

Co-constructing early childhood programs nourished by Inuit worldviews

Co-construire des programmes pour la petite enfance inspirés par les visions du monde des Inuit

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Article abstract

Saimaqtigiingniq is defined as the place where Inuit and Qallunaat meet in the middle and are reconciled (Qikiqtani Inuit Association 2010). In this paper, the researcher, a middle-aged white woman with more than 30 years of experience living, visiting, and working with Inuit in the Arctic, employs a series of questions to examine the challenge of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission, which invites Inuit and Qallunaat to do things in new ways. These questions include: What is the potential of *saimaqtigiingniq* and in what context? How can *saimaqtigiingniq* facilitate the organization of early childhood programs and services that are meaningfully structured with Inuit worldviews? What is to be considered when seeking to think with Inuit perspectives in research? What are examples of Inuit approaches to child rearing? What is the rationale and what are the dimensions for reconceptualizing early childhood education from Inuit perspectives?

Co-constructing early childhood programs nourished by Inuit worldviews

Mary Caroline Rowan*

Résumé: Co-construire des programmes pour la petite enfance inspirés par les visions du monde des Inuit

Le terme *saimaqatigiingniq* se définit comme l'endroit où «les Inuit et les Qallunaat se rencontrent à mi-chemin et se réconcilient» (Qikiqtani Inuit Association 2010). Dans cet article, la chercheuse, une femme blanche d'âge moyen, ayant plus de 30 ans d'expérience de vie, de visites et de travail avec les Inuit de l'Arctique, a recours à une série de questions dans le but d'évaluer le défi auquel est confrontée la Qikiqtani Truth Commission qui invite les Inuit et les Qallunaat à faire les choses autrement. Ces questions sont, entre autres: quel est le potentiel du *saimaqatigiingniq* et dans quel contexte? En quoi le *saimaqatigiingniq* peut-il faciliter l'organisation de programmes et services destinés à la petite enfance qui soient significativement structurés pour intégrer les visions du monde des Inuit? Que doit-on prendre en compte lorsque l'on cherche à penser des recherches dans une perspective inuit? Quels sont les exemples d'une façon spécifiquement inuit d'élever les enfants? Quelles sont, d'un point de vue inuit, les raisons d'être et les dimensions d'une nouvelle conceptualisation de l'éducation de la petite enfance?

Abstract: Co-constructing early childhood programs nourished by Inuit worldviews

Saimaqatigiingniq is defined as the place “where Inuit and Qallunaat meet in the middle and are reconciled” (Qikiqtani Inuit Association 2010). In this paper, the researcher, a middle-aged white woman with more than 30 years of experience living, visiting, and working with Inuit in the Arctic, employs a series of questions to examine the challenge of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission, which invites Inuit and Qallunaat to do things in new ways. These questions include: What is the potential of *saimaqatigiingniq* and in what context? How can *saimaqatigiingniq* facilitate the organization of early childhood programs and services that are meaningfully structured with Inuit worldviews? What is to be considered when seeking to think with Inuit perspectives in research? What are examples of Inuit approaches to child rearing? What is the rationale and what are the dimensions for reconceptualizing early childhood education from Inuit perspectives?

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Introduction

In January of 1982, I travelled by Twin Otter to Inukjuak (formerly called Port Harrison), Quebec, to take a job teaching Grade Five English to Inuit children who spoke Inuktitut as their mother tongue. I loved my second-language teaching job. My best friend, Mary Ann Haney, and I taught in a two-room school building. I quickly became involved in the Anglican Church Women's Sewing Group, where I made friends with many Inuit women who patiently taught me how to hand-sew mitts with skin outsides and duffel liners. It was during this time that I met my husband, Jobie Showmik Weetaluktuk, a local Inuk man whose ancestors have navigated the waters and lived from the lands of the surrounding area for longer than human memory can measure. In 1984, our first child was born. Today we have three grown children.

I became involved in Inuit early childhood education (ECE) in 1987 when pregnant with my second child. Since then I have dedicated most of my professional life to the development of early childhood programs and services in Inuit communities. My main interest is in supporting services that operate in Inuit languages and engage with Inuit perspectives and knowledge concerning child care and education. With this motivation I have travelled to communities in Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. I have worked as a consultant for Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Pauktuutit (Inuit Women of Canada), and for government departments, including Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Health Canada, and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. I have also worked for Inuit regional organizations and governments, as well as for some individual child care centres. I have participated with others in drafting national program frameworks, conducting evaluations, writing policy documents, coordinating curriculum material projects, and creating training programs for child care centre directors, parent majority boards, and educators. In 2007 I returned to school, thinking that if I strengthened my theoretical and practical understanding of ECE, I would fortify my work as a researcher and could become a university professor. In 2011 I completed a master's in child and youth care. My thesis (Rowan 2011b) was about using a narrative assessment approach as a strategy for strengthening the Inuktitut language, building relationships, and accessing Inuit knowledge in ECE. I am now completing my Ph.D. My dissertation topic is "thinking with Inuit Nunangat¹ in proposing pedagogies for Inuit ECE" (Rowan in press a).²

