INUIT PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING AND FORMAL EDUCATION IN THE
CANADIAN ARCTIC

by

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ABSTRACT

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There is a longstanding desire among some Inuit and northern educators to better integrate Inuit culture and modes of learning in education. At present, efforts to include Inuit culture in education can be described as *ad hoc* or *add-ons* to a Euro-North American schooling system, which puts many Inuit in internal conflict trying to live according to two value systems that in some ways are contradictory. This thesis reports on research conducted with Inuit in the western Canadian Arctic to examine what aspects of culture and modes of learning Inuit desire to have included in education, beyond those identified *a priori* by non-Inuit educators. A conceptual framework for the cultural negotiation of Indigenous education is empirically applied in a case study of Ulukhaktok, NWT to identify what Inuit think Inuit youth should learn, how they should learn it, where they should learn it and from whom, and why it is important for them to learn it.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews (n=31), free-lists and participant observation. Findings show that Inuit desire to have native languages, subsistence knowledge, skills and values, and understanding of the local environment included in education, which not only builds competence in subsistence but also provides students with capacity to cope with challenges in the modern world. This involves on-the-land hands-on learning with a skilled person and practical everyday use of native languages in learning. Inuit perceive school as a place for “learning” and the research identifies opportunities to negotiate this space to better integrate Inuit culture and modes of learning.
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1.1 Research Rationale

Prior to moving into settlements, Inuit were semi-nomadic and lived in groups of nuclear family units that migrated with seasonal hunting activities and weather patterns (Condon 1987, Irwin 1989). Inuit learned the knowledge, skills and values important for subsistence livelihoods through observation and apprenticeship; in Inuit traditional learning, living and learning were inseparable. Children would listen to, follow, observe and imitate their parents by participating in daily activities until they had reached a certain competency to perform tasks on their own. They learned how to contribute to a social structure in which the wellness of the collective was valued, and knowledge of the Arctic environment was paramount for survival (Wenzel 1987).

During the 1950s, Inuit started to move from the land into settlements, resulting in profound social, economic and political changes including disruptions to traditional learning (Damas 2002). Formal education was provided in the form of residential mission schools, introducing a new way of learning that was in direct conflict with Inuit traditional learning (Condon 1996, Vick-Westgate 2002, Pearce et al. 2011). These schools operated on strict Euro-centric religious principles; only English could be spoken and native languages were forbidden. Most Inuit children were sent away from their homes and families for long periods of time in an attempt to assimilate them into contemporary Canadian culture (Irwin 1989, Damas 2002). This period of Euro-centric enculturation had profound effects on Inuit, both those who attended residential schools and their families, resulting in a legacy of colonialism that continues to negatively affect Inuit today (Milloy 1999, Walton et al. 2015).

In the early 1960s, schools began to be built in settlements across the Canadian Arctic in place of the residential school system. Today most Inuit are able to live in their community while they attend grade school. However, the structure of formal education, including curriculum,
teaching methods and modes of learning, continues to be based on Euro-centric principles and is most often taught by non-Inuit, southern educators (Berger 2001, Rasmussen 2011). Consequently, in many instances formal education in the Arctic continues to be in conflict with Inuit worldviews and modes of learning with implications for student success, livelihoods and wellbeing (Rasmussen 2001).

Since the inception of formal schooling in the Arctic, Inuit have consistently been identified for their low rates of achievement on standardized tests (Berger 2014, ITK 2011). In 2014, approximately 47% of eligible Inuit and Inuvialuit living in the Northwest Territories (NWT) had obtained their high school diploma (Northwest Territories Statistics 2016). Only 16.5% of students attended school in 2013, and, of those students in attendance, more than 41.9% failed standardized Territorial tests (AAT 2013). Low achievement scores strongly suggest that the current education system is not meeting the needs of all Inuit students. This is cause for concern as many Inuit youth are not obtaining the skills needed to succeed in the wage-based economy and yet are also not acquiring many of the skills important for subsistence, leaving some Inuit youth caught between ‘Two Worlds’ (Henze and Vanett 1993).

Inuit leaders and education decision-makers have recognized the need to make formal education relevant to Inuit students and several attempts have been made to better represent Inuit culture and modes of learning in education (Government of Canada 2012, Gunn et al. 2011, Northwest Territories 2013, ITK 2011, Rasmussen 2011). Most attempts have focused on developing culturally appropriate curricula and teaching methods (Berger 2001; Berger and Ross, 2006, McGregor 2012). This includes “culture-based learning,” which is premised on understanding the different cultural contexts present in a classroom and working to adapt curriculum and teaching methods accordingly (Berger 2007, Blanchet-Cohen and Reilly 2013, Gutiérrez and Rogoff 2003). Others have re-developed curricula to better reflect the Arctic and
Inuit culture. For example, some schools now teach courses on northern studies and have amended their biology and social studies curriculums to include information about the Arctic environment and Inuit culture and history (Emekauwa and Williams 2004, Lipka et al. 2005, Northwest Territories 2013). New technologies have been adopted including e-learning, which connects individual students in small communities with students and educators in other communities (Philpott and Batty 2009). Most of these efforts, however, have been driven by southern educators and decision makers, with limited input from Inuit. As a result, their effectiveness at improving educational performance among Inuit has been questioned negligible.

There is a need for a bottom-up, Inuit-led process of educational renewal in the Arctic (Irwin 1989; Berger 2001, Rasmussen 2011). Sometimes referred to as the negotiation of Inuit education, changes need to occur at multiple scales, including the classroom, school, community, region and state (Berger 2001, Stairs 1994). To better represent Inuit culture and modes of learning in education, we need to understand “why” Inuit learn (the worldview that frames education), “what” is being taught (content of curricula) and “how” (including language of instruction), and we need to do so from an Inuit perspective (Stairs 1994). This thesis builds upon scholarship on the negotiation of Indigenous education to identify what aspects of Inuit culture and modes of learning Inuit desire to have included in education.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to examine what aspects of culture and modes of learning Inuit desire to have included in education, through a case study of Ulukhaktok, NWT, Canada. The aim is pursued through three objectives:

1. examine Inuit perceptions of learning and formal education;
2. document what Inuit think youth should learn, how they should learn it, where they should learn it and from whom, and why it is important for them to learn it; and
3. identify opportunities to better represent Inuit culture and modes of learning in current educational renewal efforts in Ulukhaktok and the NWT.

1.3 Thesis Outline

This thesis includes five chapters. Chapter two, Research Context, reviews relevant bodies of scholarship and situates the research within the broader context of the negotiation of Indigenous education. Chapter 3, Case study, describes the community where the research took place, with an emphasis on the influence of formal education in Ulukhaktok, NWT. Chapter 4, Methodology, defines considerations taken to build community-researcher relationships, researcher positionality, the theoretical framework used to structure data including sampling techniques, collection methods employed and data analysis. Chapter 5, Results, documents findings for objectives one and two (the perception of formal education and learning in Ulukhaktok, and what Inuit think Inuit youth should learn). Chapter 6, Discussion, considers the significance of the key research findings and addresses objective three by discussing the research findings in the context of the cultural negotiation of education generally and specifically education renewal efforts in the NWT. Chapter 7, Conclusions, summarizes key research findings, outlines the scholarly and practical contributions of the research, and suggests future research opportunities.
CHAPTER 2. Scholarly Context to the Research

This chapter reviews scholarship relevant to the negotiation of Inuit education. To begin, a description of Inuit knowledge and traditional modes of learning is given. Second, the advent of formal education in the Arctic is discussed and conflicts between traditional and formal modes of learning are reviewed. Third, approaches for the cultural negotiation of education are outlined and frameworks for operationalizing these approaches in research with Inuit are described. Fourth, research on the negotiation of Inuit education is reviewed, thereby highlighting opportunities for research that are pursued thereafter.

2.1 Inuit Traditional Modes of Learning

Inuit have lived in the Canadian Arctic for over four thousand years and have depended on traditional ways of knowing to survive (Friesen 2004, Usher 2000). Prior to European contact Inuit were semi-nomadic, relying on lifelong learning processes to sustain their livelihoods (McGregor 2010, Ohmagari and Berkes 1997). Inuit developed deep historical, cumulative and contextual understanding of the land (includes land, sea and ice) by traveling throughout the Arctic to hunt and fish based on seasonal animal migrations (Dickerson 1992). This involved generating and transmitting among generations a cumulative body of knowledge, skills, practice and values important for safe and successful hunting, and food and fur preparation.

Several terms and definitions have been used to describe Inuit knowledge, including Local Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge (TK), Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ). Local Knowledge refers to the collective knowledge shared by a unique group of people with a close relationship to their environment (Berkes and Berkes 2009). TK is broadly defined as a continuously evolving, cumulative body of knowledge, practices and values transmitted from generation to generation through oral information, experiences, observations and land skills (Berkes 2012, Pearce et al. 2011, Pearce et al. 2015, Riedlinger and
Berkes 2001). In the Canadian Arctic, Inuit communities have historically based much of their teaching and learning on the generation and transmission of TK (Condon et al. 1995, McGregor 2010, Wenzel 1987). Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) refers to the ecological component of TK, namely the accumulated body of information pertaining to the dynamic interactions among all elements, cultural and biophysical within the northern environment (Emekauwa and Williams 2004, Pearce et al. 2010, Wenzel 1999). A broader definition of TEK is Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ). The term roughly translates to “that which Inuit have always known to be true” (Tagalik 2010, p.1). IQ is an epistemological framework used by the Government of Nunavut in the policies and actions. In this thesis, the term TK is used consistently with the definition of TK in the case study region, NWT, to ensure that this research is relevant to educational governance in the NWT (Northwest Territories 2005).

Recent studies examining the generation and transmission of environmental knowledge and land skills, one component of TK, among Inuit have documented changes in the transmission process (Armitage et al. 2011, Pearce et al. 2011). Some skills important for subsistence such as traditional navigation and wayfinding have been transmitted poorly, while other skills have been transmitted incompletely such as tracking wildlife, and emergency preparedness, meaning some Inuit youth are better equipped than others when it comes to competency in subsistence (Pearce et al. 2011). Factors that have affected transmission success include: access to experienced teachers, declining participation in some subsistence activities, competing formal education system, and loss of native languages (Pearce et al. 2011). Inuit youth are generally spending less time on the land with family members acquiring skills necessary for subsistence practices and more time engaged in community socialization (e.g. Internet, sports, television) and formal education learning knowledge and skills deemed important for success in the wage-based economy (Salokangas and Parlee 2009).
2.2 Formal Education

In the early 1950s the Canadian government recognized the need to strengthen its role in the North starting by encouraging Inuit to move into permanent settlements and promoting formal education, with the aim of sharing “Canadian culture” (Damas 2002, Bonesteel et al. 2008). Formal education was residential and Inuit children were removed from their homes and forced to attend schools during the winter months and allocated small amounts of time with their families during the summer (Collings 2000, Irwin 1989). Residential schools were based on Eurocentric religious principles, which were in direct conflict with Inuit epistemologies (Bonesteel et al. 2008, Rasmussen 2011, Stairs 1992). The curriculum emphasized learning in either English or French, native languages were forbidden, and students were conditioned to behave and learn like students in southern Canada and forgo their cultural norms (Condon 1987, Irwin 1989). This had a profound impact on Inuit traditional ways of learning and the transmission of TK across generations (McGregor 2010, Vick-Westgate 2002).

