

Northern Youth Abroad: Exploring the Effects of a Cross-Cultural Exchange Program from  
the Perspectives of Nunavut Inuit Youths

By

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### **Abstract**

Nunavut Inuit youths exhibit cultural resilience and leadership. However, researchers frequently neglect such assets and instead emphasize these youths' challenges or perceived inadequacies. I conducted an intrinsic case study regarding Nunavut Inuit youths' experiences with an experiential learning program, Northern Youth Abroad (NYA), in order to investigate participants' growth in cross-cultural awareness, individual career goals, leadership, and global citizenship. Drawing on post-colonial theory, semi-structured interviews, archival research, and participant observation, I argue that NYA's Nunavut Inuit participants reported significant personal growth in these four objectives. I also provide an in-depth analysis of how NYA's Nunavut Inuit participants described and developed distinct and rich leadership styles that draw on Inuit and Euro-Canadian influences.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The case study contained in this thesis examines how Nunavut Inuit youths develop unique and varied styles of leadership, cross-cultural awareness, individual career goals, and international citizenship through the educational travel program, Northern Youth Abroad (NYA). NYA, a national non-profit organization, promotes “education through work and travel” (NYA, 2011, p. 1) for youths from Nunavut and the Northwest Territories through volunteer work placements in southern Canada and in Botswana, which are complemented by a series of self-assessments, community-based research, and fundraising assignments that participants complete in their home communities. In doing so, NYA promotes a distinctive form of volunteer travel and provides compelling evidence of Inuit youths’ agency and adaptability in the face of emerging opportunities, challenges, and neo-colonial influences in present-day Nunavut.

My thesis addresses two, inter-related research questions. I first investigate the organization’s effectiveness in achieving its mandate of fostering cross-cultural awareness, individual career goals, international citizenship, and leadership among Nunavut Inuit youths. This research question was shaped by my informal observations as a visitor to NYA’s 2011 international program reorientation and by my consultations with NYA’s Program Director and Board of Directors. My research design was subsequently guided by a Research Advisory Board within NYA whose members generously shared their time and expertise in contributing to this research. My second research question pertains to how NYA’s Nunavut Inuit alumni describe and develop leadership. This question was crafted in response to the rich and varied descriptions of leadership that emerged from my data and in consultation with a Research Advisory Board within NYA. To address these questions, I

collected data through semi-structured interviews, archival research, and participant observation at NYA's national office in Ottawa. While I addressed my two research questions with the same theoretical framework and methods/methodology, I draw from distinct literatures to situate each of these research questions. My thesis is consequently comprised of five chapters: an introduction; a methods/methodology chapter; a literature review/analysis pertaining to NYA's mandate; a second literature review/analysis regarding leadership and Inuit youths; and a concluding chapter.

On April 1, 1999, Nunavut was officially recognized as a territory and as a political homeland for the Inuit of the Eastern Arctic. The new territory had emerged from an unprecedented process of political organizing and advocacy on the part of the Inuit, an Aboriginal people whose nomadic lifestyles were forcibly and irreversibly compromised in the 1960s. During this period, the Canadian government had instigated mass relocations of Inuit into central locations in order to facilitate the delivery of public services such as health and education and to assimilate the Inuit "into southern Canadian ways" (Hicks, 1999, p. 44). Concurrently, natural scientists, resource industries, and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development had become increasingly active in exploring traditional Inuit lands for oil and other natural resources (Creery, 1993). As John Amagoalik, the Chief Commissioner of the Nunavut Implementation Commission, signaled, "the period of intense exploration in the 1960s made Inuit realize just how little control they had over their traditional lands . . . This was like a wake-up call for Inuit leaders" (p. 1).

Following decades of subsequent land claim negotiations with the Government of Canada, Inuit demands were met by the Canadian Parliament's enactment of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act and Nunavut Act in 1993. The creation of the territory and

Government of Nunavut has been widely cited and studied as a remarkable example of an Aboriginal people's successful use of non-violent processes to secure their rights and autonomy from a colonial power (Jull, 1999; Kersey, 1994; Langlais, 1999). Yet a significant amount of contemporary research about Nunavut has focused on the challenges that this territory and its youth, in particular, currently face. Hicks (1999), for example, described Nunavut's predominant challenges as

a young work force with high levels of unemployment, low (but rising) educational levels, low average incomes with heavy and mounting dependence on social assistance, high costs for goods and public services, seriously inadequate public housing, high levels of substance abuse and other social problems (including suicide and escalating levels of violence and incarceration. (p. 43)

Social scientists' emphasis on the challenges that Inuit youths face has been critiqued by Inuit organizations for at least two reasons. First, researchers' emphasis on social problems in Nunavut has privileged examples of dysfunctions or inadequacies at the cost of identifying or understanding the strengths and assets that also exist in these communities (Anielski & Pollock 2003; Noah, 2010). Second, the vast majority of social science research has not been developed in true collaboration with Inuit (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami [ITK] & Nunavut Research Institute [NRI], 2007); though researchers may be examining issues of critical importance to these communities, inegalitarian research relationships have contributed to the "exploitation and appropriation of Inuit knowledge, practices, and culture by well-intentioned, well-meaning researchers" (Flaherty, 1995, p. 183).

My research challenges northern social scientists' usual emphasis on Nunavut Inuit youths' problems by instead examining Inuit youths' development of leadership, cross-

cultural awareness, individual career goals, and global citizenship. Though NYA was developed with the support of the Chief Commissioner of the Nunavut Implementation Commission, Nunavut Boards of Education, and Inuit Youth Councils (Meyer, 2002), my own research with this organization did not include consultations with these or other Nunavut community organizations or individuals. I have tried to develop a research project that illustrates how “privileged Westerners” can act as “allied others” (Lincoln & Denzin, 2008, p. 21) by problematizing traditional research methods and collaborating with NYA’s board members, staff members, and alumni. Some researchers have described their work with Inuit youths as “participatory” as a result of including participatory methods, some of which have been similar to my own (e.g. Cole, 2004; Ip, 2007; McClymount Peace & Myers, 2012; McKenna, 2009 ). By contrast, I contend that my research – and other research like it, falls far short of Inuit’s expectations that participatory researchers engage Inuit community members as equals in the research design, data collection, analysis, and dissemination (Flaherty, 1995; ITK & NRI, 2007).

Though my work has included participatory elements, I, like most researchers, cannot claim to have nurtured an egalitarian relationship with my research participants or with NYA. Neither can I assert that my research illustrates the perspectives of any Inuit other than those individuals whose reflections I document in the following chapters. I also recognize that the data and analysis that I present in these chapters have been mediated by my own values and subjectivities as a researcher. Hence, before providing an overview to NYA, I first present a personal reflection on how I came to this research and what I brought to it.

## **My Relationship to the Research**

My journey towards this research began in a lavish, crowded conference hall during the summer of 2010. Oxfam Canada was holding its tri-annual national assembly, and I was eager to deepen my involvement with the organization, having recently returned from a volunteer project for pregnant, indigenous women in northern Panama. Yet, my naive and self-righteous assumptions about the role I could or should play in contributing to women's rights and poverty alleviation were promptly and powerfully challenged by a moving keynote address from Brenda Gatto, a health policy analyst with the Native Women's Association of Canada. Following her initial praise of Oxfam Canada's work in promoting women's rights worldwide, the keynote speaker poignantly refocused the conference's themes by describing the inadequacy of the maternal health services that many Aboriginal women in Canada receive. As she continued to describe the Canadian health system's many shortcomings for Aboriginal women, I recognized an uncomfortable number of parallels between the injustices that she described and those that had captured my attention and outrage weeks earlier in Panama.

A further shock came when the keynote speaker, curious to hear from other Aboriginal participants in the 200-hundred strong audience, asked who in the conference hall identified as Aboriginal. As mine and every single other delegates' hands remained lowered, a series of questions raced through my mind. How could I have been so uninformed about these pressing social problems in my own country? In what ways had I, through my ignorance and subsequent silence, been complicit in the perpetuation of these injustices? Further, why on *earth* had I assumed that I was uniquely or strategically positioned to address these issues, be it in Canada or in other countries? What new opportunities, insights,

and strategies might emerge in spaces that fostered transnational collaboration between Aboriginal peoples instead of well-intentioned, privileged Euro-Canadians?

A year later, these same questions stewing in my mind as a first-year Master's student, I decided to craft my thesis around the topics of Aboriginality and global citizenship. In my new capacity as a researcher, my well-meaning but naive intentions were again challenged by reading the wisdom and eloquent indignation of an Aboriginal leader in Canada. In her 1995 address to the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies National Student Conference on Northern Studies, the president of the Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association of Canada, Martha Flaherty (2005), remarked that "unless research involves Inuit meaningfully at every stage, I begin to interpret the concept of 'freedom of expression' as 'freedom of exploitation'—the freedom to exploit Inuit knowledge for one's own gain" (p. 179). These and other critical remarks about researchers' roles in perpetuating neo-colonial relationships with indigenous peoples (e.g., Brant-Castellano, 2004; Brown, 2005; ITK & NRI, 2007; Smith, 1999; Steinhauer, 2002) motivated me to conduct months of Google searches, phone calls, and meetings as I sought to identify a topic related to my interests and capable of being researched through a collaboration with an Aboriginal group or organization. My search for a relevant and respectful research project brought me to Labrador and the Inuit settlement region of Nunatsiavut, where I stumbled through a six-week course in Inuttitut (the Labradorian dialect of the Inuit language, Inuktitut), learned from the remarkably resilient and generous Inuit students with whom I lived, and realized that my desire to research global citizenship, though of interest to the government and community officials with whom I met, did not easily correspond with the present opportunities or programs in this region.

I returned to Ottawa with a sharpened interest in profiling Inuit youths' agency and strengths, an interest which led me to an organization whose mandate was centred on fostering assets like leadership and global citizenship among youths from Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, Northern Youth Abroad.

### **Northern Youth Abroad: An Overview**

NYA originated through an informal partnership between Nunavut Boards of Education, Nunavut Inuit Associations, and the international volunteer-sending organization, Canadian Crossroads International (Meyer, 2002). Following the publication of a research study that highlighted “a strong correlation between successful students and their reported participation in student travel and/or exchanges” (DaSilva & Hallett, 1997, p. 16) in the Eastern Arctic, the aforementioned actors banded together in 1998 to pilot five-week work placements and family home stays for ten youths in various southern Canadian communities. In 1999, the group launched an international program pilot for the Canadian pilot's alumni in Swaziland (Meyer, 2002). In an effort to formalize their programming and to access greater funding, NYA became certified as its own, independent non-profit organization in 2001. The years 2005 & 2006 also marked a series of significant changes to the organization; following a 2005 pilot program with youths from the Northwest Territories, NYA's target audience was subsequently expanded to include youths from both territories. In the following year, the program's name was officially changed from Nunavut Youth Abroad to Northern Youth Abroad and structural changes also made took place with the organization's Board of Directors at this time (R. Bisson, personal communication, August 19, 2011).

Today, NYA's regional volunteer selection committees select approximately 40 northern youths between the ages of 15-22 as participants in their Canadian Program each

year. Efforts are made to select youths from a diversity of lived experiences and regions, including youths who are at risk of prematurely leaving school and youths who have yet to travel outside of their home community (NYA, 2009). Following their selection as NYA Canadian Program participants in late October-November, participants work with a self-selected mentor in their communities to complete a series of writing assignments, fundraising activities, self-assessments, and community research in preparation for their southern Canadian work placements. Based on the career and personal interests that participants articulate in these assignments, NYA staff members match pairs of participants with host families and work placements across southern Canada. In late June, NYA staff members, volunteers, and alumni deliver a five-day orientation session for Canadian Program participants; this gathering enables the participants from both territories to meet and learn from one another while developing skills in leadership, first aid, communication, and cross-cultural adaptation, among other themes. Participants then travel as pairs to their placement communities, where they subsequently live and volunteer for five weeks. NYA staff members keep in close contact with the participants, host families, and worksite supervisors, via e-mail, phone, and in-person visits during the placement (R. Bisson, personal communication, August 19, 2011). Following the work placements, participants return to Ottawa for a reorientation session in which they reflect on their experiences and prepare for their return to their home communities. Upon returning home, participants are required to complete a few additional assignments. Many keep in touch with NYA's staff members for months if not for years via e-mail, phone, and remarkably constant Facebook updates (R. Bisson, personal communication, August 19, 2011).

Following their successful completion of NYA's Canadian program, alumni may apply to participate in a six-week volunteer work placement in Botswana. During NYA's international program, participants also complete a series of assignments in their home communities and attend orientation and reorientation sessions that NYA's staff members and volunteers facilitate outside of Ottawa. Unlike the Canadian Program, however, international program participants work, live, and travel as one or two teams for the duration of the six weeks. Participants' work placement, accommodations, and other arrangements whilst in Botswana are organized by a Canadian NGO and facilitated by two group leaders that are selected by NYA's staff members, a board member, and often at least one alumnus. These group leaders accompany each team for the international program's duration and have varied in age, heritage, and degree of cultural immersion in the North and/or in Africa (R. Bisson, personal communication, August 19, 2011).

In the ten months that followed my initial visit to the 2011 international program reorientation, NYA's staff members and Research Advisory Board have proven exceptionally generous in donating their time, resources, and expertise in guiding this project. I have also been moved by NYA's staff and board members' passion and commitment to the program's participants, and I hope that my thesis can contribute to the wisdom and richness of the organization's work.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Bhabha's (1988) post-colonial concepts of hybridity and third space also contributed to my research design and analysis insofar as it enabled me to conceptualize how Nunavut Inuit youths and southern Canadians (such as myself and NYA's staff members) might collaboratively create spaces of cultural renewal or innovation. The decision to begin with

post-colonial theory and a hypothesis (that Inuit youths, NYA members, and others might create a third space through NYA's programming) was discussed with and approved by NYA, as part of the participatory approach and process sought in the research. Deductive approaches, like the one employed in this research, have been critiqued alongside positivism as being contrary to or at least a partial impediment to participatory or "action" research (Chesler, 1991). This thesis and its process challenge that blanket statement, however, by incorporating theory at an early stage of the research design while maintaining open channels of communication and partnership with the organization and its members at the heart of this research, NYA.

Hybridity refers to new sites that are opened as unequal cultural powers and discourses shift, mix, and weave together (Williams & Tanaka, 2007). The creation of hybrid formations relies on the assertion that cultural identity can consist of "overlapping, migratory movements of cultural formations" that cannot be ascribed, ahistorical, or pre-determined (Rizvi, Lingard, & Lavia, 2006, p. 253). Instead, cultural identity is continually evolving and is negotiated across class, race, gender, and cultural traditions. According to Bhabha (1988), "third space" refers to the conditions or processes that facilitate the creation of hybrid formations. Bhabha (1998) contended that communities and nations can transform cultural domination by enunciating new cultural demands, meanings, and strategies in this third space. In so doing, previously marginalized cultural groups recognize cultural differences within their community and draw from these differences to generate new or modified cultural identities. These new identities can fulfil a liberating role as they "displace the histories that constitute [them], and set up new structures of authority, new political

initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom” (Rutherford, 1990, p. 211).

The concepts of hybridity and third space provided tools through which to critically assess the perspectives of a southern-Canadian-founded organization and to recognize the unique, cultural knowledge of Inuit youths. “Authentic” Inuit knowledge has typically been associated with older generations, and many Inuit youths have reported feeling excluded from this narrow conceptualization of Inuit identity (Hanson, 2003; Searles, 2006). My research disrupts this association by privileging Inuit youths’ perspectives and by highlighting how these views can differ from those of other Inuit community members. The concepts of hybridity and third space also provided valuable tools through which to contextualize and analyse NYA’s work as a Qallunaat-founded, educational travel organization (Qallunaat is typically translated to mean “white people” in the Inuit language). Residential schooling imposed an assimilative, colonial form of educational travel that removed Inuit youths from their communities. NYA’s staff and board members, aware of educational travel’s unsettling history in Nunavut, have expressed deep concerns and interests in displacing the traditional power dynamics and assimilative tendencies that had underpinned earlier forms of educational travel in Nunavut (Kreuger, 2002; Meyer, 2002). Hence, NYA’s staff and board members seek to disrupt the authority and colonial biases that may be associated with accredited education programs; in effect, NYA allows for a “third space;” as will be seen further below, this organization has enabled Nunavut Inuit youths to co-create a space of intercultural weaving and dialogue.