In this paper, I seek to collaborate with local players to promote Inuit ways of knowing in early childhood practices and to draw on this learning to consider adopting pedagogy informed by Inuit worldviews. I use a series of questions to examine the challenge of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission, which invites Inuit and Qallunaat to do things in new ways, especially with *saimaqatigiingniq* in mind. *Saimaqatigiingniq* is

¹ Inuit Nunangat is the Inuit homeland in Canada. It comprises communities located in four land claims areas: Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region of the Northwest Territories.

² The citation refers to a chapter on the topic, not to be confused with the upcoming dissertation.

defined as the place where “Inuit and Qallunaat meet in the middle and are reconciled” (Qikiqtani Inuit Association 2010: 50). My questions include the following: What is the potential of *saimaqatigiingniq* and in what context? What is to be considered when seeking to think with Inuit perspectives in research? What is the rationale and what are the dimensions for reconceptualizing early childhood education from Inuit perspectives? How do Inuit and Qallunaat (non-Inuit people) come together, in the spirit of *saimaqatigiingniq*, to support the organization of early childhood programs and services that are deeply and meaningfully structured within Inuit conceptualizations of how the world works? This paper establishes a rationale for doing things in a new way.

The potential of *saimaqatigiingniq*

The Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC) was established “to create a more accurate and balanced history of the decisions and events that affected Inuit” in post-1950 Qikiqtani (Baffin Island) (Qikiqtani Inuit Association 2010: 6). Its 2010 report invites Inuit and Qallunaat to do things in a new way by building new relationships; it asserts that Inuit must have the resources necessary to achieve *saimaqatigiingniq*—a way of working together in which Inuit and Qallunaat “meet in the middle and are reconciled” (ibid.: 50). It is a place where Inuit and Qallunaat collaborate to build a better future grounded in an Inuit culture strengthened through *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ)³ and where power shifts to enable meaningful Inuit decision making. This shift will require that Inuit voices provide the substance for actions taken.

I propose that productive relational change requires Inuit worldviews to be employed at the structural level of governance, and in program and policy design (Rowan in press b). As the author of the QTC report explains: “Given its past and present role in Inuit survival [...] IQ and traditional knowledge must be respected and incorporated in all decision making in Nunavut” (ibid.: 38-39). It is reasonable to suggest that this recommendation extend to the other three Inuit land claims areas: Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. Yet Paul Aarulaaq Quassa expresses his disappointment with the Nunavut government: “A lot of us Inuit thought that with Nunavut we would have a different system geared more toward Inuit. It would be a public government, but geared more toward Inuit and Inuit tradition. Even though our Legislative Assembly has more Inuit now, it is still operating in a Qallunaat way, perhaps because we still have to be part of the political system” (ibid.: 36).

Brody (1975: 14) writes that “a sophisticated continuation of old relationships can include a use of new institutions arranged to ensure the perpetuation of old injustices.” Could *saimaqatigiingniq* serve as a mechanism to dismantle old injustices and support the real change that Quassa and other Inuit seek? What, I ask, is needed to move away from Qallunaat operating systems in territories and regions in which Inuit reside? Most

³ Tagalik (2012b: 1) defines IQ as “a unified system of beliefs and knowledge characteristic of the Inuit culture.”

of the colonial/settler efforts to organize life for Inuit have been based on a human-centred operating system guided by Euro-Western thought. Brody (1975: 13) explains: “Southern society believed that it knew best how to use the north, how to develop its economic potential, and how to ‘improve’ the moral, intellectual and material lives of its inhabitants.” I believe that *saimaqatigiingniq* requires restructuring governance models and shifting to programs and policies grounded in Inuit understandings of how the world works. This would mean a reorganization based on ideas about affinity, alliance, and exchange, as articulated by Viveiros de Castro (2004), and systems designed in alignment with Inuit ideas and tradition, as described by Quassa (in Qikiqtani Inuit Association 2010). As Perl writes (in Viveiros de Castro 2004: 463) “when peace is achieved, it does not consist in agreement to a set of opinions and principles. The parties begin, rather, to live in a different world.”

Context

Following the Second World War, federal interest in Arctic land and people shifted from a policy of *laissez-faire* to one of more focused interest and intentional action, which have had profound consequences (Stairs 1992). Houston (1995: 70) describes the Canadian government decision in the late 1940s to set up small hamlets in the Arctic complete with “schools about the size of your average swimming pool.” This Arctic community policy was instigated pursuant to a meeting in Ottawa where members of the United States Air Force shared comprehensive aerial maps, taken during World War II, with Canadian military officials. Houston witnessed a novice civil servant ask, “Why do we want this desolate northland?” His colonel responded, “I will tell you why: If we give away this territory or let it be taken away from us, the bloody place will turn out like Oklahoma. We’ll find it loaded with minerals, and natural gas, and we’ll be standing here with egg all over our face” (ibid.: 71).

