islands earlier that year.⁴⁷⁹ The RCMP dispatched a police investigation led by Inspector D.J. Martin who arrived on the Belcher Islands on April 11, 1941.⁴⁸⁰ While on the Belcher Islands investigating, Martin reported by wireless that he examined seven dead bodies of the Qikirtamiut. Of those seven bodies one was shot, one elderly woman and one younger woman, along with four children, were found frozen to death on the sea ice. Martin learned of two other bodies which he was unable to examine, another young man shot to death and one young girl who was “clubbed.”⁴⁸¹

Martin had to conduct his investigation in which he interviewed Qikirtamiut Inuit and obtained information from them through interpretation between English and Inuktitut, though this process was evidently flawed due to the interpreter’s insufficient capacity to speak Inuktitut fluently. After unsuccessful attempts to locate an interpreter that the RCMP trusted had the

⁴⁷⁷ Martha Johnson, *Lore: Capturing Traditional Environmental Knowledge*, Hay River, N.W.T.: Dene Cultural Institute, International Development Research Centre, 1992, p. 70.

⁴⁷⁸ P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Corah Lynn Hodgson, “*Religious Frenzy*” and the Application of *Canadian Law: The Belcher Island Murders, 1941*, Peterborough: Trent University Center for the Study of Canada, 2020, i.

⁴⁷⁹ J.W. Anderson, telegram to R.A. Gibson, March 14, 1941, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol.173, file 541-2-1 Vol 1.

⁴⁸⁰ T.B. Caulkin, correspondence to the RCMP Commissioner, April 21, 1941, 41G-636-1, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

⁴⁸¹ T.B. Caulkin, correspondence to the RCMP Commissioner, April 21, 1941.

capability be able to carry out interpretation for the complex purposes of investigating deaths, Martin resorted to employing Anglican missionary George Neilson for interpretation services.

According to Neilson, who interpreted and spoke for the Qikirtamiut, in early January of 1941, a man named Charley Ouyerack with Peter Sala “acting as his lieutenant,” declared that he [Ouyerack] was “Jesus” and that “God was coming to end the world in the very near future.”⁴⁸²

Martin’s investigation gathered information from the Qikirtamiut and reported:

*This religious frenzy was apparently started with a discussion of the Eskimo bible (Anglican) and the sight of either a falling meteor or shooting star and the sight of either a sign from the Almighty. Many Natives believed in the preaching of Charley Ouyerack and in the belief that material things were no longer necessary, a rifle was destroyed and some dogs shot (emphasis added).*⁴⁸³

Apparently, according to Neilson who spoke on behalf of the Qikirtamiut, Ouyerack’s preaching, and the apparent sighting of a meteor, sparked a “religious frenzy” that the RCMP considered as the motivation for numerous deaths that they were investigating. Martin learned that the first three killings occurred while the Inuit held a “gathering” in an igloo sometime in late January of 1941. Martin’s investigation gathered information from Qikirtamiut witnesses through Neilson and reported that on January 26, 1941, an Inuk man named Alec Apawkok asked his sister Sarah Apawkok:

If she [Sarah] believed in the coming of Jesus and she answered that she did not. Alec Apawkok angered by this ‘*Heresy*’ began to beat her over the head with an Enowtuk (a stick used for beating snow off clothing) until she [Sarah] fell unconscious (emphasis added).⁴⁸⁴

The report then stated Sarah was dragged out of the igloo and brought into another igloo where an Inuk woman named Akeenik beat her with the butt of a rifle and killed Sarah.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸² D.J. Martin, “Alleged Murders,” Division File No 41-G-636-1, 1.

⁴⁸³ D.J. Martin, “Alleged Murders,” Division File No 41-G-636-1, 1.

⁴⁸⁴ Martin, “Alleged Murders,” Division File No 41-G-636-1, 1.

⁴⁸⁵ Martin, “Alleged Murders,” Division File No 41-G-636-1, 1.

Martin reported that an older man named Keytowieack, did not believe the “doctrine” of Charley Ouyerack and left the igloo after witnessing Sarah’s death. Martin recorded that the next day, on January 27, 1941, Peter Sala went to Keytowieack’s igloo and saw him in a “bent over position” when Sala prodded through the igloo walls stabbing Keytowieack with a steel-tipped harpoon. Another man named Joseph Adlaykok then shot Keytowieack through the igloo with Charley Ouyerack’s rifle.⁴⁸⁶

According to the police report, interpreted via Neilson on February 9, 1941, Charley Ouyerack “was again holding forth on the end of the World and that he was Jesus and that all the Eskimo must be his followers for he was also God.”⁴⁸⁷ While most believed that Charley was Jesus, one man named Alec Keytowieack (a different Keytowieack from the deceased) and his wife Eva did not believe that Charley was God and in response publicly denounced him. Eva later recanted, according to the report, because she did not want her community to see her as an “unbeliever.”⁴⁸⁸ According to Neilson, Charley Ouyerack then started to call Alec Keytowieack a “Devil”⁴⁸⁹ and ordered another man, Quarack, to shoot him, which he complied and shot Alec Keytowieack three times. Once he was deceased, according to Neilson’s interpretation, the entire camp “rejoiced at the death of the man who wouldn’t believe Charley Ouyerack was Jesus.”⁴⁹⁰

In March 1941, one month after the killing of Alec Keytowieack, Peter Sala travelled to the mainland post at Great Whale River with the HBC patrol. At Great Whale River, Peter confessed about the killings to a retired HBC company man named Harold Udgarden, who was also a community leader active in the Anglican Church at Great Whale River.⁴⁹¹ During Sala’s

⁴⁸⁶ Martin, “Alleged Murders,” Division File No 41-G-636-1, pp 1-2.

⁴⁸⁷ Martin, “Alleged Murders,” Division File No 41-G-636-1, 2.

⁴⁸⁸ Martin, “Alleged Murders,” Division File No 41-G-636-1, 2.

⁴⁸⁹ Martin, “Alleged Murders,” Division File No 41-G-636-1, 2.

⁴⁹⁰ Martin, “Alleged Murders,” Division File No 41-G-636-1, 3.

⁴⁹¹ John J. Honigmann, *Social Networks in Great Whale River*, 70.

absence from the Belcher Islands is perhaps when the most puzzling of all the deaths occurred. Apparently, Mina Sala, Peter's sister, ordered women and children to walk the sea ice without clothing, to "meet Jesus," and six died from exposure to freezing temperatures. These deaths occurred while Peter was at Great Whale River and *after* the HBC telegraphed the RCMP about the initial three deaths.

According to Neilson, on March 29, with Peter Sala away, Mina ordered several camp members to leave the warmth of their igloos and walk out on the sea ice near their camp to undress to be ready to meet Jesus.⁴⁹² Several of Peter's family members also walked onto the sea ice at Mina's command. Once out far enough, according to Neilson's interpretation, Mina Sala stripped off four of the children's clothing and prevented them from trying to put their clothing back on. She ordered the adults to strip, and some did at her behest, while others tried to grab the children to get back into the warmth of their igloos. For some it was too late and frostbite had already taken over, and they were unable to save themselves. Nukarak, Kumudluk-Sarah, Johnny, Johnasie, Moses and Quarack (the child, not the adult) all died of exposure due to freezing temperatures common in March in the Arctic on sea ice.⁴⁹³

After these gruesome findings, Martin's investigation was cut short because of the jaggedness of the islands and water currents that caused unstable ice conditions which required a quick turnaround and Martin departed the islands on April 16, 1941, with only three suspects: Peter, Charley, and Mina. Martin was unable to locate the other suspects and headed to Great

⁴⁹² Martin, "Alleged Murders," Division File No 41-G-636-1, 3.

⁴⁹³ W.G. Kerr, "Eastern Arctic Ottawa, Ont., Alleged Murders – Belcher Islands, N.W.T. Moses, Alec, Johnasie, Johnny (Eskimo Boys) and Nukarak and Kumudluk Sarah (Eskimo Female Adults) – Murder of – "report, April 26, 1941, 1, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Canada, RG85 Vol 173.

Whale River from which point he took his three prisoners to the Moosonee RCMP post in northern Ontario for the prisoners to await trial.⁴⁹⁴

In May 1941, the NWT Council held a meeting to discuss their approach to the killings, which were gaining media attention. Martin informed the Council about the results of his preliminary investigation of the Belcher Island killings reporting that there were nine deaths in total, all Qikirtamiut. Martin reported that the killers had religious motivations that were sparked by their reading of the New Testament, followed by witnessing a “shooting star” that he claimed the Qikirtamiut saw as a “sign from the Almighty.” In addition, the report noted that Charley Ouyerack called himself Jesus while another man, Peter Sala, was referred to as God and all were purported to have thought that the end of the world was imminent.⁴⁹⁵

The archives of the Belcher Island murder trials provide evidence that the purported “religious” motivations of the accused stem from incorrect Inuktitut-English interpretations made by the Anglican missionary George Neilson. The interpretations from Neilson are biased to Euro-Christian contexts that does not align with an *Angakkuuniq* perspective which would have been the primary context for the Qikirtamiut at the time.

While only three deaths were initially reported, Martin recorded that he learned of the deaths of four children and two women who died of exposure on the sea ice, purportedly after to having been forced on the ice to “meet Jesus” by Mina. Martin noted that the deaths of the women and children were the result of Mina’s sustained “religious frenzy” that led her to chase her community members onto the sea ice.⁴⁹⁶ More examples of Christian terminology and

⁴⁹⁴ T.B. Caulkin, correspondence to the RCMP Commissioner, April 21, 1941.

⁴⁹⁵ Author not identified, “Extracts from the Minutes of the Meeting of the One Hundred and Twenty-sixth Session of the Northwest Territories Council held on 6th May 1941,” courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

⁴⁹⁶ D.J. Martin, “Eastern Arctic, Ottawa, Ont,” file, April 26th, 1941, p 1, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Canada, RG85 Vol 173.

sayings are found in other parts of the investigation, such as “disciple;” the “coming of Jesus;” “heresy;” “doctrine;” “devil;” and “unbeliever.”⁴⁹⁷

When Martin returned to the Belcher Islands in July 1941, he brought back with him the three prisoners; Mina, Peter, and Charley, and indicted four more Qikirtamiut on charges of murder: Akeenik, Alec Apawkok, Quarack, and Adlaykok. The trials began on August 18, 1941, concluding on August 20 in which the jury convicted Peter, Charley, and Adlaykok of manslaughter; found Akeenik and Mina insane; and acquitted Alec while the judge, Stipendiary Magistrate C.P. Plaxton, only suspended Quarack to remain on the islands to hunt for the families of the convicted men sentenced to prison, presumably to ensure the families survived without their main hunter who was their source of protection and food. The judge then sentenced Peter, Charley, Adlaykok, Akeenik and Mina to two years’ hard labour at the RCMP post in Moose Factory.⁴⁹⁸

At the conclusion of Belcher Islands murder trials, Justice C.P. Plaxton addressed the jury. Plaxton’s speech reveals how the judicial party thought that the killings had a religious and psychological origin. Plaxton’s address described his theory that a “religious frenzy or hysteria” overtook the community:

These grim episodes occurred under circumstances which have excited widespread public interest and invoked the intervention of His Majesty’s law enforcement officers to see that the offenders – if offenders they should be proved – are punished according to law. *Something of the nature of a religious frenzy or hysteria* seems to have seized a number of these people. It gained expression in violent form; and in consequence some seven of these poor Eskimos now face charges for one of the most serious capital offences – that of murder.... In these cases, you are called upon to perform a task which is at once delicate and difficult... Their processes of thought and action must, in consequence, appear for us, who have had little or no contact with them, somewhat elusive and, if not wholly baffling at times, always perplexing. The task is also a difficult task because we are here seeking to apply to a primitive people, who to a large extent, have lived

⁴⁹⁷ D.J. Martin, police investigation report, April 30, 1941, 2.

⁴⁹⁸ H. Kearney, file 41-G-636-1, file reference: “re: Alleged Murders – Belcher Islands, N.W.T. CHANGED TO: Eskimo Females MINA and AKEENIK; Eskimo Males ALEC APAWKOK, QUARACK, PETER SALA, ADLAYKOK, and CHARLIE OUYERACK – Murder – Belcher Islands, N.W.T.,” September 4, 1941, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 174.

without God and without the law, the moral standard and concepts of organized civilized society. Nevertheless, these people have for many years past had, and presumably studied, prints of the New Testament in Eskimo Syllabics. These appear to have been distributed through the agency of the Anglican Church Missionary at Great Whale River. Moreover, primitive as these people are, they fully appreciate, I am reliably informed, the meaning and significance of the Scriptural commandment, “Thou Shalt Not Kill”...Untutored in our ways of life, uninfluenced by any form of alien culture, these “Children of the twilight” carry on today, as did their ancestors through countless generations, in this bleak, inhospitable region of ceaseless struggle for existence, grim and merciless in its character... “The land that God gave to Cain,” (emphasis added).⁴⁹⁹

Plaxton had a fine line to present to the jury; the accused were “primitive,” and “untutored” in the *Qallunaat*⁵⁰⁰ way of life, yet the Qikirtamiut can “fully appreciate” the “significance of the Scriptural commandment, ‘Thou Shalt Not Kill.’” Harking back to Jacques Cartier’s 1534 description of northern Labrador and the presence of Inuit there,⁵⁰¹ Plaxton’s description of the Belcher Islands in his address to the jury as the “land that God gave to Cain” implicitly suggests that the Qikirtamiut are guilty. Crown prosecutor for the trials, R.A. Olmsted, described the Inuit as a nomadic people,⁵⁰² a conception that aligned with the Christian recollection of the Genesis story of Cain and Abel, where God condemned Cain to a life of wandering the land of Nod as punishment for murdering his brother Abel, the first murder recorded in humankind history.⁵⁰³

⁴⁹⁹ C.P. Plaxton, Proceedings of Hearings held at Belcher Islands in the Northwest Territories before C.P. Plaxton: Rex vs Alec Apawkok and Rex vs Akeenik charged jointly with the murder of Sarah Apawkok, August 18, 1941, pages 16-17, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

⁵⁰⁰ *Qallunaat* is the plural term that means “white people,” “Europeans” or “foreigners” in the Inuktitut dialect of Inuktitut. *Qallunaaq* is a singular term to mean one European-descent person, *qallunaaq* is the dual term to reference two European-descent persons, and *Qallunaat* is plural to mean three or more European-descent people. See Peck, *Eskimo-English Dictionary*, 81; Spalding and Kusugak, 105; Thibert, *English-Eskimo Dictionary*, 94; Gwen Ohokak, Margo Kadlun, Betty Harnum, Mabel Ekvana Angulalik, and Frank Analok, *Inuinnaqtun to English Dictionary*, Cambridge Bay: Kitikmeot Heritage Society and the Nunavut Arctic College, N.D., 74, accessed online on November 12, 2023: http://en.copian.ca/library/learning/nac/nac_dictionary/nac_dictionary.pdf.