Framing my research through the post-colonial concepts of hybridity and third space provided useful tools with which to include Inuit youths’ perspectives, to analyse the

potential benefits of a Qallunaat-founded organization, and to complicate and blur the supposed binary between these two cultural groups. Yet, throughout my analysis, I often position Inuit and Qallunaat/southern Canadians as distinct groups rather than as fluid, overlapping, and heterogeneous identities. Hutcheon (1989) proposed a strategy of a “complicitous critique” in order to address such concerns. A “complicitous critique” is one which “has to acknowledge its own complicity with the very values upon which it seeks to comment” (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 10). In order to critique the binary between Inuit/Qallunaat, I consequently take up the very terms and binary that I intend to blur and complicate throughout my analysis. My thesis contributes to the broader literature on third space and hybridity, on Inuit youths, and on volunteer travel. My thesis highlights the pervasiveness of neo-colonial pressures and influences on volunteer travel and on Nunavut Inuit youths’ lives. More compellingly, Chapters III and IV illustrate the agency and adaptability of Inuit youths in occupying and occasionally disrupting spaces of neo-colonial subjection. Further, these chapters highlight how a national NGO can draw from colonial institutions like educational travel and volunteer tourism to support Inuit youths in contesting and renegotiating these spaces. In doing so, my thesis provides an in-depth, empirical case study of how Bhabha’s (1988) concept of third space, a site that is neither colonial nor pre-colonial but “something else besides,” can be created by Nunavut Inuit youths through educational travel. Finally, my thesis highlights how the ability of a third space to transform broader structures of power can also be hampered by the pervasiveness of neo-colonial structures, such as those found in the volunteer tourism industry, in NYA, and in present-day Nunavut.

## **CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY & METHODS**

### **Methodology**

#### **Epistemology**

My research seeks to understand how Inuit youths construct and develop leadership, cross-cultural awareness, individual career goals, and global citizenship as participants and alumni of the program NYA. As such, I follow a constructionist approach, which asserts that reality is “constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 52). Constructionists argue that learning and truth are neither fully objective/pre-existent nor fully subjective/relativistic; instead, truth is constructed through the subjective meanings that human beings attribute to objects and to the world. While individuals’ interpretations of meanings will consequently vary, constructionists contend that broader social institutions such as religion and culture contribute to the construction of shared meanings within social groups (Crotty, 1998).

#### **Intrinsic Case Study Methodology**

Qualitative research is characterized by researchers’ curiosity in the “complexity of social interactions expressed in daily life and . . . the meanings that the participants themselves attribute to these interactions” (Marshall & Rossman, 2010, p. 2). Given that my research questions address how NYA Nunavut Inuit alumni perceive, describe, and develop abstract concepts across various social settings, I felt it was appropriate to pursue these questions through a qualitative approach.

In light of the variability and complexities that qualitative researchers perceive in social reality, qualitative studies often utilize a pragmatic integration of multiple methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). My research took the form of a

qualitative case study and illustrated such an integration of multiple methods, which I will show in the methods section. I now turn my attention to my choice of methodology.

Stake (2005) defined an intrinsic case study as a qualitative investigation of a bounded system or unit in which the study is undertaken to simply better understand the case: “It is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but instead because, in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest” (p. 445). Hence, intrinsic case studies are not intended to explain abstract constructs or generic phenomenon, nor do they seek to build theory (Stake, 2005). Instead, an intrinsic case study is undertaken with the explicit purpose of providing a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) and a vivid portrayal of the case in question. In this study the “case” is NYA’s programming for Nunavut youths from 2006 to 2011.

Yin (1994) recommended that case studies be employed as a research strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being assessed, when the researcher is unable to control the phenomenon under study, and/or when the unit of analysis is a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context. In studying *how* participation in NYA has influenced Nunavut Inuit youth participants, my proposed research topic meets all three of these conditions and is thus well-suited to the use of case study methodology.

Case studies have been criticized for providing little basis for generalization (Jaworski & Coupland, 2006; Yin, 1994). In response to this critique, a growing number of qualitative researchers contend that generalizability and comparison are neither feasible nor desirable research objectives when assessing subjective, lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). For example, Stake (2005) asserted,

[c]omparison is a grand epistemological strategy, a powerful conceptual mechanism, fixing attention upon one or a few attributes. Thus, it obscures any case knowledge that fails to facilitate comparison. . . damage occurs when the commitment to generalize or to theorize runs so strong that the researcher's attention is drawn away from features important for understanding the case itself. (pp. 457-458)

Thus, while case studies may indeed lack generalizeability, some qualitative researchers contend that comparison should not be a priority within research.

## **Methods**

### **Participant Recruitment and Sampling**

My research focused on the experiences of NYA alumni who had participated in one or both phases of NYA from the year 2006 onwards. My rationale for focusing on the experiences of participants from the years 2006-2011 was three-fold. First, NYA underwent significant structural, regional, and staff changes during 2006 (R. Bisson, personal communication, August 22, 2011); hence, participants' experiences before and after 2006 are likely to have changed significantly. Second, it was logistically more feasible to conduct research regarding participants from these more recent years, as many of these participants have remained in regular communication with NYA and were therefore easier to contact to request an interview. Finally, there have been no academic studies or external evaluations conducted with NYA since the year 2005. Prior to this year, a Master's thesis (Meyers, 2002), a Master's research paper (Kreuger, 2002), and several externally commissioned reports (Wind & Hodgson, 2005a, 2005b) were written about this organization's creation, perceived impacts, and relationships with mentors and host families, respectively. My focus

on the years 2006-2011 thus had the potential to yield findings that are more reflective of the program's current structure, programming, and effects.

Randomized selection, while typical in positivist studies, is ill-adapted to most qualitative research given that the sample size is typically much too small (Stake, 2005). In its place, qualitative case study researchers often adopt purposive sampling techniques, in which the participants who are chosen "purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Thus, the primary criterion for sample selection becomes the potential for learning rather than representativeness (Stake, 2005). Stake (2005) asserted that effective purposive sampling requires that "the researcher examines various interests in the phenomena, selecting a case of some typicality but leaning towards those cases that seem to offer an *opportunity to learn* . . . That may mean taking the one most accessible or the one we can spend the most time with" (p. 451). My selection of the interviewees was consequently oriented towards learning as much as possible through my interaction with the participants rather than engaging in positivist preoccupations with representativeness or unbiased selection. My archival research complemented these interviews by drawing on documents that had been written by every alumni and every international program group leader from 2006-2011.

Following a phone consultation with NYA's Board of Directors, the Board's members approved of my proposal to conduct ten interviews with a variety of NYA Nunavut alumni. In addition to including a balance of gender, home communities, and years of participation, I strove to also include a balance between positive and/or negative experiences during and after participants' NYA placements. In order to ensure that my research included a balance of these experiences, I worked with NYA's Program Director to identify and

recruit youths who fell into the following rough categories, developed by the Program Director and based on her recollection of youths' own satisfaction with their personal and professional lives: 1) youths who did very well on placement and very well afterwards; 2) youths who did well on placement and well afterwards; 3) youths who did well during placement but who encountered difficulties upon returning to their home communities; and 4) youths who encountered difficulties during placement and difficulties upon returning to their home communities. According to the Program Director, the majority of youths fell into the second and third aforementioned categories, a less significant but substantial number fell into the first, and relatively few youths fell into the fourth. I subsequently recruited alumni whose experiences, home communities, gender, years of participation, and length of participation (i.e., participation in the Canadian or in both the Canadian and International programs) reflected a balance across these elements. In recognition of my interviewees' expert knowledge, each participant was provided with a \$50 honorarium and a thank-you card. While the experiences of NYA's Nunavut Inuit alumni formed the core of my research, I also conducted an interview with the Program Director and with a long-time board member in order to provide a richer contextualization of these participants' experiences. These twelve interviews were all conducted in a semi-structured manner.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

A semi-structured interview is characterized by its varied content and flow. While the interviewer typically prepares a number of questions to ask the participant in advance, a high level of interactivity develops as the participant's responses guide the researcher in posing additional questions or probes (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Through my interview guide and through additional probes, interviewees provided rich reflections regarding NYA's four

objectives, their own perceived growth according to these objectives, and the barriers or opportunities that they faced in seeking to further develop these objectives as alumni. These interviews also generated considerable discussion around different conceptualizations of leadership and the ways in which youths had developed such leadership styles or skills. In response to the richness of these conversations, I decided to explicitly address how NYA's Nunavut Inuit alumni describe and develop leadership as a second research question. The majority of my interviews took place over the phone; as a result, my ability to build rapport with participants and respond to non-verbal cues was more limited than would have been the case during an in-person interview. In recognition of this limitation, I integrated participant observation as a means of better establishing a relationship with the organization and with the alumni themselves, as I discuss in greater detail below.

### **Participant Observation**

By volunteering weekly with NYA, I tried to be of some assistance to the organization and to become more familiar with NYA's staff members, alumni, and programming. Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) described participant observation as a method of collecting data that occurs through the researcher observing or taking part in the activities of the people being studied; however, since my research focused on an organization and was premised on collaboration, my participant observation with NYA more so centred on a study of the organization's activities, relationships, and values, and not, to paraphrase Dewalt and Dewalt— on “people being studied.” I integrated this method into my research by volunteering five hours per week at NYA's office from November 2011 to April 2012. The majority of my volunteer work involved updating NYA's alumni contact database and liaising with NYA alumni. Doing so helped me to develop familiarity with the communities,

names, and backgrounds of some participants. Volunteering in the office also offered a richer understanding of participants' experiences and provided opportunities to consult with NYA's four full-time staff members regarding various components of my research. Further, this experience allowed me to become familiar with Nunavut youths' phone etiquette and conversation styles prior to my phone interviews. Indigenous scholars such as Wilson (2001) and Weber-Pillwax (2001) have noted that building relationships and understanding the contexts of one's research participants are essential components of the research process. Accordingly, my primary objective in employing participant observation was to contribute to NYA's work and to help repay the organization for the time that its staff so generously offered in helping me craft my research project.

### **Archival Research**

My interviews and participant observation were complemented by an extensive review of NYA's institutional records. McCullough (2004) described institutional records as "an abundance of material generated by a wide range of social institutions" (p. 62), which are frequently stored "in-house . . . so that the institution can itself continue to make use of them" (p. 63). I analysed a variety of such records in order to better contextualise NYA's work and Nunavut Inuit alumni's experiences.

During my research, NYA staff helpfully provided me with full access to NYA's digital network drive and to the majority of paper documents and records housed at the organization's office in Ottawa. In reviewing these documents, I first sought to select files that reflected how NYA has defined and represented its mandate to a variety of audiences. This was completed by selecting documents created by NYA staff for funders, participants, mentors, work supervisors, host families, and the Board of Directors. These documents were

coded thematically using NVivo 9 software, as will be discussed in greater detail in the data analysis section.

Following this initial round of archival research, I conducted an in-depth analysis of documents that addressed how or whether participants developed a stronger sense of cross-cultural awareness, individual career goals, leadership, and global citizenship. To do so, I digitized Nunavut Inuit alumni's participants' feedback forms and reflection assignments from 2008-2011 and then coded the data using NVivo software. Feedback forms and assignments for participants from 2006 and 2007 were stored off-site and were consequently not included in my analysis. This omission was not deemed significant by NYA's staff members, who felt that the feedback assignments from 2006/2007 would not present remarkably distinct findings from those of later years.

NYA conducted online surveys with alumni on a yearly basis from 2008 to the present. I organized the responses of NYA Nunavut Inuit alumni from 2006-2011 into an Excel spreadsheet and coded their responses to questions that pertained to my area of research (see Appendix 2). NYA's electronic archives also included written reports by the project leaders of each program year's two international teams. Each of these reports was collected as data, given their detailed and thorough description of participants' experiences during the NYA international program. My archival research also included the international teams' project leaders' final reports to NYA.

### **Photo-Elicitation**

Photo-elicitation refers to a variety of techniques employed within qualitative research through which the participant generates and shares photographs with the researcher (Harper, 2002). In a study conducted by Castleden, Garvin, and Huu-ay-aht First Nation

(2008), photo-elicitation enabled participants to frame the research through their choice of photographs, which proved effective in mitigating the traditional power inequalities that exist between the researcher and the researched. Other researchers have praised photo-elicitation for its ability to assist participants for whom English is a second language by enabling them to express themselves through visual cues (Hergenrather et al., 2009; Stevens, 2010). Finally, several researchers have asserted that photo-elicitation strategies are well-suited to research with indigenous communities insofar as this method combines visual recording with oral storytelling, a form of knowledge exchange in many indigenous communities (Castleden et al., 2008; Gray et al., 2010; Ip, 2007).

For these reasons, I had assumed that photo-elicitation would be well-suited to my research, and I invited my first three interviewees to electronically send photographs that related to their experience with NYA. Yet, photo-elicitation rapidly appeared ill-suited to my research for several reasons. Though most participants had taken a number of digital photographs during their trip, some interviewees were possibly unsure of how to send these files via e-mail. More importantly, I would assume that interviewees felt little motivation to send these files, since the interviewees had not helped shape the research nor did they have a personal or trust-based relationship with me prior to our interview. Hence, though many interviewees possessed the necessary computer skills for sending in photographs, they lacked the motivation or interest in doing so and I did not receive any photographs. This contributed to an awkward power dynamic at the beginning of my initial interviews, as I perceived that some interviewees felt guilty for not having sent along the requested photographs. Hence, my assumption that photo-elicitation would help balance power inequalities between me and my interviewees proved inaccurate – if anything, my requests

for photographs served to reinforce my positioning as a demanding researcher. I consequently ceased requesting that participants send along photographs and thus did not use photo-elicitation to gather data.

### **Positioning Qallunaat-Led Research in Relation to Indigenous Research Methodologies**

Following decades of research *on* indigenous peoples (Brant-Castellano, 2004), indigenous communities and scholars have increasingly critiqued the academy for its general lack of culturally appropriate ethical standards, its lack of respect for communities' cultural beliefs, its failure to conduct research relevant to communities' priorities, and its misappropriation of indigenous knowledge (Brown, 2005). In light of the significant wrongdoings and shortcomings of Eurocentric research in Aboriginal communities, researchers have an obligation to disrupt the positivist, non-participatory methods that underpinned much previous academic research in or on Aboriginal communities. Yet, research that problematizes Eurocentric assumptions and methods cannot necessarily claim to reflect an indigenous research methodology. Several Aboriginal scholars have asserted that indigenous research must by definition be conducted *by* indigenous researchers (Steinhauer, 2002; Wilson, 2001); non-Aboriginal researchers such as Giles (2005) have similarly asserted that the use of indigenous research methodology on the part of non-indigenous researchers could be construed as a misappropriation of these research approaches.

Lincoln and Denzin (2008) argued that Western researchers' primary role in supporting indigenous methodologies is that of deconstructing the positivist tenets and values underlying much contemporary Western academic research. By acting as "friendly insiders" (p. 21), antipositivist researchers can help problematize traditional research

methods while creating space within the academy for indigenous voices. As an “allied other” (p. 21), then, I intended to privilege Inuit voices and to critique the positivist epistemologies that have been common in research on Inuit youths. To do so, I sought to identify organizations that emphasized Inuit youths’ strengths and would be interested in collaborating in my research project. I selected NYA as my case study since this organization’s staff strongly emphasized Inuit youths’ strengths and expressed a strong interest in my proposed research. In recognition of my responsibility to conduct relevant and culturally-sensitive research with this organization, I invited members of the Board of Directors to act – on a volunteer basis – as an advisory board; my Research Advisory Board subsequently consisted of five people: two NYA alumni (one Dene, one Inuk), two educators (one Métis, one Euro-Canadian), and the Program Director (Euro-Canadian). This Research Advisory Board provided invaluable guidance regarding my criteria for participant selection, my interview schedules, and my analysis of the research findings through bi-monthly e-mails and conference calls. My intention to produce culturally relevant research with participatory elements was further reinforced by my efforts to use photo-elicitation and semi-structured interviews.

