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Writing and publishing as empowerment in Baker Lake, Nunavut
Écrire et publier comme source d’autonomisation à Baker Lake, Nunavut

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Résumé de l'article

Cette étude se penche sur l’écriture créative, la publication et l’autonomisation d’apprenants inuit adultes à Baker Lake, au Nunavut. J’ai enseigné l’écriture créative lors d’un atelier au Nunavut Arctic College, de pair avec les aînés locaux qui y enseignaient des chansons de la région de Baker Lake. À la suite de cet atelier, en février 2006 fut publié l’ouvrage *The Sound of Songs: Stories by Baker Lake Writers*, anthologie des écrits des apprenants adultes, et il fut lancé au Centre communautaire de Baker Lake. En cours de projet, le Comité conseil et moi-même avons examiné la signification du terme «autonomisation» dans le contexte de la culture inuit. Chacun des neuf apprenants faisant partie de l’atelier a publié au moins un écrit dans le livre. La majorité d’entre eux ont mentionné un certain degré d’autonomisation sur le plan de la confiance en soi au sujet de leur propre écriture, sur le fait d’avoir gagné le respect des membres de la communauté, en particulier des aînés, ainsi qu’en apprenant à être un «véritable Inuit» auprès des aînés qui enseignaient les chansons de la région de Baker Lake. La plupart des apprenants n’avaient jamais entendu ces chansons auparavant et il s’agissait donc d’une opportunité pour les aînés et les jeunes de mieux se comprendre les uns les autres.

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Writing and publishing as empowerment in Baker Lake, Nunavut

Diane Driedger*

Résumé: Écrire et publier comme source d'autonomisation à Baker Lake, Nunavut

Cette étude se penche sur l'écriture créative, la publication et l'autonomisation d'apprenants inuit adultes à Baker Lake, au Nunavut. J'ai enseigné l'écriture créative lors d'un atelier au Nunavut Arctic College, de pair avec les aînés locaux qui y enseignaient des chansons de la région de Baker Lake. À la suite de cet atelier, en février 2006 fut publié l'ouvrage *The Sound of Songs: Stories by Baker Lake Writers*, anthologie des écrits des apprenants adultes, et il fut lancé au Centre communautaire de Baker Lake. En cours de projet, le Comité conseil et moi-même avons examiné la signification du terme «autonomisation» dans le contexte de la culture inuit. Chacun des neuf apprenants faisant partie de l'atelier a publié au moins un écrit dans le livre. La majorité d'entre eux ont mentionné un certain degré d'autonomisation sur le plan de la confiance en soi au sujet de leur propre écriture, sur le fait d'avoir gagné le respect des membres de la communauté, en particulier des aînés, ainsi qu'en apprenant à être un «véritable Inuit» auprès des aînés qui enseignaient les chansons de la région de Baker Lake. La plupart des apprenants n'avaient jamais entendu ces chansons auparavant et il s'agissait donc d'une opportunité pour les aînés et les jeunes de mieux se comprendre les uns les autres.

Abstract: Writing and publishing as empowerment in Baker Lake, Nunavut

This article examines creative writing, publishing, and empowerment of Inuit adult learners in Baker Lake, Nunavut. I taught a creative writing workshop at Nunavut Arctic College along with the local elders, who taught songs from the Baker Lake area. After the workshop, in February 2006 *The Sound of Songs: Stories by Baker Lake Writers*, an anthology of the adult learners' writings, was published and launched at the Baker Lake Community Centre. In the course of the project, the Project Advisory Committee and I examined the meaning of the term "empowerment" in the context of Inuit culture. Each of the nine learners who took part in the workshop published at least one piece in the book. Most of them reported some degree of empowerment through increased confidence in their own writing, through increased respect from community members, especially the elders, and also through learning to be a "real Inuk" from the elders who taught songs from the Baker Lake area. Since most of the learners had not heard the songs before, elders and younger people had an opportunity to understand each other better.