⁵⁰¹ Christopher Boucher, “‘The land God gave to Cain’: Jacques Cartier Encounters the Mythological Wild Man in Labrador,” *Terrae Incognitae*, 35:1, 2003, 28.

⁵⁰² R.A. Olmsted, “Causative Factors,” Memorandum for the Deputy Minister of Justice, October 11, 1941, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 174.

⁵⁰³ Reagan Patrick, “Searching for Cain’s Land: Syriac’s Role in Shaping Islamic Tradition and the Appropriation of Sacred Space,” *Journal for the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies*, No 19, 2019, 42.

Ironically, at the same time that both the military alliances in World War II – the Allies and the Axis – were dying at each others’ hands by the millions, and at the time when theoretical physicists began to secretly develop the atomic bomb, Judge Plaxton addressed the Qikirtamiut in attendance of the trials and said to them:

I want you to remember that no man or woman among you can be God...Human life is sacred. No man has the right to kill any man, woman or child. It is the law that no white man shall kill any other white man, and that is also the law for Eskimos. It is the law of God who is in Heaven and watches over both the white man and Eskimo.⁵⁰⁴

After the Judge delivered his sentences to the convicted, there in the makeshift courtroom, Neilson led a special liturgical church service, where he led the Inuit and courtroom in hymnal singing, and preached in Inuktut that Scripture forbids the taking of human life.⁵⁰⁵ Later, when the prisoners Mina, Akeenik, Adlaykok, Charley and Peter completed half of their hard-labour sentences at Moose Factory, R.A. Gibson sent the convicted Qikirtamiut to Great Whale River, where they received religious education delivered by Neilson that was paid for by the Dominion of Canada.⁵⁰⁶

Plaxton’s theory that the Qikirtamiut acted on “religious frenzy” stems from the non-Inuit Christian interpreters used in the murder investigation and trials whose perspectives and understanding of Inuktut led to a biased understanding of the events from their Euro-Christian worldviews. These non-Inuit interpreters provided Inspector Martin and later, other judicial officials such as Plaxton, interpretations of what the Qikirtamiut purportedly said. The idea that the convicted Qikirtamiut acted on a “religious frenzy” is an enduring theory still dominant today

⁵⁰⁴ James McCook, “30 Eskimos Give Pledge They Will Kill No More,” *The Globe and Mail*, August 25, 1941, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

⁵⁰⁵ Author unknown, “30 Eskimos Pledge Peace After Trial,” *Regina Leader Post*, August 25, 1941, Courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

⁵⁰⁶ A.L. Flemming, correspondence to R.A. Gibson, June 30, 1942, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 174; R.A. Gibson, correspondence to A.L. Flemming, July 7, 1942, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, RG 85 Vol 174.

that continues to apply Christian terminology to the events, such as “religious cult,”⁵⁰⁷ “syncretistic movement,”⁵⁰⁸ “Parousial,”⁵⁰⁹ “mysticism,”⁵¹⁰ “millenarism,”⁵¹¹ and, “religious dispute.”⁵¹² One radio drama from Stereo Theatre produced in 1985, titled *God of the North*, described the story of the Belcher Islands killings as “comparable to the Jonestown business.”⁵¹³

Although the analysis of Christianity as an ideological factor in the event is important, many analyses have ostensibly applied Euro-Christian interpretations to the motives for these killings. While some scholars do consider *Angakkuuniq* as a factor in analysis, many still neglect to examine the roles of the Euro-Christian interpreters who spoke for the Qikirtamiut. Interpreters and their Christian understanding of the Inuktitut language are the focus of this section of the dissertation, as are the interpretative processes between both Inuit and *Qallunaat*, especially where they touch on religion.

***Angakkuuniq* and the Context of *Quviasukvik*: A New Interpretation**

In the trials held on the Belcher Islands in the summer of 1941, Alec and Akeenik were charged jointly for the murder of Sarah Apawkok and some quotations from witnesses found within the trial transcripts provide clues to re-imagine the context in which Sarah was killed.

⁵⁰⁷ Kenn Harper, *In Those Days: Arctic Crime and Punishment*, Iqaluit: Inhabit Media,

⁵⁰⁸ James, 124.

⁵⁰⁹ Xavier Blaisel, Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten, “Shamans and Leaders: Parousial Movements among the Inuit of Northeast Canada,” *Numen*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (1999), 370.

⁵¹⁰ Author name not shown, “Six Eskimos Led to Death by Mysticism,” *The Winnipeg Free Press*, April 21, 1941, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, RG85 Vol 173 file 541-2-1 Vol. 1.

⁵¹¹ James, 122.

⁵¹² P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Corah Lynn Hodgson, “*Religious Frenzy*” and the Application of *Canadian Law: The Belcher Island Murders, 1941*, Peterborough: Trent University Center for the Study of Canada, 2020, viii; Author not shown, “Eskimo Tragedy Report Presented,” *The Montreal Gazette*, April 28, 1941, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, RG85 Vol 173 file 541-2-1 Vol. 1

⁵¹³ “What’s On,” in the newspaper *Townships Week*, “Stereo Theatre offers the God of the North by Frank Jones,” June 21, 1985, 9, accessed online August 6, 2023, courtesy of Bibliothèque et Archives nationale du Québec: TY - NEWS - PY - 1985-06-21. Collections de BAnQ, <https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/2945488>

Crown prosecutor R.A. Olmstead asked a witness named Johnasie if there was a “meeting in a snow-house” and asked him “what happened at that meeting.” Interpreted by a Norwegian Hudson’s Bay Company post manager Harold Udgarden, Johnasie replied that there was a “meeting” and that they were “having a jolly time and praying.”⁵¹⁴ Another witness, Nellie, was asked about the meeting and what the Inuit were doing, interpreted by Udgarden, Nellie also responded that they “were having a good time” in the igloo where Alec hit Sarah who then fell unconscious.⁵¹⁵ Enoopuk, another witness, is recorded to have stated, like the other witnesses, that the Inuit “had a good time of it.”⁵¹⁶

In the trial related to Peter and Adlaykok who were charged jointly for the murder of Keytowieack, witness Johnasie stated again that the Inuit “were having a good time,”⁵¹⁷ while another witness, Shooluksuk, stated that the Inuit “believed in God and had a good time of it.”⁵¹⁸ Within the Anglophone-European context, having a “good time” is subjective and it is remarkable that all the witnesses claimed to enjoy themselves at a meeting. Additionally, in the Anglophone-European context a “meeting” is conceivably a gathering of people for the purpose to carry out business and discuss matters of importance, while a party would be a gathering for the purpose of leisure and to have a “good time.” It is within these quotations that, if we apply

⁵¹⁴ Johnasie, interpreted by Harold Udgarden, and R.A. Olmstead, trial transcripts, “Proceedings of Hearings... Rex vs Alec Apawkok and Rex vs Akeenik, charged jointly with the murder of Sarah Apawkok,” August 18, 1941, 1, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

⁵¹⁵ Nellie, interpreted by Harold Udgarden, trial transcripts, “Proceedings of Hearings... Rex vs Alec Apawkok and Rex vs Akeenik, charged jointly with the murder of Sarah Apawkok,” August 18, 1941, 6, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

⁵¹⁶ Enoopuk, interpreted by Harold Udgarden, “Proceedings of Hearings... Rex vs Alec Apawkok and Rex vs Akeenik, charged jointly with the murder of Sarah Apawkok,” August 18, 1941, 8, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

⁵¹⁷ Johnasie, interpreted by Harold Udgarden, “Proceedings of Hearings... Rex v Peter Sala and Rex vs Adlaykok, charged jointly for the murder of Keytowieack,” August 19, 1941, 1, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

⁵¹⁸ Shooluksuk, interpreted by Harold Udgarden, “Proceedings of Hearings... Rex v Peter Sala and Rex vs Adlaykok, charged jointly for the murder of Keytowieack,” August 19, 1941, 6, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

the Inuit perspective, a new interpretation of the events recorded within the trial transcripts emerges: *quviasukvik*, meaning “the time and/or place of joy.”⁵¹⁹ *Quviasukvik* is now associated with Christmas, but has roots in *Angakkuuniq* from the pre-Christian era of Inuit history.

While we do not have ethnography to suggest that the Qikirtamiut practiced a winter festival, the common utterance of the Qikirtamiut witnesses who state they were “meeting,” which in Inuktut can simply mean “gathering,”⁵²⁰ combined with the frequency in which the witnesses state they were “having a good time” is likely related to a winter festival known as *quviasukvik* and the description of the events leading to Sarah’s death, interpreted by Udgarden, suggest that the group was potentially celebrating a winter festival. Perhaps Udgarden, not familiar with the winter festivals nor fluent enough in Inuktut, misinterpreted the Qikirtamiut as “having a good time” when, given the time of year of the killings, the Qikirtamiut may have been celebrating *quviasukvik*.

Anthropologists Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten contend that Inuit held winter feasts either in late fall or early winter. These feasts, recorded in explorer narratives and missionary records, were held in a large igloo where the *Angakkuq* prayed, usually on behalf of the community. Laugrand and Oosten locate the first *quviasukvik* record in Charles F. Hall’s narrative that described the winter feast as a celebration to propitiate “Sedna,”⁵²¹ the name that referred to the Inuit sea woman *Nuliajuk*, the owner of the sea, or Mother of the Sea Beasts.

Another recording of the winter feast is found in Franz Boas’ ethnography on the Cumberland Sound Inuit in 1888 in which he described a cross-dressing *Angakkuq* referred to as

⁵¹⁹ Frédéric Laugrand, and J. G. Oosten, “Quviasukvik. The Celebration of an Inuit Winter Feast in the Central Arctic,” *Journal de La Société Des Américanistes* 88, no. 88, 2002, 204.

⁵²⁰ Spalding and Kusugak, 40.

⁵²¹ Frédéric Laugrand, and J. G. Oosten, “Quviasukvik. The Celebration of an Inuit Winter Feast in the Central Arctic,” *Journal de La Société Des Américanistes* 88, no. 88, 2002, 205.

a “*Qailertetang*,” who, after an apparent ‘wife-swapping’ ceremony, is symbolically attacked by all the men in the community who pretended to cut him with a knife and beat him on the head.⁵²² Similar ethnographic accounts for the *Qailertetang* are recorded in relation to the *tivajuut* winter festival that was celebrated by eastern Arctic Inuit. Citing Inuit elder Rose Iqallijuq, the *tivajuut* was also a festival held in a big igloo in winter.⁵²³ Linguist Louis-Jacques Dorais re-spells “*Qailertetang*” to *qailiqtiitak* and translates the word in French to “ceux qu’on fait venir,” meaning “those made to come” and connects it to the *tivajuut* festival.⁵²⁴

Laugrand and Oosten also describe the different Inuktut names for Christmas, such as “*Jisusi anivva*,” meaning “the birth of Jesus”⁵²⁵ and that the traditional winter feasts that “emphasized the danger of *tupilait* attacking the community,”⁵²⁶ *tupilait* meaning “evil spirits of the dead.”⁵²⁷ Alec Apawkok’s attack on his sister, who the community is recorded to have thought was “Satan,” reflects the practice of the older ceremonial symbolic attack of the *qailertetang* and older conceptions of *quviasukvik*. As *Jisusi anivva* is the translated version for Christmas, the term *anivvuq*, a derivative of *anivva*, however, could also mean “comes out.”⁵²⁸ In comparison, *qailertetang* or *qailiqtiitak*, “those made to come,” combined with the perception of present *tupilait* provided a fearful and dangerous context in which Sarah was potentially killed as a result.

⁵²² Laugrand and Oosten, “*Quviasukvik*,” 207.

⁵²³ Laugrand and Oosten, “*Quviasukvik*,” 208.

⁵²⁴ Louis-Jacques Dorais, “Le temps des Fêtes à Quaqaq,” *Études Inuit Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2000, 144-145.

⁵²⁵ Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity*, 100.

⁵²⁶ Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity*, 100.

⁵²⁷ Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity*, 73.

⁵²⁸ Spalding and Kusugak, 8; Peck, *Eskimo-English Dictionary*, 34.

Peter Sala and the “Sign from the Almighty”

The foundational narrative for the RCMP to describe the Belcher Islands killings as religiously motivated started with the apparent witness of a shooting star that police alleged the Qikirtamiut interpreted as a “sign from the Almighty” and this narrative became the central focus for media from the early days of the police investigation that continues in scholarship today. It deserves critical analysis as it is the initial starting point for the RCMP to consider the murders as religiously motivated.