Yet, participatory methods and design do not necessarily foster participatory results. Though I have striven to privilege Inuit voices in my research with some success, my efforts can and should be critiqued in several regards. First, the majority of individuals who influenced the focus and nature of my research within NYA were of Euro-Canadian descent. Further, I had relatively few opportunities to interact face-to-face with NYA’s Nunavut Inuit alumni, since the majority of past participants are scattered throughout Nunavut and those who are based in Ottawa face demanding academic schedules. Finally, my ability to connect

with some interviewees was restricted by a language barrier, since some interviewees spoke English as a second language and reported feeling embarrassed or frustrated by their inability to communicate the nuances of their ideas. I assured these interviewees that their English was infinitely better than my beginner's knowledge of Inuktitut— an undeniable truth that I would subsequently prove through my faltering attempts to exclaim “thank-you” in each of the interviewee's dialects. I also tried to compensate for the limited scope for participatory collaboration by encouraging research participants to ask questions about my research and to emphasize what they felt was most significant to discuss during the interviews. Further, I invited participants to provide feedback and revisions to their interview transcript, as well as two of my thesis chapters. These efforts are rooted in my desire to be respectful of and accountable to the Inuit youths and the organization on which my thesis is based. I, like all northern researchers, face a further obligation to report on our successes and shortcomings in seeking to foster significant research relationships (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami & Nunavut Research Institute, 2007). I consequently put forward these reflections in recognition of my responsibility to further strengthen Inuit voices in future research, and I invite other “privileged Westerners” (Lincoln & Denzin, 2008, p. 21) to also incorporate such critical, reflexive assessments into their work.

### **Thematic Coding**

I analyzed the data with NVivo 9 according to Miles and Huberman's (1994) guidelines for qualitative coding. These authors defined codes as “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (p. 56). Such codes are attached to segments of text and can be re-organized into different codes, hierarchies, and patterns during different stages of the research. Miles and

Huberman (1994) recommended first developing a start list of codes in order to analyse the data according to the main components of the research question. Start lists then undergo significant revisions once these codes are applied to the data since certain codes become too broad, ambiguous, or redundant, while the data often suggest new codes to be included (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I consequently adopted an iterative approach to coding in which I generated a start list of codes and continually modified this list in light of new information and categories that emerged from the data.

According to Boeiji (2010) and Lincoln and Guba (1985), this initial process of coding and recoding data has finished when the analysis itself appears to cease yielding new categories and when regular patterns or trends begin to emerge within these categories. Once this level of saturation occurs, researchers can commence creating pattern codes, described as “explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 69). This stage of coding builds on first-level coding by grouping sets or themes contained within codes into more meaningful units of analysis, such as themes, causes/explanations, relationships among people, and theoretical constructs (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Effective patterning requires considerable rigour and diligence, as the researcher must be ready to reconfigure these patterns “as the data shape up otherwise, to subject the most compelling themes to merciless cross-checking, and to lay aside the more tenuous ones until other informants and observations give them better empirical grounding” (p. 70).

Throughout the process of first-level coding, I typed memos into NVivo 9 regarding the potential relationships that were emerging between codes (Glaser, 1978). After reviewing these memos and re-reading my coded data, I generated an initial series of patterns. I then

elaborated and tested these pattern codes by applying them to additional archival records and interview transcripts.

### **CHAPTER III: INVESTIGATING NYA'S EFFECTIVENESS IN ACHIEVING ITS MANDATE WITH NUNAVUT INUIT YOUTHS**

In this chapter, I present a case study pertaining to the mandate of Northern Youth Abroad (NYA), the first and presently the only educational travel program developed specifically to meet the needs of youth from the Canadian North (NYA, 2011). My research, which was developed in partnership with NYA, seeks to answer the following question: How effective is NYA in achieving its mandate of “fostering cross-cultural awareness, individual career goals, international citizenship, and leadership” (NYA, 2012, p. 1) among Nunavut Inuit youths? To examine this question, I situated my work within the broader literature on third space, a concept that Homi Bhabha (1988) used to refer to sites that emerge as a result of colonial oppression, but that have the possibility to transform the power dynamics and cultural assimilation that had previously marked these spaces of colonial domination. I also drew on two bodies of literature that relate to NYA's work, one pertaining to educational travel and the other to Nunavut Inuit youths.

Volunteer travel programs, which are becoming increasingly common forms of experiential learning for North American youths (Palacios, 2010), have been critiqued for neglecting host communities' needs and perpetuating neo-colonial values in the guise of cross-cultural awareness (Bamber & Hankin, 2011; Guttentag, 2009; Palacios, 2010; Raymond & Hall, 2008). Further, such programs are typically completed by middle or upper class, predominantly white youths; consequently, the experiences of less privileged youths and Aboriginal youths have received little attention in the scholarly literature or in practice (Higgins-Desbiolles & Russell-Mundine, 2007). NYA is distinct from mainstream volunteer

travel programs in at least two regards. First, NYA's programming is specifically targeted at northern, predominantly Aboriginal youths. Second, NYA's mandate is focused squarely on investing in its participants' capabilities to contribute positively to their own, home communities upon their return (R. Bisson, personal communication, June 14, 2012). As a result, the model of volunteer travel that NYA has created could be likened to a third space, which successfully avoids the neo-colonial premises underlying many volunteer travel programs, and creates a space for Nunavut Inuit youths, in collaboration with southern Canadians and Botswanans to create "something else besides" (Bhabha, 1988, p. 93).

Drawing on semi-structured interviews with past participants and archival research at the NYA office in Ottawa, as well as literature pertaining to Inuit youths and to the volunteer travel industry, I argue that NYA has achieved impressive success in fostering culturally relevant growth in Nunavut Inuit youths' cross-cultural awareness, individual career goals, international citizenship, and leadership. I further argue that alumni's capacity to advance even further with these goals following NYA has often been restricted by neo-colonial structures and biases; nevertheless, NYA's programming is noteworthy for its disruption of some of the neo-colonial influences that underpin volunteer travel and Nunavut Inuit youths' lived experiences more broadly.

### **Literature Review**

NYA's programming bridges two bodies of literature, one pertaining to volunteer travel and the other to Nunavut Inuit youths. In this section, I provide an overview of the growing corpus of literature about volunteer travel and discuss some of the benefits, critiques, and connections to colonial-era travel. In particular, I focus on how such travel has involved – and continues to involve – individuals like myself, from historically imperial (e.g.

UK) or colonial (e.g. southern Canada, US, Australia) societies, purportedly “aiding” societies that are usually indigenous and historically colonised.

I then draw on post-colonial theory and situate educational travel in the context of present-day Nunavut. Finally, I illustrate how NYA’s objectives, while seemingly similar to those of other educational travel programs, may hold different meanings for Nunavut Inuit youths in light of the social, economic, political, and neo-colonial influences that they face.

### **Volunteer Tourism Programs**

Volunteer travel or tourism programs have been defined as short-term programs in which youths from “developed countries” travel to a “developing country” and perform various volunteer tasks (Sherrard Sherraden et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2005). Common project placements include volunteering in hospitals, orphanages, or other local civil society organizations, as well as constructing housing or public structures in rural villages (Clost, 2011; Lyons & Wearing, 2008). Studies have illustrated that these programs can yield significant benefits for individual participants, particularly with regards to strengthened career opportunities and cross-cultural awareness. In Canada, a qualitative study with 108 returned volunteer travel participants found that roughly three-quarters of the youths said that the learn/volunteer abroad experience had an impact on their career goals. Further, almost all respondents agreed that their overseas experience had or will help them find employment (Tiessen, 2012). Other studies have suggested that the majority of participants in volunteer travel programs developed an appreciation of other cultures and a more critical awareness of their own (Eurocentric) cultural biases as a result of their experiences (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Lambert, 1989; Thomas, Abt, & Chang, 2005). Yet, other studies have cautioned that the development of cross-cultural understanding has been overemphasized if

not misconstrued as a result of the neo-colonial biases of volunteers and their sending organizations (Guttentag, 2009; Palacios, 2010; Raymond & Hall, 2008).

Neo-colonial dimensions of volunteer tourism can be revealed by assessing the historic antecedents to volunteer tourism and analysing the discourses that underpin volunteer tourism programs today. Canadians' self-perception as civilized members of the Commonwealth framed Canadian tourists' travels from as early as the 1800s. Since these times, notions of civilisation and superiority have prompted many (particularly female) Canadian tourists to visit destitute regions or neighborhoods of foreign countries (Morgan, 2008). Wang (2000) drew on these notions in order to contextualize the pre-eminence of "Third World" tourism (which includes volunteer tourism) today. Such travel, he posited, has provided Westerners with a mechanism with which to alleviate "modernity's guilt" through a "ritual respect of difference" (p. 140). "Third World" tourism's unconscious motivation in guilt alleviation can manifest in at least two negative consequences in the context of volunteer tourism. First, Westerners' self-interested motivations can mean that the host communities' desires may be unheard, neglected, or even negated. Religious missionaries' work has been cited as an example of this shortcoming (Raymond & Hall, 2008). Volunteer tourism projects have similarly been critiqued; Bamber and Hankin (2011), for example, asserted that "the volunteer tourism industry, with its ethos of 'holiday for humanity' and 'the giving trip' can be described "at best, self-serving, at worst providing students with life-enriching experiences at the expense of people living in poverty" (p. 193).

A second negative consequence of volunteer tourism is its participants' lack of reflexivity, as individuals may waive an awareness or interest in local social justice issues or volunteer opportunities in favour of intervening in foreign communities. Indeed, as Wang

(2000) suggested, traveling to destinations similar to one's own culture may be considered a meaningless exercise for those Westerners in search of guilt alleviation. Osler and Starkey (2003) noted this lack of home community engagement and stated, "It is insufficient . . . to feel and express a sense of solidarity with others elsewhere if we cannot establish a sense of solidarity with others in our own communities" (p. 252). Hence, by situating the volunteer experience in a foreign setting, participants can readily associate social injustice with the "Other" while failing to recognize their own complicity in perpetuating social injustices as Western consumers and citizens (Palacios, 2010).

In sum, volunteer tourism initiatives occupy a precarious position. Such programs can yield significant benefits for the individual and can foster a critical, cross-cultural awareness; however, these same programs can also perpetuate neo-colonial paradigms around the roles of youths from historically colonial societies as assisting or serving the powerless Other.

The literature on volunteer tourism thus provides an important means of examining the potential shortcomings of this form of travel, which traditionally transports youths from colonial or settler societies to colonised societies. In the context of the Canadian North, literature has suggested that volunteers travel *in* and not *out* of the region (Clost, 2011). Indeed, Aboriginal youths have been under-represented in volunteer tourism programs as a result of barriers like limited travel mobility, family obligations, restricted educational opportunities, and the limited relevance of Eurocentric volunteer tourism programs (Calhoun et al., 2003; Canada World Youth [CWY], 2010; Hewitt, 2011). Little to no research to date has theorized about how Inuit youths might experience the past and ongoing incoming

volunteer expeditions, let alone how Inuit youths themselves might engage in travel programs in support of individual and community goals.

NYA is compelling because it inverts volunteer tourism, first by sending Aboriginal volunteers to southern Canada, and second by uniting indigenous peoples across continents (Canada-Africa). By enabling colonized Aboriginal peoples from Canada to interact with indigenous peoples and non-indigenous peoples in their own country and further abroad, NYA swaps the roles of traveler and recipient, and may consequently disrupt traditional, neo-colonial patterns in volunteer travel and in Nunavut Inuit youths' own lives. To better understand how such an approach may be possible, I situate NYA's four objectives in a brief, post-colonial overview of Nunavut.

#### **A Post-Colonial Contextualization of NYA's Mandate**

Post-colonial critiques of volunteer tourism are relevant for Nunavut Inuit youths in light of colonialism's impacts in present-day Nunavut. In this section, I outline some of the colonial influences that I argue have had an impact on cross-cultural awareness, individual career goals, global citizenship, and leadership. I will draw examples from across the four Inuit settlement regions of Canada since the formal divisions between these four areas (Nunavut, Nunavik, Inuvialuit and Nunatsiavut) have been a recent development and since the body of literature from Nunavut alone is sparse.

**Cross-cultural awareness.** When explorers first arrived from Europe, they were purportedly given the name Qallunaat by the Inuit in reference to their "prominent eyebrows" (Qumaq, 1991, p. 595, as cited by Dorais, 2005). Qallunaat, in turn, described the Inuit as "heathen aborigines" (Zwick, 2006, p. 21) and went so far as to exhibit Inuit, who subsequently appeared at every world's fair and at many major European and American

expositions or zoos through 1915 (Zwick, 2006). A Frankfurt newspaper article from 1880 aptly captures Qallunaat's patronizing fascination with the Inuit in its remark that "even if so-called culture has already had a strong effect on them, for us there still remain enough interesting and natural things about them to be observed and maybe also admired" (Ulrikab & Lutz, 2005, p. 46). In this instance, Qallunaat dehumanized Inuit to such an extent that cross-cultural awareness was deemed impossible or at least less desirable than an examination of Inuit's "natural" differences. In Canada, the relationships between Qallunaat and Inuit developed into a legacy of cultural assimilation as Inuit were forbidden to speak their language, pursue their traditional lifestyles, or uphold traditional beliefs (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Through interventions like residential schooling, cross-cultural awareness was negated by Qallunaat in favour of cultural assimilation.

Inuit peoples in Canada have displaced the legacy of zoo exhibits, residential schools, and other harmful cross-cultural interactions through their remarkable leadership in securing cultural rights and political autonomy through four, separate land claims agreements. Nevertheless, the nature of cross-cultural exchange between Inuit, Qallunaat, and other cultures today has remained fundamentally unequal. For example, when asked about his participation at an art conference, the Inuk soapstone carver Iyola Kingwatsiak (2010) reflected that

they treat us like carvings. The white people never seemed to be interested in talking with us. We work hard to make a living with our art and nobody asked us to talk about how we make our carvings and prints. (p. 28)

Hence, in the absence of meaningful dialogue and partnership, some Qallunaat's cultural interactions with Inuit continue to resemble those of the colonial-era Inuit exhibits (Ulrikab & Lutz, 2005, p. 46).

Though inadequate opportunities exist for Inuit to meaningfully share their culture with Qallunaat, Nunavut youths have become increasingly immersed in Eurocentric cultural influences as a result of factors like mass-media and increased travel opportunities. Nunavut Inuit youths' limited but frequent exposure to Qallunaat culture may have significant negative effects on Inuit youths' own self-perceptions and cultural identities. Hanson's (2003) research with Nunavut youths suggested that the pre-eminence of Qallunaat cultural influences in Nunavut has contributed to Inuit youths' negative cultural perceptions and ethnic identity. Kral et al.'s (2003) research in Igloodik and Qikiqtarjuaq also suggested that youth from these two Nunavut communities confront considerable tensions in developing a strong ethnic identity in light of the pervasive Euro-Canadian influences that they face. While research regarding the potential effects of such a cross-cultural tension is preliminary, several researchers have connected a weakened sense of cultural identity with low self-esteem, eroded intergenerational support networks, and higher rates of suicide among Inuit youths (Department of Culture, Language, Elders, and Youth [DCLEY], 2003; Searles, 2006; Targé, 2008).

**Individual career goals.** The power dynamics underpinning these changes in cross-cultural awareness/exchange have also been linked to Inuit's pursuit of Euro-Canadian careers and lifestyles. Up until the 1940s, Inuit in the Eastern Arctic were still actively involved with the arctic fox fur trade and were living "more or less traditional lives" (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). As pelt prices dropped and the presence of the military, missionaries,

and resource developers expanded, Inuit reliance on an exchange economy transformed into a reliance on the welfare state. The Canadian state sought to provide Inuit with material security and well-being through the imposition of (frequently inadequate) material infrastructure and through the creation or expansion of settlements. Inuit's economic dependency was consequently intensified, since communities were relegated to areas accessible to southerners rather than areas with rich hunting grounds or other economic prospects for the Inuit (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994).