For the most part, the current education system in the Canadian Arctic no longer requires mandatory residential schooling, but it remains primarily based on a government regulated southern Canadian curriculum (McGregor 2010, Rasmussen 2011). The objective of the curriculum is to provide Inuit youth with the opportunity to prosper in a modern wage-based economy (Wright et al. 2000). For example, to obtain a high school diploma, from a young age most students must attend schools based on governmental structure and strict classroom learning environments. Attendance is required for the majority of the year, and in some instances requires traveling outside of the community, limiting time with their families. Most schools in the western Canadian Arctic are operated by southern educators, the official language of teaching is English and the curriculum is the same as Alberta’s education curriculum, despite living in completely different social, cultural, political and ecological environments (Ives 2012).
Formal education follows a classroom structure and the delivery of curriculum is profoundly influenced by the teacher (Berger 2007, Bishop et al. 2007). It is the responsibility of the teacher to facilitate relationships with Inuit students and community members, a task that is daunting for many southern educators who are in the Arctic for their first time (Berger 2007, Lewthwaite and McMillan 2010, Vetter and Blimkie 2011). Most teachers are southern-based educators who come to teach in the Arctic to gain experience and are lured by high wages and a sense of adventure (Berger and Ross 2006, Rasmussen 2011). Inuit communities often experience high turnover rates with southern educators who on average spend less than five years in the Arctic (Berger 2001, Lewthwaite and McMillan 2010, Ives et al. 2015).

The term ‘Quallunology’ has been used to describe the structured education of non-Inuit (Rasmussen 2001). Credentials such as individual grades and diplomas have become the primary drivers of success in the formal education system in the Arctic (Preston et al. 2015). These credentials are based on the measurements of intermediary success that are often important in characterizing intellectual levels of ordinary southern society members (Rasmussen 2001). For example, students must learn new skills in a specific gradient in order to obtain the required intellectual aptitudes. This contrasts with traditional Inuit modes of learning, which are based on learning phases determined by the individual’s pace and curiosity (Bilson and Mancini 2007).

Since the introduction of formal education in the Arctic, Inuit have lagged behind in educational attainment compared to other populations in Canadian (Penney 2009). In 2011, approximately 75% of eligible Inuit across Inuit Nunangat (Inuit homeland) had not obtained their high school diploma (ITK 2011). In 2013 over half of the high school students from Inuit communities in the NWT, did not attain required achievement scores to obtain their secondary diploma and approximately 50% of students residing in small communities in the NWT are below the academic level for their age (Northwest Territories 2013, Northwest Territories 2016). There
is clearly a need to work with Inuit in communities to identify what aspects of Inuit culture and modes of learning they desire to have included in education and work towards building an education system that better meets the needs of Inuit students.

2.3 Cultural Negotiation of Education

“Culture” exist in many different contexts, and based on the situation or timing may be defined through different meanings, histories and traditions (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952, Maddox 1998, Oyserman 2016, Tripathy 2010). Some define culture as the human development of a way of life, which includes social behaviours to becoming a functioning member of a particular society (Keesing 1974). Other definitions of culture have emphasized the social processes of formal and informal practices incorporating beliefs, rituals, communications, and daily living (Swidler 1986). Some definitions describe the biological and evolutionary environments in which cultures develop, and consider cultures to be systems of social behaviours developed between humans and their ecological settings (Kessing 1974). Essentially cultures can be developed through a number of different practices with various ideologies to create communities of common behaviours and values that are constantly adapting to changes based on their specific context (Tripathy 2010).

Formal education in the Arctic is part of European culture and was imposed on Inuit who have their own culture of education. Some efforts have been made to better include aspects of Inuit culture and modes of learning in formal education, but these have been for the most-part limited to cultural add-ons to the dominant education paradigm (Berger 2001). Conversations pertaining to the education system in the Arctic, have historically been based on the assumptions that formal institutions are permanent structures and modifications can only occur through additions to the existing system (Stairs 1994, Rasmussen 2001). To better represent aspects of Inuit culture in formal education, the conversation needs to shift toward a broader negotiation of
education in principle. Education must be understood as a cultural phenomenon acting as a
critical site for cultures to interact and not a static dimension of culture (Stairs 1994). Thus, it is
imperative to fully understand the different cultural settings, frameworks, and approaches to
combine the different knowledge bases and aspects of culture into a functional education system.

Stairs (1994) identifies various cultural components that influence the formalized
education system and the means for the cultural negotiation of the education system (Figure 2.1).
To understand the cultural components that influence Inuit education, it is necessary to examine
three main aspects: the context; the meaning; and the depth of processes (Stairs 1994). The
context represents the situation such as physical dimensions and characteristics, including the
structural organization of the classroom, the school, and the local environment. The context is
often determined through various political and socio-economic structures, who define the
outcomes, goals, and boundaries through curriculum development and learning environments.
The meaning represents the reasoning, the values, and the social dimensions involved in the
education, including: what is being taught, how it is being taught, and why it is inherently
important to social and educational development. The depth of processes defines the influence on
the cultural development including the distribution of specific cultural values and meanings,
which represents the perceived depth of the knowledge that is being transmitted. Stairs (1994)
illustrates the negotiation of these components separately using common historical steps,
beginning by defining the context, understanding the meaning of what is being taught and
learned, and then attempting to evaluate the depth of culture that is processed. It is important to
recognize that to negotiate for these cultural components in the formal education system, culture
must be recognized as developing through the interaction of different value systems and
integrated within the educational framework (Lipka 1994).
To fully understand the different dimensions of cultural negotiation, there is a need to examine the political governing bodies. Federal, Provincial and Territorial Governments remain the primary decision-making bodies for the formal education system in the Arctic (Rasmussen 2011). In the NWT for example, the education system is overseen by the Government of Canada, the curriculum is developed by the NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment, and is implemented into regional education councils and community boards (Northwest Territories 2013). Each one of these boards has various mandates that must be followed in order to maintain common educational goals (Partington 2014).

It is also important to understand how the different levels of government perceive the education system. In Canada, the education system in Indigenous communities is often based on western principles and standards (Gunn et al. 2011). An example of how the national government monitors education and develops policies is through the use of National Household Surveys. The 2006 and 2011 National Household Survey found that education completion rates for First Nations, Métis and Inuit fell below the national average (Statistics Canada 2013). Despite this continued shortfall in educational attainment, limited attention and resources have been directed
towards Aboriginal education (Gunn et al. 2011). In 2012, the Government of Canada released selected findings from the Aboriginal Peoples Survey and developed a framework of the different hypothetical educational pathways for Aboriginal students (Figure 2.3.2) (Government of Canada 2012). Within this framework student are classified as completers or leavers (Government of Canada 2012). A student who does not obtain a high school diploma or equivalent certification is a leaver (Government of Canada 2012). Thus, a student that is a leaver in an Inuit community may in fact be an accomplished hunter, and be well known throughout their community, but under governmental standards is not successful (Benería 2003).

Despite the continued disconnect between formal education and Indigenous peoples, governments are making efforts to bridge the gap. In June 2008, the Government of Canada publicly apologized to Aboriginal peoples of Canada for residential schools (Government of Canada 2008). While noted as a symbolic gesture of acknowledgement and apology some critics refer to the apology as ‘reconciliation-to-forget’ (Rasmussen 2001). However, the Government of Canada is recognizing the need for aboriginal communities to have a greater amount of control of
their education (Government of Canada 2014). In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada made calls to action, including many directly related to the education system (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015). They emphasized the need to improve funding for Aboriginal education, eliminate the education gap, develop culturally appropriate curricula, protect Aboriginal rights to languages, and enable more parental and community control and participation in their children’s education.

2.4 Inuit and Education

Several scholars have examined education in the Arctic. Some research has examined the cultural adaptations within the education system such as cultural responsive teaching methods (Lewthwaite and McMillan 2011, Walton et al. 2015), others have focused on integrating aspects of culture into curriculum (Goldbach 2000, Lipka 1994), and there is an increasing body of literature on the cultural negotiation of Inuit Education (Berger 2001, 2016, Stairs 1994, Ives et al. 2015).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Many educators in the Arctic today are southern and have different worldviews and perspectives on education than Inuit. There are rapid turnover rates of southern educators making it unlikely for them to integrate into Inuit societies (Lewthwaite and Renaud, 2009). This is problematic as a classroom environment in which teachers are culturally responsive to the students allows the learning process and the transfer of knowledge to be more effective (Bishop et al. 2007, Fuzessy 1998, Gay 2000, Berger and Ross 2006). McGregor (2013) emphasizes that “ideological conflicts reveal the most extreme challenges” to the implementation of culturally relevant knowledge. Southern educators and Inuit educators have different ways of teaching and provide different ways of learning (McGregor 2010). There is a need for educators to ‘care’ for students, their cultural values and traditional modes of learning (Berger and Ross 2006, Garakani,
2014, Lewthwaite and McMillan 2010). Caring, includes encouraging teachers to recognize the strengths of their students through their cultural knowledge, prior experiences to make learning more appropriate, effective and to bridge the gap between their home learning environments and the classroom (Lewthwaite and McMillan 2010). This behaviour is said to encourage the importance of Aboriginal culture, specifically traditional modes of learning (Castagno and Brayboy 2008). Some consider Inuit educators to be best suited to apply these teaching methods (Berger and Ross 2006, Ives et al. 2015).

There have been two main programs aimed at increasing the number of Inuit educators teaching in the Arctic by providing post-secondary education in Arctic regions. The first, known as the Nunavut Teacher Education, offered by the McGill University through the Nunavut Arctic College in Iqaluit, provides Inuit the opportunity to obtain a certificate in Native and Northern Education or a Bachelor of Education (McGill University 2016). The second, the Certificate in Educational Leadership in Nunavut offered by the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) in partnership with the Department of Education of the Government of Nunavut, provides qualified teachers with the tools necessary to take on leadership positions in the school system (University of Prince Edward Island 2016). Most recently the UPEI in collaboration with the Nunavut Department of Education, St. Francis Xavier University and Nunavut Arctic College has developed a Master’s in Education program offered in Nunavut (University of Prince Edward Island 2016). Although the number of Inuit educators and educational leaders has increased, education in the Arctic continues to be primarily driven by southern educators and ideologies (Berger et al. 2016, Rasmussen 2011).