Neilson had just moved to Great Whale River in 1939, and on April 16, 1941, he wrote to Bishop Flemming and said that interpretation for the police investigation was easier than he had expected, an experience that surprised him. By September 1941, after the trials had concluded, he expressed to Flemming that he “knows the main” Inuktitut words, suggesting that his comprehension of the Qikirtamiut dialect was gradually improving, but to be sure, not fluent. Two years after the Belcher Islands murder trials in 1943, Neilson expressed to his superior Bishop Flemming that his capacity to speak fluent Inuktitut was limited to reading:

The weather was unusually cold but I received a warm welcome from Mr. and Mrs. Shaw. I must say they are fitting in very nicely to the life and the Master’s work in the North. They were also making good progress with the language. I was glad to be able to help them with the language in my own small and humble way. I was especially please to be able to help Mrs. Shaw start an Eskimo branch of the Women’s Auxiliary. I was fortunate enough to be there for one Sunday and able to help out with services. I brought them all a message in Eskimo from memory about the Epiphany from the second chapter of St. Matthew’s gospel. *Last year I read them all a good address from one of my Labrador books. However I felt rather ashamed at one camp when inquiry was made somewhat as follows. “Will he talk to us.” “No, he is only going to read to us.” This year I decided I must redeem myself and I tried my best to do so (emphasis added).*⁵²⁹

George Lester Neilson was born in 1898 and earned a BA in 1927 from King’s College in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and an MA from Dalhousie University in 1929. He was stationed in Lake

⁵²⁹ George Neilson, correspondence to Bishop Archibald Flemming, March 6, 1943, page 2, courtesy of the Archives of the Anglican Church of Canada, Toronto, Ontario, file M96-B10-F1c-1943, March 6 – Neilson to Flemming.

Harbour (now called Kimmirut) for six years from 1933 to 1939⁵³⁰ where he presumably learned to speak South Qikiqtaaluk dialect of Inuktut⁵³¹ from the Kimmirummiut.⁵³² Neilson was then restationed to Great Whale River in 1939 and in a letter to Bishop Archibald Flemming dated September 10, 1941, he expressed his observation of the dialectical difference in Inuktut and observed Harold Udgarden's shortcomings, "Many Eskimo words are very different here but by now I am glad to say I know the main ones...Harold knows the words used here. However he is handicapped a little by not knowing the Syllabics."⁵³³

To be sure, Neilson's reliance on text to speak Inuktut suggests a lack of fluency that would normally be required to interpret complex messages of religion and law. Neilson arrived on the Belcher Islands on March 31, 1941, with HBC manager Ernest Riddell and Peter Sala, Neilson's Inuk catechist.⁵³⁴ That Peter Sala was an Inuk catechist is not mentioned in the police reports, nor is it mentioned in any of the case files or trial transcripts. Neilson stated that Peter Sala had arrived in Great Whale River on the 4th of April at which time Neilson held a Holy Communion service for Sala and other Inuit and explained to them "about Holy Communion."⁵³⁵

⁵³⁰ Author unknown, "Clerical Obituaries," *Canadian Churchman*, October 1973. Courtesy of the Archives of the Anglican Church of Canada, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

⁵³¹ Inuktut Tusaalanga, "Inuit Dialects in Canada," website, accessed online October 28, 2023: <https://tusaalanga.ca/node/2503>

⁵³² Not much is known about George Neilson's days at Lake Harbour. Lake Harbour changed its name to the traditional Inuktitut name Kimmirut in 1996 and the people who have lived there for centuries call themselves the Kimmirummiut. For information on the names for Kimmirut and Kimmirummiut see, Qikiqtani Inuit Association, *Qikiqtani Truth Commission, Community Histories 1950-1975: Kimmirut*, Iqaluit: Inhabit Media, 2013, 9.

⁵³³ George Neilson, correspondence to Bishop Archibald Flemming, September 10, 1941, courtesy of the Archives of the Anglican Church of Canada, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, file M96-7-B10-F1c-1941, Sept.10 – Neilson to Flemming.

⁵³⁴ Neilson, correspondence to Bishop Flemming, April 16, 1941, courtesy of the Archives of the Anglican Church of Canada, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, file M96-7-B10-F1c-1941, April 16 – Neilson to Flemming.

⁵³⁵ George Neilson, correspondence to Bishop Archibald Flemming, April 16, 1941, courtesy of the Archives of the Anglican Church of Canada, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, file M96-7-B10-F1c-1941, April 16 – Neilson to Flemming.

Martin noted Neilson's capacity to interpret was "not thorough enough" for the preliminary hearings and planned trials, presumably because Martin's experience with Neilson's interpretative services from the initial police investigation demonstrated difficulties.⁵³⁶ On the police investigation, Neilson remarked in his letter to Fleming his role as the interpreter and his letter demonstrates that his interpretation is the initial source for the allegation that the Qikirtamiut witnessed a shooting star:

...Then on account of the deaths I gave them the message about the sixth commandment, innoaktook saungeelootiit, and also about the fact that we do not know when Christ's second coming will be, and "not even the angels in heaven know," for it seems that one of the *natives had seen a very bright light early in the morning which I think was a meteor according to what he [Sala] told me*, and another leader Charlie Ooyarak [Ouyerack], decided that Christ was coming very soon. He [Ouyerack] got the natives around his camp and some others all half crazed so it seems, and because three did not believe, he incited others to put these people to death, ~~so it seems~~. Two met death around Jan 6th, the third, Feb 9th. Mina did not come to the service so I called her in to the igloo, I got some of her story and she still seemed a bit defiant. However I soon convinced her of her wrongdoing and she was quite repentant (emphasis added).⁵³⁷

What is remarkable about Neilson's letter to Flemming is the aspect that Neilson interpreted Peter Sala's sighting of a "bright light" to be a meteor, a broad guess that ends up in the police investigation, media headlines, and current analyses of the events.

For instance, Martin began his police report with the mention of the meteor or shooting star, statements obtained from the Qikirtamiut through Neilson, who interpreted and spoke on their behalf:

Around the first part of January, 1941, Charley Ouyerack, with Peter Sala acting as his lieutenant started a campaign to impress the Natives of the southern section of the Belcher Islands that *he was Jesus and that God was coming to end the World in the very near future*. This *religious frenzy* was apparently started with a discussion of the Eskimo bible (Anglican) and the *sight of either a falling meteor or shooting star that was interpreted as a sign from the Almighty...* a belief that material things were no longer necessary a rifle was destroyed and some dogs shot (emphasis added).⁵³⁸

⁵³⁶ See D.J. Martin, "Re: Alleged Murders – Belcher Islands, N.W.T.," correspondence to the R.C.M.P. Commissioner, May 5, 1941, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Canada, RG85 Vol 173.

⁵³⁷ George Neilson, correspondence to Bishop Archibald Flemming, April 16, 1941, courtesy of the Archives of the Anglican Church of Canada, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, file M96-7-B10-F1c-1941, April 16 – Neilson to Flemming.

⁵³⁸ DJ Martin, "Alleged Murders," Division File No 41-G-636-1, 1.

Although the “shooting star” is never mentioned elsewhere in the files, the *Toronto Star*’s headline for April 26, 1941, read “Meteor in Arctic Signal for Nine Eskimo Murders: Quarrel About God’s Coming, Then Bullets, Clubs Fly Freely.” The article denotes the tendency of Canadians at the time to imagine Inuit as primitive club-carrying cavemen who marvelled at the supposed comforts of ‘civilization,’ and reported:

A falling star streaking through the Arctic night last February was the spark that blasted the simple lives of Eskimos on Belcher Islands, Hudson Bay, and resulted in nine murders...In their New Testament, written in their own language, some Eskimos read that “stars will fall from Heaven – and they shall see the Son of Man descending in the clouds...” One man was shot in the back. A second was shot when a bullet went through the window of igloo, and a young girl was clubbed to death by her brother. Another Eskimo woman believed Christ was due to arrive immediately after the flash of the star faded and led a “multitude” before her, without their clothes, on the ice of Hudson Bay. They froze to death. R.C.M.P. officers flew from Ottawa to investigate the murders. The three prisoners are unconcerned and happier than ever before. They get plenty of food and are seeing trees and other things for the first in their lives.⁵³⁹

Curiously, the police investigative party invited William Kinmond to accompany them on the police investigation where he sent out media reports updating the public on the investigation and provided some photos.⁵⁴⁰ The fact that a journalist made up part of the police party was potentially a strategy to enhance the international coverage of the RCMP’s administration of law and order over the Arctic. The *Ottawa Citizen* article dated April 28, 1941, curiously depicted a photo of Kinmond with the accused “Quarach, Mina and Adlaykuk,” in front of Mina’s tent in the Belcher Islands. That article’s headline read: “Police Party Is Back After Probing Northland Crime:”

Back from a 2,000 mile patrol to Belcher Islands in Hudson Bay, a Royal Canadian mounted Police party reported to headquarters during the week-end that nine Eskimos were dead, allegedly

⁵³⁹ Author unknown, “Meteor in Arctic Signal for Nine Eskimo Murders,” the *Toronto Star*, April 26, 1941. Courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

⁵⁴⁰ Author name not shown, “Police Party Is Back After Probing Northland Crime,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, April 28, 1941, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, RG85 Vol 173 file 541-2-1 Vol. 1. Kinmond worked for the *Toronto Star* but his photo was found in the *Ottawa Citizen*, suggesting he may have provided press releases and photo ops to media outlets for the R.C.M.P.

murdered on the islands. Police said three were charged with murder and three other suspects would be found when investigations are resumed after break-up.⁵⁴¹

William Kinmond, who was present during the initial police investigation and later served as a juror at the murder trials, was a reporter for the *Toronto Daily Star*. It is from Kinmond that Neilson's story about Peter Sala and the Qikirtamiut witness of a bright light is embellished to a "meteor," and then to a "sign from the Almighty." Sala's description of a "bright light" Neilson only surmised was a meteor, and it is through Kinmond that Neilson's conjecture that Sala observed a bright light takes on a biblical connotation with a citation to the Gospel Matthew. Kinmond reported on April 21, 1941:

To one group the falling star was a sign that Christ was returning to earth at once. From the book of St. Matthew they read "and the stars shall fall from heaven... and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds... when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors."⁵⁴²

The Qikirtamiut most certainly had syllabic Bibles; however, we do not know exactly what "religious books" the Qikirtamiut had in their possession because they burned them, thinking they would get new ones.⁵⁴³ Additionally, we cannot know with certainty if the Qikirtamiut actually witnessed a shooting star that they interpreted as a sign inspired by biblical literature; we do know, however, that the shooting star is only mentioned in the initial police investigation report when Neilson was interpreting for Martin, after no other interpreter could be found.

⁵⁴¹ Author name not shown, "Police Party Is Back After Probing Northland Crime," *The Ottawa Citizen*, April 28, 1941, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, RG85 Vol 173 file 541-2-1 Vol. 1. Though the LAC RG85 fonds that detail the Belcher Island murder investigation do not have files that explicitly show the R.C.M.P. invited the journalist to attend the investigation, the photographic evidence shows that at least one journalist (Kinmond) accompanied the police party for the investigation.

⁵⁴² William Kinmond, "Star Falling in Arctic Sky is Signal for Nine Murders," *The Toronto Daily Star*, April 21, 1941, 4.

⁵⁴³ Witnesses Nellie and Bertie Akparok, questioned by R.A. Olmsted, Prosecuting Counsel, trial transcripts, Rex vs Alex Apawkok and Rex vs Akeenik charged jointly with the murder of Sarah Apawkok, page 6-7, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

It appears that William Kinmond took it upon himself to locate the exact passage according to his understanding of the Gospels. Kinmond reported:

A flash of fire streaked through the Arctic heavens one night in February. To the Eskimos of the Belcher Islands in Hudson bay what must have been a falling star or a meteor was a piece of a planet, and that little bit of heavenly fire was the spark that blasted the quiet, simple life of the Eskimos and took a toll of nine lives... That flash of fire started the Eskimos thinking... poring over the New Testament. It was their own New Testament written for them in their own language and left with them by a missionary who passed through the islands in 1924. To the Eskimos the sign had come, for the flash of fire in the sky was the first warning, as they thought, that Christ was returning to earth... This they all agreed on, but they didn't agree on the time. Here they got into trouble, for while they could read their testament and could understand to a degree, they had no one to explain and interpret it for them. They through it out for themselves, and because two groups arrived at different conclusions, four children died, three women, and two men. To one group the falling star was a sign that Christ was returning to earth at once. *From the book of St. Matthew they read "and the stars shall fall from heaven... and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds... when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors (emphasis added)."*⁵⁴⁴

To be sure, the Gospel of Matthew citation that Kinmond provided is nowhere to be found in any of the case files or trial transcripts, and Neilson's personal letters do not cite Matthew. Judging by language, Kinmond likely cited the King James Version of the Gospel of Matthew. Although Kinmond does not cite the biblical chapter, Matthew Chapter 24 verse 29-30 from the King James Version is as follows,

[29] Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and *the stars shall fall from heaven*, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

[30] And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (emphasis added).⁵⁴⁵

As for the Gospel Matthew as being the purported source for interpreting the shooting star as a "sign from the Almighty," the Inuktitut bibles the Qikirtamiut likely had in their possession

⁵⁴⁴ William Kinmond, "Star Falling in Arctic Sky Is Signal for Nine Murders: Christ Returning, Meaning for Eskimos, But Time Sets Off Rival Factions – READ TESTAMENTS," *The Toronto Star*, April 21, 1941, 4.

⁵⁴⁵ Matthew 24 – 29:30, King James Version (KJV), The Zondervan Corporation, 1995-2020, www.Biblegateway.com, accessed online October 28, 2023:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passages/?search=Matthew%2024&version=KJV>

inclusion in the media is purely the result of Kinmond's imagination. Furthermore, the event of a shooting star is merely Neilson's speculation.⁵⁴⁹ Neilson relayed in his letter to Flemming, "'not even the angels in heaven know,' for it seems that one of the natives had seen a very bright light early in the morning *which I think was a meteor* according to what he [Sala] told me..."⁵⁵⁰ Further, "a very bright light" early in the morning *could* be a shooting star, as Neilson surmised, again we are unsure of the Inuktut words spoken to him by Peter Sala.