Though substantially more employment opportunities have become available in Nunavut with the creation of a territorial government in 1999 and with the expansion of the resource development sector (Hicks, 2000), Nunavut Inuit continue to face barriers in pursuing many careers. Among youths, school absenteeism is common (ITK, 2005) and high school completion low; in 2001, 59% of Inuit aged 20 to 24 had not completed high school (O'Donnel & Tait, 2003). As a result of these low graduation rates, many Inuit youths encounter difficulties in finding employment in certain sectors (O'Donnel & Tait, 2003). Inuit students who do graduate often face significant cultural, economic, and logistical barriers to pursuing further post-secondary training (ITK, 2005). With the exception of distance education programs and several degrees offered through the Arctic College, university education opportunities require that Nunavut youth travel and live outside of their home communities. In addition to the financial costs and cultural adaptations that accompany such a move, Hanson (2003) reported that the decision to pursue post-secondary education, "could be perceived as an abandonment of their culture, with the concomitant feelings of guilt and shame associated with this betrayal" (p. 68). In light of these significant barriers, it is perhaps unsurprising that the 2006 unemployment rates among the Inuit of

Nunavut reached approximately 19.2 per cent, almost four times the unemployment rate of the Canadian non-Aboriginal population for that year (Statistics Canada, 2008).

The rapid transition from hunting and trapping and Nunavut Inuit women's concomitant tasks, like sewing and preparing skins, to a reliance on the state also altered Nunavummiut youths' amount of leisure time. Nunavut Inuit youths are less compelled to engage in land-based activities for survival, may not be expected or encouraged to attend school regularly, and are likely to encounter difficulties in securing formal employment (Cole, 1982; ITK, 2005; Minor, 1992). Consequently, these youths have much more leisure time and fewer recreational opportunities in comparison to earlier generations of Inuit (Pauktuutit, 2006). Cole's (1982) doctoral dissertation about Inuit youth in Resolute Bay contended that increased amounts of leisure time resulted in a boredom that drove many youths to seek out excitement through activities such as vandalism, drug experimentation, and breaking and entering. Condon (1987) also hypothesized that alcohol use, petty theft, and vandalism had increased as a result of Inuit adolescents' boredom.

In sum, colonialism significantly impeded Inuit's ability to engage in traditional pursuits like hunting or preparing skins and failed to provide Inuit with adequate career alternatives. Though the education system and labour market have expanded in recent years and under Inuit rule, considerable barriers continue to constrain Inuit's pursuit of traditional and non-traditional careers.

**Leadership.** The meaning and practice of Inuit leadership has also been affected by the social and political transitions discussed above. Inuit values, such as group cohesion, equality, consensus, and sharing, differentiate Inuit forms of leadership from conventional Euro-Canadian leadership styles (Tompkins, 2006). In contrast to the emphasis on individual

achievements found in Western leadership models, Inuit Elders have emphasized the importance of leaders' developing strengths and abilities that enhance the group's well-being (Hanson, 2003; Minor, 1992; Tompkins, 2006). Further, Inuit leadership styles are described as fluid and communal processes whereby no single individual is characterized as *the* leader. Instead, some Inuit have emphasized the concept of *sivumuaqatiginniq*, an Inuktitut word meaning to lead forward together or to lead as a team (Lee, 1996).

Yet, many of the emerging leadership positions in Nunavut's public, private, and non-profit sector are premised on the assumptions that a leadership role should be occupied by a single person for an extended period of time. Further, these positions often require that the "leader" make decisions that exert authority over others, which contrasts with the Inuit model of leading by example and through non-interference (Boult, 2006). Some Inuit in these positions have reported significant stress or discomfort as a result of this tension. While some Inuit have responded to this tension by adapting Qallunaat leadership styles, other senior-level leadership positions suffer from high turn-over of Inuit staff or an under-representation of Inuit altogether (Pauktuutit, 2006). For example, Tompkins (2006) found that the Qallunaat leadership values that are embedded in the Qikiqtani school board have contributed to Inuit's under-representation in this system and Qallunaat's "appalling over-confidence, certainty, and arrogance" (p. 81) in assuming leadership positions. While the abovementioned studies emphasized Elders', educators', and older community members' perspectives on leadership, it is unclear whether contemporary Inuit youths perceive and develop leadership skills in a similar manner.

**Global citizenship.** Global citizenship, like leadership, may be viewed as a Western concept whose significance varies in Nunavut as a result of the region's distinct social,

historical, and political values. Though oft debated and redefined, most scholars describe global citizenship in relation to the behaviours, skills, or values through which individuals can address local and global social justice issues (Isin & Turner, 2007; Pike, 2008; Wood, 2008). Long before these definitions were developed or the world's state boundaries mapped, Inuit developed and maintained transnational linkages with other northern indigenous peoples (Stern, 2010). Yet, as Appadurai (1988) noted, the colonial view of an indigenous groups' "authentic" identity has erased these linkages from our collective memory and confined each indigenous group to an existence that is bound to a single, homogenous place: "The construction of their 'authentic' identity is rooted in the idea that the places to which they are indigenous constitute the only places appropriate for them, and thus they are effectively incarcerated, or confined, in those places" (p. 37). Min-ha (1988) noted that white people continue to view other cultures as objective and knowable in comparison to the subjectivity and heterogeneity of their own culture. This reductionist collapsing of divergent cultures into the "Other" has meant – according to Min-ha – that the white First World views cross-cultural interactions between non-white cultures as a puzzling and fruitless endeavour. She remarked,

That a white person makes a film on the Goba of the Zambezi, for example, or on the Tasaday of the Philippine rainforest, seems hardly surprising to anyone, but that a Third World member makes a film on other Third World peoples never fails to appear questionable to many . . . the pair is no longer outside/inside, that is to say, objective vs. subjective, but something between inside/inside – in what is already claimed as objective. (p. 75)

It is unsurprising, then, that little research has documented how global citizenship may be practiced in or from Nunavut. Nevertheless, examples of Nunavut Inuit promoting global citizenship and cross-cultural collaborations certainly exist. For example, Nunavummiut were actively involved in the creation and leadership of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (Stern, 2010), created an International Inuit Youth Exchange Program between Inuit youth, Yupik Russians, and Mapuche Chileans in 1995, and collaborated around land claims negotiations and language preservation strategies with indigenous groups in the Amazon, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere (Jull, 1999; ITK, 2012; Lees, Burgess, & Walton 2010). Today, programs such as the Circumpolar Young Leaders Program, the Inuit Circumpolar Youth Council, Nunavut Sivuniksavut, and NYA provide further avenues for Inuit youth to engage in exercises of international cooperation and understanding. Despite the growing numbers of present-day programs and the rich history of previous Inuit initiatives that could be linked to the concept of global citizenship, academic, governmental, and community-based research does not appear to have discussed the definition or significance of global citizenship as it relates to present-day Inuit youth.

In sum, numerous critiques have been issued regarding the “civilizing mission” and cultural homogenization that colonial actors wrongfully and destructively espoused in Inuit communities (e.g., Kanu, 2003; McGregor, 2010; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Indeed, by examining the four elements of NYA’s mandate – cross-cultural awareness, individual career goals, leadership, and global citizenship – much can be learned about the challenges Inuit youth face as a result of Canadian colonial influences. Volunteer tourism has also been widely critiqued as an industry that reifies cultural difference, ignores the desires or needs of host communities, and perpetuates neo-colonial perceptions of white innocence and the

virtuousness of volunteering abroad (Guttentag, 2009; Palacios, 2010; Raymond & Hall, 2008). NYA's programming and mandate bridges these two bodies of literature in a potentially transformative manner. In emphasising the mobility of colonised – rather than colonising – peoples, in visiting areas formed by and re-populated through colonialism (like much of southern Canada), and in enabling cross-indigenous interaction, NYA's model can disrupt some neo-colonial tendencies that frequently surface in volunteer tourism and in Nunavut Inuit youths' lives. I now turn to my own research in order to investigate the extent to which Nunavut Inuit alumni discuss developing according to NYA's four objectives.

### **Results**

In order to assess the impacts of NYA's unique form of cultural exchange, I conducted archival research, participant observation, and held semi-structured interviews with ten NYA alumni, the NYA Program Director, and an NYA Board Member. My results illustrate that NYA has made significant contributions to Nunavut Inuit participants' growth in the four above-mentioned objectives. NYA's Nunavut Inuit participants have encountered some difficulties in further pursuing the organization's objectives following and occasionally during NYA; nevertheless, the transformations that program participants reported are varied and noteworthy.

#### **Cross-Cultural Awareness**

I decided to assess the impact of cross-cultural awareness according to three different themes that continually emerged in the definitions of this term that were put forward by participants, staff members, and board members: developing an awareness of another culture, strengthening an awareness of one's own culture, and developing skills to interact/adapt to other cultures.

The degree to which alumni reported developing an awareness of other cultures varied according to youths' experiences prior to NYA. In 17 of the 78 feedback forms that I analysed participants reported that previous travel experiences and/or their families' lifestyle had prepared them for living in southern Canada, which resulted in few culture shocks or challenges. Most other participants, in contrast, described living in the South as a definite cultural shift in which communication norms, parenting styles, and recreational opportunities differed from those of their home communities. In response to these differences, many alumni described effective adaptation strategies, such as becoming more outgoing and adapting to their host family's chores or etiquette norms. While some participants reported feeling "very comfortable" throughout NYA's Canadian program (K. Ayalik, personal communication, February 8, 2012), a small number of alumni reflected that integration into southern Canadian culture was challenging if not impossible:

Their culture is nothing like my culture, and living in their culture is much harder, that you cannot share any time, cash, anything you want can't be given out . . . I learned that I cannot live with white people, their culture, for very long time. (NYA 2012b, p. 4)

In general, interviewees who had completed NYA's international program reported further developing cross-cultural awareness; however, the extent to which participants perceived cultural differences and developed cultural adaptation/interaction strategies varied. Some alumni felt that developing cross-cultural understanding was in fact easier in Botswana than in southern Canada. David, for example, shared that "it was harder to do anything" during his placement in the Canadian city of Mississauga, whereas Botswana provided many opportunities to meet local people and make friends (D. Ooleesie, personal

communication, February 9, 2012). Other alumni perceived greater cultural differences in their travels to Botswana than in their experiences in southern Canada, but also expressed an appreciation for the cross-cultural awareness that resulted. For example, Kate likened her arrival in Botswana to “being dropped on a different planet” and remarked that her exposure to “poverty and the issues that they [the San] are going through was a strong impact” (K. Ayalik, personal communication, February 8, 2012).

Though interviewees often described developing cross-cultural awareness during their placements in Botswana, my analysis of interview transcripts and of group leaders’ reports suggests that the scope of these cross-cultural interactions often varied depending on the group leaders’ own cross-cultural awareness and facilitation skills. Some NYA group leaders’ comments demonstrated a nuanced awareness of cross-cultural similarities and appeared successful in enabling participants to draw these connections. For example, one of the 2006 group leaders’ reports described how “it took some crafty facilitating on the part of the group leaders to make parallels between San and Canadian Aboriginal issues,” but also noted that “when this did happen, we could just about see light bulbs flashing on above our participants’ heads” (NYA, 2012d, p. 8). Other group leaders, in contrast, appeared to have little awareness of colonial history and of potential parallels between the experiences of NYA participants and the San peoples with whom they interacted. Several group leaders also reflected that “even though we lived in the community, we still lived in our own bubble” (NYA, 2012d, p. 8). Though NYA youths participated in a weekend home stay and had occasional opportunities to interact as individuals in the community, the vast majority of participants’ time was spent as a group participant rather than as an individual immersed in a foreign culture.

In spite of some limitations to participants' cross-cultural interactions during NYA's International Program, participants typically reported that their own Aboriginal cultures were highly valued and appreciated during their interactions with southern Canadians and with Botswanans. Further, virtually all participants reported significant growth in developing a sense of cultural identity. Indeed, all ten interviews, respondents discussed how their cultural presentations and daily interactions in southern Canada and (when applicable) Botswana enabled them to appreciate the uniqueness of their culture, to develop a sense of ownership in their own cultural knowledge, and to subsequently develop a greater interest in learning more about their culture. For example, Carl noted that NYA's Canadian and international program enabled him to "see myself more of where I was and who I am . . . where I fit into this big puzzle of the world" (C. Inaksajak, personal communication, February 2, 2012). Alumni who had only participated in NYA's Canadian program also reported a significant growth in cultural identity and pride. Neil Allurut, for example, shared that "it's like you realize who you were and what—culturally—you're from . . . it made me feel like I should take pride in it" (N. Allurut, personal communication, February 4, 2012).

Further, the growth in cross-cultural awareness and adaptation that alumni described appears to be linked to a variety of additional benefits. Many participants reported greater confidence in studying or living in southern Canada and in traveling more broadly as a result of their enhanced cross-cultural awareness. Interviewees also highlighted ways in which their heightened cross-cultural awareness had prompted them to hunt, to improve their Inuktitut, and/or to teach other youths about their culture. Finally, one interviewee described cross-cultural awareness as the "stepping stone" (K. Ayalik, personal communication, February 8, 2012) to global citizenship, another one of NYA's objectives.

## **Individual Career Goals**

Like cross-cultural awareness, NYA has played an important and varied role in fostering most participants' career goals. My analysis of individual career goals and NYA centred around four themes that frequently emerged in interviewees' descriptions of this objective: developing an awareness of personal career interests, enhancing academic success, developing habits conducive to working in a structured environment, and developing skills related to one's career of choice. All of the interviewees remarked that their work placement during the Canadian program had been the most intensive (and oftentimes the first) formal work experience that they completed. Many participants' feedback forms from 2006-2011 highlighted that the Canadian program of NYA enabled them to develop work habits like going to bed early, arriving to work on time, and getting along with co-workers. A smaller number of participants also reported developing skills specific to their career of choice, such as skills pertaining to childcare, automotive repair, or carpentry.

Participants also highlighted significant contributions that NYA had made to their academic success. In addition to receiving high school credit for participating in NYA, many alumni reported experiencing an attitudinal shift whereby they felt more motivated and more personally responsible for their academic success. For example, Eleanor noted that the Canadian program of NYA,

helped me strive harder for the things that I wanted. Because I really enjoyed myself that summer, and I said, "you know what? If I want to do things like this more often, then I need to get my ass in gear and finish school, and graduate, and have a good job so I can do things that I want." (E. Kusugak, personal communication, January 22, 2012)

Though many participants clearly linked academic success to the pursuit of their career goals, few participants appeared to valorize their traditional knowledge or competencies as career assets during NYA. For example, one 2010 Canadian program alumnus remarked that “You can't just go out hunting when you want to, so our hunting experience from the North ain't going to help us out alot” (NYA, 2012b, p. 3). Additionally, some youths described their lack of confidence in English as a major barrier during their work placements, but did not discuss their fluency in Inuktitut as a longer-term career asset (NYA 2012b). These perceptions from participants during their placements contrast with several examples from post-program survey responses in which alumni’s career success as hunters, Inuktitut teachers, sled dog tour operators, or sealskin fashion designers, among other examples, depended on their traditional competencies and skills (NYA 2012a).

NYA’s success in fostering Nunavummiut participants’ work habits, career skills, and academic motivation/success contributed to some alumni’s pursuit of careers as educators, social workers, nurses, miners, mechanics, and hunters, among other professions. Yet, virtually no participants reported that NYA contributed to an increased interest in business, law, or politics – some of the occupations that are presently most dominated by Qallunaat. Alumni’s seeming disinterest in these careers might be linked to the limited availability or accessibility of such careers in comparison to professions linked to sectors like education or natural resource extraction (G. Dawson, personal communication, June 15, 2012). NYA’s Program Director and the Board Member that I interviewed also mused that this disinterest in law, politics, or business might simply be a function of my sample population’s young age. The barriers or choices that have dissuaded youths from pursuing such careers merits further investigation, since many alumni expressed a strong desire to see

“Inuit running Nunavut instead of having to get people down South to come up here” (NYA, 2011, p. 9).