Much about Qallunaat community construction in Inuit Nunangat has proven to be self-serving and destructive (Brody 1975, 1987, 2001; Inuit Tapirisat of Canada 2001; Qikiqtani Inuit Association 2010) and, despite Inuit land claims, Inuit leadership, and the establishment of Nunavut Territory, problems persist. IQ has been absent from much of the development. I remember when Arctic College opened in Iqaluit in 1987. They hired a college teacher from Ontario to set up an early childhood educator training program based on the Ontario curriculum and taught in English. I was interested in developing childcare programs guided by Inuit ways of knowing and being. The college had received a lot of money for this program, and I was frustrated because I could see that the course organizers, despite good intentions, were not setting out to train teachers and support services in line with Inuit values and using the Inuktitut language.

In Indigenous communities in Canada and around the world, education has historically served assimilative purposes (Arnaquq 2008; Bear Nicholas 2008; DIAND 1990; Greenwood et al. 2007; Martin 2007). Prochner (2004: 10), in his comparative study of Aboriginal education in New Zealand, Australia, and Canada explains:

“Education for indigenous children was almost entirely in the political and economic interest of colonial governments.” Formal education separated Inuit children from families and values, eroded Inuit languages, and compromised Inuit cultural understandings (Brody 2001; Laugrand and Oosten 2009; Legacy of Hope Foundation 2013). As one example of this erosion, Arnaquq (2008: 21) reflects on her experiences as a young Inuk child attending school in Iqaluit. She describes the seemingly instantaneous process of assimilation: “I am sure each of us [...] after the first day of school started to dream differently from our parents with the beginnings of a new language, words, concepts, new ways of behaving, doing things, and a new way of thinking.” Annahatak acknowledges the tensions between Western and Inuit views. Almost 20 years ago, she wrote: “There are tensions related to Inuit values versus institutional values, traditional activities versus current activities, obedience versus originality, Inuit worldview versus mainstream worldview, and modern cultural tools versus traditional knowledge” (Annahatak 1994: 13; see also Douglas 2009).

Since the 1980s, increasing efforts have been made to involve Inuit in Inuit education, yet somehow systems based on Inuit conceptualizations have been hard to achieve (Berger 2009). This is despite clearly articulated positions from Inuit organizations and advisory bodies, which situate Inuit languages and knowledge as the foundation of Inuit education.

Organizational commitments to Inuit ECE

The National Committee on Inuit Education and the Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group (IECDWG) have developed visions and written policy documents affirming the presence of Inuit languages, knowledge, and culture in Inuit ECE. The IECDWG is an advisory body housed at Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and composed of First Nations and Inuit Child Care Fund agreement holders from Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Qikiqtaaluk, Kivalliq, Kitikmeot, and Inuvialuit regions. The Working Group sees early childhood as a place of great promise. Within their vision of “Inuit children who are thriving” they describe Inuit early childhood development as encompassing “Inuit languages, Inuit culture and ways” (ITK 2006: 4). The National Committee on Inuit Education (2011) also identifies the early years as a priority area. The first two key messages in a report to the National Committee about Inuit ECE were: 1) position Inuit knowledge as the foundation of Inuit early childhood education, and 2) engage and involve elders in all levels of Inuit child care to ensure that Inuit culture and values are promoted and preserved (Rowan 2010: 14).

Dahlberg et al. (2007: 167) describe how some Aboriginal communities wish to prepare their children and young people to grow up in “both their own specific culture and community and in the culture and communities of the surrounding society”; these communities envision a future that is respectfully informed by a rich past and a multifaceted present, a new construction with multiple roots and traditions developed through a process over which they have a substantial measure of control through their own agency and actions (ibid.). For example, the first goal of the National Strategy on

Inuit Education is that education “be bilingual [in the Inuit language and one of Canada’s official languages] and founded on Inuit history, culture and worldview” (National Committee on Inuit Education 2011: 47)—in other words, IQ. The Nunavik Position Paper (Martin et al. 1995: 7) articulates how, “ideally, childcare programs serving Inuit people should be designed and controlled by the communities and teach children their own heritage.”