Ulluriat Anangit and Ingnirujait: Shooting Stars in Inuit Astronomy

Inuit all across the Arctic have specific words for shooting stars. There is *ulluriat anangit* for falling stars, meaning "star feces," or there is the word *ingnirujait* for fast-moving shooting stars, "fireballs,"⁵⁵¹ not to be confused with *ingnirujait*, "non-human beings."⁵⁵² There are also several Inuktut words that could have been spoken for words that would correspond with "very bright light." For example, *qaumaniq* means "light, illumination; ray or shaft of light," whereas *qaumajuq* simply means "it is bright," and *qaumallartuq* means "lightning flashes in the sky."⁵⁵³

⁵⁴⁹ The initial report on the investigation was the first mention of a "shooting star," and is the first instance in which the event is described as a "religious frenzy." The "shooting star" is also reported in the Extract from the Minutes of the Meeting of the One Hundred and Twenty-Sixth Session of the Northwest Territories Council held on 6th of May, 1941, but is not mentioned anywhere else in the case files or trial transcripts. D.J. Martin, police investigation report division file no 41 G 636-1, "Alleged Murders – Belcher Islands, N.W.T., April 30, 1941; File 12003, "Extract from the Minutes of the Meeting of the One Hundred and Twenty-sixth Session of the Northwest Territories Council held on 6th May, 1941," courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

⁵⁵⁰ George Neilson, correspondence to Bishop Archibald Flemming, April 16, 1941, courtesy of the Archives of the Anglican Church of Canada, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, file M96-7-B10-F1c-1941, April 16 – Neilson to Flemming.

⁵⁵¹ John MacDonald, *The Arctic Sky: Inuit Astronomy, Star Lore, and Legend*, Iqaluit: Nunavut Research Institute, 1998, 142.

⁵⁵² Laugrand, and Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity*, 393.

⁵⁵³ Spalding and Kusugaq, 111; Edmund James Peck, *Eskimo-English Dictionary: Compiled from Erdman's Eskimo-German Edition*, Hamilton: The Church of the Ascension Thank-Offering Mission Fund, 1925, 96. Peck's dictionary spells the word *qaumavok* that means "it is bright," this word is likely the dialect used by the Qikirtamiut.

But *qaumaniq* can also mean the enlightened state of an *Angakkuq* and the special seeing powers bestowed onto the *Angakkuq*, the “shamanic vision.”⁵⁵⁴ The *qaumaniq* allowed *Angakkuq* the abilities to see things that ordinary people could not see, such as non-human beings and spirits, and it allowed the *Angakkuq* to see his/her *tuurngait*, “helping spirits.”⁵⁵⁵ The *Angakkuq*’s *qaumaniq* was provided to him/her by the *tuurngait*.⁵⁵⁶ In the late nineteenth century, Peck compiled a list of *tuurngait* he recorded from the descriptions that his Inuit informants provided, many listed the *tuurngait* either as supernatural beings made of light, dwelling in the light, or givers of light.⁵⁵⁷

As anthropologists Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten note, *qaumaniq* allows for the *Angakkuq* to enhance their ability to see and visibility is the center of the “shamanic complex.”⁵⁵⁸ In order for an individual to become an *Angakkuq*, they must apprentice under a practicing shaman and the instructor gathers his/her apprentice’s *qaumaniq* from the *Ullurmuut*,⁵⁵⁹ the spirits of the dead who died a violent death and live in the sky⁵⁶⁰ (from the root word *ulluriaq*, meaning “star”).⁵⁶¹ Inuit believed that the *ingnirujait*, fast-moving shooting stars, had the ability to bring power to the *Angakkuq* if the *ingnirujaq* happened to hit near the individual, and that the *ingnirujaq* could light up the spirit within the *Angakkuq*, thus passing the torch of *qaumaniq* from the *Ullurmuut* to the *Angakkuq*.⁵⁶² Charley Ouyerack was a notable *Angakkuq*, so we know that the Qikirtamiut at this time in 1941 had practicing shamans⁵⁶³ and would have understood

⁵⁵⁴ Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism*, 180.

⁵⁵⁵ Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism*, 194-195.

⁵⁵⁶ Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism*, 202.

⁵⁵⁷ Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism*, 202.

⁵⁵⁸ Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism*, 195.

⁵⁵⁹ Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism*, 203.

⁵⁶⁰ Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism*, 113.

⁵⁶¹ Spalding and Kusugaq, 177.

⁵⁶² MacDonald, 144.

⁵⁶³ Honigmann, *Social Networks in Great Whale River*, 69.

and spoken words with an *Angakkuuniq* meaning, quite different than how those words are understood today.

We cannot know for certain which words Peter Sala spoke to Neilson that made him think that Sala saw a shooting star, but we do know that Neilson recorded Sala to have said he saw a “very bright light.” The reason for outlining the different Inuktitut words is to illustrate the differences and similarities that show how Neilson may have easily interpreted something entirely different from what Sala attempted to convey. It is quite clear, however, that the Inuktitut words for “shooting star” are impossible to mix up with “very bright light,” *ulluriat anangit* or *ingnirujait* for the former and *qaumaniq* for the latter. However, *qaumaniq* or *qaumavoq* as Peck recorded the word, could also indicate the enlightened state of an *Angakkuq*, as well as mean “bright light.”

Neilson versus Udgarden: Two Interpretations of Mina

Harold Udgarden was of Norwegian descent, born in Moose Factory on January 6, 1867.⁵⁶⁴ He started working for the Hudson’s Bay post in Fort George as a labourer from 1883 to 1901 where he learned to speak Cree: he was known as *Wamistikusiis* by the Whapmagoostui Cree.⁵⁶⁵ In 1901 he moved to Great Whale River where he married an Inuk woman named Mary whose brother was Nero Fleming, an Inuk man who worked for the HBC and served the Anglican church as a native catechist.⁵⁶⁶ In Great Whale River, Udgarden learned the local dialect of Inuktitut when he worked as a labourer and interpreter for the HBC from 1901-1932

⁵⁶⁴ HBCA Biographical Sheet, “Name: Udgaarden, Harold (Udgarden),” *the Hudson’s Bay Winnipeg Archives*, accessed online May 28, 2023:

https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/uv/udgaarden_harold.pdf

⁵⁶⁵ Emily Masty, *Royal Commission On Aboriginal Peoples: Women's Three Generation Life History Project In Whapmagoostui*, Quebec, December 1993, 51, accessed online May 28, 2023:

https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/bcp-pco/Z1-1991-1-41-135-eng.pdf ; Honigmann, 7.

⁵⁶⁶ Honigmann, 7.

when he retired and spent his remaining days in Great Whale River until his death on April 3, 1950.⁵⁶⁷

Udgarden was also a devout Christian who spent his Sundays interpreting for Anglican missionary W.G. Walton where he interpreted his sermons in Inuktut but continued to teach Inuit about biblical matters in between church services. Both Walton and Udgarden required strict adherence from Inuit to respect the Sabbath, and any Inuk found in breach of Sunday observance he denied entry into the Church. Although Udgarden could speak English, Cree and Inuktut, he felt that he lacked the ability to properly pronounce Inuktut words and was known to have a rather shy demeanour.⁵⁶⁸ Udgarden also served in his earlier years as interpreter and catechist for Anglican missionary Edmund J. Peck in Great Whale River, whom he claims was much more tolerant of Inuit cultural traditions than Walton.⁵⁶⁹

In 1950, anthropologist J.J. Honigmann visited Great Whale River and interviewed Udgarden, who died shortly thereafter. According to Honigmann, “in Harold Udgarden the combination of moral and practical authority deserves special notice. Through his roles as a church interpreter, he is associated with religion. He takes other opportunities to explain the Bible both to Eskimos and Indians.”⁵⁷⁰ If we can take Honigmann’s observations a step further, Udgarden’s knowledge of Inuktut primarily served his religious work.

Udgarden likely learned Inuktut from his wife Mary and her catechist brother Nero, with specialized usage of Inuktut for the explicit purpose of converting Inuit. Nero, also known as “Anoat” (likely Anorak or Anowak, “windbreaker jacket” in Inuktut), who from the age of ten,

⁵⁶⁷ HBCA Biographical sheet.

⁵⁶⁸ Honigmann, 7-10, 36, 68.

⁵⁶⁹ Honigmann, 10.

⁵⁷⁰ Honigmann, 36.

grew up living with the famous Anglican missionary Edmund James Peck and taught Peck how to speak Inuktitut.⁵⁷¹ W.G. Walton reported that when Nero grew older, he had great power and influence over Inuit.⁵⁷²

Udgarden provided interpretative services for both the HBC and the Anglican Church, a distinction that was likely not as clear-cut to Qikirtamiut, who traded with him and having made the long and sometimes dangerous trek from the islands to the mainland, stayed in the Great Whale River long enough to hear Udgarden interpret sermons for the missionaries. Honigmann noted:

The fact that some men possess more power than others automatically indicates the uneven distribution of prestige. Unequal rank is readily acknowledged by the Eskimo. My informant was also quite ready to reject what he regarded to be spurious claims to prestige made by people who put on airs and pretend they are wealthy. Inside, my informant said, as he pointed to his chest, they are far from rich. The same man denied that economic classes existed. Nobody, he declared, was utterly poor or extraordinarily well off (c.f., Payne, 1899: 226). Only the Company [HBC] and the missionary could be considered rich, he pointed out.⁵⁷³

Perhaps because of Udgarden's prominent stature among the Inuit was the reason why the RCMP chose him to interpret for the trials and brought him of retirement to interpret for the Dominion of Canada Court, with Martin's opinion being that Neilson's interpretation capacities unsuitable for trial.⁵⁷⁴ Despite this, Udgarden likely held Christian biases in his interpretations between the Qikirtamiut and the Dominion of Canada officials, as his role and position in Great Whale River amongst Inuit are demonstrated in Honigmann's analysis. A comparison of Neilson's interpretations of the police investigation next to Udgarden's interpretations for the

⁵⁷¹ Arthur Lewis, *The Life and Works of the Rev. E.J. Peck Among the Eskimos*, New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1904, 79-80.

⁵⁷² Lewis, 80.

⁵⁷³ Honigmann, 37.

⁵⁷⁴ D.J. Martin, "Re: Alleged Murders – Belcher Islands, N.W.T.," correspondence to the R.C.M.P. Commissioner, May 5, 1941, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Canada, RG85 Vol 17.

trials demonstrate a remarkable difference in the narrative of events in the Belcher Island killings.

After the murder trials held on the Belcher Islands concluded in August 1941, Canada's Department of Justice prosecutor R.A. Olmsted, wrote to the Minister of Justice a memorandum that he titled "Causative Factors." According to Olmsted, the initial causative factor lay in the fact that many years prior to the killings, the Qikirtamiut had obtained translations of the New Testament written in syllabic form that they read and interpreted without any religious instruction. Olmsted described his understanding of the events, especially of Mina's actions, stating:

Many years ago an Anglican missionary worked for a time among the Eskimos at Great Whale River on the East coast of Hudson Bay. He left a number of syllabic translations of the New Testament with them. In the years following, some of these books got over to the Belcher Islands. All but one of the perpetrators of these crimes were young children 20 years ago and I think I can say without fear of contradiction that they have not had religious direction of any kind. In fact, no missionary has been in contact with the Belcher Islands Eskimos until after the murders. In her [Mina] reading of the New Testament or, more probably, as it may have been explained to her by others, the Eskimo woman, Mina, became obsessed with the idea that what she had read or been told could only mean one thing, namely, that Jesus was coming. To her this meant immediately. Also believing Scripture, as she learned it, she spread the word that, with the arrival of Christ, there would be no more need for dogs, guns or clothing. These things would not be necessary in the new life. Dogs were killed, guns were broken. In her excited state of mind...Four children and two adult women perished.⁵⁷⁵

Because the Dominion officials considered the Qikirtamiut killers to be religiously motivated, it requires an examination of what the Inuit were purported under the framework of uqattiartuq that questions the interpretations and the interpreters.

A large segment of the files related to Belcher Island murder trials focus solely on Mina Sala and within the files that mention her is where we find much evidence that the RCMP officers, administrators and other government agents, experienced many communication

⁵⁷⁵ R.A. Olmsted, "Causative Factors," Memorandum for the Deputy Minister of Justice, Ottawa, Re: Belcher Islands Murders, October 11, 1941, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG 85, Vol 174, 1-2.

difficulties with the Qikirtamiut. Upon close examination of Mina's story, we find two different narratives: the murder investigation story of Mina interpreted via Neilson versus the murder trials story of Mina interpreted via Udgarden.