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Introduction

Many people have seen creative writing as a tool in their journeys of self-discovery. This was particularly true in the 1960s and 1970s when some scholars and writing instructors viewed creative writing as a way to encourage self-expression (Berlin 1987). To a lesser extent, they discussed the issue of empowerment—that is, how creative writing can change a person's sense of self-efficacy. In 1984 I was working with an international self-help organisation of persons with disabilities, Disabled Peoples' International (DPI), which had just embarked on leadership training seminars in the developing world. To me, the seminars were in line with Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's (1970) ideas about learning the "word" and using it to free oneself from oppression, whatever form that oppression may take for an individual or group. He referred to this process as "conscientisation." The idea of the "word" liberating people was intriguing. Thus began my own odyssey of examining the "word" in my own life and the lives of others. In the late 1990s, I taught creative writing to the Disabled Women's Network of Trinidad and Tobago and discovered that writing appeared to have an empowering effect (Driedger 2004). The women wrote creatively about their lives, they published an anthology and, afterwards, they felt empowered in their communities and began to speak out more. As a result, I decided to study further the effects of this process on marginalised peoples.

As a poet and person with a disability myself (since 1992), I have understood the impact of writing on my own sense of self-esteem and identity. My ideas developed further in 2001-2002 while working with the University of Manitoba Northern Medical Unit. I undertook a feasibility study for a program that trained Inuit to become rehabilitation assistants in the Kivalliq region of Nunavut. I visited three communities in the Kivalliq region and noted that people were very enthusiastic and hopeful about the new territory of Nunavut. I sensed that Inuit felt there were possibilities for them to embark on new projects. An important backdrop was the new territorial government of Nunavut, which was composed primarily of Inuit at the territorial and hamlet levels. As the majority in Nunavut, the Inuit had negotiated their own self-government with the Government of Canada. They were now entitled to more decision-making, control, and remuneration from the vast resources of Nunavut's land (Nunavut Tungavik Incorporated 2004).

While visiting the Kivalliq region, I had the opportunity to talk to people in the adult literacy community. There was enthusiasm in Nunavut about working on a creative writing and publishing project with adult learners,[1] as Inuit wanted to improve their overall literacy skills for work in their own territory. In addition to honing job-related skills, my writing project could contribute to the Inuit sense of power in their new territory. Through contact with the Nunavut Literacy Council and the Nunavut Arctic College Campus in Rankin Inlet in 2003, I started discussing my possible dissertation project with Alexis Utatnaq, Adult Educator at Nunavut Arctic College in Baker Lake.

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1 I have chosen the term "learner" instead of "student," as this term is used in the area of adult education.

Nunavut has made preservation of the Indigenous language a priority. Nonetheless, there is also a need for English, even though it is the Southern coloniser's language. The *Bathurst Mandate* (Government of Nunavut 1999) suggests a marriage of the two languages in the new territory. English is needed for communication with the rest of Canada and for accessing knowledge that is available only in English at this time, as very few books are published in Inuktitut. In addition, English is required for government and mining jobs in the region.

Nunavut Arctic College in Baker Lake has been offering adult upgrading classes in English. In February 2006, I taught adult learners there to write creatively in English and Inuktitut. For my Ph.D. dissertation in Education (Driedger 2009), I conducted a study on these Inuit learners from 2006 to 2008 with the goal of understanding how the task of writing and publishing one's own experiences and stories could influence one's sense of empowerment. This article presents and discusses my results.

Methodology

From the beginning, I emphasised Inuit participation. The project goals were discussed with Alexis Utatnaq, Adult Educator of Nunavut Arctic College in Baker Lake, and a Project Advisory Committee was formed with elders and community representatives. Alexis Utatnaq agreed to be the editor of the book that would be published after the workshop. I also worked with elders Winnie Owingayak and Thomas Qaqimat to design a curriculum that met the needs of the adult learners in the community. These discussions included how to teach Inuktitut songs, and I enlisted the elders to teach with me in the course. The elders, overall, deferred to me in the choice of format and timing for the two-day workshop. They did, however, have control over the portion that they chose to teach: Inuit songs in Inuktitut. They opted to teach as a team, as they had before at the high school in Baker Lake.