The policy-level commitments and insights described above fuel my enthusiasm for working with Inuit to develop and integrate approaches to early childhood spaces that are deeply and meaningfully informed by IQ—even though I know very well that policy-level commitments to Inuit direction, development, and delivery often go unfulfilled (Rowan 2011b), and I am wary of language such as “ideally” and the commitment to bilingualism in the previous paragraph. I am also perplexed by the conceptualization of policy documents as purposefully nonperforming (Ahmed 2005), which is how it seems many of these policy directions about Inuit involvement have turned out (Rowan in press b). QTC invites Inuit and Qallunaat to come together in new ways. If we are to take up the spirit of *saimaqatigiingniq* as a commitment to a strengthened Inuit culture incorporating IQ, it becomes incumbent on us, Inuit and Qallunaat, to act in ways that ensure that the words written in commission reports and policy documents about Inuit direction, developments, and delivery are transformed into action. This transformation will include better ways of engaging with elders’ insights, support for local programs grounded in Inuit worldviews, vibrant use of Inuit languages, stronger connections with the land, and improved access to meaningful educational opportunities for Inuit at all levels, from preschool to postsecondary education. In the next part of this paper I will consider how researchers have engaged, and can engage, with Inuit perspectives in research.

Thinking with Inuit perspectives in research

As a Qallunaaq doing research in an Inuit community, I am cognizant of Bates’s (2007) critique of Western approaches to research and his challenge to researchers that they become aware of Inuit philosophies. Bates (ibid.: 87) expresses concern about efforts to show that Inuit “plan and predict—in much the same way as do western scientists.” He describes how the successful hunter lives and works in the moment, prepared to improvise, adapt, and move as needed. Inuit knowledge equips the hunter to be comfortable with uncertainty and act responsively. Bates (ibid.: 91) suggests that, for Inuit, forecasting and planning as in Western research traditions could be “impractical, foolhardy.” Similarly, Chambers and Balanoff (2009: 74) caution that “researchers must not universalize Western processes of knowledge formation, inherited from European intellectual traditions, to northern indigenous communities.” They assert that how a people participate in the world in which they live with others constitutes local knowledge, and “their activities of participation are the knowledge practices generated within, appropriate to and necessary for that locale” (ibid.: 86). Pasch (2010: 65) advises that “many conceptual frameworks applied to the North by non-Inuit researchers may inadvertently harm Inuit communities and should be

carefully evaluated first.” Price (2008: 128) describes how, during the International Polar Year, “researchers and scientists came to the north, armed with methodological and ethical logics that are not of Nunavut, not the Inuit way.” She argues that “Inuit must look back to Inuit knowledge systems in order to imagine a time where Inuit are able to rise above the colonial chaos. Inuit must remember the lessons that came from interacting with the land” (ibid.: 129). Price (2008), Bates (2007), and Chambers and Balanoff (2009) argue for local approaches to knowing and being in Arctic research—based on the community, with the people, and on the land. Tagalik (2012b: 5) remarks on elders’ predictions that, “until a proper balance is restored in Inuit society, based on IQ values, [Inuit] will continue to experience unhealthy social contexts.”

There are some excellent examples of Qallunaat-Inuit collaborations that can contribute to the search for restoration of harmony in Inuit lives. Take, for example, the work of Balanoff et al. (2009) in the community of Ulukhaktok, Northwest Territories. The research team of four included two local Inuinnaqtun-speakers, a university professor, and a representative from the territorial literacy council. Their project had multiple levels of support, including the community, the territorial literacy council, the University of Lethbridge, the government of the Northwest Territories, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The research plan included employing Indigenous protocols, using Indigenous traditional knowledge research methods (specifically, narrative approaches), and sharing the content in the community. Balanoff et al. (2009: 5) write about “validating the knowledge through ‘gatherings’, large social events that involve food [and] story telling.” The data collection approach they used was called “ethnographies of situated literacy” (ibid.), which involved recordings of spoken accounts of local activities, in addition to written ones, such as “Mom and Tot” programs and the Anglican Church Women’s Sewing Group meetings, along with archival and other research. I am fascinated by the findings, including the idea that “cultural meanings are stored and recreated in visual representations” (ibid.: 9). For example, Balanoff et al. (ibid.) write that “in Ulukhaktok people with the necessary clothing literacy can read the clothing, that is they can tell where the person comes from, their gender, their age, which animals they hunt, who the creator of the article is, and so on.” This description provides an expanded definition of literacy and a tangible example of what it means to think with Inuit perspectives in research.

In a Nunavut-based example, Kral and Idlout (2006: 57) write about participatory ethnography where “the participants in participatory research include those being studied in the role of co-researchers. They are now also observing from beyond their traditional roles as research subjects. Participation here can include involvement in the planning, conduct, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination or knowledge transfer of research.” Developing strong relationships with Inuit co-researchers is a strategy for ensuring Inuit perspectives are part of the research process (Kral 2014). As Kral and Idlout (ibid.) confirm, “the participation of community members as research collaborators adds an unfamiliar dimension to the usual state of western knowledge production, but it opens a door to new theory, methodology, and knowledge.” In my own research, I have been working with Inuit co-researchers for more than 10 years.