Mina Sala (who was Peter Sala's sister), heartbreakingly "went violently insane" when apprehended into police custody and was placed in a psychiatric hospital in Toronto on May 23, 1941, while awaiting her trial.⁵⁷⁶ When Mina's trial started in the Belcher Islands on August 19th, 1941, the police had to bring Mina into the makeshift courtroom strapped to a stretcher because she "refused to come from her tent and struggled violently." As she sobbed loudly in the courtroom, strapped to the stretcher, the jury found her "insane" and she was taken into police custody in a straight jacket. The RCMP brought her, along with Akeenik, Adlaykok, Peter Sala, and Charley Ouyerack to Moose Factory where Mina and Akeenik spent the next year under the supervision of Dr. Orford.⁵⁷⁷

Mina's response to court proceedings and her firm resistance demonstrate that she did not understand what was happening and it must have felt more like a kidnapping than retributive justice. While in custody in Moose Factory awaiting trial, Dr. Orford recorded that Mina was experiencing hallucinations, not completing her chores, danced and yelled in her cell, and had an "expressionless" face. Dr. Orford then decided to send Mina to the Toronto Psychiatric Hospital on May 22, 1941, and sent a letter to Dr. Farrar, explaining his decision for placing Mina in an asylum:

I first came in contact with Mina at the Belcher Islands...while accompanying the Police party investigation a series of alleged murders. It was charged that Mina was instrumental in causing the deaths of six people. It appeared that in a burst of religious enthusiasm over mistaken believe

⁵⁷⁶ Dr. C.B. Farrar, correspondence to Dr. Ross Millar, Toronto Psychiatric Hospital, May 29, 1941, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

⁵⁷⁷ H. Kearney, police report division file 21-G-636-1, "re: Alleged Murders – Belcher Islands, N.W.T. CHANGED TO: Eskimo Females MINA and AKEENIK; Eskimo Males ALEC APAWKOK, QUARACK, PETER SALA, ADLAYKOK, and CHARLIE OUYERACK – murder – Belcher Islands," 3, courtesy of the Library and Archives and Canada, RG85 Vol 174.

in the second coming of Christ Mina had led children and some women out on the sea ice in cold weather to meet Him. She had caused these people as well as herself to remove clothing. When some distance from home she apparently decided to return and abandoned her companions to freeze to death... While still apparently holding to her belief of a second coming of Christ she began to say that she was wrong in causing the death of others – that she was no good and that her mind must be wrong. It is difficult to say just what she meant by this. It is probably she considered that by doing wrong in causing deaths she was now unworthy as she thought in the eyes of God...On the 21st she was irrational in the morning...but still apparently having hallucinations...It was decided to have her removed for observation and she left here on the morning of the 22nd.⁵⁷⁸

On July 21, 1941, Dr. Farrar of the Toronto Psychiatric Hospital corresponded to the Dominion Department of Mines and Resources and the Department of Justice and noted quite a different observation from Dr. Orford:

The above mentioned person [Mina] has been under observation at this hospital since May 23, 1941. The language barrier makes verbal communication impossible. She has adapted herself readily and satisfactorily to her new environment; and in her manner and behaviour there has been nothing to indicate any form of mental illness. This is of course not to say that this person would have any understanding of the nature of or reason for court proceedings. So far as we can judge she does not know why she was brought into hospital or detained here.⁵⁷⁹

Gibson requested for an Anglican missionary to visit Mina at the Toronto Psychiatric Hospital and Bishop Flemming sent retired missionary W.G. Walton to talk to Mina while she was in the asylum. W.G. Walton reported on his discussions with Mina and noted difficulties in communication with Inuit, of which were frequent:

We as missionaries have been asked to question her in an attempt to judge her sanity, but from experience and from knowledge both of the native mind and language we judge that no direct questioning of this native in a foreign environment, while lacking sure knowledge of the real happenings in the native camp, could produce any concrete results. *In fact there is the awful possibility that though her words might be easily misconstrued. Our past experience of the natives will supply numerous examples of how these things can happen* (emphasis added).⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁸ G.E. Dexter, quoting Dr. Orford, file reference D 636-13-L-1, Moose Factory Detachment, May 26, 1941,1-3, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

⁵⁷⁹ Dr. Farrar, copy of correspondence "To Whom Concerned, re: Eskimo 'Mina,'" Toronto, July 21, 1941, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

⁵⁸⁰ W.G. Walton, correspondence to R.A. Gibson, June 12, 1941, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

In a letter dated July 25, 1941, to the Minister of Justice, John P. Madden, who was the defence attorney for the accused questioned W.G. Walton's abilities to communicate with Mina:

I spoke to Dr. Farrar over the telephone today. Frankly I do not think he is in a position to express any opinion regarding this patient. He has had no conversation with her except through one or two missionaries *who had a very indefinite knowledge of the Eskimo language*. Dr. Farrar's conclusions are purely the result of observation (emphasis added).⁵⁸¹

Further, Dr. Farrar reported on June 24, 1941, that he found inconsistencies in Mina's story and reported difficulties in communication with her:

Owing to the difficulties of communication, to the fact that the subjective criteria of the Eskimo are so different from our own, and also to the fact that our reports of the previous happenings are indirect and necessarily somewhat conflicting, we feel that we have no accurate knowledge whatever of occurrences said to have taken place among the Eskimo, either as to fact or interpretation, on the basis of which Mina was apprehended.⁵⁸²

Despite the inconsistencies and inabilities to properly communicate with Mina, Dr. Farrar deemed that Mina did not show any signs of mental illness and would be fit to stand trial. For greater certainty, Dr. Farrar also requested that a solicitor be named to represent Mina and that the solicitor should confer with his doctors at the psychiatric hospital prior to her release.⁵⁸³ However, his requests were not granted.

The initial police investigation records presented similar inconsistencies with witness testimonies that differ in their stories about Mina. For instance, Nellie stated that Mina "said she was Jesus. She said Jesus was coming and scared us all. She said 'Jesus is coming, come thou quickly, he is going to arrive,'"⁵⁸⁴ while Moses' rendition was that Mina said "God was coming,"

⁵⁸¹ John P. Madden, correspondence to the Deputy Minister of Justice, July 25, 1941, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, RG13 Vol 2025, file 142299.

⁵⁸² Dr. Farrar, correspondence to Dr. Ross Millar, Toronto, June 24, 1941, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, RG13 Vol 2025, file 142299.

⁵⁸³ Dr. Farrar, correspondence to Dr. Ross Millar, Toronto, July 19, 1941, RG13 Vol 2025, file 142299.

⁵⁸⁴ W.G. Kerr, "Eastern Arctic Ottawa, Ont., Alleged Murders – Belcher Islands, N.W.T. Moses, Alec, Johnasie, Johnny (Eskimo Boys) and Nukarak and Kumudluk Sarah (Eskimo Female Adults) – Murder of," report, April 26, 1941, 3, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Canada, RG85 Vol 173

not Jesus.⁵⁸⁵ The witnesses questioned, Nellie, Mina Anowtelik, Sarah Eerkok, and Mary Nukarak all mentioned that Mina Sala either said she was Jesus or that Jesus was coming, while only one other witness – Moses – referred to God only. Despite the overwhelming majority of witnesses that are recorded to have specified that Mina said Jesus was coming or that she was Jesus, the coroner is recorded to have only asked about God: “On or about March 29th, 1941, were you under the belief that God was to visit the World very soon?” to which Mina replied: “yes.”⁵⁸⁶ Following the records of the inquest, Corporal Kerr, who authored the report on Mina’s case, recorded Dr. Orford’s verdict on the inquest:

After considering the evidence, the Coroner Thos. J. Orford, Esquire rendered the following verdict, the same applying to the death of each of the following; Johnny, Johnasie, Alec, Moses (Eskimo boys) Nukarak and Kumudluk Sarah (Eskimo Female Adults) – That (name of person) came to his (or her) death on or about March 29th, 1941 on the sea adjacent to Camsell Island of the Belcher Islands Group N.W.T. as a result of intense cold weather and insufficient clothing due to Eskimo Woman Mina inciting said (Name of person) as well as others to follow her in her false prophesy and belief in the coming of God and imminent end of the World.⁵⁸⁷

The differences between “God” and “Jesus” are significant, and its significance lies in the case files where Dr. Orford is recorded to only have asked if Mina thought *God’s* coming was imminent and nowhere do the records provide indication to questioning Mina if she thought she was *Jesus* or that his arrival was imminent, despite other witnesses recorded to have mentioned she thought she was Jesus.⁵⁸⁸ Walton’s admission of frequent miscommunications with Inuit, combined with defence lawyer Madden’s concern that the missionaries had an “indefinite” knowledge of Inuktitut unsettle the position that Mina was acting on “religious frenzy.” The

⁵⁸⁵ Kerr, report, April 26, 1941, 3.

⁵⁸⁶ Kerr, report, April 26, 1941, 6.

⁵⁸⁷ D.J. Martin, “Eastern Arctic, Ottawa, Ont.,” file, April 26th, 1941, pp 6-7, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Canada, RG85 Vol 173.

⁵⁸⁸ W.G. Kerr, “Eastern Arctic Ottawa, Ont., Alleged Murders – Belcher Islands, N.W.T. Moses, Alec, Johnasie, Johnny (Eskimo Boys) and Nukarak and Kumudluk Sarah (Eskimo Female Adults) – Murder of – “report, April 26, 1941, 6, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Canada, RG85 Vol 173.

reason why the difference in words is important is because the words for God and Jesus are different in Inuktitut and would not have had the same Christian meaning to Qikirtamiut in 1941.

Comparing the police report of the April 1941 inquests, interpreted by Neilson, held into the deaths of Johnny, Moses, Alec, Johnasie, Nukarak and Kumudluk-Sarah with the transcripts for the preliminary hearings held in July 1941 interpreted by Udgarden provides some insight into how the narrative regarding Mina is flawed and inconsistent. For instance, in the April inquests, all the witnesses recorded said that Mina forced her community out on the sea ice to “meet Jesus,” and that it was a “very cold day,” and that she frightened them and made them take off their clothing, after which some succumbed to the cold and died. However, in the preliminary hearings’ transcripts, Udgarden’s interpretations differ. In the preliminary hearings, the witnesses all remarked that it was a “fine day” with no wind and a “hot sun.”⁵⁸⁹

The witnesses were also recorded in the April inquests, interpreted by Neilson, as stating that Mina said that Jesus was coming and commanded everyone to go on the ice and take off their clothing to meet Him. In the trials held later that summer, interpreted this time by Udgarden, none of the witnesses affirmed that she forced them to walk on the ice and take off their clothing. Mina did not force others to walk on the ice, *she* took off her clothing first and then walked out on the ice, apparently beckoning towards the sky to “bring” Jesus, while the others merely followed her.⁵⁹⁰ The April inquests read in comparison with the summer trial

⁵⁸⁹ W.G. Kerr, “Alleged Murders – Belcher Islands, N.W.T. Moses, Alec, Johnasie, Johnny (Eskimo boys) and Nukarak and Kumudluk Sarah (Eskimo Female Adults) – Murder of,” April 26, 1941, courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173; Transcripts, “Proceedings of Preliminary Hearings held at Belcher Islands in the Northwest Territories before, Douglas J. Martin, Esquire, Justice of the Peace, this 31st day of July, 1941, in the case of Rex vs Mina, Eskimo female, charged with the murder of Johnasie, Eskimo male, aged about six years old, at 29th day of March, A.D., 1941, Harold Udgarden interpreter duly sworn in,” 1-7, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

⁵⁹⁰ Trial transcripts, “Rex vs Mina, Eskimo female, charged with the murder of Johnasie, Eskimo male, aged about six years old, at 29th day of March, A.D., 1941, Harold Udgarden interpreter duly sworn in,” 1-7, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG85 Vol 173.

transcripts show that officials asked the exact same witnesses the same questions, the only difference being the interpreters: Neilson for the April inquests and Udgarden for the trials. Different interpreters produce different interpretations, changing the story all together.

Neilson's story of Mina that we get from witnesses recorded in the April inquests who are purported to have said that Mina either called herself Jesus or said that he was coming, with one witness who is purported to have said that Mina thought "God" was coming. The inquest was led by Dr. Orford and he only asked Mina if she thought that "God" was coming, not Jesus. The difference is not just theological, God the Father versus Jesus His son, but the language is significantly different in Inuktitut. For example, the biblical translator E.J. Peck, an Anglican missionary who adopted Cree syllabics created by Methodist missionary James Evans and translated much of the Christian bible into Inuktitut using Evans' Cree syllabary,⁵⁹¹ referred to both Jesus and God with different Inuktitut names that had different meanings.

For God, Peck transliterated the Inuktitut name *Gude*, "God," or *Gudeionek*, "Godhead, divinity, deity," or *Gudetuak*, "the one, only God."⁵⁹² Peck also chose to translate "Almighty" to *ajugakangilak*, which could mean, depending on the Inuk hearing it, "has no failings."⁵⁹³ For Jesus, Peck transliterated Jesus' name in Inuktitut to the name *Jesusib*.⁵⁹⁴ Where the Gospels refer to God as "Lord" in English, Peck translated this to an Inuktitut word that Inuit would understand,

⁵⁹¹ Arthur Lewis, *The Life and Work of E.J. Peck Among the Eskimos*, New York: A.C. Armstrong & Son, 1904, 82-96.

⁵⁹² Edmund James Peck, edited by W.G. Walton, *Eskimo-English Dictionary: Compiled from Erdman's Eskimo-German Edition*, Hamilton: the Church of the Ascension Thank-Offering Mission Fund, 1925, 52.

⁵⁹³ Spalding and Kusugak spell those words as such: *Guuti ajugaqanngittuq*. Broken down, the word *Guuti* is transliteration of "God," where Peck spelled it "Gude," and *ajugaqanngittuq* comes from root *ajurtuq*, which can mean incapable or broken, to *ajurqaq* which means failing or weakness, with the suffix *-qanngittuq* meaning is "without, or does not have." Thus, *Guuti ajugaqanngittuq* means "God is without failing." See Spalding and Kusugak, 4.

⁵⁹⁴ E.J. Peck, *Eskimo-English Dictionary*, 249.

thus he translated that word to *Attanek*⁵⁹⁵ which means “leader” in many Inuktit dialects.⁵⁹⁶

Where the Gospels referred to Jesus as “Christ,” Peck transliterated that word and invented an alternate name for Jesus in Inuktit that he spelled Xᑕᑭ. X is not in Peck’s Syllabarium, and it is therefore a special character meant only for the name “Christ” and would have been pronounced “Christ-tuu-see.” It was a common practice for Inuit to add the suffix “-sie” (pronounced “see”) at the end of non-Inuit names in order for them to be pronounceable in Inuktit.