When I asked interviewees if they felt satisfied with the progress they had made towards their career goals, several interviewees highlighted certain barriers that had impeded their ability to pursue their original career goals. A number of interviewees reported that the job prospects in their communities were limited and that the resultant labour market was highly competitive. In the words of one 2009 alumnus from Whale Cove, “the ‘career peoples’ are setting the bars [high]” (N. Allurut, personal communication, February 4, 2012). Alumni also discussed their need for further guidance and support in refining or pursuing their career goals following NYA. Eleanor Kusugak, for example, remarked, “I wanted to do a lot of things . . . I had so much . . . career ideas going in my head that I never set my mind to one thing” (personal communication, January 22, 2012). While Eleanor reported a high level of satisfaction with her present career, she nevertheless felt that she would have benefitted from additional support from NYA or others in mapping out her career trajectory.

Another factor that heavily influenced some alumni’s career goals was parenthood. David, for example, left high school in order to start working as a stock boy at the local co-op store: “I have kids now. . .so when my ex-girlfriend . . . told me to stop going to school and to go to work instead, I listened to her” (D. Kooneeliusie, personal communication, February 9, 2012). Another alumnus reported a high level of satisfaction with her career as a teacher of Innuinaqtun, a dialect of the Inuit language, but indicated that her unexpected pregnancy had forced her to delay further career aspirations (E. Kusugak, personal communication, January 22, 2012).

Several male interviewees also highlighted how hunting and being on the land had affected their availability or interest in pursuing their career goals. For example, one interviewee reflected that he had not pursued his goal of opening a maintenance shop because he was busy hunting (A. Anguilianuk, personal communication, March 31, 2012).

### **Leadership**

Alumni's and staff and board members' perceptions of leadership provide examples of how NYA's objective to develop leadership can take on different meanings and relevance in Nunavut. When I asked Gemma Dawson, a Board Member with NYA, to define leadership, she remarked that leadership "can happen in many different ways" and that NYA's staff and board members strive "to be cognizant of what it means in the different cultures" (G. Dawson, personal communication, January 2, 2012). This variability was reflected in NYA alumni's descriptions of leadership, as interviewees provided examples of how Elders' and youths' leadership styles differed but often overlapped. Within the varied definitions of leadership that I encountered, two traits cut across virtually every example. First, interpersonal competencies, such as skills in conflict resolution and communication, were frequently cited as important components of leadership development. Additionally, the theme of "leading by example" or role modeling continually emerged in the definitions and personal reflections that were provided by interviewees.

Throughout my analysis of leadership, "improved communication skills" was undoubtedly the most recurrent theme that emerged. For example, the vast majority of alumni feedback forms included references to becoming more outgoing, talkative, and/or comfortable presenting to others: "When I first went to work I was really shy but . . . I

slowly worked it and I got better . . . this is a really good start because it's helping me with my leadership" (NYA 2012b, p. 10).

Additionally, alumni frequently referenced developing interpersonal skills like compassion, conflict resolution, and teamwork abilities. This was particularly the case for international program participants:

At times when someone felt home sick or just had a lousy day, we were there for each other. . . [W]e did it [volunteer projects] together and spread out the workload. I feel that the group helped me gain confidence in myself to be able to make new and more friends throughout the rest of my life. (NYA 2012c, p. 2)

Many alumni also reported that they were able to lead by example as a result of NYA. For example, Carl remarked that NYA's international and Canadian program "opened my eyes to see and show that doing things like this will encourage other youth to push themselves" (C. Inaksajak, personal communication, February 2, 2012). Furthermore, many alumni said that their very ability to complete NYA had enabled them to become role models to other youths in their communities. Some alumni also highlighted the value and motivation that they gained in becoming role models for other youths in their community. For example, a 2007 international program participant's reflective essay highlighted, "Every time I leave my home town . . . all the kids will start asking me questions about my adventures. That really motivates me, and I shall continue to be a good leader" (NYA 2012c, p. 4). Many of the examples of leadership that alumni provided also relate to global citizenship, the final of NYA's four objective to which I now turn.

## **Global Citizenship**

Most interviewees and many NYA documents referred to global citizenship as a way of developing a sense of interconnectedness to other peoples and other issues around Canada and around the world. According to the Program Director, NYA's promotion of global citizenship is intended to build participants' knowledge of globalization and capacity to participate in "the role that the North is going to play" in an increasingly interdependent world (R. Bisson, personal communication, December 1, 2011). I consequently focused my analysis of global citizenship on how alumni described developing a sense of interconnectedness and how this altered youths' contributions to their local/global communities.

One of the most common themes to emerge from the data was "volunteering and giving back." In every interview and in the majority of alumni survey responses, former Nunavummiut Inuit NYA participants described a range of volunteer roles or initiatives that they engaged with upon returning to their home communities. For example, in the 35 days that had elapsed between my initial interview and a brief follow-up interview with Alma Noah, this high school student had attended an Aboriginal leadership conference in Yellowknife, started a youth council in her home community, nursed a dog back to health, and registered for a summertime Aboriginal intercultural exchange in British Columbia. When I asked Alma if she would have volunteered with these initiatives if it had not been for NYA, she replied, "I probably wouldn't even know there was [sic] more opportunities in this world right now if it weren't for NYA" (A. Noah, personal communication, February 24, 2012).

Some of NYA's international program participants reported that their volunteer work with the San people of Botswana fostered global citizenship by nurturing a critical awareness of how systems of poverty and colonialism have shaped present-day challenges in their own territory and abroad. Kate, for example, shared that NYA's international program helped her realize that "everywhere in the world, there's someone who was there first. And, there's also someone – a group of people, a race or culture or something – that's being slowly taken apart by their surroundings and being assimilated" (K. Ayalik, personal communication, February 8, 2012). Kate then remarked that these new insights contributed to her later decision to volunteer with a range of regional and national volunteer initiatives related to Aboriginal issues in Canada. Another alumnus, David, reflected:

When I went there [Botswana]. . . I see poor people and I see rich people and I see all kinds of different people, so I was like "only Inuit are like that." I was saying that before, but now I know: there are lots of people who are poor everywhere. (D. Ooleesie, personal communication, February 9, 2012)

For David, meanwhile, this deepened understanding of poverty prompted him to become more active in preserving his culture: "I learned just by watching people [the San] – how they're doing and they're helping each other . . . we can do that too . . . and try to keep our culture and we try and go hunting and all that" (D. Kooneeliusie, personal communication, February 9, 2012).

Although NYA's international program contributed to Kate's and David's critical awareness of social justice issues, other international program participants did not report such powerful revelations. This was the case in at least two of my interviews with male participants; while both discussed significant benefits to having completed the international

program, neither interviewee reported identifying any similarities between the lives of the San peoples in Botswana and their own lives as Nunavummiut.

Further, the extent to which group leaders and participants espoused a reflexive and critical awareness of their roles or limitations as “global citizens” was occasionally limited. For example, some group leaders reported feeling dissatisfied with their team’s overall contributions to their host communities and attributed this perceived shortcoming to their host communities’ laid back working style rather than to their own team’s potential limitations (for example, a lack of knowledge, skills, trust-based relationships, or long-term engagement required to make more significant contributions) (NYA 2012d). Hence, assumptions overestimating volunteers’ positioning and capacity to make a difference in Botswana may have occasionally been left unchallenged by the end of participants’ and group leaders’ time in Botswana.

Yet such particular cases cannot be generalized to all NYA staff and participants. NYA’s Program Director and group leaders, for instance, neither claimed that the youths’ volunteerism invariably produced significant impacts for the communities in which they volunteered, nor suggested that such benefits were a part of the organization’s mandate. While NYA’s Program Director expressed a hope that the organization was doing “collateral benefit” in host communities through the youths’ volunteerism, she nevertheless stressed that “our emphasis in all of our programming – Canadian and International – is our participants” (R. Bisson, personal communication, December 1, 2011). Group leaders and interviewees often reflected a similarly measured or subdued analysis of their contributions as volunteers in Botswana. This kind of global citizenship, therefore, was one that took into

account international variation, while maintaining an understanding of similarities across colonial histories and post-colonial/neo-colonial presents.

## **Discussion**

NYA addresses some of the neo-colonial challenges facing Nunavut Inuit youths by coordinating volunteer placements with Qallunaat in southern Canada, and with the indigenous San and other Botswanans. Furthermore, as the above section on research results has shown, an analysis of interviews and archival research reveals that NYA has met considerable success in promoting its four objectives.

In the paragraphs that follow, I argue that NYA can be considered an example of a third space insofar as its individual-focused and culturally-relevant approach to achieving its mandate enables participants to subtly transform their perceptions of and competencies in cross-cultural awareness, individual career goals, leadership, and global citizenship. Yet, much like other examples of third space, NYA's programming appears to reflect a limitation that has been put forward when applying this concept as a tool of colonial resistance: the creation of a third space does not necessarily enable colonized subjects to challenge or transform the broader colonial structures that continue to confine or oppress. In order to illustrate this argument, I will contextualize the results pertaining to each objective – first, in relation to the neo-colonial structures that have influenced volunteer travel programs (contrasting these structures and programs with NYA's differing outlook and aims), and second, in light of Nunavut Inuit youths' lived experiences.

### **Cross-Cultural Awareness**

Whereas many mainstream volunteer travel programs purport to challenge participants' assumptions of cultural superiority (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Lambert, 1989), NYA's programming fosters participants' sense of cultural pride alongside their enhanced sense of cross-cultural awareness. In doing so, NYA's programming contrasts the

conventional outcomes attributed to volunteer tourism programs and supports post-colonial scholars' perspectives regarding the construction of identity in relation to other cultures. Indeed, Carl's remark that "I could see myself more of where I was and who I am . . . where I fit into this big puzzle of the world" (C. Inaksajak, personal communication, February 2, 2012) supports Bhabha's (1990) assertion that one's cultural identity is intrinsically linked to one's cultural knowledge of others. Further, the ways in which Inuit alumni reported developing this sense of pride (for example, through cultural presentations and through informal conversations with host community members about Nunavut) illustrate a celebration of cross-cultural difference; this represents a fundamental shift from the erasure of cultural difference through assimilation and the exhibiting of cultural difference through colonial-era zoos or present-day conferences in which Qallunaat "treat us [Inuit] like carvings" (Kingwatsiak, 2010, p. 28).

Although Nunavut Inuit participants reported that *their* culture was respected and that the Canadian and international program experiences contributed to their cultural pride, some group leaders' comments suggest that the San people and other Botswanans with whom the international program participants interacted may not have always been afforded the same degree of respect. Meanwhile, although some group leaders demonstrated and facilitated an awareness of how participants' and host communities' cultures and colonial histories bore similarities, other group leaders appeared less aware of such parallels and appeared to exhibit presumptuous cultural biases.

NYA's participants also developed a stronger understanding of Euro-Canadian culture and a heightened awareness of their ability to adapt to life in southern Canada. For those youths who reported an ability to "live comfortably" in southern Canada, the prospect

of pursuing education or training opportunities in the South often became less daunting as a result of their experience (K. Ayalik, personal communication, February 8, 2012). Yet, youths who learned that “living in their [Qallunaat] culture is much harder [than previously thought]” also exhibited a significant form of cross-cultural awareness (NYA 2012b, p. 21). Bhabha (1990) remarked, “it is actually very difficult, even impossible and counterproductive, to try and fit together different forms of culture and to present that they can easily co-exist” (p. 211). From a post-colonial perspective, then, it would be challenging if not harmful for cross-cultural awareness to be measured through all of alumni’s ability to integrate into a southern Canadian way of life. This perspective is further supported by Hanson’s (2003) argument regarding youths who choose to leave Nunavut Sivuniksavut before the eight months of Ottawa-based training has finished; while these youths have “failed” to complete the program, Hanson (2003) argued their disenchantment with southern Canada is itself a valuable outcome insofar as it enabled the youths to develop a new appreciation of and connection to their own communities.

NYA’s international program alumni also discussed developing cross-cultural awareness through their work placements and through interactions with local peoples in Botswana. Though some participants attributed great significance to this cross-cultural exchange, my analysis of group leaders’ reports suggests that neo-colonial assumptions can also be reified through such interactions. These findings echo Raymond and Hall’s (2008) caution that

the development of cross-cultural understanding should be perceived as a goal of volunteer tourism rather than a natural result of sending volunteers overseas . . . sending organisations can play an important role in facilitating the achievement of

this goal through pro-active management prior, during, and after their volunteer tourism programmes. (p. 530)

Ensuring that group leaders appreciate cultural differences, challenge their own notions of cultural superiority, and recognize the impacts of colonialism would seem especially pertinent for NYA since the participants stand to deconstruct or reify neo-colonial cultural biases in their own lives as well as in their perceptions of other cultural groups.

### **Individual Career Goals**

My results also highlighted how some alumni's cultural knowledge and competencies contributed to their career success, but were rarely framed as career assets during participants' work placements in southern Canada. This supports Hanson's (2003) earlier finding that Inuit youths in southern Canada may feel that "life represented a division between tradition and modernity, and that there was little alternative but to follow the modern path" (p. 68). Yet, alumni who have become Inuktitut teachers, dog sled tour operators, and sealskin fashion designers provide powerful counter-narratives to this seeming dichotomy by blending Inuit knowledge and customs with non-Inuit influences to create their own, professional third space.

Some alumni perceived Inuit's career advancement in powerful or prestigious careers that are currently Qallunaat-dominated as an important means to resist the prevailing power relations in Nunavut. However, the extent to which NYA can or has contributed to "Inuit running Nunavut instead of having to get people down south to come up here" (NYA, 2011, p. 9) remains uncertain for two reasons. First, though participants report developing and/or advancing career goals in influential professions like education, relatively few NYA alumni

reported developing career goals that challenged Qallunaat dominance in careers associated with politics, business, or the law as a result of NYA.

Alumni's seeming lack of interest in careers as politicians, businesswomen/men, or lawyers is probably linked to the youthfulness of my sample population, as well as to the limited career opportunities linked to professions such as law in comparison with sectors like education, healthcare, or resource extraction. Yet, Nunavut Inuit alumni's under-representation in many Qallunaat-dominated careers may also be linked to Kapoor's (2008) reminder that third spaces do not necessarily transform broader systems or relationships of power. In particular, Kapoor observed that current theorizing about third space "offers nothing in the way of coordinating mechanisms needed for sustained political transformation" (p. 130). Though NYA's participants and staff transform neo-colonial and colonial notions of educational travel and of Qallunaat-Inuit interactions, the creation of a third space in NYA does not automatically challenge Qallunaat's dominance in all careers. Further, Qallunaat career expectations or structures may conflict with Inuit youths' parenting and/or hunting responsibilities and may disadvantage Inuit youths for whom further education or training may be inaccessible. Nevertheless, NYA has made a significant contribution to alumni's confidence, capacity, and motivation to disrupt some of these challenges or biases, as can be evidenced by some alumni's use of traditional knowledge in their careers and through other youths' decision to pursue further training and careers in fields like education, social work, mechanics, and natural resource extraction.

### **Leadership**

The second reason that fostering of Inuit youths' career goals may not necessarily translate into a workforce that is less Qallunaat-dominated relates to NYA's final objective,

to foster leadership. Pauktuutit (2006) and Tompkins (2006) both highlighted how certain high-ranking positions with the Government of Nunavut require a directive, authoritative leadership style that conflicts with the Inuit practices of leading as a team or by example. If Inuit work in these positions but model Euro-Canadian leadership styles in order to do so, these workplaces risk becoming sites of contemporary assimilation rather than of Inuit resistance or empowerment. The potential for a seemingly emancipating space to instead recreate Qallunaat dominance in Nunavut relates to a broader theoretical challenge when applying the concept of third space. As Kapoor (2008) remarked, many of Bhabha's own examples of third spaces do not clearly illustrate localized agency bringing about meaningful change at the macro-levels of power.

While certain careers in Nunavut privilege Euro-Canadian leadership styles, NYA's staff and board members reflected a keen awareness that leadership "can happen in many different ways" and did not appear to heavily promote Euro-Canadian leadership values. NYA's open interpretation of leadership appears to have facilitated participants' leadership development in manners that are largely consistent with traditional Inuit leadership styles. For example, an alumnus' reflection that "the trip was a group effort . . . we did it [volunteer projects] together and spread out the workload" (NYA 2012c, p. 8) appears to closely resemble the Inuit concept of *sivumuaqatiginniq*, or leading forward together (Lee, 1996). Further, alumni indicated that they, like Inuit Elders, promote the well-being of their communities and group cohesion by leading as role models who "encourage other youths to push themselves" (C. Inaksajak, personal communication, February 2, 2012).