The *Unikkaangualuartaa/Let's Tell a Story* project (Avataq Cultural Institute 2004a) involved hiring a unilingual elder to interview other elders while working with a bilingual Inuk teacher and project coordinator. The project methodology involved the elder and project coordinator visiting communities throughout Nunavik, meeting with parents and educators at the local child care centre, spending time with children and educators in playrooms, and interviewing elders who shared stories, songs, and ideas for activities for young children. The project resulted in a curriculum manual that was specific to Inuit knowledge in ECE and published in three languages: Inuktitut, English, and French. My role as a Qallunaaq project director was threefold: write proposals and reports; liaise with project funders; and work with the bilingual project coordinator on planning, processing, analysis, development, and production—in short, knowledge dissemination. The project operated on the understanding that, by hiring an Inuk elder to interview her peers in Inuktitut, without translation, the quality of the content would be enriched by the shared cultural, geographical, and linguistic perspectives. The value of the elder's contribution multiplied when the elder went on to sew over 100 museum-quality dolls, thus making possible the production of a video featuring doll animation (Avataq Cultural Institute 2004b).

In my current Ph.D. research, educators are creating narratives about land-based experiences, which, through a process of reflection and discussion, enable identification and consideration of Inuit perspectives and knowledge in ECE. This process is fortified through land-based activities led by elders and hunters working in collaboration with the pedagogical team, including community research collaborators and me, the Qallunaat researcher.

Moving toward Inuit understandings of early childhood relationships and practice

Much of contemporary ECE is informed by what is referred to as developmentally appropriate practice, or DAP (Copple and Bredekamp 2009), an approach founded on humanistic ideas about individual growth and the cherished dyadic mother-child relationship (Burman 2008; Gonzalez-Mena 2008). DAP has dominated Inuit ECE despite policy and program documents detailing the value of including Inuit direction, insights, culture, and language (ITK 2005, 2008; Joint First Nations/Inuit Federal Child Care Working Group 1995; Rowan 2010, in press b). I believe that “Inuit knowledge(s), language and culture must be available, must be lived, and must be embodied to be known” (Rowan 2013b: 187). This requires drawing on Inuit understandings of the child, which differ from those described in DAP (Briggs 1998; Williamson-Bathory 2011). In this section I present examples of Inuit approaches to child rearing.

Some Inuit approaches to child rearing I have read about (Briggs 1998; Crago et al. 1993; Douglas 2009; Ekho and Ottokie 2000; Jessen-Williamson and Kirmayer 2010; Stairs 1988, 1991, 1992; Williamson-Bathory 2011), experienced, and practised include strategies for forging enduring relationships (through naming practices, dressing ceremonies, and *aqausiit*—a unique song created by the singer, often a mother, for a

particular child); for nurturing physical closeness (including carrying babies in the *amauti*, i.e. a coat with a big hood and a pouch in the back for a baby, sleeping in a family bed, extended breastfeeding, hand shaking of newborns, and *katajjaq*—throat singing); and for shaping children’s actions (through baby talk, *nilliujuusiq*—a loud, affectionate, nonsensical talk, problem solving, and teasing). Below I discuss naming practices and *annurarsiniq* (dressing ceremonies), two strategies that serve to build relationships by connecting infants, toddlers, and preschoolers to particular people, as well as to families and communities.

Thinking about families and relational naming

Douglas (2009) writes that for Inuit the family is the main institution. She recognizes that kinship knowledge helps to reinforce children’s understanding that “the group comes first” (ibid.: 39). Crago (1992) confirms this idea, explaining that Inuit have a complex and extensive lexicon of kinship terminology and that it is important for young children to know and use correct relational name calling. I witnessed one wonderful example of this relational name calling while working in the infant room at the Tasiurvik child care centre in March 2011. On this occasion, the children were playing on the floor when an adult passed by, leaning against the closed half of the two-part Dutch door and cooing through the open upper portion into the room, “*Anaanangai.*” The caller was addressing one particular one-year-old girl, who smiled and moved in acknowledgement. *Anaana* means mother in Inuktitut and so the caller was addressing the baby, who was named after her own mother, and calling the baby “Mom.” The scene repeated itself several times over the course of the morning as the baby’s “daughter” passed by, calling into the room on each occasion. Certainly this encounter depicts an example of a relational naming practice in action.

Some years before this incident, I had received a telephone call at home in Montreal from a distressed relative in Inukjuak, who was chastising me because her daughter, who was enrolled in the child care centre, was not learning about or addressing her own relatives using the appropriate kinship referencing. Practising relational name calling in the child care centre does happen, as evidenced in the first example, but not to the extent some parents expect—as the second example demonstrates. It is a valued practice. I remember during the 1990s, in planning for licensed child care in Inuit communities, participants noting the importance of relational name calling.