The suffix “-sie” at the end of personal non-Inuit names transformed them into Inuktit names and was a common practice across the Arctic in the early twentieth century, as referenced by Stefansson who noted that Inuit called him “Sitepasi.”⁵⁹⁷ This was also the practice when Peck baptized Inuit and gave them a Christian name.⁵⁹⁸ Baptism signified a “new” life in Christianity and a commitment from Inuit to leave their “heathen” ways of *Angakkuuniq*. Thus, to signify Inuit conversion and a new identity as Christians, baptism brought forth new names for Inuit who converted.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁵ Today this word would be spelled *ataniq*. For an example of Peck using the word *Attanek* in place of “Lord” as spelled in Inuktit syllabics see Edmund James Peck, *The Four Gospels Translated into the Language of the Eskimo of Hudson’s Bay*, London: British and Foreign Bible Society, N.D, 21 (Matthew Chapter 7 verse 21).

⁵⁹⁶ Spalding and Kusugaq, 13; Edmund James Peck, edited by W.G. Walton, *Eskimo-English Dictionary: Compiled from Erdman’s Eskimo-German Edition*, Hamilton, ON: The Church of the Ascension Thank-Offering Mission Fund, 1925, 39; Ohokak et al., 18; Dorais, and Koperqualuk, *Words of the Inuit*, 19, 208-209; Peck used the King James Version of the Christian Bible to translate into the dialect of Inuit in Hudson Bay in syllabic that he adapted from James Evans Cree bibles. Initial comparison of the KJV and *The Four Gospels Translated into the Language of the Eskimo of Hudson’s Bay* written by Peck indicate that he used the word “Ataniq” to translate “Lord” in the English Christian Bible. For an example see Edmund James Peck, *The Four Gospels Translated into the Language of the Eskimo of Hudson’s Bay*, London: British and Foreign Bible Society, N.D, page 122, AND the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 2 Verse 28, King James Version (KJV) accessed online from BibleGateway on September 24, 2023: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%202&version=KJV>

⁵⁹⁷ Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *The Friendly Arctic: The Story of Five Years in Polar Regions*, New York: the MacMillan Company, 1921, 441. Accessed online on September 17, 2023: <https://archive.org/details/friendlyarcticst0000vilh/mode/2up>

⁵⁹⁸ Lewis, *The Life and Works of the Rev. E.J. Peck*, 107.

⁵⁹⁹ Regitze Margrethe Søby, “Naming and Christianity,” *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 1997, Vol. 21, No. 1/2, 293-294.

Although we cannot know for sure what Mina thought, or said, we do know that there are different words for “God” in Inuktitut that cannot be confused with the personal name of “Jesus.” Two interpretations may have occurred. If Mina did say she thought that God was coming to end the world, she could have either referenced “Gude,” Peck’s invention of a new Inuktitut name for God, or she could have used the word “*Attanek*.” *Attanek/ataniq* means “leader” and the word used in the Inuktitut Bible for instances where the English version uses Lord in reference to God. The fact the coroner only questioned about God is surprising, and either Orford did not think there was any difference between God and Jesus, or the records are heavily redacted. If Mina called herself Jesus, as many of the witnesses attested, we know that she could have referenced *Jesusib*, or *Christusie*.

Names and *Atiiniq*: Inuit Customary Naming Practice

Why did Mina and Charley call themselves Jesus? Why was Peter referred to as God? Charley, Peter, and Mina’s reference to themselves as Jesus and or God has been an enduring focal point for analysis of the Belcher Islands killings. From a Euro-Christian perspective, to take on the name of God or Jesus is to practice apotheosis in which the glorification of someone to the level of the Christian deity is considered a blasphemous violation against both Christian and Jewish religions.⁶⁰⁰ Perhaps we can interpret R.A. Gibson’s decision to send Peter, Adlaykok, Akeenik and Mina to Great Whale River to receive religious instruction as part of their sentence was because the government administrators potentially felt responsible for the ultimate outcome of their prisoners’ afterlives, linked with their own salvation, and believed that religious

⁶⁰⁰ While Jesus’ apotheosis the Jews considered blasphemous, later Christian communities who read and interpreted the Gospel of John formed the theology that Jesus was the one and only begotten Son of God. See John 10:31-38; and see John 1:14, *the New Testament: New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*, www.BibleGateway.com.

instruction was necessary. The alleged apotheosis of Charley, Peter and Mina is the result of the Euro-Christian perspective of the name *Jesus* and the title *God*, both of which would not have the Christian underpinning when Charley et al. decided to appropriate the names for themselves.

Out of reverence, *God* is a title and not a proper name for the Christian god.⁶⁰¹ Inuit at the time of the Belcher Islands killings had practiced similar reverence with respect to the name of the Mother of the Sea Beasts, *Nuliajuk*, and were frightened to say her name out loud, only referring to her with epithets that were related to her location, her refusal to marry, and her size.⁶⁰² For Charley et al., some names likely had to be revered (such as *Nuliajuk*) and not mentioned out loud. Although at their time, Charley et al. did not consider such reverence was required for the names *Jesus* or *God*. In their context, an application of an Inuit-centered framework is again helpful to understand why⁶⁰³ Charley et al. appropriated the names *Jesus* and *God*: *Inuusiq*, the life cycle.

Inuusiq is the Inuktut term referring to the “life cycle” that illustrates a cyclical nature of life through personal names and is of crucial importance to understanding Inuit culture. *Inuusiq* also provides an Inuit-focused framework to understand why Charley Ouyerack may have called himself *Jesus* and why Peter Sala may have called himself *God*. *Inuusiq* starts with a newborn baby who inherits the name of a recently deceased family or community member, and

⁶⁰¹ From Exodus 3:13-15, the Divine Name Revealed: “But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I am has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.” The title *God* is thus out relationship and reverence. See Exodus from www.BibleGateway.com, *New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*.

⁶⁰² Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten, *The Sea Woman: Sedna in Inuit Shamanism and Art in the Eastern Arctic*, Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2008, 21.

⁶⁰³ There exist other historical records of Inuit calling themselves *God* and or *Jesus*. On analysis of an Inuk named Simigak from Kinngait (formerly Cape Dorset) who called himself *Jesus*, Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten discuss Simigak’s appropriation of the name *Jesus* as a way for Inuit to integrate *Jesus* into Inuit cosmology. See Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity*, 38-41.

with that name, the infant inherits all the personal qualities and attributes of the deceased.⁶⁰⁴

Atiit, “names,” are essential for understanding the Inuit worldview and *Angakkuuniq*. *Atiit* are not just personal names but have inherent power, and it is imperative to consider why Inuit, such as the accused in the Belcher Islands killings of 1941, may have called themselves Jesus and/or God. Names are also a source of strength and come with protection from the ancestors who once bore the same soul-name. *Angakkuuit* called on their *tuurngait*, helping spirits, who came to the *Angakkuq* either through their name giver at birth, their mother, an elder in the community, or from another *Angakkuq*.⁶⁰⁵ *Angakkuuit* could also acquire *tuurngait* at the time that he/she transformed or grew into an *Angakkuq*, or acquired *tuurngait* through bartering of material goods and services.⁶⁰⁶ The trading of names demonstrates the value of names, especially for *Angakkuuit* who derived their powers from their personal names.⁶⁰⁷ The famous *Angakkuq* Aua said to Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen in 1922:

Everyone receiving a name receives with it the strength and skill of the deceased namesake, but since all persons bearing the same name have the same source of life, spiritual and physical qualities are also inherited from those who in the far distant past once bore the same name.⁶⁰⁸

Throughout Christian history, Christians recite the Johannine prayer ending *In Jesus Name, Amen*, believing that communication with God is possible through the medium of Jesus’ name.⁶⁰⁹ The arrival of Christianity in Inuit Nunangat brought *Angakkuuit* a new source of names

⁶⁰⁴ For a discussion on how Inuit elders understand the relationship between *Inuusiq* and *atiit* see: Mariano Aupilaarjuk, Tulimaaq Aupilaarjuk, Lucassie Nutaraaluk, Rose Iqallijuq, Johanasi Ujarak, Johanasi, Isidore Ijituuq, Michel Kupaaq, and Louis-Jacques Dorais, *Interviewing Inuit Elders 4: Cosmology and Shamanism*, 2001, 9; Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *My Life with the Eskimo*, New York: MacMillan Company, 1913, 397-402. Accessed online from Archive.org on September 17, 2023: <https://archive.org/details/mylifewitheskimo00stef/mode/2up>

⁶⁰⁵ Alia, 13; Mariano et al., *Cosmology and Shamanism*, 13.

⁶⁰⁶ Stefansson, *Stefansson-Anderson Arctic Expedition*, 369-370; Aupilaarjuk et al., *Cosmology and Shamanism*, 19.

⁶⁰⁷ Aupilaarjuk et al., *Cosmology and Shamanism*, 15.

⁶⁰⁸ Rasmussen, *Iglulik*, 58.

⁶⁰⁹ Scott Adams, *In Jesus’ Name: Johannine Prayer in Ethical, Missional, and Eschatological Perspective*, Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2022, 1.

that they could appropriate as new sources of power. Like Jesus' name for Christians, names have special powers within Inuit cosmology and the concept of Jesus' name having inherent extraordinary power would have been familiar. Historically, Inuit philosophy on *Atiit*, and in some respects continued to today, was based on the premise of the "soul-name," the "symbol of the continuity of [the person's] social life on earth, and the assurance of his or her immortality."⁶¹⁰

The Qikirtamiut practiced *Atiiniq*, a traditional Inuit naming practice, as evidenced by the number of individuals who shared the same names referenced in archival records. In addition, it was recorded that Qikirtamiut birthing women had four people present during birth to assist: the midwife, a person to cut the umbilical cord, a ritual sponsor, and a *name-giver*.⁶¹¹ Valerie Alia noted that, "Inuit naming is based on a complex namesake system, in which the *person* inherited along with the name." So, when a child is named, "he or she becomes a *sauniq*, or 'bone' of all those who have shared that name."⁶¹²

In the earlier twentieth century, some Inuit from the western regions of the Arctic relayed to Stefansson that before children were born they were *tuurngait*, understood today as shamanic "helping spirits,"⁶¹³ and that before birth, the *tuurngait* roamed the land looking for a mother who was about to give birth in which they could be born and that some people remembered their prenatal existence as roaming *tuurngait*.⁶¹⁴ What is not immediately recognizable in current and past ethnologies about Inuit culture is that *tuurngait*, i.e., "helping spirits," are personal names and *tuurngait* are *atiit*. These *tuurngait-atiit* are the names that community leaders passed on

⁶¹⁰ Bernard Saladin d'Anglure, quoted in Valerie Alia, *Names, Numbers, and Northern Policy Inuit, Project Surname, and the Politics of Identity*, Halifax, N.S: Fernwood, 1994., 15.

⁶¹¹ Alia, 15.

⁶¹² Alia, 14.

⁶¹³ Aupilaarjuk et al., *Cosmology and Shamanism*, 33.

⁶¹⁴ Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *My Life with the Eskimo*, New York: MacMillan Company, 1913, 296. Accessed online from Archive.org on September 17, 2023: <https://archive.org/details/mylifewitheskimo00stef/mode/2up>

from their deceased loved ones to children in which some children can have multiple names they obtained through different processes in their lives. Thus, in the philosophy of *inuusiq*, the life cycle, soul-names are immortal and return to this world through the child's inheritance of the name. Unlike Christian ideas of life-everlasting in Heaven based on an individual living life according to orthodoxy, Inuit have the same philosophy of the immortality of the soul, but the major difference is that the soul has life-everlasting here on earth with family, regardless of how the individual lived or died through its continued existence in the name.

Because *tuurngait* are also *atiit*, personal names, an individual can call on them for assistance during times of need and duress or sever from them if the community felt the soul-name was causing harm. *Atiit* and *tuurngait* are not necessarily separate concepts, but represent two distinct forms of the same entity: *atiq* is one of many soul-names that can reside in one person's body through the complex namesake relationship, and the soul-name can be given to more than one person.⁶¹⁵ The namesake relationship is called *sauniq*, meaning 'bone,' and so when a child receives a name they become the *sauniq*, or bone, of all those who have shared that name in the past but also with those who share the name in the present.⁶¹⁶ When an *Angakkuq* calls on his *tuurngaq*⁶¹⁷ (helping spirit), he is actually calling on one of his *atiit* (personal names), which like Jesus' name, had inherent power.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁵ Alia, 14.

⁶¹⁶ Alia, 14.

⁶¹⁷ Singular term *tuurngaq* means one soul-name/spirit, and the dual term, referencing two, is *tuurngaaq*, and the plural term, referencing three or more is *tuurngait*.

⁶¹⁸ The elder Aupilaarjuk recalled, "Through their [Angakkuit] power, they could find out what kind of sickness a person had. They could give a name to a sick person, either to a child or an adult, by finding out who it was who wanted their name carried on in the sick person. That's how it is among the Nattilingmiut. I have a younger brother who was named by an angakkuq. He was very strengthened by this. He was very sick when he was a small baby. The angakkuq named my brother Kakiarniut. That was the name he gave to my brother, the name of one of his *tuurngait*." See Aupilaarjuk et al., *Cosmology and Shamanism*, 12-13. See also Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *The Stefansson-Anderson Arctic Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History: Preliminary Ethnological Report*, New York: The Order of the Trustees, 1914, 364, accessed online at Archive.org on September 24, 2023: <https://archive.org/details/stefnssonander00stef/mode/2up>

Perhaps we can conceivably say that because an *Angakkuq* is a person with extraordinary abilities, his extraordinary abilities are bestowed on him through soul-names that have extraordinary power. Thus, for *Angakkuit*, who have their own language separate from laypeople, their personal names become elevated from *atiit* to *tuurngait*, helping spirits. Laypeople in the community can also call on their personal names for assistance, but their soul-names can only perform insignificant miracles, thus not meeting the qualifications of being a *tuurngaq*, a soul name that has inherent extraordinary abilities, and remains just an ordinary, though immortal, soul-name.