The elders asserted their right to teach oral traditions in their session the way they wanted, just as Fanon (1963) had emphasised the importance of oral storytellers in Algeria's decolonisation. The elders did not interfere with the English portion, as that was my domain. They, in essence, made an anti-colonial decision—they would have control over Inuktitut oral storytelling to teach the young people in the present and to build their culture. According to Fanon (1963: 194): "The emergence of the imagination and of the creative urge in the songs and epic stories of a colonised country is worth following. The storyteller replies to the expectant people by successive approximations, and makes his way, apparently alone but in fact helped on by his public, towards the seeking out of new patterns, that is to say national patterns." Before this stage, as Fanon explains, the colonised have learned the coloniser's culture, and their own culture has become fixed and static. The elders asserted Inuit culture by teaching Inuktitut and by also insisting that the book published as a result of the workshop be in Inuktitut and English. Indeed, in their research on language usage in the Baffin Region of Nunavut, Dorais and Sammons (2002) found that Inuit saw Inuktitut as the language of their identity.

The first portion of the workshop was held on February 21, 2006, a sunny and very cold day. Eight learners attended: seven women and one man. The women were all in their 20s or early 30s. The man was in his 40s, and was unable to attend the second day of the workshop. On that day, there was another man in his late 20s or early 30s. All but one were General Educational Development and Adult Basic Education students at Nunavut Arctic College.

I held a short focus group with the learners just before the first workshop. I asked them what their previous writing experiences had been and how they felt about writing. Two of them saw writing as important for communicating with family and friends, and another for expressing feelings. In addition, they saw writing and education as essential for the kinds of employment that they wanted. Many of them had or used to have retail and government service jobs in Baker Lake, which they found very difficult and demanding. The learners felt that they could do better in their careers by going to Nunavut Arctic College and the workshop. This feeling coincides with the findings of Dorais and Sammons (2002), who found that Inuit in Iqaluit and Igloolik perceived English as a way to secure more job opportunities.

We then began the workshop. I asked the learners to start writing in English right away in any form—prose, poetry, song, or fiction. I also explained that the best way to learn to write is to write, that they should just put their pen to the paper and keep writing, anything, just keep writing. Also, the learners should not worry about correct grammar and spelling, as this was irrelevant for the workshop duration. This was the method that I had employed in my writing workshops in Trinidad (Driedger 2004).

The elders instructed the learners on the afternoons of both workshop days. I was present and Alexis Utatnaq was my translator. First, they talked about songs from the area around Baker Lake. They stated that they were talking from their experiences of the songs, and of hearing them from others. Songs needed to be composed and sung in Inuktitut, as they always had been. Elder Thomas Qaqimat emphasised that songs were composed when one was alone on the land and could think peacefully. A hunter might compose a song in his head. Elder Winnie Owingayak described traditional songs as experiences in the composers' lives. Topics included the family, hunting, sewing, and the weather, anything that was happening in the composer's life.

Empowerment

It became evident during the project that the word "empowerment" was problematic, as there were different views of this term. As researcher and instructor, I had thought of it more as a political way of acting in the world, as self-efficacy to make changes in the community. This is how Freire (1970) defines the empowerment gained from literacy and knowing the word. I had used Ritchot's (2005) notion that Aboriginal women empower themselves individually to help their community. Throughout the project, other, more Inuit-related definitions became evident. Alexis Utatnaq (June 20, 2007) translated the word "empowerment" for the elders as *makitpaallirniq*, which

conveys the meaning of not only making oneself known to others, but also becoming a person in the community: "[…] to make visible, […] to develop yourself in a way that you're making yourself visible to others, look, look at me, I've done this, I can do this."