Brody (1987) writes about Inuit babies being given an *atiq* (a name); he describes this term as meaning essence or soul. Brody explains that usually a baby is named after an old relative who has died and that this person is called one’s *atiq*. Chambers (2010: 13) explains that “a name of an ancestor gives a child a path and a life.” This name enables an infant to be “grown up before they are born” (ibid.: 16) because the name gives the child a history. Brody (1987: 137) elaborates: “Once given its *atiq*, every child is both him or herself and someone whom its parents want to immortalize. The infant is also an adult and loved for being an admired and beloved member of an older

generation.” Furthermore, “in securing the immortality of the wisest and most loved,” Brody (1987: 139) writes, “these beliefs also mean that no child is only a child, and feelings for the behaviour towards children are shaped by feelings and behaviour in relation to some of the most respected elders.”

In many Nunavik communities, *atiq* is the term used to address a person with a matching name. For example, most of the people named Jobie can call each other *atiq*. In Inukjuak, most babies will have one or more namesakes referred to as *atiq*, and they will also have a *sauniq* (‘bone’). *Sauniq* is the title of the person after whom the infant is named, and is used synonymously with Brody’s (1987) and Chamber’s (2010) definitions of *atiq* above. Through the naming (boning) process, the infant is thought to acquire the *sauniq*’s character. Through naming, the memory of the *sauniq* is perpetuated.

Within the family and community, the essence of the person after whom one is named, who is called *sauniq*, lives on (even if the person is still literally alive) through the newborn. This relationship is maintained in several ways, including through name-calling practices. Take my husband, Jobie Showmik Weetaluktuk, for example. Jobie is named after his mother’s brother, Showmik Inukpuk. Today Showmik’s widow uses the word *aipaq* (husband) when addressing Jobie, in honour of the memory of her own husband and in respect of Jobie’s perpetuation of his *sauniq*’s spirit through his living being. Showmik’s daughter calls Jobie *atataqpik* (little father) for similar reasons.

The human connections and relationships that are created through the naming process are significant, and they nourish sentiments of belonging to a caring community with a complex interconnectivity through time (past, present, and future). Taking steps to acknowledge the relationships embedded in names and to use relational name calling in the child care centre is one way of adopting a practice embedded in IQ. One example from current practice comes from the Inukjuak learning stories pilot project, where each child’s parents are invited to complete a child information page that includes identification of the child’s *sauniq* (Rowan 2011b). This information page enables educators to help children to adopt relational name-calling practices. It represents one tiny step that may provide an example of *saimaqatigiingniq*, where the Euro-Western form provides space for Inuit knowledge(s) and supports the enactment of connected practice.

Annurarsiniq: thinking about building strong human relationships

The *annurarsiniq* ceremony is an important intimate event in the life of a newborn Inuk, whereby the *sanajiq* (translates as maker, but referred to as dresser) dresses a newborn in brand-new clothes (Weetaluktuk 2013). While the infant is being dressed, he or she becomes an *angusiaq* (‘man-begotten’) or an *arnaliaq* (‘female-made’). From this time onward, the dresser and dressed have a special relationship and may refer to each other by their ceremonial names. During the ceremony, the *sanajiq* whispers hopes, aspirations, and character traits, such as “you will be a good hunter/sewer” and

“you will be generous in character.” As the years progress, this relationship is nurtured through gift giving (Ekho and Ottokie 2000). As the dressed child achieves important milestones, he or she shares the accomplishments with the *sanajiq*, as evidenced in the following learning story⁴ titled “Catching Arctic Char at the Big Narrows,” written by Elsie Kasudluak (Figure 1).⁵

At Qungualuk (Big Narrows) when we were fishing, Tau made his first cast and then yelled “Mom.” I got there and he had an Arctic char on-line. It was a very strong fighter. This was Tausaruapik’s first fish ever. We dried it in the *pitsiq* style, so he could give it to Moses Alaku, his *sanajiq* (Kasudluak 2011).



Figure 1. Elsie Kasudluak and her son Tau catching Arctic char at Qungualuk (Big Narrows). Top photos by Moses Atagotaaluk. Bottom photos by Elsie Kasudluak. Source: Kasudluak (2011).

4 A learning story comprises photos of children with a description of or reflection on an action; the stories are then shared and discussed among the children, families, and educators.
 5 As a result of my master’s work at the Tasiurvik Child Care Centre in Inukjuak, learning stories (Rowan 2011b, 2013a, 2013b) are being used as a way to make IQ visible in the lives of children connected with the centre.

The above story by Tau's mom, Elsie, an educator at the Tasiurvik Child Care Centre, can be brought into early childhood practice as a way of recognizing the *sanajiq/angusiaq* relationship. The story, when inserted into Tau's three-ring binder with an 8 by 10-inch photo of Tau on the cover and his name in Inuktitut syllabics on the spine, creates an opportunity for children, families, educators, and readers to read an Inuktitut language text and to think about the story, its contents, its value, and its meaningfulness to local families and community.