## **Global Citizenship**

Much like leadership takes on different and under-theorized meanings in the context of Nunavut so, too does global citizenship appear substantively different for Nunavut Inuit youths. Further, NYA's objective of fostering global citizenship with participants introduces some concepts that appear to be under-theorized in post-colonial scholars' interpretations of hybridity and third space. In particular, my findings highlighted how marginalized cultural groups may share some significant commonalities as transnational examples of people "who were there first" (K. Ayalik, personal communication, February 8, 2012). Yet, as Min-Ha (1988) noted, interactions between colonized or Third World peoples are often under-theorized and under-valored in mainstream cultural studies. Nunavummiut participants' interactions with other participants from the NWT and with the San people of Botswana through NYA could be considered an example of alliance-building insofar as it enabled various indigenous people to interact and learn from one another in some capacity. For some (though not all) alumni, these interactions translated into effects such as transformed worldviews, cultural pride, and a sustained engagement with Aboriginal issues. These examples lend credence to Kapoor's (2008) prediction that coordination and alliance-making "may well be the hallmark of a strategy of hybridization" (p. 1440) in an era of transnationalism.

Yet, my findings also revealed several shortcomings or uncertainties regarding the transformative nature of these alliances. First, my interviews and archival research did not reveal any examples of longer-term engagement, interaction, or alliance-building with the San peoples or other Bostwanans following participants' departure from their host community. This suggests that post-colonial consciousness-raising can take place through

interactions with other marginalized groups, but that these interactions may not necessarily yield valuable alliances in the longer-term. Second, some group leaders and participants can potentially develop patronizing perspectives of global citizenship, as was illustrated through one group leader's belief that her team's limited contributions had been a result of the host community's working style rather than a product of her own team's potential shortcomings, such as limited knowledge, skills, trust-based relationships, or long-term engagement in the community.

My findings also reveal a compelling counter-example to the common critique that volunteer tourism programs may have negligible impacts on youths' volunteerism in their own home communities (Osler & Starkey, 2003; Palacios, 2010; Wang, 2000). Inuit alumni from NYA reported a dramatic increase in their local volunteer efforts following the Canadian and international program. This increase in alumni's volunteerism following their placements in the Canadian phase of NYA also lends credence to Bamber & Hankin's (2011) findings that in-country service learning programs can be equally as beneficial to participants as international volunteer programs.

### **Conclusions**

To what extent has NYA achieved its mandate of "fostering cross-cultural awareness, individual career goals, global citizenship, and leadership" (NYA, 2008) in light of the neo-colonial factors that influence Inuit youths' lives and have shaped the volunteer tourism industry? Nunavut Inuit NYA participants from 2006-2011 discussed developing varied and remarkable growth in meeting the organization's four objectives. For many alumni, NYA served as a major stepping-stone that enabled them to continue to develop in these areas according to their own individual preferences during and after the program. My post-

colonial, thematic analysis has shown how NYA's work in the promotion of these objectives can be likened to a third space that fuses Euro-Canadian and Inuit values. NYA illustrates that volunteer travel programs can potentially avoid reinforcing the assimilative, colonial impacts of Qallunaat influence in the North and of neo-colonial volunteer tourism programs in the South. Ongoing structures of neo-colonial influence, like limited career opportunities, the pre-eminence of directive leadership styles, and neo-colonial assumptions on the part of a few NYA group leaders, can impede Nunavut Inuit youths' abilities to displace prevailing, neo-colonial power structures. Yet, the pervasiveness of neo-colonial influences in Nunavut Inuit youths' lives does not reduce the transformative impacts of NYA, but rather, highlights why this program's work should be amplified and emulated.

## **CHAPTER IV: NUNAVUT INUIT YOUTHS' DESCRIPTIONS & DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP**

A growing number of leadership roles and responsibilities are facing Inuit youths in Nunavut, Canada's newest territory and an Inuit settlement region. The creation of Nunavut's government, the rapid expansion of the territory's resource development sector, and the increasingly apparent effects of climate change are but some examples of new challenges and opportunities that Nunavut's younger generation could take the lead in addressing. Curiously, there is a paucity of research that has addressed the topic of leadership and Nunavut Inuit youth. While Nunavut youths' problems, such as high rates of suicide and school absenteeism, have been well documented (Hicks, 2007; Kral et al. 2003; Minor, 1992; Targé 2009), few studies have focused on Nunavut youths' assets or strengths. Further, the limited literature that does address Inuit forms of leadership has emphasized the voices of Elders or older community members (Lee, 1996; Minor, 1992; Pauktuutit, 2007; Tompkins, 2007). Consequently, Nunavut Inuit youths' perspectives on and development of leadership have not been documented in the literature.

My research seeks to address this gap by assessing how some Inuit youths describe and develop leadership. To do so, I conducted my research with Northern Youth Abroad (NYA), the first and presently the only educational travel program developed specifically to meet the needs of the Canadian North's youth (NYA, 2012). Drawing on semi-structured interviews with past participants and archival research at the NYA office in Ottawa, I argue that NYA's Nunavut Inuit alumni have developed varied and remarkable examples of leadership. In particular, these youths have drawn from traditional Inuit and Euro-Canadian leadership approaches in response to the present-day challenges, opportunities, and demands

that they face as Inuit youth leaders. In doing so, NYA's Nunavut Inuit alumni have created what Bhabha (1983) termed a "third space" (p. 93), or a site in which the binary between colonial/neo-colonial and traditional influences is displaced by new structures.

### **Literature Review**

There is a dearth of academic and grey literature that addresses Nunavut Inuit youths' perspectives on leadership. Given the paucity of such research, I provide an overview of the literature addressing traditional Inuit styles of leadership. I also review studies that have focused on Nunavut Inuit youths, the majority of which highlight challenges and problems that this demographic faces. I then assess how colonial and neo-colonial factors have contributed to some of the challenges discussed in the literature. My literature review suggests that Inuit youths are excluded from discussions on Inuit leadership but featured prominently in the literature on Nunavut's societal challenges. My research seeks to help bridge the gap between these bodies of literature by highlighting how Inuit youths can simultaneously confront challenges while also developing diverse leadership skills.

### **Inuit Leadership**

Although there are significant gaps in understanding leadership from the perspective of Inuit youths, several studies have illustrated how traditional Inuit leadership styles differ considerably from mainstream, Euro-Canadian perspectives on leadership. In particular, the emphasis on individual achievements in Western styles of leadership contrasts against Inuit Elders' emphasis on developing strengths and abilities that enhance the group's well-being (Hanson, 2003; Minor, 1992). This preference for collaborative skills rather than individualistic achievement has been linked with the strong value that Inuit communities

have placed on group cohesion, equality, consensus, and sharing (Hanson, 2003; Tompkins, 2006).

Inuit leadership styles are embedded in fluid and communal process whereby no single individual is characterized as the leader. For example, research on Inuit women's leadership in the Qikiqtani school board discussed the concept of *sivumuaqatiginniq*, an Inuktitut word meaning "to lead forward together" or "to lead as a team" (Lee, 1996). In the national Inuit women's association's publication *The Inuit Way* (Pauktuutit, 2006), leadership is described as a temporal role dependent on context and broader group dynamics:

An experienced and respected hunter may be seen as a leader in certain situations or for certain tasks, but he leads more by example and by taking the initiative rather than delegating people to certain tasks. When the event is over, so is his leadership.

(p. 35)

The report's authors contrasted this approach to leadership with the Eurocentric leadership styles that have been introduced through emerging political and employment opportunities in Nunavut. In particular, leadership positions in the public, private, and non-profit sector are premised on the assumptions that a leadership role should be occupied by a single person for an extended period of time. Further, these leadership positions often require that Inuit make decisions that exert authority over others, which contrasts with the Inuit model of leading by example and through non-interference (Pauktuutit, 2006). Tompkins (2007) asserted that these same tensions have contributed to Inuit's under-representation in educational leadership positions, which are instead filled by Qallunaat educators who can embody "appalling over-confidence, certainty, and arrogance" (p. 81).

Since the abovementioned studies emphasized Elders', educators' and older community members' perspectives on leadership, it is unclear whether Inuit youths perceive and develop leadership skills in a similar manner. Considerable research has documented how Inuit youths' lifestyles and values have diverged considerably from those of earlier generations. For example, Hanson's (2003) research with Inuit students in Ottawa suggested that some youths feel unable to bridge the gap between their academic trajectories and cultural knowledge or lifestyles. Searles (2006) also asserted that definitions of tradition and culture in present-day Nunavut risk excluding or discriminating against Inuit youths, who do not necessarily embody these traits. Given that Inuit youths' social contexts and lifestyles can differ considerably from those of older generations, I provide an overview of some of these emerging trends and challenges that Inuit youths face in order to better situate how these youths might define or perceive leadership.

## **Challenges that Inuit Youths Face**

While a growing corpus of literature has addressed some of the multiple and complex needs facing Inuit youths, very few studies have assessed Nunavut youths' assets, leadership, or well-being. The dearth of research around Inuit youths' strengths was remarked upon and critiqued in a recent report commissioned by the Nunavut Social Development Council:

Most European and North American social reporting focuses solely on the failures of society – its deficiencies – e.g. school drop out rates, suicide, teen pregnancy, crime and lagging GDP growth. The usual social “report card” is a list of things lacking, it usually conveys the impression that the society in question is just a pile of problems. We believe that Inuit self-reliance and well-being is more than a matter of identifying deficiencies, it is even more important to identify assets and capacities – the good things, the reasons for being. (Anielski & Pollock, 2003, p. 8, as cited in DCLEY, 2003, p. 7)

These frustrations regarding the lack of research around Inuit youths' strengths were echoed in the Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre's recent literature review of camp programs for Nunavummiut youths: “there is a paucity of research exploring camp models for youth empowerment and wellness. The literature overwhelmingly points to the glaring problems Inuit youth face but does not engage in scholarly discussion to explore what is working” (Noah, 2010, p. 21). In light of the scarce research regarding Inuit youths' strengths or assets, I provide an overview of the literature regarding the challenges that Inuit youths face. I conclude by re-asserting the need for strengths-focused research with Inuit youths.

Numerous studies have highlighted how substance abuse, suicide, teen pregnancy, health problems, delinquency, and elevated school drop-out rates have become increasingly

worrying issues for Inuit youths (Hicks, 1999; Ip, 2007; Kral et al., 2003). These concerns appear to be supported by a range of alarming statistics. The 2007 rate of youth accused of criminal offences was 4.4 times higher in Nunavut than the national average (Dauvergne, 2007); suicide rates among Inuit youth rank among the highest in the world and are more than 11 times higher than the overall Canadian rate (Hicks, 2007; Kral et al., 2003; Tester & McNicoll, 2004). Meanwhile, low levels of educational achievement have restricted many Inuit youths' abilities to pursue careers or other opportunities linked to academic achievement; for example, in 2001, 59% of Inuit aged 20 to 24 had not completed high school (O'Donnel & Tait, 2003).

In order to ascertain how these challenges relate to one another and influence youths' abilities to act as leaders, I analysed a range of studies and identified some of the most prevalent contributing factors that were identified. Here, I present three colonial/neo-colonial processes that were commonly linked with the problems discussed above: the rapid transition into the welfare state and wage economy, the decline in familial and societal support networks for youth, and youths' perceived loss of ethnic identity.

**Dependence on the wage economy & increased leisure time.** Nunavummiut's lifestyles changed dramatically following the Canadian government's creation of permanent settlements and efforts to shift Inuit lifestyles from nomadic and land-based to sedentary and "integrated" into Canada's wage economy and welfare provisions (Condon, 1995; Minor, 1992). This new reliance on waged work and state assistance required younger Inuit generations to gain very different skills than those that had been developed by their predecessors. According to McDougall (1994) and Henderson (2003), Inuit rites of passage into adulthood have not been adapted in light of these changes in livelihoods, which have

negatively impacted youths' sense of esteem and inclusion. For example, Inuit boys traditionally became recognized as adults following their first hunting kill; as a result, present-day Inuit boys who lack the skills, resources, or interest necessary for hunting may be unable to gain recognition as an adult in the eyes of some community members (Henderson, 2003). These findings are further corroborated by Hanson's (2003) research with participants in Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS), an 8-month, Ottawa-based college training program for Inuit youths. According to Hanson (2003), these youths' decision to pursue post-secondary education, "could be perceived as an abandonment of their culture, with the concomitant feelings of guilt and shame associated with this betrayal" (p. 68).

The transition from land-based lifestyles to income or welfare-based lifestyles has also resulted in an increased amount of leisure time for Nunavut youth. For earlier generations of Nunavummiut, substantial amounts of time were dedicated to assuring one's survival through activities such as hunting, sewing, cooking, and building shelter (Tester and Kulchyski, 1994). Today, in contrast, few Nunavummiut engage in land-based activities for survival and often have much more leisure time as a result (Pauktuutit, 2006). Cole's (1982) doctoral dissertation about Inuit youth in Resolute Bay contended that increased amounts of leisure time resulted in a boredom that drove many youth to seek out excitement through activities such as vandalism, drug experimentation, and breaking and entering. Condon (1987) also hypothesized that alcohol use, petty theft, and vandalism had increased as a result of Inuit adolescents' boredom.

**The decline in familial and societal support networks.** The resettlement of Inuit communities in the 1950s and 1960s by the federal government of Canada had drastic implications for the structure of familial support in northern communities. Briggs (1970)

reported that social bonds and kinship pervaded Inuit thought, lifestyle, and even dreams. Other researchers have illustrated how social bonds in the forms of *nalartuk* (respect-obedience) and *ungayuk* (affection-solidarity) formed the foundation of Inuit society (Damas, 1963; Stevenson, 1997). Prior to resettlement, children were typically regarded as the responsibility of extensive family networks rather than as a member of a particular, nuclear family (Cole, 1982; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). The housing structures and family allowances that the federal government issued consequently imposed a nuclear family structure through architectural and economic designs (Cole, 1982; Dawson, 2008). Residential schooling further disrupted Inuit communities' abilities to raise children since youth were removed from their homes and therefore lacked opportunities to experience and therefore learn vital child-rearing skills (ITK 2005; King, 2006; Pauktuutit, 2007).

Little research has assessed the nature or impacts of these changing social relations from the perspectives of Inuit youths. Searles (2006) speculated that many youths may feel disconnected or excluded from their culture. Several other studies have alluded to youths' concerns around parental neglect (Cole, 1982; Kral, 2009). For example, Kral (2009) documented an incident in which a number of youths from Iglulingmiut burned down a community building to protest their parents' excessive consumption of alcohol. Cole's (1982) dissertation suggested that a distinct Inuit youth culture had developed in the community of Resolute Bay as a result of increased leisure time and parental neglect. While researchers have documented this erosion of traditional Inuit societal relations, little attention has been given to examples of successful resistance or adaptation.

**Perceived loss of cultural identity.** With the increasing accessibility of television, internet, and cheaper transportation to and within Nunavut, non-Inuit North American

cultural influences have become widespread and familiar to Inuit youth (Condon, 1988; Kral, 2009). Hanson (2003) noted that these forms of media often transmit idyllic portrayals of the South, which Inuit youths typically consume without a critical awareness of the biases or inaccuracies contained therein. Hanson (2003) also observed that some Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS) training program participants experienced confusion regarding their ethnic identity as a result of three processes: a lack of understanding regarding Inuit history and contemporary Inuit affairs, a perception that Inuit lifestyles and southern lifestyles represent two mutually exclusive realities, and a sense of unfamiliarity or even personal inadequacy with regards to Inuit customs and knowledge. Several studies have linked acculturation to challenges around sexual health, suicide, and other health concerns (for example, Berry, 1985; Steenbeek et al., 2006; Wexler 2006); however, the nature and extent of Inuit youths' sense of acculturation and/or loss of cultural identity has been largely ignored in the literature.