Cultural Curriculums

There have been efforts to include cultural programs in schools in the Arctic (Berger 2001). Goldbach (2000) describes research in Greenland examining efforts to base learning
materials on traditional knowledge. To recognize Greenlandic and Danish culture, the formalized education system in Greenland provides two types of schooling: academic and vocational (Goldbach 2000). In secondary school, students choose between focusing on the curricular requirements to pursue post-secondary education, and/or concentrating on trades and vocational training (Goldbach 2000, Wyatt 2012). The goal of this type of education is to promote Greenland’s independence and create a diversified economy; however, many students from small communities still choose not to attend secondary education and opt to spend more time in their communities, in familial environments (Fridfinnsdottir, 2014)

In Alaska, Lipka (1994) describes the introduction of Yup’ik mathematics and science. Yup’ik teachers and Elders together worked with educators to combine traditional Yup’ik meanings within the modern mathematical system (Lipka 1994, Barnhart and Kawagley 2005). This has helped students engage and understand the production of knowledge based on their cultural values, and compare their knowledge system to Western approaches of learning (Lipka and Ilutsik 2014). This type of education has also enabled Yup’ik teachers to use their cultural values and styles of teaching in the classroom and has strengthened the student-teacher’s relationships and overall learning environment (Lipka and Ilutsik 2014).

In Canada, there have been efforts to combine traditional modes of learning with western science (Lewthwaite and McMillan 2010, Lewthwaite and Renaud 2009). Aikenhead (1996) describes science as being a sub-culture of Western society, thus requiring Inuit students to cross multiple cultural boundaries to comprehend science materials. Lewthwaite and Renaud (2009) note that the underlying premise of culture-based learning is that it should ‘reflect, validate and promote culture’. A science curriculum was developed based on principles outlined by Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit to include both Western science and Traditional Knowledge (Lewthwaite and Renaud 2009). In 2014, these resources were approved for use in curricula taught in Nunavut
(Government of Nunavut 2014). However, the success of the curriculum and its corresponding effectiveness remains dependent on the educators and the formal education institution (Lewthwaite and McMillan 2010, Lewthwaite and Renaud 2009).

Education curriculums in some regions of Inuit Nunangat have more Inuit content in them than in others. For example, in Nunavut and Nunavik Inuktitut language has long been an essential part of education in the regions. In Nunavut, the 2008 Education Act introduced the right for all students to receive bilingual education in either an Inuit language, English, or French (Government of Canada 2013). This act also includes priorities, such as: the incorporation of Inuit culture into all aspects of the education system, continued community consultation, and involvement of Elders. In Nunavik, the first Inuit-controlled school district established in Canada, the Kativik School Board is mandated to develop teaching materials and provide education in Inuktitut, English, and French (Callaghan 1992, Ives et al. 2015). Vick Westgate (2002) noted the priority and importance of language as a part of cultural programing and educational development. Other priorities in Nunavik were key components of Inuit culture, including: traditional knowledge, Inuit History, and survival training on the land (Vick-Westgate 2002). However, in both cases the success of language inclusion is dependent on the local context (Ives et al. 2015).

E-learning practices

There is an increasing trend towards the use of technologies to provide educational opportunities. For example, the Government of the Northwest Territories has implemented an e-learning pilot project to provide students with access to more diverse courses needed to attend post-secondary educational institutions (Northwest Territories 2013). Strategies to improve the education system in the Arctic include the use of e-learning platforms, now feasible with the advent of high speed Internet in most communities (Aporta et al. 2005). E-learning platforms are
designed to create new learning spaces based on the principles of collaboration and participation to connect students in small communities with students and educators elsewhere, providing them with course options and learning opportunities they may not otherwise have access to receiving (Greenhow et al. 2009).

E-learning strategies have the potential to focus on the inclusion of aspects of Inuit culture into educational programing. For example, the Arctic Eider Society is working in collaboration with the Kativik School board and the Nunavut Department of Education to use multimedia resources to introduce the dynamics of sea ice ecosystems and Inuit culture to classrooms (Arctic Eider Society 2016). However, it is important to understand that the use of technologies and digital media used to transmit information does not necessarily consider local cultural values and norms (Keskitalo 2014).

There is a clear need for the negotiation of Inuit education. The negotiation necessitates collaboration with northern communities to fully understand their perceptions of learning and the education system (Berger 2001, 2007, 2014, Crago et al. 1993, Garakani 2014, Lipka 1994, McGregor 2010, Stairs 1992, 1994). To date few have considered the complete negotiation of Inuit education. Berger (2001) explains that for communities to negotiate the direction of their schools, they must demonstrate the importance of schooling and show their support for the institution at large. This will help to identify the meaning of school for their cultural development (Berger 2001).
CHAPTER 3. Background to the Case Study

This chapter describes the local context for the research by presenting background information on the community of Ulukhaktok, NWT. This includes information on the development of Ulukhaktok as a settlement, with a particular focus on the evolution of formal schooling. The use of a case study allowed for an in-depth examination of Inuit perceptions of learning and formal schooling in a particular place, and it is intended for this information to contribute to the renegotiation of education in Ulukhaktok and elsewhere in northern Canada.

3.1 Ulukhaktok, NWT

The hamlet of Ulukhaktok is located on the west coast of the Victoria Island (70.7364° N, 117.7681° W) situated within the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) in the NWT, in the western Canadian Arctic (Figure 3.1). The community was founded in 1939 with the establishment of the Hudson Bay trading post and the Roman Catholic Mission (Condon 1987). Starting in the late 1960s, Inuit were encouraged with government incentives such as the provision of free houses to move from their land-based camps into the settlement, in 1971 the last family to remain on the land moved into the settlement. The population is currently composed of approximately 428 inhabitants, primarily of Inuit descent (92%). The spoken languages are primarily English and the Inuvialuit dialect of Inuinnaqtun. The majority of the population ranges from 15-45 years of age.
3.1.2 Schooling in Ulukhaktok

Beginning in the early 1950s, students were taken from land-camps with their families to attend residential schools on the mainland. In 1963 the development of a federally governed school was completed in the community, an elementary school (K-7) in a two-roomed schoolhouse. This was the first-time parents could send their children to receive a certified education while living at home (Condon 1987). High school aged students continued to attend residential secondary schools in Kugluktuk and Yellowknife until the construction of Helen Kalvak Elihakvik (School) in 1985 (Condon 1996). Named after the Inuit Elder and artist, the school is situated at the top of a hill above the hamlet and includes nine classrooms, a gymnasium, a library, a computer room, a wood working shop, kitchen, a science laboratory, the main principles office, staff room, and secretariat. Elementary students are based in the northern portion of the school, and high school students are primarily taught on the southern side. Outside
of school hours, the gymnasium and library are used for community activities. Students are separated by grade level, but due to small class sizes many classes include two or more grades.

The delivery of formal education in Ulukhaktok is primarily based on the mandated curriculum. In the Northwest Territories (NWT), the curriculum is based on national education standards, Alberta Educational curriculums and specific modifications for the NWT developed by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. The Territorial government oversees the regional Beaufort Delta Education Council, who provide amendments to curricular structures, then Helen Kalvak Elihakvik (School) delivers the material. The curriculum includes basic literacy, arithmetic, general science, physical education, northern studies and Inuinnaqtun class. Adjustments are made within the school to provide students with the most beneficial education based on the limited number of students and teachers.

Teachers are responsible for the final delivery of the curricular objectives. In Ulukhaktok, teachers are primarily southern educators. In order to be qualified to teach at the school, teachers require a university diploma in education. There are currently seven full-time teaching positions including the principle, one specialized teacher for children with disabilities and teachers for pre-kindergarten to grade twelve. Only one full-time certified teacher is Inuit; she is responsible for teaching kindergarten students. There are a number of other positions in the school, including six full time educational assistant positions, one librarian and one secretary, all which are all filled by Inuit community members.

Several strategies have been developed to make education more relevant to Inuit students with the intention of enhancing student success and completion. These strategies include corresponding foundational statements, visions and goals to help schools and educators better understand what resources should be used to teach Inuit Students. These include the development of collaborative learning processes, the recognition of success, investments in early level
education, improving support and ultimately increasing the number of graduates. Each initiative has taken different approaches to expand on their potential actions. These approaches include call for research, data collection through pilot projects and working in collaboration with communities to focus on integrating new information and developing future initiatives. To date actions corresponding to these strategies have been minimal.

**Table 3.1: Strategies used in Ulukhaktok, NWT to include Inuit Culture in school**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Date of Publication</th>
<th>Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>National Strategy on Inuit Education</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>National Council meetings and reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Amaujaq National Centre for Inuit Education Milestone Report</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial</td>
<td>NWT Education Renewal</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Territorial Council meetings and reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Beaufort Delta Education Council Strategic Plan 2014-2017</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Community visits Regional Council meetings and reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Ulukhaktok, the educators have chosen to include some aspects of Inuit culture. These are introduced through the form of required courses (Table 4.3). These courses are to represent cultural curricula, to replace mainstream social studies, history and arts classes. Based on classroom teaching styles, these courses aim for students to be exposed to various aspects of Inuit culture including language, history, arts and crafts. They are supplemented by occasional field trips, including short hunting trips, limited to students with higher academic achievement.

**Table 3.2: Cultural programs and courses offered at the Helen Kalvak Elihakvik (School)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inuinnaqtun Class</td>
<td>● Class Based Instruction</td>
<td>Inuit Teacher</td>
<td>5hr/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● BEDEC Literacy council curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall student engagement in these courses remains low. For example, students attending arts and crafts would often indicate that they wished they could attend this class every day, whereas the limited amount attending Inuinnaqtun class would state that they would rather be sleeping. Participants were critical of what was being taught in these classes and by whom. High school students would attend classes based on their interest for the subject, the time it was offered, the educator and on the other students attending class. If there was an incentive for students to attend classes, engagement would also increase. For example this would include field trips, quantifiable gains, or participation in other activities.
CHAPTER 4: Methodology

This research was developed and conducted in collaboration with the community of Ulukhaktok, NWT. Primary data collection took place in Ulukhaktok between September and December 2015. This chapter begins by describing the research approach that guided the research process, which includes measures that were taken to develop a collaborative community researcher relationship, a description of the researcher’s positionality, and the use of the cultural negotiation of education model to develop research questions. This is followed by an outline and description of the methods used for data collection including sampling strategy, interview design, participant observation and analysis of secondary sources and data analysis.