What is needed to develop practice that incorporates content meaningful and relevant to Inuit and that draws foundational structuring content, not only from developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) but also from Inuit approaches to child rearing, in the spirit of *saimaqatigiingniq* and informed by IQ? Information about learning and care practices that are valued by Inuit elders, parents, and educators must be accessible to program and service deliverers and developers.

Reconceptualizing ECE from Inuit perspectives

I would like to establish reasons why Inuit perspectives on child care and education should be engaged with intentionally in Inuit ECE. My research involves accessing local Inuit ideas, values, and child-rearing practices through a collaborative process of co-construction. I do not intend to define precisely what Inuit ECE is. As Briggs (1998: 10) writes, "I do not expect to find a totalizing system in any cultural world." I understand that there are many practices and approaches to communicating with children, to nurturing relationships, to preparing food, to working with materials, and so on which are informed by Inuit worldviews. However, some general statements can be made. Many Inuit children like to eat frozen caribou, seal, and fish. Many Inuit children eat with their families when the hunters return with fresh meat or the family retrieves food from relatives, friends, or the community freezer. Open adoption is frequently practised in many Inuit communities; often children are adopted within their extended family and grow up knowing both their biological and adoptive parents quite well (Kativik Regional Government 1990). I also understand that there are many Inuit and a multitude of shifting ideas about Inuit childcare. I am interested in these ideas, as malleable as they may be.

My personal engagement in this community-based approach was fortified through my master's thesis work in which I found, in collaboration with co-researchers Annie Augiak and Maaji Putulik, that learning stories⁶ "provide a medium through which children can see themselves as part of a world that includes Inuit knowledge and practices [...] a place through which identities grounded in Inuit knowledge(s) and language can be formed" (Rowan 2011b: 103). Learning stories provide a platform for merging modern technologies and Inuit knowledge(s). In our work we together determined that learning stories can act as a catalyst to co-construct meaningful

⁶ For its definition, see footnote 4.

curricula grounded in Inuit knowledge(s) and approaches to ECE. My intention is to build on this work as a tool for incorporating IQ in early childhood practice.

I am concerned about ways in which the differences between Euro-Western anthropocentric ideas of binary relationships (Gonzalez-Mena 2008) on the one hand and Inuit multiple interdependent inclusive relationships (Briggs 1981[1970], 1998; Douglas 2009) on the other complicate approaches to ECE, especially when much of the training for early childhood educators is grounded in Euro-Western child developmental theory. Take attachment theory as an example. Reconceptualist thinker MacNaughton (2003: 152) explains attachment theory and maternal deprivation as presented in the 1950s: “John Bowlby argued that it is vital that the child attaches to a single prime caregiver (the mother) and that failure to attach or incorrect separation from the mother poses grave risks to the child’s psychological development.” Attachment theory was widely recognized and adopted, and it continues to influence practice today, as evidenced by its inclusion in the *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development* (van IJzendoorn 2012). Yet this dualistic, privileged coupling of mother and child seems inconsistent with Inuit approaches. In considering Inuit perspectives on relationships, and how children become human beings, Tagalik (2007: 10) explains that “the process of *inunnguiniq* or ‘making a human being’ [child rearing and socialization] was a responsibility of everyone in the group and was a central preoccupation.” Tagalik expands on this process:

Inunnguiniq is the *Inuit* equivalent of “it takes a village to raise a child.” Inherent in this process are a set of roles and expectations for those connected with a child to nurture, protect, observe and create a path in life that is uniquely fitted to that child. These roles are also situated in a complex network of relationships which may be kin affiliations, but may also bring non-kin into kin-like relationships with the child (Tagalik 2012a: 1, italics in original).

My research interests include creating opportunities to co-construct ECE practice in consideration of Inuit family strengths within the context of an Inuit society built on interdependence, collaboration, and cooperation. Koperqualuk (2011: 18) writes: “Within the perspective of the origins of modern individualism, Inuit society can be considered to be a traditional, holistic society compared to the western modern society.” Most Inuit children are not particularly raised in a way that makes leaving their families or communities easy to imagine. As an example, my Inukjuamuiq⁷ husband comes from a family of 12 children, and he is the only one of those who has opted to live outside the community. A typical Inuit extended family includes siblings and cousins (older ones often care for younger ones), grandparents (who often openly adopt first-born grandchildren), aunts and uncles, and all of these have particular role-related names. Williamson-Bathory (2011: 18) explains: “As Nunavut elder Saullu Nakasuk commented ‘when we were children, we didn’t know adult names.’ Children know everyone by their kinship terms.” For example, my husband’s older brother’s wife calls me *Nukaunguq*, a technical term that positions me as her husband’s younger brother’s partner. In return I call her *A’nga’jung’nguq*, which places her in relation to