At the meetings with the elders and the Advisory Committee, the elders saw empowerment as knowing real Inuktitut and being able to sing and compose in the Inuit song forms. In my examination of the concept of empowerment, I found that Brody (1991: 141) had discussed the word *inummarik,* which means "a genuine Inuk" or "a real person." "To make visible," the Inuktitut translation of empowerment that Alexis Utatnaq used, can be interpreted as young people becoming visible as "real Inuit" (*inummarit)*, a standard that Inuit would like to live up to according to Brody. This also includes knowledge of Inuktitut and its terms for specialised plants and birds: "The *Inummarit*, however, use a vocabulary with a special richness beyond the names of creatures undifferentiated by others. They also use a host of refined terms and phrases and complex grammatical forms" (Brody 1991: 151). In addition, being a "real Inuit" means possessing traditional knowledge about hunting, geography, animals, and kinship (Brody 1991). Stairs (1992) suggested that an individual evolves towards becoming a genuine person who can contribute to the community:

> *Inummarik* identity is progressive, one does not assume the fixed qualities of a bounded person […]. This acceptance of a progressive identity is demonstrated by Inuit as they absorb such external features as syllabic writing, fox trapping, media technology, and large-scale carving into the same body of traditional knowledge as oral literature, sea mammal hunting, land lore, and kinship structure (Stairs 1992: 118).

Stairs reiterates that this identity is ecocentric, that is, it has Inuit involved with their environment, the land and animals, directly in their development as people. There is also the cycling of Inuit lives, which is captured in the metaphor of hunting—an ongoing process that is required to sustain Inuit lives.

The young people at the workshop were able to read and write Inuktitut and syllabics, as most of them demonstrated on the white board during the class. They felt hesitant about speaking Inuktitut with the elders because they did not speak it as fluently. One learner felt her lack of knowledge of Inuktitut acutely and said that she could not write a song in Inuktitut with the elders. Nevertheless, she attended the elders' instruction about the traditional songs. I suggested that she write her song in English, but she declined, saying that the song was supposed to be written in Inuktitut because that is the way the elders were teaching it. Again, Brody's (1991) concept of being real Inuit means doing it in the way that the elders instruct.

The works of Laugrand (2002) and Shearwood (2001) help explain the dynamics of different Inuit generations. They postulate that there are three generations of Inuit now in Nunavut, each of whom has a different view on the written word and especially on the writing of their history: 1) the group that came off the land, the elders, 2) the in-between generation now in their 40s and 50s who were the first to go to English-language schools, and 3) the young people in their 30s or under. According to

Laugrand (2002), elders are wary of telling stories in print, but the other groups are not. Elders dislike the loss of context when stories appear in print. In particular, the reader does not know the person telling the story, or where the story is being told. In the elders' opinion, these details are as much part of the story as the actual words. Elders explain that they can tell a story only from their own personal point of view and their own lived experience.

The second group went to school and learned about the value of writing as a way to obtain agreements in writing and thus benefit the Inuit of Nunavut politically (Laugrand 2002). Two of the Advisory Committee members, then in their 40s and 50s, joined the project because they saw the value of writing for the younger generation. They themselves had experienced the benefits in their work and through recording of stories from elders for future generations. One of them had edited a book of elders' stories (see Mannik 2000).

This, then, fits in with Briggs' (1970) experiences living with Inuit in the 1960s in the Gjoa Haven area, which is connected to the Baker Lake area by the Back River. Some of those Inuit did settle in Baker Lake, but most went to Gjoa Haven. She postulated that development of personal autonomy is the goal of each Inuk while moving from childhood through the different stages of life. This autonomy is thought of in terms of *ihuma*—that is, the cerebral functions of the person's mind, the ability to reason: "The growth of *ihuma* is internal and autonomous to a degree. They believe that *ihuma* needs to be informed, instructed, in order to develop along proper lines" (Briggs 1970: 112).