4.1 Research Approach

The empirical portion of this research employed an ethnographic approach. Ethnographic research is described as that which commonly entails spending valuable time living within a community or among a specific group with the aim of documenting cultural attributes (Berg et al. 2004). By being actively involved with the community the researcher is able to develop a genuine relationship with community members. To fully understand the complexities of the formal and traditional learning paradigms, this research necessitated working with people to describe social, emotional trends, meanings and value systems. This research approach assisted with participant observations, communications and the ability to describe specific events, social structures, behaviours and meanings (Collings 2009, Hay 2010).

4.1.1 Community Researcher Relationship

This research necessitated working with Inuit in Ulukhakot to identify what aspects of culture and modes of learning they desire to have included in education. As such, the research embraced considerations for building community-researcher relationships with Inuit as described by Pearce et al. (2009), ITK and NRI (2007), and protocols for conducting research with
communities in the NWT, described in the guide for ‘Working Together’ with northern communities (Aurora Research Institute 2015). Key considerations included early and ongoing communication with community representatives, community involvement in research design and development, opportunities for local employment, and dissemination of results (Pearce et al. 2009) (Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1**: Key considerations for engaging arctic communities in research (Pearce et al. 2009)

*Early communication* was made with community representatives on the District Education Authority (DEA), and Helen Kalvak Elihakvik (School) in Ulukhaktok during a pre-research consultation visit. Early communication was also initiated with representatives of the education renewal initiative being undertaken by the Government of the NWT. The research proposal was shared with John Stewart, the director of instructional and school services, and feedback was integrated back into the proposal so that the research findings are relevant to the renewal efforts. The researcher invited *community involvement in the research design and development* and solicited feedback on a draft research plan including confirming the research question, methods, timing of research, local employment, and expected research results.

*Opportunities for local employment* were identified, including the hiring of a local research
assistant Jasmine Klengenberg and translator Susie Malgogak to guide research in the community
and facilitate interviews. *Results will be disseminated* in the community through a dissemination
booklet describing key findings written in plain language which will be distributed to regional
and national stakeholders involved in education renewal. In particular, findings will be
communicated with the Northwest Territories Educational Renewal and Innovation Department
in Yellowknife and the Amaujaq National Centre for Inuit Education.

4.1.2 Researcher Positionality

A researcher’s positionality (i.e. gender, age, culture, education level, background, etc.)
influences the design of research questions, the selection of informants, the type of information
that people are comfortable sharing and the interpretation of data. As a 25-year-old Caucasian
female masters student, I recognize that my positionality influences how I collected, analyzed and
interpreted the research data. I have been educated through a western system and therefore view
the research topic differently than others. I come from a diverse background. I was raised under a
combination of Francophone and Anglophone heritage lines in New Brunswick at the time when
the French culture was undervalued. Therefore, when discussing the intersections between
southern and Inuit perspectives on education, it is easier to reflect and comprehend the differences
and similarities among two cultures.

The questions and the research topic are a reflection of my personal interests in cross-
cultural education and cultural identity. The interview questions were developed based on
previous literature on Inuit education, and input from Inuit research partners. Additional probing
questions were identified as I built relationships with the participants. Interviews were conducted
with a greater number of female participants. One explanation is that there was a greater number
of females involved in education decision making, and also that it was easier for me to build
relationships with female than male participants because of the gendered nature of culture in the
settlement. My previous visits to the settlement and established friendships, including with Elder community members, helped facilitate interviews.

I worked closely with Inuit research partners to mitigate researcher bias including the development of research questions, data collection and interpretation of findings. The experiences acquired living in the community for nine weeks with an Inuit Elder also helped contextualize and verify the interview data.

4.1.3 Cultural Negotiation of Education

Data collection was guided by a modified conceptual model for the cultural negotiation of education described by Stairs (1994). The term “negotiation” describes a dialogue between two or more parties intended to reach a mutually beneficial outcome, resolve points of difference, gain advantage for an individual or collective, or craft outcomes to satisfy various interests (Berger 2001, Lee and Anderson 2009). Here the negotiation is between Inuit and education decision makers, the intention being to better represent Inuit culture and modes of learning in schooling. The model was used to guide data collection to identify the current context of negotiation, the level of meaning and the depth of the process of the education system. While negotiating Inuit and education, it is important to examine learning as a separate entity to school and understand the meaning attributed to acquiring skills and knowledge. Therefore, we must identify what things Inuit think youth should know by the time they reach young adulthood. Here we use twenty years of age as a benchmark, consistent with the upper age limit of students attending the school. While twenty years of age is a benchmark, learning is a continual process and we are interested in identifying general knowledge and skill-sets that youth should have by twenty and acknowledge that each person will be at different stages in the learning process. This research first identified what things Inuit believe Inuit youth should know before they are twenty years of age, how they should learn these things, where they should learn them, from whom, and why? Consistent with
Stairs (1994) model for the renegotiation of Inuit education, we are interested in what Inuit think youth should know by twenty, how they should be learning, where they should be learning, from whom they should be learning, and why they should be learning these things. Next, the research identified “what” from this list of learning items Inuit believe should be taught at school; “how” it should be taught, including language of instruction, mode of learning and environment; “who” it should be taught by; and “why” in terms of what is the motivator for acquiring this knowledge and skills, including the worldviews, values and belief systems that frame formal education (Stairs 1994).

**Figure 4.2**: Adapted from Stairs (1994) three-dimensional epistemological model of cultural negotiation of education

### 4.2 Data Collection

Data for this research were collected over a three-month period from September to December 2015 by Lalonde and two research assistants, Jasmine Klengenberg and Susie Malgokak. Ethical protocols were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Guelph and the research was licensed by the Aurora Research Institute (#15402), which
oversees research in the Northwest Territories. The research employed ethnographic research methods including semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions (n=31), participant observation, and analysis of secondary sources.

4.2.1 Sampling Strategy

To gain a sample that accurately represented what aspects of culture and modes of learning Inuit in Ulukhaktok desire to have included in education, a purposive sampling technique was used. This technique began by identifying community members who have school-aged children, are currently or have been involved in the formal education system (e.g. work at the school, on the BDEC board, etc.), and/or were identified by the community as having significant local knowledge of and playing an active role within education. The identification process served to develop a list of potential participants. This list was further refined through discussions with the DEA and Research Assistants. Finally, participants were contacted and interviews were arranged. A description of the sample is given in Table 4.1. It should be noted that there is a greater number of female than male participants. This may be attributed to there being a greater number of females involved in education decision making in the community and/or because the primary researcher and research assistant are both female.

Table 4.1: Participant Education Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Community Member</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Elder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male (n=11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Schooling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (n=20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Schooling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews using fixed and open-ended questions were conducted to uncover what informants think people should learn, how they should learn it, and how these things can be better represented in the school system. The interview guide included two sections: questions to identify what type of things were important to learn by the age of twenty, including where they should be learned, why these were important to learn and who should be instructing; and questions to discuss education and the participants understanding of school. Prior to the interview the primary investigator spent time visiting the participants to develop rapport before conducting the actual interview. Interviews were scheduled at a time and location that was suitable for participants. Responses were recorded to retain information and to recall specific wording. Each interview began with casual conversation, a brief acknowledgement of research themes including culture and learning, and a notification of ethical procedures. Interviews were semi-structured and followed a conversation format to allow respondents to share their knowledge and experiences from their perspectives and in terms that made sense to them and reflected their priorities. After the interviews, the primary investigator and research assistants spent time discussing the contexts and comparing different perceptions of the responses.

4.2.3 Participant Observation

Participant observation was used to better understand learning processes in the community, the role of the school, and to contextualize information shared in interviews. The primary investigator spent three months living and working in the community, volunteering at the school (e.g. teaching as an educational assistant, grading student assignments, coaching basketball), contributing to community events (e.g. helping with cooking workshops, attending various meetings, helping with bingo card distribution, attending local art collaborations), living
in an Inuit household, and participating in daily livelihood activities (e.g. fishing, preparing meals, sewing, etc.). Observations were recorded as field notes on a daily basis.

4.2.4 Analysis of Secondary Sources

Analysis of secondary sources was used to review relevant sources of information about education in the community and region (e.g. meeting notes, government documents, educational data, published research). Information was obtained through communications and collaborations with the Government of the Northwest Territories, the NWT Education Renewal, the Amaujiaq National Centre for Inuit and Education, the Beaufort Delta Education District, the local District Education Authority and the Helen Kalvak Elihakvik (School).

4.3 Data Analysis

This section describes methods used to analyze primary data collected. Demographic data retrieved from fixed questions were analyzed using Microsoft Excel Software, and narrative and observational data documented through semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions were analyzed using content analysis through NVivo qualitative data analysis software.

Content analysis is considered as a practical and effective tool to examine and understand human behavior, personal knowledge and experiences relevant to educational research (Bos and Tarnai 1999, Downe-Wambolt 1992). This technique helped to analyze both semi-structured interview and participant observation data. Content analysis does not presuppose specific categories, rather it helps to identify patterns and categories, and emerging themes. This technique incorporates the actions and emotions portrayed by the respondent to the questions into the data analysis.

Content analysis was completed using NVivo software. All interview recordings were transcribed and uploaded to NVivo. Each interview transcript was then scanned to identify
predominant ideas and recurring themes, which were then coded following the structure of the
interview guide and Stairs (1994) model for the negotiation of education. Coded information was
then cross-referenced to identify instances in which multiple themes were discussed together. The
coded interview data were then considered together with other sources of data including field
notes and relevant secondary sources.
CHAPTER 5: Results

This chapter presents the results for the first two research objectives: (1) examine Inuit perceptions of learning and formal education; and (2) document what Inuit think Inuit youth should learn, how they should learn it, where they should learn it and from whom, and why it is important for them to learn it. These results are presented following the patterns of the themes generated by the respondents. This chapter begins by describing respondents’ perceptions of formal education, namely the concept of school and the physical building that houses school, and respondents’ perceptions of learning generally. The subsequent section reports what respondents think youth should learn, how they should learn, who should be teaching, where they should be taught and why it is important for them to learn these things. The percentages reflect the responses from interviews and not the broader population of the community.

5.1 Perceptions of Formal Education

This section describes Inuit perception of formal education. Respondents associate ‘formal education’ with ‘school’ and describe their perception of school in two ways: (i) the concept of school and (ii) the physical institution that houses school, including the building and teachers.