Angakkuit referred to their *tuurngait* by their personal names and called on them for assistance by calling their names.⁶¹⁹ Franz Boas remarked that when someone in the camp fell ill, the *Angakkuq* changed the sick person's name as a cure, sometimes giving up one of his or her own names in efforts to heal the sick person; additionally, Inuit would barter their names through the exchange of something valuable, like a hunting implement or tool.⁶²⁰

The initial arrival of Christianity into Inuit Nunangat produced new soul-names from which Inuit could appropriate and Jesus could be properly understood as a *Qallunaaq Angakkuq*,⁶²¹ as it is evident that Inuit imagined Jesus to be a *qallunaaq*, a “white man.”⁶²² Biblical stories about Jesus and God, relayed to Inuit in the Inuktitut language produced the image

⁶¹⁹ Aupilaarjuk et al., *Cosmology and Shamanism*, 9.

⁶²⁰ Franz Boas, “The Central Eskimo,” *Sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*, Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1888, 612.

⁶²¹ *Qallunaaq* means “white person” or “European,” in Inuktitut. See Spalding and Kusugaq, 105.

⁶²² Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen recorded that a Netsilik *Angakkuq* named Niaqunuaq had eight “helping spirits,” *tuurngait*, plural for *tuurngaq*, in which one was a white man. See Knud Rasmussen, *The Netsilik Eskimos: Social Life and Spiritual Culture, Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition 1921-24, Vol. VII (1-2)*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 294. Accessed online from Archive.org on September 17, 2023: <https://archive.org/details/netsilikeskimos00rasm/page/6/mode/2up>; see also Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *My Life with the Eskimo*, New York: MacMillan Company, 1913, 255, 292, 423. Accessed online from Archive.org on September 17, 2023: <https://archive.org/details/mylifewitheskimo00stef/mode/2up>

of Jesus within the *Angakkuit* corpus. Both as a saviour and a man, Jesus' stories contain miracles similar to the extraordinary abilities of *Angakkuit*: bringing the dead back to life, walking on water,⁶²³ feeding hundreds of people through miracles, and enduring tribulations in fighting Satan. In fact, many stories about *Angakkuit* detail their trials in fighting other, nefarious *tuurngait*.⁶²⁴

E.J. Peck translated the name Satan as *torngak*,⁶²⁵ a word that *Angakkuit* would have equated with their helping spirit, although to be sure a *tuurngaq*'s intentions, whether good or bad, were dependent on the intention of the *Angakkuq*.⁶²⁶ Peck likely chose to translate Satan as *torngak* in an effort to distinguish prayer to God from supplication to *tuurngait*. Peck also transliterated Satan as "Satanasi" and thus invented a new Inuktitut name.⁶²⁷ Inuit would have understood these names within the purview of *Angakkuuniq* during the early twentieth century. In Peck's syllabic bibles, he transliterated the biblical names *Gude* and *Jesusib*, for God and Jesus respectively, and also applied the name *Attanek* [*Ataniq*] for biblical verses that refer to God as "Lord." Qikirtamiut obtained the Inuktitut bibles, called "Eskimo Testaments," from the

⁶²³ Stefansson remarked that Inuit shamans he met attested to seeing miracles of shamans walking on water and bringing the dead back to life. See Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *My Life with the Eskimo*, New York: MacMillan Company, 1913, 406. Accessed online from Archive.org on September 17, 2023: <https://archive.org/details/mylifewitheskimo00stef/mode/2up>; Aupilaarjuk et al., 13.

⁶²⁴ Aupilaarjuk et al., *Cosmology and Shamanism*, 27, 94; Laugrand, and Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity*, 277; Tungilik et al., *The Transition to Christianity*, 95; Idlout Interview, time: 11:54-16:23, courtesy of the Nunavut Archives Program, cassette recording, N-1987-009-001A. In the Nunavut Archives Program Archival Inventory listing for N-1987-009, the records state that the cassette recording was apparently carried out by Princess Margaret in 1979. One elderly woman recalled that their *Angakkuit* used to put on performances in front of the community every year. The performance was for the *Angakkuq* to demonstrate their strength to the community by fighting an invisible *tuurngaq*, a performance that kept the community in fear both of the *Angakkuq* and the *tuurngaq*.

⁶²⁵ Peck, *Eskimo-English Dictionary*, 246.

⁶²⁶ Tungilik et al., *The Transition to Christianity*, 10, 93, 97, 115; Laugrand and Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity*, 19; Mariano Aupilaarjuk, Marie Tulimaaq, Akisu Joamie, Emile Imaruittuq, Lucassie Nutaraaluk, edited by Jarich Oosten, Frédéric Laugrand and Kim Rasing, *Interviewing Inuit Elders: Perspectives on Traditional Law*, Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 1999, 113.

⁶²⁷ For an example of Peck's transliteration of Satan to "Satanasi" see Peck, the *Four Gospels Translated into the Language of the Eskimo of Hudson's Bay*, from the Gospel Matthew Chapter 4 verse 10, 9. Peck spells Satan in Inuktitut syllabic as ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ, pronounced "Saw-tawn-a-sie."

Hudson's Bay Company post.⁶²⁸ As was the practice for *Angakkuit*, names had special inherent powers – they *are* the helping spirits – and Jesus and God's names would have been powerful *Qallunaat* names for Inuit shamans to appropriate in effort to assist them through their own tribulations.

Whereas Neilson was an Anglican missionary with indefinite knowledge of Inuktut who relied on written Inuktut texts to communicate with Inuit, Udgarden's extent of his knowledge of Inuktut is uncertain, however, it is evident that he was active in spreading the Gospel to Inuit and his knowledge of the Inuktut language was likely framed by his Euro-Christian interpretation of the language. It is conceivable that Peter and Mina likely referenced themselves as a "leader," *ataniq*, not necessarily referencing themselves as "God" whose Inuktut epithet is *Ataniq*. Moreover, Charley Ouyerack was a notable *Angakkuq* and called himself Jesus not as a practice of blasphemy or misinterpretation of the Bible, but as an *Angakkuq* who likely desired the extraordinary power that he perceived in Jesus' name, thus called himself Jesus as part of *Angakkuuniq* orthopraxis.

⁶²⁸ Hudson's Bay Company, "Whale River Inventory, 1892," courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba, Location code: B.372/d/7, Microfilm No. 1M1407, 10, accessed online May 28, 2023: http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/Access/HBCA%20Microfilm/1M1407/23_B372-D-7.pdf

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I present examples that show how the Dominion of Canada employed Euro-Christian religious interpretations to solidify their claims to Arctic sovereignty over the land and people. This study addresses gaps in scholarship that focus primarily on historical policies without much focus on religion or the Inuit perspective. Through an examination of historical court cases, I highlight the layers of interpretative processes at play and superimpose Inuit perspectives to reimagine how Inuit might have received and interpreted religious messages conveyed to them in Inuktitut from various missionaries. These records present fascinating glimpses of contact, painting a picture from which to draw an analysis on the interplays of religion and law in relation to Arctic sovereignty.

By examining the contact between missionaries and Inuit through the two historical court cases, we provide a window to glimpse what the first contact might have looked, felt, and sounded like for both Inuit and non-Inuit. In consultation with historical and contemporary Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun dictionaries written by missionaries and later employed by other historical figures such as anthropologists and government agents, it is apparent that the mission-created dictionaries invented new Christian meanings for Inuktitut words previously unrelated to Christianity, in addition to the creation of new Inuktitut names.

Without considering the possible consequences of mixed meanings, anthropologists and government bureaucrats utilized interpretation services by religious clergymen, many novice Inuktitut speakers, to communicate with Inuit that, in effect, marred messages received and understood by Inuit and non-Inuit. Non-Inuit received and understood Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun words spoken by Inuit through an interpreter and understood those messages through their Euro-Christian worldview, even though the intended messages from Inuit likely had no basis in

Christian thought. These early bilingual conversations provide evidence that Inuit, upon receiving Christian messages, did not discard their culture to replace foreign Christian ideology. Through their own unique, *Angakkuuniq* worldview, Inuit performed their own Biblical exegesis that the Dominion of Canada, and scholars today, have viewed as “misinterpretations” of the Bible, and conclude that Inuit possession of Bibles and early Christian instruction sparked the Inuit adaptation and adoption of Christian values. This line of reasoning either supports the theory of Inuit cultural erosion or has contributed to it because it stems narrowly from a Euro-Christian perspective that neglects to consider how Inuit would have understood the Bible and Christian instruction through their own worldviews, rather than supplanting a new Euro-Christian worldview.

The first case study explored was the 1917 murder trials *R v Sinnisiak* and *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak*, the first ever to involve Inuit that occurred during the height of the WWI. Under the mounting pressure of global interest in Arctic sovereignty, the Dominion of Canada used murder trials to promote their administration over Inuit as a way to demonstrate their sovereignty over the Arctic. The Oblates, on the other hand, used the killings to promote their missionary pursuits and add to their Tertullian theological underpinning of “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church,” and attributed the conversions of the Inuit shortly thereafter to the “martyrdom” of the two Oblates. The *R v Sinnisiak* and *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak* case study, in particular, present a contrary view to the current understanding of historical Inuit as passive recipients of colonial expansion onto their homeland who accepted Christianity pacifyingly. In fact, this case study shows that when non-Inuit did not behave in cultural ways accepted by Inuit, they suffered death as a result.

The second case study explored the murder trials of the Belcher Islands held in Inuit Nunangat in 1941. This occurred during WWII and represented one of the first times that the Dominion of Canada decided to produce a full trial, complete with jurors, a judge, flags, bench wigs, and gowns, *on* Inuit Nunangat. One of the accused Inuit called himself “God” and the other “Jesus,” factors that led to a myriad of non-Inuit religious interpretations since news of the deaths reached the non-Inuit world.

The Dominion government used the event to carry out administration of Canadian justice over the Inuit and described them as acting in a “religious frenzy” in need of Dominion intervention in the form of civilizing Christianity where the convicted were required to accept religious instruction from George Neilson. The fact that George Neilson, a member of the Anglican clergy and admittedly insufficient in Inuktitut, provided an interpretation between Inuit and Dominion justice representatives is unacknowledged in the scholarship. The Christian bias of those involved in the linguistic interpretation, both Neilson and Udgarden, is why non-Inuit understood the events from a Christian perspective, eventually placing the Inuit on trial explicitly for murder and implicitly for blasphemy. Taking a bird’s eye view, the two case studies, *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak*, and the Belcher Islands murder trials, present moments in Canadian history where the connection between religious discourse and the occupation of land becomes more clearly in focus.

This dissertation also examined the interpretative and communicative aspects of two case studies through the Inuit-focused theoretical frameworks of Inuit philosophy, laws, and language and suggested alternative motivations for historical Inuit actors’ actions, producing alternative ways to understand these historical events. Both case studies analyzed saw Canadian public discourse sensationalize tragic events, both historically and today, often recorded in English by

Euro-Canadians, who recorded their understanding of events through their Euro-Christian perspective that marginally considered the Inuit perspective. In the minds of the Dominion official, anthropologist, missionary, and Company men, they considered the Inuit as a Stone Age people, incapable of producing cultural and societal organizations such as law, religion, and governance. That the Inuit were primitive people was an unquestioned truth that led to many misinterpretations of Inuit culture and society, and further led to miscommunication with Inuit.

Scholars and government officials during the *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak* trials viewed Inuit culture as vulnerable and at-risk for erosion due to the Northward expansion of “civilization.” When the Belcher Islands murder trials occurred twenty-four years later, scholars and government officials continued to express concern over Inuit cultural vulnerability and advocated for policies of non-interference with the view that Inuit were better off isolated from “civilization.” Government officials’ policy on isolationist non-interference persisted throughout the Cold War and well into the 1960s and 70s, this time with the frame of mind that Inuit culture would erode due to settlement life and the wage economy. Almost one-hundred years after *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak*, some contemporary scholars have made similar observations within their analyses of these historical trials and continue to express caution, yet again, about the vulnerability of Inuit culture, or its complete disintegration.

Scholarship strives to understand the motivations of Inuit recorded in these historical court cases but fails to consider in their analyses how the archival records pertaining to these cases are all recorded in English or French, not Inuktitut. Scholarship today tends to take Inuit speech acts recorded in archival records at face value. However, one of the most pressing aims of this dissertation is that, in order to grasp the full complexities of this history, the Inuit perspective must be considered as a primary window to understand these events.

The aim of this dissertation is to provide examples to understand this history through an Inuit-focused interpretation that unsettles current notions of Inuit culture decline and to subvert common assumptions in scholarship that present Inuit as disengaged bystanders to the arrival of foreigners. These case studies demonstrate examples of Inuit resistance to foreigners by sentencing those who refused to conform to Inuit laws to death. These case studies also provide examples of historical Inuit actors' selective incorporation of material and intellectual culture imported by foreigners, showcasing Inuit as practicing fidelity to their traditions, while concurrently driving cultural change. This dissertation also highlights examples of the essential contribution of Inuit leadership in which all non-Inuit relied on Inuit for their survival in the Arctic, and this reliance extended to the ability of non-Inuit to conduct business, whether for Dominion or private enterprises.

Implications of an Inuit-specific lens for understanding Inuit history

Interpretative processes – whether judicial, religious, or linguistic – impacted the fate of the trials and shaped our understanding of their history. What is of primary interest in this dissertation is the language found in the historical context related to Arctic sovereignty that state, in some shape or form, the deficit discourse of Inuit cultural vulnerability and erasure. The notion that Inuit have lost their culture is rooted in the non-Inuit *perception* of Inuit cultural vulnerability, made explicit with deficit discourse from non-Inuit. For Inuit, the implications of this theory of cultural vulnerability and degradation are potentially damaging, both on an individual and collective psychological scale, and require in-depth, careful analysis of this history with the application of Inuit-specific theoretical frameworks.