Indeed, according to Laugrand (2002), the elders maintain that they can give only their point of view and do not speak for others, and this belief relates to the individuality of each person's experience of the world. Inuit perceive knowledge, as do other Aboriginal peoples (*cf.* Goulet 1998), on the basis of personal experience and thus will speak only from such experience. Inuit empowerment can be seen as the development of a person in the direction of greater autonomy. This was the path that the learners were taking through my project.

Interviews with learners

After the workshop, Alexis Utatnaq edited the resulting anthology*, The Sound of Songs: Stories by Baker Lake Writers.* It was published in both Inuktitut and English, and a book launch was held at the Baker Lake Community Centre in June 2006 and attended by 50 people. Nearly nine months after the May 2006 launch, I hired two bilingual (Inuktitut-English) research assistants from the Advisory Committee, Hattie Mannik and Alexis Utatnaq, to ask the learners what they thought of my workshop. As the teacher of the workshop, I did not wish to do the interviews because I represented a Southern-style schooling experience, and the learners might have told me what they thought I wanted to hear. Furthermore, they probably felt freer to comment without me being present.

The learners' identities are not known to me and I will refer to them by number. Out of nine learners, seven were interviewed. One was deceased at the time of the interviews and another one did not wish to be interviewed one-on-one. The research assistants asked them how the writing workshop and book launch had affected how they saw themselves and how others in the community regarded them. They were not asked whether they had experienced empowerment, as I thought this term might cause them to answer "yes" or "no" and provide little explanation about how the project had impacted them.

Four learners felt that the course had been a good experience and had increased their confidence in writing, which is a tool for achieving personal autonomy, that is economic and social opportunities, in Baker Lake. As one of them reiterated: "It gave me the opportunity to learn how to write properly and it enhanced my writing skills […]. So in that case I am pretty optimistic with writing" (Learner 1, January 9, 2007). One learner learned how to write more fluidly: "I've learned a lot about writing in that program, like just keep writing something and then go back and then fix the errors" (Learner 3, January 11, 2007). In addition, another learner viewed the whole workshop as an emotional healing experience: "I think it [the workshop] was pretty interesting, and part of healing" (Learner 7, April 24, 2007).

Did this experience empower the learners? Six of them felt more confident writing since the workshop and the book launch: "The course that we took here encouraged me to keep trying and trying to write and never to give up, if I failed for the first time" (Learner 1, January 9, 2007). Another learner likewise felt more confident: "I wanted to learn more and write more songs and write more Inuktitut" (Learner 2, January 11, 2007). Although this confidence could be construed as a form of empowerment, how did it relate to their overall sense of self, personal autonomy, and place in the community? Four of them felt good about the publication of their work: "I felt good and excited about my work being published" (Learner 6, January 23, 2007). Two learners expressed surprise at being able to write and publish their work. Learner 3 (January 11, 2007) stated: "A lot of people were impressed and even I myself was impressed with what I saw [in *The Sound of Songs*], not knowing that I can write when English has always been a challenge for me."

To ascertain their public visibility, the learners were asked after the book launch about the reactions from others in the community to the publication of their work. Five said that people had talked to them and the reaction was positive. Two heard from family members about their achievements. Learner 2 (January 11, 2007) shared that her mother was very happy: "She said that she didn't expect me to write something like it, as a ya ya song, and she was really impressed cause I did something like that. She wouldn't think that I would do such a thing like that, but I went home with the book and surprised her, so she has a couple of the books now." Learner 7 (April 24, 2007) related: "We only spoke about it within the family. I don't know what the other people thought about my own personal stories. I don't know if it's too fresh, they didn't feel what I felt."