5.2.1 Concept of School

Of the 31 respondents, most (84%) had attended some sort of schooling, including elementary school (42%), high school (26%), college (13%) or vocational training (3%). Some Elders had not attended school (16%), but their children and/or grandchildren had. All respondents described, in some capacity, that formal education was where students attend school and are taught by teachers who follow curriculums designed to provide students with the necessary information to gain jobs. This type of education involves learning new skills in a gradient with routine individual tests to evaluate achievement levels. Skills that are taught,
include learning how to read and write in English, basic arithmetic, and understanding the western scientific method. 71% of respondents also considered the school to be a place to develop general social skills such as learning how to cooperate with others and build relationships. The school also provides additional resources that are not otherwise available in the community. 93.5% of respondents considered the school to be a place to access technologies including computers, wood and metal working tools, electronics, and sports and culinary infrastructure. In a rapidly modernizing world, respondents perceive school as a place where there is access to these technologies and knowledge of how to use them. However, when asked what their children were learning at school, 48% of respondents did not know. This is described by a Susan Koadloak a mother of two high school students who said when asked what her children were learning at school, “I don’t know, I am used to the government running our school.”

5.1.2 Institution of School

Many respondents were conflicted when asked to describe the institution of school, including the physical building and people associated with it. 29% of respondents had predominantly positive perceptions of the school describing it as a peaceful place for learning, to develop relationships, and have access to the tools and skills necessary to succeed in the wage economy. In contrast, 71% of respondents had negative perceptions, describing the school as a dark place filled with bad memories and unfavorable connotations. The average age of respondents associating negative feelings towards school was 57.5 years and some of these participants attended residential school while others had negative experiences at the local school.

Among the respondents, positive perceptions of school tended to frame the school as a building that is used by the community for many different purposes. 64.5% of respondents describe school as a place that offers students the opportunity to gain skills important for getting jobs. For other respondents, school is a place of employment in positions including the
Inuinnaqtun teacher, educational assistant, librarian and janitor. Interestingly, only two respondents, who have held positions as teachers, identified being a “teacher” as a potential job at the school. All respondents associated the school as a place where community events can be hosted, such as community gatherings, drum dances, sports and recreational activities.

Many respondents (71%) shared negative perceptions of school, both memories of past schools and the current school in Ulukhaktok. 52% of respondents immediately associated school with a strong sense of regret and deprivation. Negative perceptions of school were defined using themes such bad relationships among peers or educators, abuse both physical and mentally and feeling of unease or unhappiness, sad memories such attending funerals at the school. Some respondents (39%) identified the current institution as a modified version of residential school. Similar features include: rigid time frame and schedule regardless of the season or weather, English as the primary language of instruction, and the government mandated curriculum determining what students should learn. Jeane Epakohak’s memories of residential school and perceptions of the current school help illustrate this view:

“As the years passed it was like I hated it for a while, because I was going through residential school, and then after the years, after working through with my parents, and that then it seemed to fade away more and the lovingness seemed to come back. Most of the time, I don’t know how many years… through the years I remember going through residential school. I went up to grade seven and I only remember coming home three times. I don’t remember which years are those where I came home. I know when they built this school here in Ulukhaktok, in 1964 and 1965. I never went back to school. Thinking that this school here in Ulukhaktok would be the same as what we had in Inuvik. So I never went back to school.”— Jeane Epakohak, 62

This Elder, like other respondents have negative memories and feelings towards residential school. These negative memories are associated with the mandatory schooling practices, where students were taken from their families at a young age in order to attend schools operated on strict Euro-centric religious principles. Residential mission schools were in direct conflict with Inuit traditional learning (Vick-Westgate 2002). These schools were far from their families and
students were required to stay for long periods of time. These schools stripped the students of their traditional practices and forced them to follow strict southern structured schooling practices. Respondents shared experiences including being forced to speak English, reside in crowded unethical residences and to eat unfamiliar foods in an unfamiliar environment. If students did not follow these guidelines they often suffered both emotional and physical abuse and the institution that is school is a constant reminder of these traumatic experiences.

5.2 Perceptions of Learning

Respondents described the concept of “learning” separately from formal education, as the act of acquiring information from multiple sources. Learning as described by respondents follows different stages of information retention using all types of learning styles including, observation, apprenticeship and completing the task independently. Respondents perceive the school to be a place for learning but the idea of learning is not directly associated with the school. As described by one Elder respondent the importance of learning from the school is directly associated with obtaining employment.

“Anywhere a person could learn. I guess, but it is really important to learn as much as you can from the school because like everybody has been saying these days you can’t get a good job without a proper education.”—Eddy Okheena, 56

There are a limited number of employers in the community, and therefore obtaining additional credentials increases the chances of obtaining wage-based employment. While having an education is described as obtaining a high school diploma, attending school is spending time at the education institution and learning is obtaining the skills needed to be self-sufficient. Elder Morris Nigiyok describes his learning experience and the importance of it in his development as a man:
“My dad he told me come on we are going to get it, I said no. We are going to go kill that polar bear. With a knife? I said no. He come to me he grabs my arm. I was just 13 years old. Just one thing, I know I was scared, its big. Only thirteen years old I think. He grabs me by the hand and try to pull. I got the rifle one thing. He tells me that he starts talking to him. He said I am going to go to that polar bear with this knife, he is going to come to me, you shoot it. Don’t miss it just shot it good. The polar bear is facing that way so it has to go there. It went to him, he took that knife and hit it, he never stopped running. That bear is running running, getting slower slower... stop. He is dead. He never stopped telling me that polar bear he is like any kind of animal, the kidney because that is it right there. If he loses the blood he is going to die. Boy, that night I can’t sleep. But that’s my dad he taught me. Take the knife and kill anything. If you got a dog, you have got a dog and you have got a knife don’t be scared. You got to get animal. You worry about what animal to do you are going to be poor man.”—Morris Nigyok, 77

Here, learning is perceived as developing a deep contextual understanding of the land through the cumulative uptake of knowledge and skills. By traveling with his father at a young age, he is able to learn important skills, practices and values needed in order to be successful. In Ulukhaktok, learning how to hunt polar bear is one of the greatest accomplishments. This learning experience also demonstrates three primary steps to sequential learning, familiarization, observation and simple steps with assistance (Pearce et al. 2011). This type of scenario corresponds to many of the respondent’s perception of learning including observation, listening and practicing in order to be able to perform a task or skill self-sufficiently.

5.3 What should youth learn?

Respondents were asked what things are important to learn before the age of twenty. The age of twenty here is used as a benchmark to identify general knowledge and skill-sets understanding that learning is a continual process and each person will be at different stages in the learning process. Respondents shared that by twenty years of age youth should be developing a general grasp of their culture, their language, knowledge, skills and values important for subsistence, and basic skills and credentials needed to obtain wage employment such as reading, writing and basic arithmetic. Table 5.1 groups what respondents shared into themes and provides direct quotations to help contextualize the response. This information represents a list of general
knowledge to help identify how to make education more relevant and culturally appropriate and desirable for Inuit. This list will provide educational renewal efforts with an understanding of what community members in Ulukhaktok desire for their education.

**Table 5.1:** Aspects of culture that Inuit should know by the age of twenty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Quote(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land Based</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Hunting and Traveling Skills (x=6)</td>
<td>The ability to travel on the land and participate in subsistence to provide for their family and kinship ties. (97%)</td>
<td>“A twenty year-old should be learning a lot of things. First of all, if it’s a young boy, young man, this persons going to have to learn to survive on the land. Making sure he has his own gear to stay alive out there on the land. Shelter, heat. Learn how to recognize different kinds of weather. Be prepared for any injuries if they ever get hurt. Themselves how to treat themselves.” (Male, Hunter, 48)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inuit Knowledge and Values of Subsistence</td>
<td>To acquire the knowledge and understanding of subsistence practices and values. (87%)</td>
<td>“Values, from their family to help people never stop learning, learn about the land and the animals. What times to hunt and where to go for hunting and fishing. At what times of the year. How to skin and prepare the meat that they catch. How to share it. Bringing up their own families when they are to start a family. How to rear children, how to discipline them, get them ready for their own lives.” (Female, Recreations Coordinator, 46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigation and Way Finding (x=7)</td>
<td>Use the environment (e.g. land forms, snowdrifts, celestial) to navigate on the land; understand different types of ice and snow conditions; be flexible and adaptable under changing weather conditions. (81%)</td>
<td>“To be able to adapt to the changing weather conditions or how when it, to know when it is safe to travel, instead of just keep on going going, and no matter what. And the, one of the biggest ones is understanding how much the ice is changing and how its going to change and how to safely travel on the ice conditions with have now. And how much its changed over the last, 25 years, 20 years, even within our kids lifetime. Its completely different from when our kids were little.” (Male, Educator, 30)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sewing and fur preparation skills (x=6)</td>
<td>Know how to sew different types of clothing including cutting out patterns and treating</td>
<td>“If they are going traveling the guys can’t go without a sewing kit, because if something happens or their clothing, their warm clothing gets holes they have to...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Inuinnaqtun Language</td>
<td>To converse using some of the Inuinnaqtun language in order to understand and learn important knowledge from Elders and to fully comprehend the meaning of words used to describe elements of culture. (97%)</td>
<td>“Language and culture is a big thing; by the time they are twenty they should be learning how to speak to Elders. We know today they don’t so I really wish there were programs that could teach our youth and middle aged adults to give them the communication skills to communicate with Elders. There is that big gap there. The Elders still speak in Inuinnaqtun but a most of the youth don’t understand and don’t speak.” (Male, Hunter, 48)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Relevant</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inuit History (x=5)</td>
<td>Learn Inuit and arctic relevant history. This includes: history of land claim agreements, Inuit ancestors, government regimes and influences relevant in the settlement, etc. (84%)</td>
<td>“For the Arctic living up here I think one thing you should learn is about the history about the area they live in the history of the Inuit the history of the explorers coming the missionaries coming. The history of their land. Why it is the way it is. Maybe even learn history of Canada why the north is the way it is like how it’s a territory and why we haven’t had our own government power like why aren’t we allowed to.” (Male, Hunter, 40)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocational training (x=5)</td>
<td>A high school diploma or a certified skill or trade that indicates basic education skills to help obtain employment in the settlement. (74%)</td>
<td>“They should upgrade themselves, because they don’t do so much hunting anymore. Education, learn, education, jobs, upgrade themselves so that they could become something. Like teachers or doctors or what not. Even there that old they should be still learning because they need people like that now here, anywhere. Its different from long ago. They don’t live on land no more, so they need jobs to survive.” (Female, Elder, 65)</td>
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x= number of skill items listed, % represents percentage response
Most respondents (97%) shared that it is important for Inuit youth approaching the age of twenty to learn survival skills including general hunting, traveling and sewing skills. Responses indicated that the ability to travel on the land and be competent in subsistence ensures individuals with tangible benefits in terms of food production and intangible benefits linked to Inuit identity and status as a provider. Most male respondents (91% of male respondents) emphasized the importance of youth knowing how to navigate using snowdrifts, topographic features, and celestial coordinates, and use new technologies such as Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and satellite phones to travel and communicate on the land. Some respondents who are experienced hunters noted that it is imperative that hunting skills be complemented with an understanding and respect for the land and wildlife including, how to treat animals and hides, and sharing your catch. 84% of respondents described the importance of knowing how to sew and prepare furs. Important sewing skills included knowing how to sew clothing such as mittens, kamiks (footwear), and parkas (coats). These respondents also indicated by 20 years of age youth should be learning, with assistance, how to prepare the hides of arctic hares, foxes, wolves, polar bear, seals and muskox for sewing and commercial purposes.

