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Perspectives inuit et qallunaat : points de vue en interaction
Inuit and Qallunaat perspectives: Interacting points of view
Volume 26, numéro 1, 2002

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/009271ar>
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/009271ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Association Inuksiutiit Katimajit Inc.

ISSN

0701-1008 (imprimé)
1708-5268 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Oosten, J. & Laugrand, F. (2002). *Qaujimajatuqangit* and social problems in modern Inuit society. An elders workshop on *angakkuuniq*. *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 26(1), 17–44. <https://doi.org/10.7202/009271ar>

Résumé de l'article

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Abstract: *Qaujimajatuqangit* and social problems in modern Inuit society. An elders workshop on *angakkuuniq*

This paper discusses the main results of a workshop on "Integrating *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* into methods of social control" that was held in Rankin Inlet in July 2000. The workshop was set up from an anthropological perspective to record the views of Inuit elders on social control and *angakkuuniq* (shamanism). In many respects the results of the workshop confirm current trends and efforts to strengthen the involvement of Inuit communities in the judicial processes, especially with respect to minor offences. Today Inuit traditional knowledge and values are rapidly eroding. Many knowledgeable elders who grew up in the nomadic period and in contact with shamans are now passing away and with them disappears the knowledge of the great traditions of *angakkuuniq* and related beliefs and practices. Hence there is an urgent need to record knowledge from Inuit elders with due attention to its richness and local variation.

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Introduction: Inuit and Qallunaat¹

In the eastern Arctic, Inuit and Qallunaat (non-Inuit) have been in contact ever since Martin Frobisher explored the arctic seas at the end of the sixteenth century. Explorers and missionaries assumed that contacts with European and American cultures would lead to the disappearance of Inuit and their culture. Thus the Moravian Brother Mathias Warmow wrote in 1858:

I am always sorry to see the Esquimaux [...] imitating the Europeans in all respects. They were undoubtedly better off in their original state and more likely to be gained for the kingdom of God. But when they begin to copy our mode of life they are neither properly Europeans or Esquimaux and will speedily die out, in consequence of the change².

These predictions never materialized. Inuit integrated Western religion and technology, adapted to the Western market economy, and successfully managed to preserve their identity as Inuit. Inuit have amply proved that they are perfectly capable of dealing with Western discourses while retaining and preserving their own cultural traditions. Today, the valorization of the past is changing, and Inuit are claiming respect for their own cultural institutions, not only from Inuit, but also from Qallunaat. On the one side, Inuit emphasize that cultural institutions which were imported from the South can only function satisfactorily if their relations to Inuit institutions, customs and traditions are taken into account. On the other side, some Inuit now consider that even traditions such as *angakkuuniq* (shamanism), that played an important part in social life in the past, have to be studied carefully to assess what they can contribute to solving the problems of modern Inuit society.

This paper does not claim to bring out new data on *angakkuuniq* (a forthcoming book in Inuktitut and English will provide many details in a verbatim account of the elders' testimonies)³. It aims firstly to present an original ethnographic setting for the discussion of the complex issues of social control and *angakkuuniq*, and secondly to discuss how some Inuit elders want their perspectives to be acknowledged and integrated into modern institutions such as the Canadian court system.

Research on *angakkuuniq* has always been difficult. Early ethnographers such as Ludvig Kumlien, Franz Boas, Edmund Peck and Knud Rasmussen already faced many problems in recording these traditions while they were still practiced in the Arctic. Yet, a wealth of ethnographic knowledge has been collected in anthropological studies, but most of this material never became available to the Inuit themselves. Inuit are very well aware of this state of affairs and gradually, a deep distrust of anthropological research has developed in northern communities. What is the use of anthropological research on Inuit if it does not benefit Inuit? What is the point of an anthropology that

¹ This paper is based on the report *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit and Canadian Law* presented to the Nunavut Department of Justice in 2000. We thank Susan Sammons, Alexina Kublu, Henry Kablalik, Scott Clarke, Mireille Provost and Chantal Marion for their support and comments on an earlier draft of this paper. We also wish to thank all the elders and those who participated to the workshop, and especially Ollie Itinnuaq and his wife Lizzie for their warm hospitality at their hunting camp as well as the federal Department of Justice, which funded the workshop. Support for the continuation of this project was provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

² Quoted in *Kekerten Historic Park*, Northwest Territories Historic Parks, n.d. 14-15.