Four learners out of the seven said that non-relatives had commented on their work and that they seemed to be seen differently in the community. One learner's friends were supportive: "A lot of my friends pat me on my back and said that I did a good job (Learner 1, January 9, 2007). Another learner related: "Yeah, there was a few people that came up to me and they said to me that I did a good job and for the first time; they were happy about it. They said that they should have taken that course so they can write a book too" (Learner 2, January 11, 2007).

Learner 3 commented, "When I see one of the elders that attended this program he says that I'm very smart and bright and that I know a lot of my traditions and that I'm a fast learner, that made me feel more confident in doing things" (Learner 3, January 11, 2007). Another learner expressed hope that others, including the elders, would see her differently in the community: "I hope so, I want people to understand that people are human beings and people do have feelings, these feelings" (Learner 7, April 24, 2007). Is this, then, empowerment? According to the Inuktitut word *makitpaallirniq* that Alexis Utatnaq used in the workshop, the learners had made themselves stand out, and had become more visible to others in the community. People were surprised at the achievements of some learners. Overall, four out of the seven learners interviewed felt a sense of achievement within their community. One of them had received positive reinforcement within the family, and two did not report experiencing any increased visibility in their community. To measure increases in personal autonomy, I examined such indicators as the learners' readiness to move on to other challenges.

Six of the seven learners related that writing would help them in their future plans. Three stated that it would help them further their schooling, as Learner 6 (January 23, 2007) stated: "Writing will definitely help me in my future plans since I am continuing my schooling." Learner 3 (January 11, 2007) added that English writing skills were very important on the job market: "Without Grade 12 you can't even work anywhere, and a lot of places require good reading, writing, English skills and to me right now I still find English is a challenge for me." Another learner saw that writing offered her a way to deal with personal stories in her life: "Writing would definitely help me deal when it's my deep personal stories. I think it's easier to write than to speak about anything, it's so personal" (Learner 7, April 24, 2007).

Were these learners better able now to include Inuit traditions in their personal development? Two of them mentioned these traditions as being pivotal. One learner felt more confident writing in both Inuktitut and English (Learner 2, January 11, 2007). She also wanted to write more in English, saying that another writing group, like the workshop at Nunavut Arctic College, would help her in her future plans and show her son what she had learned about Inuktitut songs. The elders' definition of being empowered as a person through language and traditions is seen here. Learner 2 also stated that the experience had affected her life, as it had three of the other seven learners: "It got me thinking, yeah, about writing […]. It just, I just wanted to keep on going and writing different stories and writing different songs" (Learner 2, January 11, 2007). One of her workshop classmates said that having her work published had changed her self-perception of herself as a shy person: "[...] I'm the shy type, and after

seeing the book that was published from our writings, I felt more confident and not as shy. I felt more open, that I can be open and even having the people in the community telling me that they didn't know I can write stories or that I was good in writing" (Learner 3, January 11, 2007).

Two of the learners seemed indifferent. They answered "no" or "I don't know" to most questions, although one of them did say that she felt more confident now about her writing. According to research assistant Hattie Mannik (pers. comm. 2007), these learners may not have been interested in what they had written. Perhaps they considered it to be like schoolwork that just had to be done. The other research assistant, Alexis Utatnaq (June 20, 2007), saw a typical response of the younger generation: "A lot of young people are like that, they'll try to avoid the issue by just saying, no, I don't know […]. Yeah, they don't want to talk about it or they're just not interested or they're shy."

The Advisory Committee acted as a barometer of how the community might view the publication of the book and how the learners were perceived afterwards. Before the workshop, the elders had been adamant that the young people be taught in Inuktitut and learn more about their language and songs. This was indeed the outcome, and they were impressed. After the workshop they expressed satisfaction with the learners' efforts: "I was quite happy with it, they were trying very hard in their Inuktitut and they all worked very hard at it" (Thomas Qaqimat, February 27, 2006).