All respondents stressed that for youth to fully understand land-based skills they require some knowledge of Inuinnaqtun language. There are three dialects of Inuinnaqtun spoken in Ulukhaktok: Kangiryuarmiut, Siglit, and Pueblingmiut. Inuinnaqtun is taught at the school using Pueblingmiut. All respondents, including Inuinnaqtun speakers, noted that youth also require the English language to communicate with southern society members, to acquire employment and learn at the school.

84% of respondents said that youth should learn Inuit history, including past events, government affairs, and the settlement of land claim agreements. 61% of respondents said that by understanding local and national history Inuit youth will be empowered to participate in decision
making such as land-claim agreements and local government and benefit from economic possibilities.

Another common theme pertaining to community relevant skills included the importance for youth to acquire skills and training relevant to obtaining wage employment. Vocational training was noted by 74% of respondents using key themes such as secondary school diploma, obtaining a certificate of completion (driver’s license, environmental monitoring certification, Aurora College course), receiving post-secondary training for a trade (e.g. mechanic, electrician, telephone maintenance) and/or other profession (e.g. office worker, educational assistant). These respondents emphasized that wage based employment in the community is limited and some vocational training enhances the chance of being hired.

5.4 How should youth learn?

All respondents said that youth should learn through observation and hands-on experience with a skilled teacher through a multi-stage process of information retention. All respondents described in their own words the importance of spending quality time practicing skills and learning from mistakes. Responses included stories with valuable lessons, strong experiences and relatable messages. These stories described the process of learning specific skills through observation by indicating places, locations or experiences, where they watched an instructor perform a task. Some respondents (54.8%) noted the importance and deeper meaning of learning a skill or task in this manner and others indicated it was simply the way Inuit learn. Pat Klengenberg, 40, describes it in terms that relate to receiving post-secondary education, learning in a specific manner, spending time out on the land in a relevant manner will allow students to better retain the information, skills and knowledge.

“When they do go out on the land how about if they go out with an established family that does that all the time, and that family actually teaches them. Let’s go for a whole weekend and actually show you where you guys can go and try to set up camp how to do this and actually see it a family that is well established traditionally
teach it well because those families, they do it all the time. They are like, if you want to look at it. It’s like a professor hunter. You are being taught from someone that is like a professor.”—Pat Klengenberg, 40

Many parents (75%) referenced the fact that youth are learning through different methods. Many associate the inception of formal education, with students spending more time in large groups, with southern educators teaching them to take initiative and become more inquisitive to learn information that is pertinent to their needs. These parents indicated that the school teaches students to ask questions in order to obtain the information they require; however, when students return to their home environment, instructors do not respond to the same learning styles. This suggests that there is a disconnect between how students are learning at the school and at home, where perhaps students should be learning in a manner that best suits their needs.

5.5 Who should teach youth?

When asked who should be teaching youth things important to learn before the age of twenty, all respondents considered Elders to be the most knowledgeable and best instructors within the community to teach land-based skills. As described by Susie Malgokak, 60, educators can be understood through a pyramid, there are few but very important instructors on the top, then the middle is composed of parents and family members, and the bottom is supported by the students and children. Elders are understood as having a greater knowledge on certain subjects because they have spent a greater amount of time learning.

“I think that the Elders are very important because they seem to be the ones that you know taught, next level is us, and then our children. If we lose our Elders it’s like the top is just getting weaker and weaker. Because our Elders were teaching us a lot. You know always always, mostly if you are from a small community and you have a close-knit family, it’s like the older folks are always the ones that are keeping us in track of how we are supposed to live. My sister, you know she is the oldest in our family now, after my mom and dad passed away. She still like look after now. Plus, my auntie, she is like the elder of the Elders now she is the one that I like to go and get advice from. Or listen to her stories, like you are doing. Listen to her stories and get ideas about how it was long ago and then you can do this and you know work today if it can work today in the past, so you know it is very important that we have
Elders involved. They are the ones that keep us strong, keep us going, keep us in the right track, they do a lot.”—Susie Malgokak, 60

Common themes used to describe why Elders were the best instructors included them having seen the greatest amount of changes, survived through many different conditions, and understanding what it means to be Inuk. Elders only represent 11% of the population in Ulukhaktok, and many of them do not speak fluent English (Northwest Territories Statistics, 2016). Most respondents noted that Inuit youth are not fluent in Inuinnaqtun and therefore do not always understand the meanings behind some of the teachings as described by Adam Kudlak, 41:

“The students should learn Inuinnaqtun, because if it keeps going the way it is going, in two generations, all of it is going to be gone, 99% of the knowledge will be gone. When I am an Elder, with my limited speaking, what I call myself a limited speaking and limited knowledge, that is going to be around, that will be around to show that I am one of the people that knows more. Which is almost nothing. Like an Elder and a grandchild, can’t speak to each other. There is one Elder who looked at me and said, I wish to keep teaching my grandchild alright, but she can’t understand me and I can’t understand her. Its that language gap. After this generation goes through its going to be gone.”—Adam Kudlak, 41

Knowledge of Inuinnaqtun is imperative for communication between youth and Elders and several respondents expressed urgency in making Inuinnaqtun an official language at the school so that it is not lost.

Respondents noted that parents should also play a major role in teaching their children, particularly land-based skills. There are some limitations, however, for parents to teach their children. One main barrier that was noted was the cost of equipment and the limited availability of employment opportunities not offering parents the flexibility to spend quality time on the land, limiting their skills and hindering the type of education they can offer their children.

“When I am teaching someone, when there is for instance there is a seal. I will let him shoot the seal when he finally gets the seal he gets all excited because his parents can’t teach him how to hunt because they don’t have the equipment to teach him. You know there is a lot here with children, but they just don’t have the equipment to do things that go out on the land with them or teach them and for these you need a gun all those expensive things for a young couple.”—Morris Nigyok, Elder, 77
Some parents may not have access to the resources to teach their children, noted here, in addition to parents, other relatives including grandparents, aunts and uncles, older siblings, kinship ties or shared namesakes are also important teachers. For example, Joanne Ogina, 51, describes the importance of the community acting like a family to support each other.

“Family plays a big role. It’s like here where we are one big family. Even though there are so many little families in town. Once, if someone needs help there is always someone there to turn to. Even though you are isolated sometimes in your own home. There is always family out there to turn to. That is one of our strongest things as a community. That is something we really need to, or keep teaching our kids.” — Joanne Ogina, 51

Respondents shared that youth should learn different skills from different family members. Susan Koadloak, 42, describes how Elders and parents play primary roles as teachers and other family members contribute to skill development where the primary teacher may be less knowledgeable:

“It is supposed to be a long process with the Elders, then the parents that teach the kids, however this is difficult because parents are lacking the important knowledge. Students should be learning by watching, then listening, the doing but these days children just ask a lot of questions. But really everybody teaches, it takes a whole village to raise a child” — Susan Koadloak, 42

94% of respondents believed that southern educators should play a role in educating Inuit youth, noting that these educators offer information and skills that are increasingly important for succeeding in the modern settlement. Respondents were, however, critical of southern educators and 51.6% respondents said that most southern teachers only come to the community to gain employment experience and large wages. They were also critical of some teaching styles, which they argued negates individual student needs and stages of learning.

5.6 Where should youth learn?

While respondents have indicated that there are important skills for youth to learn, and agree that there is a need for school, it is important to understand what skills should be taught
where. When asked where youth should learn respondents said the home, out on the land, at camp, at the school and at community centers depending on the skills being taught. As described here learning is not restricted to a specific location, and is based on how an individual acquires information.

“Anywhere, allover, anywhere a person can learn from anywhere. In school, at home out on the land. From each other. There is so many different ways to learn even off the, off the internet, off the computer. If a person lives the right way they could learn anywhere”—Eddie Okheena, 56

Most would associate land-based skills to be taught on the land and community based-skills to be taught in the school but all respondents identified the home as where learning begins. This is true for both community relevant skills. Respondents emphasized the importance of experiential learning, where students can experience and learn hands-on, particularly for land-based skills. However, the school is becoming an increasingly important place for students to and skilled instructors to have access to resources needed to teach these skills and therefore perceived as another location to develop land-based skills.

Respondents also identified the school and community centers as places for learning. These locations offer learning styles based on classroom structures, following guidelines or curriculums, taught by teachers. It is here that students learn knowledge and skills important for gaining employment. These skills may include community relevant skills, but learning community relevant skills are not restricted by the infrastructure.

5.6 Why should youth learn?

Respondents were asked why these skills were important to learn to gain a deeper understanding of the epistemological meanings of these skills. Respondents indicated that it was important for youth to learn land-based knowledge and skills and curriculum taught at the school as a part of self-identification and survival.
“It is important for youth to know these things to know where they are from to know what culture they are from, because I have seen it in youth they have no idea, like family is so important to who is related to who, where they come from, what they experienced in life to get here. How it was before all the hardships and triumphs I guess. What people have done, have been through, to get where they are. For the youth, to understand it and not take things for granted just realize things could be harder but they are not now, not as much. To be thankful for what they have and not take things for granted I guess.”—Laverne Klengenberg, 44

Laverne Klengenberg, 44, suggests youth who do not learn these skills are fighting emotional battles and do not necessarily understand the meanings behind certain aspects of Inuit culture. Respondents noted that understanding their culture gave them a feeling of responsibility, entitlement, strength, pride and happiness. Some respondents (23%) recognized that they themselves do not fully grasp their own cultural identity and therefore feel a sense of loss and deprivation.