⁷ An Inukjuamuiq (plural, Inukjuamiut) is a person from Inukjuak.

me as my husband's older brother's spouse. Arnaquq explains her situation as a child in Iqaluit, where she was expected to play with her younger siblings under the supervision of her older sister. She recounts how daily visits with her "extended family were normal and expected" (2008: 26). During the 2008 pilot study for the Aniingngualaurtaa Project⁸ (Rowan et al. 2009), elders in Inukjuak reported on childhood community responsibilities, explaining that "one of the chores was to drop into the neighbours' each day. A little visit as we say. They called it to go Anijaaq" (Rowan 2008: 28).⁹

These examples have implications for the application of an attachment theory grounded in Euro-Western conceptions of dyadic relationships. Relationship building, identity construction, and attachment have a cultural base (Gonzalez-Mena 2008). Briggs (1981[1970], 1998), an anthropologist who spent many years working in the Arctic on studies of Inuit families in the Kivalliq and Qikiqtani regions, writes: "I do not believe in the universality of specific emotion concepts or experiences" (1998: 13). Briggs (1998) suggests instead that the evidence shows fundamental differences in the conceptualization of emotions across cultures. She theorizes that the idea of exclusive relationships can be inappropriate and even dangerous in the Inuit context. Jessen-Williamson and Kirmayer (2010: 302) consider Briggs's (1998) work "provocative in presenting a different mode of child rearing and insisting that its logic be understood in terms of larger cultural frames that enable a child to become a certain kind of social person."

The challenge for me, working in Inuit ECE, is how do we build, support, and sustain local Inuit knowledge(s) within the context of continuing colonization and an ever-extending assemblage of global forces and networks? How do we engage with and make foundational Inuit approaches to child rearing in a contemporary and evolving practice? What would an organized child care program informed by an Inuit worldview look like? Such a program would necessarily be unique to each centre and community and would change and shift in relationship to the people, place, things, animals, weather, community events, and so on. It would be based on IQ and connected with *saimaqatigiingniq*.

Conclusion

Over the past 50 years, Qallunaat have been immigrating to Inuit Nunangat in increasing numbers. The vast majority are transient. In the process, they have imported and imposed operating systems and structures that are foreign to Inuit worldviews. Jessen-Williamson and Kirmayer (2010: 306) emphasize that "the challenge the Inuit face lies in forging new individual and collective identity within the nation state that

⁸ *Aniingngualaurtaa* means 'Let's play outside.'

⁹ The notes from which this quotation is drawn were recorded, translated, and prepared by Annie Nulukie of the Kativik Regional Government during the pilot phase of the Aniingngualaurtaa Project.

would allow them to enjoy the fruits of modernity and globalization without losing the wisdom of their traditions.”

In the spirit of *saimaqatigiingniq*, it is time for Qallunaat and Inuit to find new ways of working together in which the strengths of Inuit family values and knowledge(s) are recognized and their integration in practice is supported. Where education is redefined based on Inuit understandings. Where elders’ stories, ideas, and direction are made central to decision making. Where Inuit drive real change, which is embedded in Inuit worldviews and connected with the land and the sea. Where the current hierarchical organizational structures are reassembled to ensure real Inuit control. Where Qallunaat pull back from Euro-Western-informed positions in order to listen to, respect, engage with, and support Inuit understandings of pedagogy and socialization. Where the “bag of ingredients” used by Inuit in creating a kind of social world informed by Inuit understandings of how the world works (Briggs 1998) is made accessible to both Inuit and Qallunaat.

This road will not be easy. Obstacles include the child care regulations that interfere with serving country food like caribou and fish and eating it, frozen and fresh, uncooked. Child care buildings are mostly of Euro-Western design, with some notable exceptions, such as the tent-shaped child care centre with a sleeping platform in Cape Dorset. The typical ECE classroom filled with tables and chairs leaves little room for floor-based activities and work. In some jurisdictions, such as Nunatsiavut, hiring unilingual elders to work with children in the licensed centres is difficult, because these elders usually do not have certification (Tagataga Inc. 2008). Other obstacles include educator training based on developmental theory—with negligible access to content sourced from Inuit knowledge bases. This developmentally based training results in educators attuned to foreign Euro-Western knowledge systems rather than to Inuit understandings of child care and education.

It is time for Inuit voices to be heard and Inuit approaches to child rearing to be incorporated into educator training programs and daily centre-based child care practice. My overarching research questions ask: How are relationships, knowledge(s), and cultural and linguistic identities negotiated? How do Inuit traditions connect with present and future possibilities in living Inuit child care systems? It is my intent through the collaborative processes of my research to move toward practices in Inuit early childhood settings that are embedded in IQ and function in the spirit of *saimaqatigiingniq*.

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