There was further indication that the elders' version of empowerment had been achieved to some extent. Thomas Qaqimat (June 2, 2006) explained that "seeing the results of the book and the opening, they [the learners] understood a lot and were able to produce and [I am] very impressed by that […]." In addition, many parents came to the book launch and showed much support. "One mother yelled out from excitement to see her daughter performing up there" (Winnie Owingiyak, June 2, 2006).

Empowerment, here, is seen as the act of making oneself visible to the community and developing personal autonomy. This vision was also present at the book launch, as most learners read their compositions from the book in both English and Inuktitut. One learner was so overcome by the excitement of the event that she read her piece on stage even though she had signed herself as "anonymous" in the publication. There was a feeling the night of the book launch that this was a community event. As elder Thomas Qaqimat stated, he had a hard time holding onto his copies of *The Sound of Songs* even in his own house. His son and grandchildren wanted to read the book to find out what others in the community had written. Alexis Utatnaq (June 2, 2006) pointed out that this was the first community event where people other than the elders were voicing their own perspectives. The contributors were telling "the community with their own words, their own thoughts and in that structure the book, *The Sound of Songs*, and the book launch." Overall, there was a sense of empowerment for the learners as they read at the book launch, saw their families there, and received reinforcement from elders and others in the community, who bought their book. Thirty copies were sold. In fact, at one point, I looked at the book launch attendees, all in chairs backed up against the four

walls of the Community Centre, and they were all following along in their copies of the book as the learners read.

In general, the majority of the learners felt that the writing and publishing experience had benefited their quest for more training and better employment. They saw the workshop as a stepping-stone not only in developing writing skills and in being seen as doing well in the community but also in learning about the elders' songs. Elder Winnie Owingiyak led a song group formed by four workshop learners, and performed a traditional song at the book launch. There was sufficient interest and sense of ownership among these women for them to practise for two days before the launch. At the time it appeared that a song group would develop out of the workshop activities, given the degree of interest among the women. This outcome did not materialise, however, probably because no funding was available to start a group (Winnie Owingiyak, November 6, 2007). Indeed, to varying degrees most of the learners exemplified all definitions of empowerment, from knowing the traditional ways and being real Inuit to making themselves visible to the community and developing personal autonomy.

Conclusion

The learners were empowered through the creative writing workshop in Baker Lake and the process of publishing their work in a book and then launching it in the community. This empowerment also changed how the community, especially the elders and the parents, viewed the learners' abilities to write and to understand Inuit traditions. Is this then a gaining of critical consciousness, as Freire (1970) understood the word and the world? Whether or not the project produced this outcome is uncertain. It opened the learners up to the songs of the elders, a first step toward being conscientised about one's personal and social situation and then being able to work for change. Indeed, Freire and Macedo (1987: 142) emphasised that no true learning in the critical sense would take place unless the words and texts learned were relevant to the culture and reality of the people who were learning: "Literacy must be seen as a medium that constitutes and affirms the historical and existential moments of lived experience that produce a subordinate or a lived culture." In the case of the Inuit, stories from their past must be shared and modeled in the process of learning to write. The Inuit will then be writing from the lived experience of their people.

Overall, it seems important that the study was structured as a participatory action research project. As such, some community members were able to have input into its activities and findings, and it linked the elders and younger people together. What would be the implications of a future study in a place like Baker Lake? The community and the literacy project would be better served by having writing instructors on site to deliver a longer and more in-depth writing workshop in both English and Inuktitut. The Project Advisory Committee thought that more instruction would have enabled the learners to perfect the traditional songs from the Baker Lake area and to learn more about Inuit traditions. I also concluded that longer instruction in English would have

benefited the learners' writing. Since the community does not often have such writing opportunities, more time should have been spent on improving writing and creating a more in-depth learning experience for the learners. By training local instructors from the different Nunavut communities, it would become possible to have longer courses and more follow-up with the learners. Inuit would also have a venue in which to write and publish their own realities.

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