“I think it is so that we have a sense of who we are or how we belong here. I notice the ones that don’t know this stuff that live here are, kind of seem like lost. Kind of thing and because your lost they don’t really lead very good lives because they don’t really know where they fit in kind of thing.”—Susan Koadloak, 42

Susan Koadloak, 42, shares sentiments to have a sense of well-being and belonging by learning these important skills. She indicates that there is a noticeable sense of loss when people have not learned these skills. This sense of loss is even attributed to the fact that they are not living a good life.
The aim of this research was to examine what aspects of culture and modes of learning Inuit desire to have included in education, through a case study of Ulukhaktok, NWT, Canada. The research was guided by a modified conceptual model for the cultural negotiation of education described by Stairs (1994). This model was used to guide data collection to identify and describe the context of negotiation, the level of meaning and the depth of process. The context for negotiation is captured in Chapter 3: Case Study with a description of the current education and learning structure in Ulukhaktok; the level of meaning is documented in Chapter 5: Results, and includes what youth should learn, how youth should learn, who should teach youth, and why youth should learn these things; and the overarching depth of process of negotiation is discussed here.

To make education more relevant to Inuit in the Arctic, it is necessary to identify what aspects of Inuit culture and modes of learning Inuit desire to have included in education. The present school continues to be based on governmental regulated curriculum, with limited input from Inuit. To date, most renewal efforts in Ulukhaktok have focused on isolated small-scale projects, and efforts to increase awareness of Inuit history and culture. For example, Ulukhaktok participates in the Northwest Territories trapping program that connects students with skilled community members to learn how to trap, prepare and sell furs. This research shows that Inuit desire renewal efforts to go beyond one-off programming, such as the trapping program, to include a broader negotiation of education generally including how to mainstream cultural programming into the school.

To initiate education renewal, we first need to understand the cultural context for renewal in terms of how Inuit perceive learning and formal education. Inuit in Ulukhaktok perceive “learning” as the act of acquiring new knowledge and skills through observation, hands-on
learning and apprenticeship. For Inuit, learning and living are the same things and a person continues to learn through everyday life experiences. Respondents see formal education through the school as part of this learning paradigm.

Inuit in Ulukhaktok perceive “school” as a concept and an institution: concept refers to how Inuit perceive the idea of formal education – school, and institution refers to the physical building that houses the school. Respondents perceive the school as providing youth with basic employment skills including basic reading, writing, and arithmetic, building social relationships, and access to resources, like technologies including computers, wood and metal working tools, electronics, and sports and culinary infrastructure. The finding that nearly half of the respondents did not know what their children were learning in school suggests that there is a disconnect between teachers and parents/grandparents and a blind faith that the school is equipping their children with the skills they will need to gain employment post-graduation.

Respondents had conflicting sentiments about the institution that is school (the physical building in the community). Those with positive perceptions of the school have benefited from the institution in terms of employment, relationships, and memorable experiences. Others with negative feelings about the school had experienced difficult times there or at similar institutions. Similar to Ives (2012), some respondents likened the structure of the present school to that of residential school, which evoked somber memories and resentment towards the present school. The rigid structure of the school system is a barrier for some Inuit to want to participate in it or support their children to do so. The results show that Inuit favour a school that is a place where community members, regardless of their formal educational achievement, can gather and exchange knowledge with youth. Respondents call for the greater inclusion of Inuit in designing and guiding the education system, beyond taking instructions from Inuvik (BDEC) and Yellowknife (Northwest Territories education innovation and renewal) to include authority over
the timing of the school year and curriculum. The research shows that Inuit in Ulukhaktok identify a need for formal education – school, in the community; however, respondents were critical of how the school currently functions in terms of what is being taught and where, by who and why?

Respondents identified several knowledge and skill items that they believe youth should learn by the time they are twenty years of age, but are not currently being taught at the school. Most of these knowledge and skill items relate to subsistence livelihoods and Inuit culture and identity, and learning these skills often involves observation and hands-on learning with a skilled teacher. Respondents acknowledged that the school is not responsible, nor is it the best place, to teach all land-based knowledge and skills. That said, youth spend a considerable amount of time attending school, and respondents believe that the school should therefore play some role in teaching land-based knowledge and skills. Moreover, not all youth have experienced teachers at home, thus at school may be the only time these students have the opportunity to learn certain knowledge and land-based skills. The school currently offers some on-the-land trips, but these are limited to day trips, are exclusive to students enrolled at the school, and often take place in the spring and fall. Respondents stress that there should be a greater emphasis on facilitating on-the-land trips at different times of the year, namely winter, and including youth who are not in school as well as other family members. Some knowledge and land-based skills could also be integrated into curricular goals, and/or used to teach different components of subjects such as math and science. For example, one respondent described that basic math could be taught by having students calculate the distance they need to travel to reach a certain hunting location, how much gas, oil and naptha they would need, and the cost of these items. Another respondent explained that preparing meat and hides requires knowledge of wildlife biology and sewing hides requires knowledge of measurement and geometry. Respondents suggested that linking land-based
knowledge and skills with core curriculum would help make core subjects in school more relevant and interesting to Inuit students. This finding is consistent with work done in Alaska to combine traditional Yup’ik meanings with modern mathematics, and increasingly in Canada to develop science curriculums based on traditional knowledge (Lipka and Ilutsik 2014, Lewthwaite and McMillan 2010, Arctic Eider Society 2016).

To fully grasp many land-based knowledge and skills, youth must be able to understand Inuinnaqtun language. The foundation for communicating important skills and knowledge are being lost because of the inability to comprehend Inuinnaqtun with a growing disconnect between Elders and youth. Respondents identified native language as an essential component of Inuit culture and the important role that the school could play in teaching Inuinnaqtun. A common sentiment shared among respondents was that Inuinnaqtun language should be taught throughout the school as one language of instruction, and not just in a single class, which is currently the case.

There is a documented need to expand the current definition of “teacher” to include knowledgeable community members regardless of their educational level. Currently, the school is staffed mostly by teachers from the south who receive high salaries and come to the community with minimal, if any, knowledge or training for teaching in the north. Respondents suggested that teachers coming to the community needed to first obtain some training in how to teach in the north, including learning basic Inuinnaqtun, and some knowledge of Inuit culture and history. It also needs to be mandated that southern teachers work together with skilled community members to facilitate teaching beyond just land-based activities, but also within the school.

The results of this study reinforce the key findings of recent government reports on Inuit and education. The focus of most of these reports has been on developing strategies to try and make education more relevant to Inuit students with the intention of enhancing student success.
and completion (BDEC 2014, Canadian Center for Learning 2009, ITK 2011, 2014, Northwest Territories 2013). These strategies mostly consist of broad vision statements and goals to help schools and educators better understand what resources should be used to teach Inuit youth but rarely outline how to operationalize these goals. The results of the research reported here advance understanding of education renewal among Inuit beyond vision statements and goals to identify practical entry points to make education more relevant, culturally appropriate and desirable for Inuit. This research demonstrates the necessity of working with people in particular places to identify their learning pedagogy and how new learning materials can be adapted to local conditions and needs.

To date, most research on the negotiation Inuit education has started with the assumption that the current dominant mode of learning in Inuit communities, formal education – school, is the appropriate platform for negotiation. Previous research has focused on adapting the content and delivery of curriculum to Inuit contexts and improving southern teacher and Inuit student relations (Berger 2001, Lewthwaite and McMillan 2010, Lipka et al. 2005). The research reported here challenges the assumption that formal education – school is the appropriate platform for negotiation and starts by identifying how Inuit perceive learning generally and formal education specifically. In doing so, this research documents the dominant Inuit learning pedagogy in Ulukhaktok and identifies where the “school” fits within this pedagogy. The research results show that Inuit see the concept of “learning” as broader than, and inclusive of, the “school.” That said, while Inuit identify a role for the school in learning, the physical structure of the current school and school system need to be adapted to the Inuit learning pedagogy.

The results of this research support other work that has examined culture-based learning in schools in the Arctic (Barnhart and Kawagley 2005, Lewthwaite and Renaud 2009). For example, in Nunavut science curriculums have been developed based on principles outlined by
Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit to include both types of knowledge and taught in culturally responsive manners (Lewthwaite and Renaud 2009, Lewthwaite and McMillan 2010, Arctic Eider Society 2016). The findings of this research echo previous work and support the integration of land-based skills and community relevant skills into the broader school curriculum. This research also reinforces what others have long been saying, that native language is vital to learning and should be recognized as a language of instruction in schools (Crago et al. 1993, Lipka 1994, Menken and García 2010, Wright et al. 2000).

This research was guided by aspects of the Stairs (1994) conceptual model for the cultural negotiation of education. It is important to note that the results of this research were not intended to be neatly placed within the different subsets of the model, but rather the general ideas of the model were used to guide the research. For example, Stairs (1994) identifies the need to examine what should be taught, how and why, and these general questions helped structure the interviews for this research. This research was conducted at the community-scale, and while conditions operating and multiple scales, influence learning and education in Ulukhaktok, the research focuses on the manifestation of education in the community. The Stairs (1994) model acknowledges that the cultural negotiation of education occurs across multiple scales, and this research contributes to a better understanding of negotiation at the community-scale. The findings of this research show that the general ideas captured in the Stairs (1994) model are useful for guiding the cultural negotiation of education. Stairs (1994) is a conceptual model and the broad themes outlined including the context, the meaning and the depth of the process should be understood as starting points to begin the conversation of negotiation. There is an outstanding need for a framework to operationalize the Stairs (1994) conceptual model.
CHAPTER 7: Conclusions

This chapter summarizes the key findings of the research and highlights the scholarly and practical contributions. This chapter is divided into four sections: the first section outlines a summary of key findings; the second section discuss scholarly contributions of this work in the broader field of the cultural negotiation of education in the Arctic; the next section describes the practical contributions of this research to educational renewal efforts in Ulukhaktok and the NWT; and the final section discusses future research opportunities.

7.2 Summary of Key Findings

While the findings of this research are specific to Ulukhaktok, they may be relevant to other Inuit and Indigenous populations elsewhere in Canada. The main messages of this research can be summarized as follows:

1. Educational renewal necessitates working with community members to identify how to make education more relevant, culturally appropriate and desirable.

To date educational renewal efforts and research pertaining to Inuit and education have focused on documenting aspects of Inuit culture that southern educators and education decision makers deem necessary to include in the school. This research starts by having Inuit describe the context of negotiation by documenting how Inuit perceive “learning” and “formal education – school”, both the context of school and the physical institution that is school. The research found that Inuit in Ulukhaktok see a role for school within the broader learning paradigm but some Inuit have reservations about the structure of the school in terms of timing, teachers and curriculum. There is a call to integrate land-based knowledge and skills into curriculum and expand the definition of “teacher” to include skilled community members regardless of their educational attainment. Importantly, Inuit stress that one-off programing and cultural add-ons, such as the
current Inuinnaqtun class, are not adequate but rather there needs to be a broader reform that reframes the school based on Inuit perceptions of learning, culture and priorities.