### **Synthesis of the Literature Review**

In conclusion, societal relations and roles among Nunavummiut have changed rapidly since the 1950s. Colonial and neocolonial influences have contributed to a range of serious social challenges for youth, including high rates of suicide, substance abuse, and crime, among other worrying trends. An understanding of Inuit youths' strengths, assets, and leadership styles could contribute to effective, relevant approaches to addressing these challenges; yet Inuit youths' capacity to confront social challenges as Inuit leaders has been largely unaddressed within the literature to date. By highlighting how NYA alumni describe and develop leadership, the analysis below is among the first to address these themes with Nunavut Inuit youths.

## **Results**

The results of my research, presented in the subsequent paragraphs, highlight commonalities and differences between Inuit youths' and Elders' conceptualizations of leadership. Additionally, my results illustrate the rich variability between individual Inuit youths' conceptualizations of leadership. I also present NYA alumni's reflections regarding their own personal leadership development. All alumni reflected that they had developed as leaders in several regards, including the development of enhanced communication skills, interpersonal competencies, personal growth, and a strengthened sense of cultural identity. I conclude by addressing some of the shortcomings that youths discussed when reflecting on their leadership development; these include youths' difficulties in confronting shyness and in receiving the support necessary from their community and social networks to continue their leadership development following NYA.

### **Descriptions of Leadership**

Each interviewee was asked how s/he would explain the concept of "leadership" to someone who had never heard the term before. In order to understand whether these youths perceived their leadership styles to be different than those of Elders, I then asked each interviewee to consider how older community members might have answered the same question. Interviewees' descriptions of how they and how Elders perceive leadership revealed some interesting similarities as well as distinctions. In both cases, leadership was described in terms of leading by example rather than directing others. Youth also noted that leadership required interpersonal competencies like skills in communication and in following/respecting others' leadership styles.

Youths' descriptions of Elders' leadership styles centred around two predominant themes: "leading by doing" and "leading by knowing." According to the youths that I interviewed, Elders depicted leadership by modeling important behaviours or skills such as those related to hunting. For example, David Kooneeliusie, a 2009 (international) and 2007 (Canadian) NYA alumni from Arctic Bay, described Elders as leaders because "they like to hunt more so they would try to teach us how to do this ... they would let us do all the work ...so we can learn it and they could teach us how to do it" (D. Kooneeliusie, personal communication, February 9, 2012). Rather than instructing youths on how to hunt, then, Elders led youth to learn these skills through non-interference and example-setting. Interviewees also remarked that Elders' perceptions of leadership were rooted in the acquisition and transmittance of knowledge. For example, Kate Ayalik (personal communication, February 8, 2012) noted that in Baker Lake, Elders were valued for "knowing their environment and knowing who they're working with." Similarly, Neil Allurut noted that Elders in his community of Whale Cove became role models "because of the way that they look at things and ... because they have more experience" (N. Allurut, personal communication, February 4, 2012). Interviewees' descriptions of how Elders might define leadership were also fairly brief; this brevity might have been because youths felt uncomfortable or unable to speak about Elders' perceptions of leadership in nuanced detail. When I first asked Kate how an Elder might describe the term leadership, for example, she remarked that "I don't know what they'd think – I wish I did" (K. Ayalik, personal communication, February 8, 2012).

Youth's own descriptions of leadership often included references to "leading by doing" and non-interference – traits that the interviewees had also associated with Elders'

leadership. In particular, interviewees frequently referenced “leading by example” (C. Inaksajak, personal communication, February 2, 2012) as a foundational component of their leadership definitions. Some interviewees appeared to feel that defining leadership was challenging for this very reason – namely, that leadership could refer to virtually any scenario in which an individual modeled desirable behaviours or actions. For example, Eleanor Kusugak remarked: “I don’t know how to explain it [leadership] –like, taking part and taking action on things and being a leader –it’s kind of straightforward” (E. Kusugak, personal communication, January 22, 2012). Several interviewees discussed the importance of enabling others to learn for themselves rather than directing or commanding others. Neil, for example, noted that “you don’t tell people what to do, they do their own things ... it’s like teaching a man how to fish, not giving a fish, that’s ... what I think of for leadership” (N. Allurut, personal communication, February 4, 2012).

Some interviewees described “leading” with reference to its antonym, “following,” since this enabled others to also lead. Alma Noah mused that leadership involves “following good decisions and making good choices” (A. Noah, personal communication, February 24, 2012). Similarly, Paul Qavvik remarked that leadership involves “guiding [a group] to a positive way or environment” and ensuring that “other groups get a chance to be in leadership” (personal communication, March 9, 2012). According to these interviewees, then, leadership can be considered a dynamic process with distinct stages and responsibilities.

Interviewees’ personal definitions of leadership also included some dimensions that were not referenced in their discussions of Elders’ leadership. In particular, interviewees strongly emphasized effective communication skills when describing leadership. David

remarked that leaders “talk more” as a way of building others’ motivations to become involved in different initiatives (D. Kooneeliusie, personal communication, February 9, 2012). In addition, Kate included “communicating well . . . and with respect” in her description of leadership traits (K. Ayalik, personal communication, February 8, 2012).

### **Developing Leadership**

My analysis of the archives and interview transcripts highlighted a range of ways in which NYA alumni reported having developed leadership. Most interviewees referred to NYA as a turning point in which they developed a range of skills, abilities, and confidence, which enabled them to further develop as leaders. Four predominant themes emerged in my thematic analysis of participants’ leadership development: communication skills, interpersonal competencies, personal growth, and cultural pride.

**Communication skills.** Interviewees vividly and frequently discussed enhanced communication skills when I asked them to reflect on if/how they had developed as leaders through NYA. Further, almost every Nunavut alumnus from 2006-2011 referenced communication skills like public speaking, confidence in approaching strangers, or listening in response to the question, “what leadership skills do you have now” on a post-program questionnaire (NYA, 2011). The significance of communicating and overcoming shyness can be illustrated through Eleanor’s comments below:

I was never good at presentations in school, so the program [NYA] helped me come out of my shell and not be shy and to take ownership and do what I want to do and not be so shy and awkward about it, like, being up in front of people of crowds- that was a problem for me ‘cause I felt kind of like, shy type. But after taking part of this program . . . I did presentation in front of people, I wasn’t so shy when I came home

so I kind of broke out of my shell and took leadership more in the community, like, helping with the kids and, um, taking up jobs that involved youth and impacting their lives and helping them make better choices. (E. Kusugak, personal communication, January 22, 2012)

In this brief passage from her interview, Eleanor's frequent mention of shyness suggests that feeling shy had been a significant barrier to this alumna's development as a leader. An alumna from 2009 also described a direct relationship between communication skills and confidence as a leader:

I ... am becoming more confident within my community towards raising my voice in a large group of people ... I do see myself as a leader because I will be helping youth ... I also want to let them know that there are many other positive things like traveling to do and all kinds of opportunities for which they can apply. (NYA, 2012c, p. 12)

In this example, enhanced communication skills enabled the alumna to see herself as a leader and, further, enabled her to share leadership opportunities with other youths.

Alumni also described how they enhanced their listening skills through NYA, which enabled them to become better leaders. After completing the international program in 2007, for example, one alumna reflected, "it is now easier for me to work with a group of people. [Before NYA,] I couldn't do that. I used to try and do things my way, but [now] I give myself a chance to listen and speak" (NYA, 2012c, p. 9). This alumna's reflection on listening skills also connects with the broader theme of developing interpersonal competencies as a leader, the second most predominant theme that alumni described in their reflections on leadership development.

**Interpersonal competencies.** NYA alumni's descriptions of leadership development included references to interpersonal competencies that were varied and occasionally divergent. In some cases, alumni referenced interpersonal skills that appeared incompatible with the collaborative, example-setting approaches to leadership that they described. For example, one alumna expressed confidence in becoming a "delegator, organizer, mediator, and spokesperson" (NYA, 2012b, p. 3), while several other alumni referenced their ability to "take charge" of situations. In contrast to these comments, several interviewees described "giving orders" (N. Allurut, personal communication, February 4, 2012) or being the one "in charge ... the one to tell them to do this and this" (K. Ayalik, personal communication, February 8, 2012) as poor examples of leadership. More frequently, alumni discussed developing interpersonal skills based on respecting and/or serving others. For example, one 2007 international program alumna reported learning that "if you set good examples, respect everyone and help people out, you can be a better leader" (NYA, 2012c, p. 4). Another participant from 2008 reflected, "I respect the youth. I hope one day that I can be a better leader than now to show youth that we get stronger with positive energy/thinking and working together" (NYA, 2012c, p. 13). Similarly, Kate mused that some of NYA's strongest leaders were those who helped others feel at ease rather than those who exemplified confidence in directing or delegating tasks to others:

there are some participants who are very quiet ... but grounded or mature ... in that way they're being leaders, they're like, calming the group down ... you're comfortable approaching them and asking them a question that you'd probably be too shy to ask someone else- and it that way they're leaders. (K. Ayalik, personal communication, February 8, 2012)

These examples highlight the variability in the interpersonal skills that NYA participants developed and the different impacts that these skills have had on former participants' leadership styles. Many alumni emphasized interpersonal skills based on respect and service to others, which resulted in leadership that enabled others to develop. A smaller number of alumni discussed developing more authoritative interpersonal skills, which could be likened to a more directive, Euro-Canadian style of leading.

**Personal growth.** Alumni's individual growth in developing confidence, a positive outlook, and/or a healthy lifestyle was an additional thematic focus in alumni's descriptions of leadership. One alumnus reflected: "I see myself as a positive leader after the program... before [NYA] I had a negative attitude – I used to drink a lot, get into fights, but now I've changed" (NYA 2012c, p. 8). According to this alumnus, then, taking control of one's own life can be considered an important example of leadership. Derrick, a Canadian phase alumni, shared a similar perspective when I asked him if he felt that he had grown as a leader since completing NYA. Following my question, Derrick described how much of his adolescence had been consumed by activities like sniffing glue, drinking nail polish remover or hairspray. Derrick then asserted that he had become a leader following NYA because he had stopped participating in these negative pursuits (D. Suwaksiork, personal communication, February 18, 2012). Derrick's description of leadership, then, centred on his own remarkable journey of battling and overcoming personal challenges. These examples suggest that leadership does not have to necessarily involve directly influencing others, but can instead be rooted in one's own personal growth and development.

**Cultural identity.** Many alumni described a growth in cultural pride or awareness as a component to the leadership they developed through NYA. For example, Kate asserted that

she had “definitely” developed a sense of leadership during NYA because she had gained “a sense of accomplishment and acceptance of my culture” (K. Ayalik, personal communication, February 8, 2012). Paul shared that he developed leadership skills in the NYA’s Canadian program because “I got to show some of the kids how to drum dance . . . how it’s done . . . and how we moved” (P. Qavvik, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Similarly, a 2006/2007 NYA alumna reflected that “I have gained leadership skills – I overcame my shyness, I learned to be more proud of my identity. I now understand why volunteer work is important and improved on my public speaking skills” (NYA 2012b, p. 4). In these and other examples, cultural identity was considered to be a noteworthy component of leadership development.

**Barriers to NYA participants’ leadership development.** In addition to the range of competencies that NYA alumni reported developing as leaders, these youths also identified factors that impeded their abilities to grow as leaders. Some alumni discussed how they continued to experience shyness, which restricted their abilities to lead. For example, Neil reflected that participants “who are quiet and shy like me” can struggle to exhibit leadership following NYA’s Canadian program (N. Allurut personal communication, February 4, 2012). Another potential limitation to alumni’s leadership development that participants identified was the short-term nature of NYA’s leadership programming. Alma remarked that leadership development requires continual revision and practice “because, you know, we eventually forget some things” (A. Noah, personal communication, February 24, 2012). Alumni’s capacity to develop as leaders following NYA was also restricted or enhanced by their home environment. While most alumni discussed feelings of pride and satisfaction in sharing their stories with other youths in their home communities, certain participants

confronted bullying, unsupportive peer groups, and other inhibiting factors that have restricted their capacity to lead (R. Bisson, personal communication, December 1, 2011). Finally, but perhaps most interestingly, Derrick remarked that his community perceived youth to be the leaders of tomorrow rather than today. As a result, youth were neither provided with leadership opportunities, nor were they expected to take on significant leadership tasks in their society (D. Suwaksiork, personal communication, February 18, 2012).

### **Discussion**

In this section, I discuss my results with reference to the literature about Inuit youths and Inuit leadership. In some ways, my findings on Inuit youths' reflections on leadership reinforce earlier research about the perceived divergence of Inuit youths' and Elders' cultural knowledge and values. Yet, my findings have also highlighted ways in which Inuit youths and Elders define and develop leadership in similar ways. These findings enrich our understanding of Inuit youths' well-being by highlighting youths' strengths and illustrating how these assets can intersect with the well-documented challenges that Inuit youths face. Throughout this analysis, I draw on the post-colonial concepts of third space to situate these youths' leadership development as neither traditionally Inuit nor Qallunaat, but rather, "something else besides" (Bhabha, 1988, p. 13).

#### **Perceptions of Leadership**

NYA alumni described Elders' leadership and their own styles of leadership as overlapping, yet distinct. In both scenarios, "leading by doing" emerged as an overarching theme throughout interviewees' responses. The primary differences that interviewees identified centred on *what* youths and Elders were doing as leaders rather than *how* they

were leading. Much like the Pauktuutit (2006) publication, *The Inuit Way*, noted, interviewees described Elders' leadership in terms of hunting – a primarily male activity. Interviewees' comments denoted a shift whereby Inuit youths' definitions of leadership are no longer grounded in hunting, but are instead described in broader and more gender-inclusive terms. These findings support Hanson's (2003) assertions about the range of leadership opportunities and changing gender roles that NS participants perceived to have emerged in their lifetimes.

My findings have also highlighted that some interviewees lacked confidence or familiarity in describing Elders' leadership styles. This finding is consistent with other studies that have reported how youths perceive a disconnect between themselves and Elders or their culture more generally (Cole, 1981; Hanson, 2003; ITK, 2005; Targé, 2008). This divergence between Elders and youths can also be illustrated through the differences between the two styles of leadership that youths described.

My findings highlight how Inuit youths placed a greater emphasis on communication skills and (on occasion) on “taking charge” in comparison to Inuit Elders' preference for non-interference as a leadership strategy (Pauktuutit, 2006). According to Bhabha (1987) and Kapoor (2008), we should not consider these youths' altered interpretations of the term leadership as being “less Inuit” than the definitions of leadership put forward by earlier generations. Kapoor (2008) cautioned that efforts to reproduce a “pure” Native identity reinforce the binary structures of signification that were imposed during colonialism. Instead of recreating the myth of a single, consistent, cultural identity, then, Bhabha (1987) recommended a strategy of cultural differentiation, whereby the heterogeneity of viewpoints and identities within cultures are recognized and celebrated. Hence, the variations in youths'

definitions of leadership are not necessarily less Inuit but rather, differently Inuit, when compared with earlier generations' conceptualizations of these terms. Indeed, youths' distinct leadership definitions might contribute to the loss of certain elements of traditional leadership styles; however, as I discuss below, these distinct interpretations can also enable youth to better address their present-day social and political contexts.

### **Leadership Development**

Alumni also described how they developed leadership abilities during their experience with NYA. In response to questions about leadership during interviews and in archived questionnaires, alumni especially discussed developing communication skills, interpersonal competencies, a sense of cultural identity, and personal growth. Such skills were developed through workshops during orientation and reorientation, through cultural presentations that youths delivered in their host communities, and through youths' interpersonal interactions during their volunteer placements. These experiences contributed to youths' confidence in pursuing leadership roles like "raising my voice in a large group of people" (K. Ayalik, personal communication, February 8, 2012), "set[ting] good examples, respect[ing] everyone and help[ing] people out" (NYA, 2012b, p. 2), "calming the group down," or acting as a "delegator, organizer, mediator, and spokesperson" (NYA, 2012c, p. 8).

These results highlight the remarkable capabilities of Inuit youths to assume diverse leadership roles, a theme that very little research has addressed to date. Indeed, the majority of reports and studies about Inuit youth have focused on the challenges that they face (Anielski & Pollock, 2003, as cited in DCLEY, 2003) such as suicide, school drop-out rates, or substance abuse. While such issues are of course important challenges that require scholarly attention, my findings reinforce Noah's (2010) recommendation that more research

be conducted on Inuit youths' leadership as well. Indeed, my findings illustrate how some youths with addictions perceived themselves as exhibiting leadership by taking control of their lives, an important and inspiring counter-narrative to most research study's findings about these challenges.