³ See Oosten and Laugrand, eds (in press). A film on the *qilaniq* ritual should also be available soon.

only applies an outsider's perspective to Inuit culture? The scientific research licensing procedure that has existed in Nunavut for more than 10 years should be seen from the perspective of a history of research where Inuit felt studied without ever becoming real partners in the process of research. Inuit resent that their own perspectives were never taken seriously by anthropologists and that the main aim of anthropological research was to describe Inuit culture and society in terms of Qallunaaq perspectives, an endeavour without any interest for Inuit. This state of affairs is especially relevant with respect to *angakkuuniq*, a tradition at the very heart of Inuit culture.

In the past, anthropologists often thought that they should not get involved in the concerns and interests of participants in a culture. This attitude could be justified by the need for an "objective" perspective provided by the theories and methods of anthropology. But this situation is changing rapidly. The confidence in the objectivity of anthropology's theories and methods is rapidly eroding, and present-day anthropologists are aware of the ethnocentric nature of their views.

Since several years and from other research projects conducted in the North, it has become obvious that research in the Arctic can only be done in much closer collaboration with the Inuit, who claim their own space in the ethnographic experience. Inuit are no longer willing to act solely as informants of anthropologists in the field and demand a more balanced interaction. Ethnography requires a new orientation, becoming more a context or a dialogue in which the relationships between researchers and informants are based on intense collaboration, common goals and shared expectations⁴.

In this paper, we wish to focus on Inuit perspectives. Regarding social control and *angakkuuniq*, our ethnographic approach contrasts in many respects with traditional approaches that presented *angakkuuniq* as an esoteric body of knowledge and kept it completely separated from the sphere of social control. In organizing a workshop on integrating *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit* into methods of social control, we insisted on our position as facilitators and focused on arranging the meeting so that every participant could find a place to present his or her own views and experiences. For the elders it was crucial to know who was going to benefit from this workshop: Inuit or Qallunaat? Only after they had established that the transfer of knowledge from the older to the younger generations was one of the main goals of the workshop, were they prepared to participate in it. We also stated clearly that the workshop was set up to write a report for the Department of Justice and that we hoped it would come up with helpful recommendations to deal with the problems of modern Inuit society.

Obviously, we had to reflect carefully on our role as facilitators. Respect for the depth and richness of the great traditions of Inuit culture should not be confused with political correctness. But we accepted the challenge to participate and involve ourselves in the meeting. We did not only facilitate and record the discussions, we also assisted the elders in preparing their recommendations. The final text of the recommendations is the result of this dialogue. It reflects the convictions of the elders and was unanimously approved. We hope that the format of the workshop will inspire

⁴ See "An Anthropologist Resassesses her Methods" in Fienup Riordan (2000: 29-57) for an excellent discussion of an "anthropology of engagement."

other researchers and lead to further projects of co-operation between anthropologists and Inuit. In the first part of this paper, we examine the question of law and social control to see how the Inuit gradually moved from adaptation to innovation, and introduced the new concept of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. In the second and third parts, we discuss the workshop in more details and present its main recommendations regarding social control and *angakkuuniq*.

Antecedents: law, social order, *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* and elders

The Canadian law system was introduced from the South in the beginning of this century, especially with the assertion of Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic and the Northwest regions⁵. Even before the 1920s, Canadian law intervened on the occasion of the famous killings of Fathers Rouvière and Le Roux in the Western Arctic, and of Robert Janes in the eastern parts. Even though Canadian law is now a generally accepted institution in the North, Inuit have always perceived it, and still continue to do so, as a Qallunaaq institution. *Images of Justice* by Dorothy Eber (1997) aptly illustrates the problems of applying Western principles of law to Inuit culture, by describing a few famous cases in the fifties and sixties⁶.

Law and maligaq

In 1954, Adamson Hoebel devoted the first chapter of *The Law of Primitive Man* to the Inuit and concluded that only "rudimentary law in a Primitive Anarchy" existed among the Inuit (see also Mowat 1953: 180). Geert Van den Steenhoven, who conducted fieldwork among the Inuit of the Keewatin district, gave systematic accounts of many cases of conflict (Steenhoven 1954, 1956) and concluded that the existence of some form of law among the Keewatin Inuit could not be demonstrated (Steenhoven 1962: 113). Van den Steenhoven was well aware that Inuit were perfectly capable of managing their own affairs and in the last chapter of his book he discussed the problem of maintaining peace and examined some of the principles which served that purpose in Inuit communities. In many respects, the consequences of Van den Steenhoven's pioneer study were never fully realized as many scholars continued to search for some sort of legal system in Inuit societies which could be studied as an equivalent to the Western system of law (*e.g.*, Rouland 1976, 1978, 1979). Other researchers opted for an alternative strategy either by studying a few social institutions⁷, or by focusing on "social control" (Hughes 1966; Rasing 1989, 1994).