Without the application of Inuit-specific theoretical frameworks, our understanding of *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak* and the Belcher Island murder trials becomes distorted, one-sided, and

incomplete. Indeed, to make sense of the motivations behind Inuit in these historical court cases, which many scholars have attempted to do, requires a foundational theoretical framework based on an Inuit-specific philosophy. Without the Inuit context, the scholar may unintentionally reproduce the original misinterpretations of the historical Inuit that were the result of insufficient fluency and interpreter bias. By taking the archival records at face value that quote Inuit in English, who originally spoke in Inuktitut, risks reproduction of the initial interpreter's misinterpretation or bias.

Inuit youth today, who might learn about these events, or the theory of Inuit cultural loss, risk absorbing those theories into their collective identity as a people without culture and without knowledge of their ancestors' agency in history. The distortion of a lost culture, created by the incomplete analysis of history that omits the Inuit perspective, have real ramifications.

I participated in the National Inuit Student Gathering in March 2023, held in Ottawa, hosted by the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK, formerly ITC), and had the opportunity to hear Inuit youth from across Canada discuss their ideas and concerns. What I heard from them was alarming in the sense that their understanding of their reality was steeped in deficit discourse, and there was much pain that could be heard in their voices as they felt the immense pressure to resuscitate a dead culture. I attempted to share my research while sitting on a panel with other Inuit grad students, and shared that, contrary to conventional scholarship, our Inuit ancestors were astute businessmen, contributors to historical and modern assertions of Canadian Arctic sovereignty, and that there are just as many, if not more, instances in our history to be proud of beside instances that require reflection and healing. I shared that, from my perspective in studying Inuit history, that Inuit culture is alive and well, and that it is not lost. I challenged everyone to recall their families and communities and *see* how Inuit culture is all around us.

From the panel stage that I had delivered my ideas on Inuit culture, I found it hard to gauge how the youth viewed my perspective on Inuit agency in history and my assertion that Inuit culture was alive and well, and I did not have opportunity to converse with them directly. Three Inuit from an older generation, including one interpreter and one prominent leader, approached me after my talk and expressed gratitude that I shared my sentiments about our culture's healthy status. They expressed that they have observed the same, and as current practitioners of Inuit culture, they appreciated that I spoke about Inuit culture's current existence and said that Inuit need to talk more about Inuit culture, and our people, in a positive light that affirms and emphasizes the resilience, continuation, and innovative nature of Inuit culture. This experience provided me with sustenance to continue with the research that I was conducting, presented in this dissertation, and indicates that this topic is important for Inuit.

Inuit are, for the most part, today proud Canadians,⁶²⁹ and have achieved incredible feats such as "Changing the Face of Canada," to borrow from John Amagoalik, with the birth of the Nunavut Territory.⁶³⁰ Surprisingly, despite these modern achievements, there still exists a convention to view the historical relationship between Inuit and Canada through current non-Inuk theoretical frameworks that narrowly focus on paradigms of power and oppression. The assumptions made today are that historically, Inuit lacked power and agency, and these assumptions are the result of the scholar's application of non-Inuit theoretical frameworks to understand Inuit history that narrowly focus on the modalities of oppression and power, which inherently produce a deficit discourse about historical Inuit. By employing Inuit-specific

⁶²⁹ Aluki Kotierk, "Inuktitut deserves a place in the Official Languages Act," *Maclean's*, May 27, 2019, accessed online May 4, 2024: <https://macleans.ca/news/canada/inuktitut-deserves-a-place-in-the-official-languages-act>.

⁶³⁰ John Amagoalik, *Changing the Face of Canada: the Life Story of John Amagoalik*, Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 2007, 187.

theoretical frameworks to understand historical Inuit, we provide avenues for those historical Inuit to “speak” about their motivations that dispel the distorted narratives of these historical events commonly sensationalized as examples of the tragic collision of cultures. In allowing for historical Inuit to “speak,” their choices and motivations become clearer into focus, their actions become rational, and their agency and humanity are reinstated.

Implications for Distortions of Inuit History

In the cold winter month of January 2024, seventeen Iqaluit residents held a second rally calling for a “ceasefire” in Gaza, three months after the Hamas’s brutal onslaught perpetrated against neighboring Israelis on October 7, 2023.⁶³¹ One of the protestors, Jennifer Lane said that the rally was to “raise awareness in Nunavut...show support for the Palestinian people,”⁶³² and that her reason for attending the rally was to assert that “Palestinian rights are Indigenous rights to those lands and we’re on Indigenous land here, and we’re fighting for the rights of Indigenous people in Canada, in Nunavut, we should be doing the same worldwide.”⁶³³ Lane’s comments are not isolated, and many Indigenous people have expressed a perceived commonality with Palestinians, especially in “decolonial” discourses.⁶³⁴ As Middle Eastern tensions continue to escalate at the time of writing this dissertation, the global impacts have resulted in a dramatic rise

⁶³¹ Jeff Pelletier, “‘We are all Palestinian:’ 2nd Iqaluit rally calls fir Gaza ceasefire,” *Nunatsiaq News*, January 6, 2024, accessed online on April 13, 2024: <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/we-are-all-palestinian-2nd-iqaluit-rally-calls-for-gaza-ceasefire/>

⁶³² Pelletier, *Nunatsiaq News*.

⁶³³ Pelletier, *Nunatsiaq News*.

⁶³⁴ Bayan Alabda, “The Power of Listening to Each Other’s Stories,” SeeChange wesbite, March 11, 2024, accessed online on April 13, 2024: <https://www.seechangeinitiative.org/news/the-power-of-listening-to-each-others-stories>.

in antisemitic violence across North American cities, particularly within university and college campuses.⁶³⁵

Understanding that my knowledge on the Israel-Hamas war is limited, I was curious to learn more about Hamas, and why Canadian Indigenous Peoples have pivoted their support to Palestinians,⁶³⁶ a move that erases the atrocities and mass-murder perpetrated against Israelis by Hamas on October 7th by justifying it as an act of “decolonization,” and as Palestinian “resistance,” as one law student group in Canada stated.⁶³⁷ Many scholars have presented research that describes the October 7th attacks by Hamas as justified “anti-colonial” violence through a narrow interpretation of history that Palestinians are Indigenous, and like Indigenous people in Canada, have experienced “genocide,” “apartheid,” and “occupation” at the hands of Israel, a “settler colony.”⁶³⁸ This narrow interpretation of history has also reached Nunavut, where one Inuk lawyer stated, “[T]he settler colonial violence that we see in Palestine is intrinsically linked to the settler colonial violence carried out in Canada against Indigenous peoples.”⁶³⁹

I have heard the words such as “decolonization,” “genocide,” and especially “settler” used in academic contexts to describe the current situation of Inuit and Canada and have engaged

⁶³⁵ Center for Antisemitism Research, Report, *Campus Antisemitism: A Study of Campus Climate Before and After the Hamas Terrorist Attacks*, November 29, 2023, accessed from Anti-Defamation League website on April 13, 2024: <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/campus-antisemitism-study-campus-climate-and-after-hamas-terrorist-attacks>

⁶³⁶ Chris Sankey, “Stop comparing Palestinians to Indigenous Canadians: Canadians should not project our own politics onto a conflict half a world away,” MacDonald-Laurier Institute, October 20, 2023, accessed online on April 13, 2024: <https://macdonaldlaurier.ca/stop-comparing-palestinians-to-indigenous/>

⁶³⁷ Jonathan Kay, “Lincoln Alexander School of Law’s unequivocal solidarity with Palestine,” Twitter Post, October 22, 2023, accessed online on April 13, 2024: <https://twitter.com/jonkay/status/1716174330785104112>

⁶³⁸ Tristan Hopper, “It is not apartheid: A quick debunking of the most obvious lies about the State of Israel,” The National Post, November 4, 2023, accessed online on April 13, 2024: <https://nationalpost.com/news/world/israel-middle-east/israeli-history>

⁶³⁹ Madalyn Howitt, “Nutrition North advisory board member resigns in support of Palestine,” Nunatsiaq News, December 12, 2023, accessed online on April 13, 2024: <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/nutrition-north-advisory-board-member-resigns-in-support-of-palestine/>

in debates with colleagues and friends to determine their applicability to the Nunavut context. Until reading the same words from Indigenous Canadians in relation to the Israel-Hamas War, I never contemplated the potential extreme provocations that those words could evoke.

One of the arguments made by Canadian supporters of Palestine is that Hamas is not the same as the Palestinians, but a symptom of colonial violence against Palestinians by the State of Israel.⁶⁴⁰ Categorizing the October 7th Hamas attacks as “anti-colonial” violence as part of the struggle of an occupied people deflects from the underlying religious dimensions of Middle Eastern history and current motivations for Hamas. Far from the simplistic abstraction of a politically charged people who have endured colonial occupation, Hamas is religiously motivated, and this factor seems to be absent from current discussions amongst Indigenous groups protesting in Canada on behalf of Palestinians.

Hamas is an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (the Islamic Resistance Movement), an Islamic fundamentalist organization, brought into power in Gaza in 1988 after the first intifada.⁶⁴¹ Hamas’ mandate is found in their Charter, issued in 1988,⁶⁴² and it produced a narrative distortion of the history of Israel, referring to Jewish Israelis as “Nazi Zionists”⁶⁴³ who were, according to Hamas in the most perverse distortion:

...behind the Second World War where they grossed huge profits from their trade of war materials, and set down the foundations to establish their nation by forming the United Nations and Security Council, instead of the League of Nations, in order to rule the world through that organization.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴⁰ Cara Nickerson, “As Canadians react to Israel-Hamas conflict, deeply held beliefs expose and emotional divide,” CBC News, October 9, 2023, accessed online on April 13, 2024:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/israel-hamas-reactions-ontario-1.6990568>

⁶⁴¹ Ziad Abu-Amr, “Hamas: A Historical and Political Background,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Summer 1993, Vol. 22, No. 4, 10-11.

⁶⁴² Abu-Amr, “Hamas,” 12.

⁶⁴³ Muhammad Maqdsi, “Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) of Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Summer, 1993, Vol. 22, No. 4, 132.

⁶⁴⁴ Maqdsi, “Charter,” 129.

The perverse distortion that the Hamas Charter makes of the history of the State of Israel's Jewish population as somehow benefiting from the Nazi genocide of their people and few remaining survivors seeking refuge is jarring. It is evident that its main ideologies are religiously motivated⁶⁴⁵ to remove the State of Israel, and its inherent Jewishness,⁶⁴⁶ through *jihad*, or "armed struggle,"⁶⁴⁷ and establish in its place an Islamic state.⁶⁴⁸ The motto for Hamas is most revealing in the religiously motivated destruction of all who oppose the Islamic Resistance Movement:

Allah is its God.
The Messenger is its Leader.
The Quran is its Constitution.
Jihad is its methodology, and
Death for the sake of Allah is its most coveted desire.⁶⁴⁹

The comparison that some Inuit make in attempts to link a distorted Palestinian history with Inuit history in Canada warrants critical attention. To know that some of the educated Inuit are making such comparisons publicly requires at the very least, a critical examination of our current understanding of Inuit history that is intertwined with the history of Arctic sovereignty. Moreover, as the tension in Israel between Israelis and Hamas stems from both religious interpretations of sovereignty and distortions of history, as found in the Hamas' Charter, it begs the question of how and why some educated Inuit are drawing such comparisons.

Without glossing over some of the real ill-conceived policies that Canada has employed in relation to Inuit in the Arctic that resulted in trauma and harm, the current study provides examples that illustrate the requirement for historical analyses that benefit from the Inuit perspective by interpreting history with the lens of Inuit culture, language, religion, and law,

⁶⁴⁵ Maqdsi, "Charter,"127.

⁶⁴⁶ Maqdsi, "Charter,"131.

⁶⁴⁷ Abu-Amr, "Hamas," 9.

⁶⁴⁸ Maqdsi, "Charter,"124.

⁶⁴⁹ Abu-Amr, "Hamas," 9.

producing a more nuanced understanding of early contact experience between Inuit and non-Inuit. This current study demonstrates the need to employ Inuit-specific theoretical frameworks to provide a fuller understanding of history that concerns Inuit.

Implications for Further Study

Scholars and historians reviewing these case studies might wonder how they could analyze the social contexts of Inuit implicated in these trials. The context might seem too foreign. To understand historical Inuit is hard work; we cannot just accept things at face value when it comes to purported recordings of Inuit that are not in the original language or context. Having just reached the near completion of this research, realizing that there is still so much to cover, I reflect on how incredibly complex research is when the aim is to understand historical people from their potential frame of view, it requires extra work to understand the myriad of possible meanings that could be gleaned from historical sources. Although the language and philosophy of Inuit add levels of interpretation required to understand historical Inuit make research incredibly complex, starting research of historical Inuit to analyze their actions and speech acts, and arriving at study with the presumption that they were rational, lawful, civil, and religious requires no effort at all.

The primary goal of this current study is humanistic. By reinterpreting historical Inuit through an Inuit-specific lens as people with agency, we reinstate their humanity. This reinterpretation, then, requires a conscious effort to rethink so many people's roles in history that it amounts to a "genuine leap of imagination,"⁶⁵⁰ to paraphrase the authors of *the Fourth World*,

⁶⁵⁰ George Manuel, and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*, Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2018, 224.

Michael Poslun and George Manuel. To answer this call, which is the overarching goal in the current study, requires a re-interpretation of history that is nuanced with both *Qallunaat Qaujimajatuqangit* (QQ) and *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ) philosophical traditions, while making Inuit-centered frameworks, inherently strength-based, the primary methodology.

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