My findings also highlight the importance of cultural identity in enabling NYA participants to develop as leaders. This is consistent with research that has illustrated how a loss of cultural identity or ownership can contribute to low self-esteem, higher rates of suicide and the erosion of familial support networks (DCLEY, 2003; Hanson, 2003; Kral et al., 2003; Searles 2006; Targé 2008). Significantly, my findings broaden the literature's discussion of cultural identity loss by illustrating how becoming proud of one's identity can generate valuable benefits for Inuit youths. Though this case study contributes to the literature by illustrating how cultural identity can be fostered and with what effect, further research is required to assess the broader significance of a strengthened cultural identity among Inuit youth.

My results also illustrate the agency of youths in weaving Euro-Canadian and Inuit influences together in shaping cross-cultural leadership styles. Many interviewees described their enhanced capacity to lead in terms of setting examples for others rather than through wielding social influence, a preference that is consistent with the style of Inuit leadership discussed in the Pauktuutit publication (2006), *The Inuit Way*. Yet, alumni also discussed skills that had not been associated with traditional, Inuit forms of leadership. For example, the ability to overcome shyness was not referenced in my research or literature review as a component of traditional, Inuit leadership; however, the majority of NYA alumni referred to overcoming their shyness as one of the most significant components of their leadership

development. I suggest that these results highlight how cultural variations on leadership are dynamic and continually re-constituted by new cultural agents (e.g., youth) in accordance to their current social context. Though leadership skills linked to hunting would have been of paramount importance for earlier generations of Inuit, leadership opportunities for Inuit youths today take place in a range of venues with an increasingly varied range of actors. NYA alumni's emphasis on interpersonal competencies and communication skills in their descriptions of leadership could consequently be interpreted as adaptations to present-day opportunities rather than as a departure from "Inuit" leadership styles.

NYA alumni's interpretation of leadership development resembles Bhabha's (1990) description of a third space: "[it] displaces the histories that constitute it and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom" (p. 211). A third space for Inuit leadership, then, would draw from colonial influences and Inuit values/knowledge to generate hybrid leadership styles that are neither purely Inuit nor purely Qallunaat, but "something else besides" (Bhabha, 1988, p. 13). NYA alumni's description of leadership in terms of cultural identity, communication skills, interpersonal competencies, and personal growth is an example of one such space. By enunciating this new space, NYA alumni introduce "a split between the traditional, culturalist demand for a model, a tradition, a community, a stable system of reference – and the necessary negation of the certitude in the articulation of new cultural demands, meanings, and strategies in the political present" (Bhabha, 1988, p. 19).

Yet, as Bhabha cautioned, youths' agency in defining concepts within a cultural group can be constrained if members of this group emphasize a unified, national-popular sentiment that harkens back to earlier cultural forms. Searles (2006) echoed this concern in

cautioning that the Government of Nunavut's recent emphasis on traditional Inuit values may risk marginalizing and even alienating many young Inuit. This tension was also illustrated in my findings through Derrick's observation that youths in his community lack credibility as leaders of today. An important direction for future research and policy will be to re-examine local communities' and researchers' attitudes towards Inuit youth leadership in this era of emerging pressures, opportunities, and influences.

My findings also raise important questions about the gendered dimensions of leadership with Inuit youths. Earlier forms of Inuit leadership have been largely described with reference to hunting, both in publications like Pauktuutit's (2006) *The Inuit Way* and by the NYA alumni whom I interviewed. These descriptions would suggest that earlier forms of Inuit leadership were more strongly associated with male gender roles, particularly that of the male as hunter. In contrast, the dimensions of leadership that NYA alumni described were not explicitly connected to gender roles and may consequently enable females to access more prominent leadership positions than would have been common in earlier eras. Indeed, increasingly visible examples of female leadership in Nunavut are evident in the prestigious political positions that Eva Aariak, Leona Aglukkaq, and Mary Simon hold as the territorial premier, national health minister, and past president of the national Inuit organisation, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK). Though some barriers to females' participation in arenas like sports and politics have been documented (Giles, 2002; Gombay, 2000), the Inuit youths with whom Hanson (2003) consulted also reported that opportunities for women's empowerment had increased for their generation. Whether this trend can be equally or conversely applied to young males' capacity or confidence in leading requires further investigation.

## Conclusions

Nunavut Inuit participants from NYA defined and developed a third space for leadership. These youths emulated many components of traditional Inuit leadership styles, such as “leading by example” and enabling others to take the lead. Yet, while examples of “traditional” Inuit leadership were described by interviewees, NYA’s alumni’s descriptions of leadership applied to a variety of different scenarios. Further, NYA alumni reported developing leadership skills that had not been formally linked to Inuit leadership styles, such as interpersonal and communication skills. Youths’ descriptions of leadership, however, did include a strong emphasis on cultural pride and identity. Further, some participants highlighted personal growth and development as primary forms of leadership development. These findings suggest that NYA’s Nunavut Inuit alumni possess strong and adaptive leadership abilities.

Better understanding the mechanisms through which Nunavut Inuit youths develop leadership presents a promising direction for research with Inuit youth for several reasons. First, research into Inuit youths’ leadership may hold important insights into problems like suicide, substance abuse, and crime since some youth leaders have confronted and overcome these challenges personally. Second, research about Inuit youths’ leadership development over a longer time frame may enable a more nuanced understanding of how these youths’ leadership skills and aspirations connect with the range of leadership roles that are emerging in Nunavut. My research highlighted how NYA alumni from the past six years pursued a range of leadership roles in their communities and abroad; however, my results do not address how these youths’ leadership development might contribute to future leadership roles as parents, politicians, caregivers, businessmen/women, and so on. Third, the

Government of Nunavut, Nunavut youth councils, the Canadian International Development Agency, and others have established leadership programs specifically for Inuit youths (for example, CIDA, 2011; Hanson, 2003; Noah, 2006); assessing how Nunavut Inuit youths develop leadership skills in their own community, territory, or abroad through such initiatives can consequently enrich and deepen our understanding of Inuit youths' leadership styles.

NYA's Nunavut Inuit alumni highlighted how rapid cultural changes and new social problems have affected their generation. More compellingly, these alumni illustrated their capacity to adapt to these new contexts by crafting leadership skills that are neither wholly Inuit nor Euro-Canadian, but "something else besides" (Bhabha, 1993, p.13). In order to better understand the challenges facing this generation of Inuit youths, researchers would be well advised to recognize the adaptability, resilience, and leadership that Nunavut Inuit youths such as NYA alumni have developed.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

My interest in investigating how indigeneity might contribute to distinct forms of global citizenship was sparked at an Oxfam Canada conference in 2010; following my past year of researching Nunavut Inuit participants' journeys with Northern Youth Abroad, this initial interest has expanded, thanks to those participants who contributed their insights, wisdom, and time. I was given opportunities to learn about – and continue to find inspiring – Nunavut Inuit youths' capacities to develop as global citizens and as young leaders with varied career paths, nuanced understandings of cultural differences and similarities, and a sense of cultural pride. My thesis, based on a post-colonial, case study, has documented this journey and some of its rich findings. I first assessed NYA's effectiveness in achieving its mandate of fostering cross-cultural awareness, individual career goals, international citizenship, and leadership in Chapter III Building on these findings, in Chapter IV I investigated how NYA's Nunavut Inuit alumni draw from Inuit and Qallunaat leadership styles when discussing and developing their own, varied forms of leadership. Taken together, these chapters elucidate Inuit youths' remarkable capacity to weave together Inuit and Euro-Canadian influences in order to better respond to the opportunities and challenges Nunavut's first generation of youth face. Below, I summarize the key findings from Chapters III and IV and situate them within the broader context of Nunavut Inuit youths' identity, neocolonialism, and educational travel. Finally, I outline my findings' contributions, limitations, and implications for future research about Inuit youth.

Chapter III highlights that NYA's Nunavut Inuit alumni reported developing substantive and varied growth in the organization's four objectives of cross-cultural awareness, individual career goals, leadership, and global citizenship. Further, participants

drew from both Inuit and non-Inuit influences as they developed these four objectives in southern Canada and in Botswana. Drawing on these findings, I argue that NYA's work in fostering youths' sense of cultural pride alongside their growth in NYA's four mandated objectives could be interpreted as a compelling example of "third space" (Bhabha, 1988). NYA's programming draws from volunteer tourism and Qallunaat-led educational programs, both of which have been widely critiqued as Eurocentric, (neo)colonial institutions that have attempted to exhibit or assimilate cultural differences (Guttentag, 2009; McGregor, 2010; Raymond & Hall, 2008; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). My findings suggest that NYA has been effective in displacing many of the Eurocentric biases found in volunteer tourism and Qallunaat-led educational models and that NYA's staff members, board members, and alumni instead co-create a third space (Bhabha, 1988) of cultural richness and variability. This space positions Inuit youths as agents of cultural re-assertion rather than as victims of culture loss. Nevertheless, NYA alumni's development and eventual attainment of individual goals linked to careers, leadership, cross-cultural awareness, or global citizenship appeared to have been restricted by neocolonial biases; for example, most alumni dissociated their traditional knowledge or skills from career assets; some alumni expressed discomfort in adapting the authoritative leadership styles required in certain emerging careers in Nunavut; and at least one alumni discussed how the majority of his community members viewed young Inuit as the leaders of tomorrow but not today. Whether NYA can or has prepared its alumni to address neocolonial influences within the program and throughout alumni's lives remains uncertain.

Chapter IV addresses how NYA's Nunavut Inuit alumni described and developed leadership. In addition to drawing on elements of Inuit leadership models, like "leading by

example” or leading collectively, the youths incorporated competencies in skills like public speaking that had not been associated with earlier Inuit leadership models, but better prepared these youths for the changing demands and opportunities of present-day Nunavut. Nevertheless, youths’ varied and vibrant examples of leadership have received little academic attention and, according to some alumni, have also failed to gain credibility of other community members as examples of leadership. I argue that Nunavut Inuit youths’ work in weaving Inuit and Qallunaat leadership styles together again illustrates Bhabha’s (1988) concept of third space. Moreover, the tensions that some Nunavut Inuit alumni perceived for having departed from earlier models of Inuit leadership illustrates Bhabha’s (1987) and Kapoor’s (2008) caution against the reproduction of a “pure” Native identity which negates the existence of rich, cultural variations and which risks excluding certain demographics of a cultural group, such as youths.

Taken together, my chapters present a compelling counter-narrative to social scientists’ almost exclusive focus on Nunavut Inuit youths’ perceived challenges and deficiencies (e.g. Dauvergne, 2007; Hicks, 1999; Minor, 1992; O’Donnell & Tait, 2003; Targé 2009). While I do not question the prevalence or gravity of issues like suicide, substance abuse, or delinquency in many Nunavut communities, I do present strong evidence of Inuit youths’ strengths, adaptability, and resilience in light of the problems as well as opportunities that this demographic faces. Further, my findings highlight that NYA alumni’s sense of cultural pride and identity was strongly linked to youths’ development of a positive self-image, sense of belonging, desire to volunteer, leadership abilities, and interest in learning from their own and other cultures. These findings build on Hanson’s (2003), Kral’s (2003), and Searles’ (2006) discussions on the importance of Nunavut youths’ cultural

identity by illustrating some far-reaching benefits that youths associated with their heightened sense of cultural pride and identity.

My analysis also contributes to the literature about third space by illustrating how this concept, when applied to NYA, describes a limited space of continuous re-negotiation rather than a permanent or all-pervading site of cultural emancipation. Neocolonial influences therefore can and do continue to influence the space, as I illustrated in my critique of some (though certainly not all) of NYA's international group leaders' neocolonial biases. Further, the pre-eminence of neocolonial influences and spaces outside of NYA can and have influenced alumni's development and pursuit of personal career goal, leadership skills, cross-cultural competencies, and global citizenship. In this way, NYA exemplifies Kapoor's (2008) reminder that a third space, though powerful in its own right, may offer "nothing in the way of coordinating mechanisms needed for sustained political transformation" (p. 130).

Though NYA's ability to transform broader neocolonial structures in alumni's lives may be limited, its exemplary work in subverting neocolonial structures and influences within their own organization could serve as an interesting model for other southern-based organizations to consider when working with Nunavut Inuit youths. The case of NYA is evidence that adapting an organization's programming and desired outcomes to Nunavut Inuit youths' unique cultural backgrounds, challenges, and strengths may result in far-reaching and more significant benefits for this demographic.

My findings also reveal important queries and directions for future research with youths from Nunavut. Chapters III and IV illustrated that NYA's Nunavut Inuit alumni demonstrated adaptive abilities and strengths in light of or in response to challenges like substance abuse, suicide, low graduation rates, and a weak sense of cultural identity. I argue

that Nunavut Inuit youths' diverse strengths are therefore under-researched, but are linked to the prevention or mitigation of the many challenges that Nunavut Inuit youths presently face. My findings also highlight how NYA's female and male alumni might interpret and experience leadership differently as a result of changing gender roles in Nunavut. A more thorough assessment of how gender has intersected with Nunavut Inuit youths' lived experiences and aspirations could yield interesting results, but was beyond the scope of my investigation. Further, my research did not explicitly address how participants' class, home community, ability, sexual orientation, or other such factors linked to identity influenced their experience in NYA. Incorporating an intersectional analysis in which participants' age and cultural identity are assessed alongside these and other factors could provide a deeper understanding of NYA alumni's experiences. Incorporating the voices of participants' family members, host family members, and workplace supervisors could have also yielded different and significant insights. Finally, while my research has focused on NYA's work as a southern-based organization, future research with Inuit youth organizations based in Nunavut could yield interesting results.

### **A Final Reflection: Full Circles and Third Spaces**

My past 11 months of researching and volunteering with NYA has been a gratifying, enriching, and familiar journey. My Research Advisory Board – comprised of NYA's Program Director and four Board Members, two of whom are also alumni – and my supervisors, Dr. Audrey Giles and Dr. Nadia Abu-Zahra, provided such phenomenal support and interest in my work that my role as a researcher felt compelling and relevant. Further, alumni's stories and reflections were so poignant and thought-provoking that I genuinely looked forward to transcribing, coding, analysing, and writing about them. As my

experiences with NYA's alumni, staff, and board members broadened, I came to personally appreciate how NYA's carefully cultivated atmosphere and relationships foster such varied and remarkable forms of personal growth in its participants.

During my research, I also recognized some uncanny parallels between alumni's stories and my own journey in developing cross-cultural awareness, leadership, career goals, and global citizenship as a Newfoundlander. Like Nunavummiut, Newfoundlanders' livelihoods and cultures had been far removed from Canada and predominantly land and sea-based until the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, I and many other young Newfoundlanders have lost some of these earlier cultural connections, but have also refashioned cultural identity and ownership on our own terms. I, for example, have never jigged a cod or developed any interest in eating seafood; nor have I developed any mastery (or even basic competence) in imitating a Newfoundland accent. Nevertheless, I cultivated a deep sense of cultural pride and ownership by performing on provincial, national, and international stages with Shallaway, an internationally renowned youth choir whose mandate (much like that of NYA) includes "celebrat[ing] cultural diversity and connection in this nation and around the globe" and "develop[ing] its young choristers as leaders for the future in and for Newfoundland and Labrador" (Shallaway, 2012, p. 1). Further, Derrick's remarks about how youths' leadership capacities were underestimated in his community closely paralleled my own struggles to be recognized as a young leader in founding a youth-driven non-governmental organization in Newfoundland and Labrador. As I progressed with my thesis, such similarities made participants' journeys seem all the more familiar, while the rougher terrain that research participants had also frequently traversed made their journeys seem all the more humbling, inspiring, and remarkable. I have great faith that NYA and its

Nunavut Inuit alumni will continue to weave rich, flexible, and resilient futures, and I hope that my thesis has aptly conveyed the transformative power of NYA as a stepping-stone, a turning point, and a third space for Nunavut's young leaders of today and tomorrow.

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