2. Inuit perceive the school to be a place for learning but the idea of learning is not directly associated with the school.

The results of this research indicate that Inuit describe school as a concept, a place to gain employment skills, and an institution, the physical structure and people associated with it. Inuit describe formal education as attending school, learning the skills required to obtain employment and receiving a diploma. Learning, however, is the act of acquiring information and skills to be self-sufficient and occurs in multiple different stages, time frames and locations. Therefore, learning can occur outside of the institution by acquiring information from other sources, and can be as valuable as gaining a formal education. Education renewal needs to consider this important finding and adapt the schooling system to meet the needs of academic students and students who are better suited for vocational studies (e.g. trades: trapping, housing maintenance, carpentry, electrician, plumbing, etc.).

3. The rigid structure of the school system is a barrier for the participation of some Inuit and their children.

The school in Ulukhaktok continues to remind some respondents of residential school in terms of its rigid structure, foreign teachers, and foreign teachings. Several respondents have negative feelings towards the physical building that is the school, which evokes dark emotions and bad memories from their time at residential school. This has created a barrier for some Inuit and/or their children to participate in the current school system.

4. Inuit in Ulukhaktok identify the role of native language as essential for the education of Inuit youth
This research confirms that Inuit in Ulukhaktok desire to have their native language, Inuinnaqtun, as an equal second language of instruction at the school. Inuinnaqtun is the foundation for the communication of many land-based knowledge and skills, and is the core of Inuit cultural identity. It is of timely importance to take action on language revitalization now while native speakers are still able to teach.

5. Some knowledge and land-based skills should be integrated into curricular goals, and/or used to teach different components of subjects such as math and science.

The findings of this research show that Inuit desire to have some land-based knowledge and skills included in school curriculum. This includes experiential trips on the land with skilled instructors at different times of the year. Inuit do not call for all land-based teachings to occur at the school but many respondents said that existing curricula, such as math, biology, history, etc., could be taught using Inuit concepts and contexts.

6. There is a need to expand the current definition of “teacher” to include knowledgeable community members regardless of their educational level

This research suggests that education renewal should include an expanded definition of “teacher” to also include skilled community members regardless of their educational attainment. Certain knowledge and skills that are relevant Inuit youth are best taught by knowledgeable community members. There is also a need for southern educators to undertake language and cultural training prior to coming to the community that extends beyond a week or weekend course, and includes some level of rigor comparable to their other university training.

7.3 Scholarly Contributions

The findings of this research support previous work on the negotiation of Inuit and education including Inuit perceptions of learning and the continued relevance of traditional modes of learning (Berger 2001, Rasmussen 2001, Stairs 1994). The research also documents that Inuit
recognize the importance of the school and formal education to provide youth with the knowledge and skills needed to gain wage employment. This research expands our understanding of the negotiation of Inuit education by defining the context of negotiation, with Inuit defining what “learning” and “school” means to them. The research shows that the context for learning, the school, needs to be renegotiated in the community, in terms of the physical space, structure of learning (rigidity of timing), how curriculum is taught, and by whom, citing the importance of expanding the current definition of “teacher” to include skilled community members. The research also advances our understanding of how formal education can be better suited to Inuit, beyond ideas generated by southern teachers (Berger 2001, 2007, Ives et al. 2015, Lewthwaite and McMillan 2011) to include the voice of Inuit. In this research Inuit call for the recognition of Inuinnaqtun as a language of instruction, and for subjects such as math and biology to be taught drawing on local examples and Inuit learning pathways – observation and hands-on apprenticeship.

7.4 Practical contributions

Beyond scholarly contributions, this research makes practical contributions to educational renewal in Ulukhaktok, the NWT and elsewhere in the Arctic. Importantly, this research documents the perspectives of Inuit in Ulukhaktok and these perspectives will be shared with decision makers tasked with education renewal in the community and region. It is hoped that the findings of this research will inform the future direction of education renewal in Ulukhaktok.

This research makes a strong practical contribution to the process of educational renewal in Inuit communities. Importantly, this research demonstrated that the negotiation of education must be led by Inuit, including defining the context, meaning and depth of negotiation.
7.5 Opportunities for Future Research

This research has developed a basis for understanding the negotiation of Inuit education in Ulukhaktok, NWT, and identified some considerations to amend the school system to better reflect the needs of Inuit. The process of education renewal is continual and this research serves as a starting point for future research and action. A major contribution of this research is to the conversation on best practices for educational renewal research, in which community members are central to identifying the context of education, the meaning of educational renewal and the depth of process.

This research is a case study of an Inuit community in the Western Canadian Arctic. Although similar to other communities located across the Arctic, some of the findings may not necessarily apply to every community. It is important to build upon this case study and conduct similar studies with other Inuit communities elsewhere in the Arctic to broaden our understanding of what aspects of culture and modes of learning Inuit desire to have included in education. By describing similarities and differences amongst communities there is the opportunity to develop more significant dialogues pertaining to the negotiation of Inuit education throughout the Canadian Arctic.

There is one major factor that has not been evaluated throughout this research, this being the economics underlying the education system. Much of the education system is a direct derivative of the idea that the economy is a driving factor of society. The economics have not been neglected, rather purposely ignored. To elicit information pertaining to the negotiation of Inuit education this research was based on the optimal scenario of change, disregarding the economic implications and focusing on the value of Inuit culture and modes of learning. Future research should however examine the economic drivers of change and negotiation strategies that are economically sustainable and viable.
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Pearce, T., Smit, B., Duerden, F., Ford, J. D., Goose, A., & Kataoyak, F. (2009). Inuit vulnerability and adaptive capacity to climate change in Ulukhaktok, Northwest Territories, Canada, 46(02),


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APPENDIX 1: Interview Guide

Inuit Culture and Education in Ulukhaktok

The interview is semi-structured and the responses are expected to be open-ended. The interview should take about an hour.

Inventory 1

This part of the interview generates some basic information about individual and household characteristics, educational experience, and other relevant information.

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<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>ID#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Occupation, secondary occupation. How much do you make per hour? Per week?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Have/do you worked at the school?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If so, what did you do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Have/do you sit on an education board? (DEA) – When? How long?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td># Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td># Children at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Do you rent or own the house you live in? (If rent, how much per month?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>How long have you lived in Ulukhaktok?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Inventory 2

This survey is designed to uncover what informants think people should learn, how they should learn it, and how these things can be better represented in the school system. Note that these questions are semi-structured and it is expected that questions will lead to conversations about learning and schooling.

Freelist 1:

1. What kind of things should people know before they are 20.
   a. Is that the same for boys and girls?

Learning:

2. How should people learn these things?
   a. What is the best way for people to learn these things?
   b. Who is the best to teach these things?
   c. Where is the best place to learn these things?
   d. Why are these things important?

Freelist 2:

3. When you think of school, what sort of things come to mind?

School:

4. What kind of things should kids learn at school?

5. If you could make the school better for learning, what would you do?
   a. What would you keep the same?

6. What are the efforts are being made to make learning relevant to kids?
APPENDIX 2: District Education Authority Letter of Approval

Mrs. Magaret Kanayok
Ulukhaktok Community Corporation
P.O. Box 127
Ulukhaktok NT
X0E 0S0

8th October 2015

ArcticNet
Pavillon Alexandre-Vachon, Room 4081
1045, avenue de la Medecine
Universite Laval
Quebec, QC Canada G1V OA6
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Facsimile +1-418-656-2354
Email arcticnet@arcticnet.ulaval.ca

RE: Support for the ArcticNet project, “Community Vulnerability, Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Arctic”

The District Education Authority is highly supportive of the proposed ArcticNet project, “Inuit Culture and Education,” a component of the project entitled “Community Vulnerability, Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Arctic.” We have worked together with Tristan Pearce and Geneviève Lalonde on Education research for the past two years and the proposed project builds on this work. We will continue to work in partnership with Geneviève to develop an understanding of the aspects of culture that should be included in education. This will help to build a stronger understanding of the strategies and programs that are taking place in Ulukhaktok and the NWT. The project will involve communicating with key stakeholders to identify and document strategies that are currently in use and those desired to represent Inuit culture and modes of learning in education. This project will employ local research assistants and key informants, the total estimated income to the community is valued at $6,000.

The UCC is committed to the success of this project and offer in-kind support in the form of Inuit and university researchers. We are highly encouraged by the project’s continued commitment to local employment and capacity building. We are pleased to support this highly relevant and important project.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Margaret Kanayok
Ulukhaktok Community Corporation
APPENDIX 3: UCC Letter of Approval

Mr. Colin Okheena
Chair, Ulukhaktok Community Corporation
P.O. Box 127
Ulukhaktok NT
X0E 0X0

25th September 2015

ArcticNet
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Facsimile +1-418-656-2244
Email arcticnet@artcticnet.ulaval.ca

RE: Support for the ArcticNet project, “Community Vulnerability, Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Arctic”

The Ulukhaktok Community Corporation (UCC) is highly supportive of the proposed ArcticNet project, “Inuit Culture and Education” a component of the project entitled “Community Vulnerability, Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Arctic”. We have worked together with Tristan Pearce and Geneviève Lalonde on Education research for the past two years and the proposed project builds on this work. We will continue to work in partnership with Geneviève to develop an understanding of the aspects of culture that should be included in education. This will help to build a stronger understanding of the strategies and programs that are taking place in Ulukhaktok and the NWT. The project will involve communicating with key stakeholders to identify and document strategies that are currently in use and those desired to represent Inuit culture and modes of learning in education. This project will employ local research assistants and key informants; the total estimated income to the community is valued at $6,000.

The UCC is committed to the success of this project and offer in-kind support in the form of office space and administrative support for Inuit and university researchers. We are highly encouraged by the project’s continued commitment to local employment and capacity building. We are pleased to support this highly relevant and important project.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Colin Okheena
Chair, Ulukhaktok Community Corporation
Research on Inuit Culture and Education

September 21st – November 20th 2015

Student Geneviève Lalonde working
with Tristan Pearce

The goals of the research are to document what aspects of Inuit culture and modes of
learning community members in Ulukhaktok desire to have included in education and identify
opportunities to include desired strategies in current educational renewal efforts.

Participants include community members who have significant knowledge and experience
with education, traditional learning and/or formal schooling.

Please feel free to contact Geneviève Lalonde [glalonde@uoguelph.ca] or Tristan Pearce
[tpearce@uoguelph.ca] with any questions you might have about the project.