⁵ See Harring (1989), and Moyles (1989), but also Diubaldo (1985); Macleod (1976); Matthiasson (1967); Morrison (1985); Schuh (1979-80).

⁶ Other references to this question of conflicting systems of law and justice can be found in texts published by lawyers such as Brice-Bennett (1993a, 1993b), Morrow (1995), Sissons (1968) or researchers such as Eber (1992), Haysom and Richstone (1987), Hippler and Conn (1973), Patenaude (1989), Rowe (1990), Therrien (1990), Rasing (1993) and Tomaszewski (1995).

⁷ Except for studies of infanticide in the Canadian Arctic, most of the research that has been done in this perspective does not concern the Nunavut region but Greenland and Alaska: see Lantis (1972) on Inuit leadership; Hoebel (1954, 1967), Kleivan (1971), Smidt and Smidt (1975) and Sonne (1982) on song duels and blood feuds; Kjellström (1974-75) on senilicide and invalidicide. In the Nunavut area, see Brody (1976), Condon (1982), Hallendy (1994), Jenness (1964), König (1923-25, 1927-29) and Van de

These categories are useful in applying Western theoretical perspectives to Inuit society, but they do not help us understand Inuit perspectives. Inuit leaders and elders did not see themselves as agents of law and order or social control (Oosten *et al.*, eds 1999: 3).

Social norms and cosmic norms are difficult to separate in Inuit culture. Relations between the communities and the world around them are interdependent as was already perceived by Hoebel. The issue was again raised by Wim Rasing in his study of *Order and Non-Conformity in Iglulingmiut Social Process*. He concluded: "Iglulingmiut social norms, that is the norms that affected the interactions with other persons, were tied in with the norms pertaining to their dealings with nature. The acute, strong dependence on nature, animals in particular, had its pendant in the direct dependence on other people" (Rasing 1994: 269). Therefore, studies of Inuit social norms should not only take Inuit values into account (Briggs 1970, 1975, 1982), but also their worldview. In this perspective, we can understand why Susan Enuaraq (1995) opened a paper on *Traditional Justice among the Inuit* with an account of the famous creation myth of the woman who did not want to get a husband and then married a dog. For Susan Enuaraq, a discussion of traditional law starts with a discussion of the origin of the cosmic order. The woman who did not want to marry became the ancestor of different peoples as well as the mother of the sea game, illustrating the fact that relations among human beings on the one side and between human beings and game animals on the other can not be separated. A social order that only aims at social control and does not involve the relationship to game and the spirits makes no sense to Inuit. In interviews with elders during the Nunavut Arctic College Oral Traditions Project, it was repeatedly emphasized that transgressions were not so much sanctioned by the community as by spiritual "agencies" such as the weather or the game. Stingy people would catch less game. Sins would evoke bad weather. Transgressions would not only affect the offenders, but also their relatives and their descendants.

Elders, shamans and campleaders all contributed to the preservation of social values. Many anthropologists of law (Pospisil 1964; Graburn 1969; Van den Steenhoven 1962) have stressed the fact that there are many variations and even contradictions in the ways of preserving Inuit social order. Thus, one should not look for a uniform system but for general principles that could be applied in a variety of ways. Shamans, elders, and campleaders, all played an important part in assuring that social order, as it was embedded in Inuit traditions (songs, tales and rituals as well as social practices), was preserved.

Maligaaq, *piqujaq* and *tirigususiit* refer to what had to be followed, done or not done, in Inuit culture. Nowadays, these words are often used as equivalents to modern Western notions of "law." In the process of translation, Western concepts as well as Inuit notions have changed. Western concepts acquired new connotations and meanings associated with the old Inuktitut words that are not always sufficiently acknowledged by Westerners. Old Inuktitut concepts became imbued with new meanings attached to Western concepts of law. The use of these translations tends to obscure the fact that *maligaaq*, *piqujaq* and *tirigususiit* on the one side and notions such

Velde (1956). On violence and deviance, see Finkler and Parizeau (1973), Jayewardene (1975) and, for the women's perspective, Pauktuutiit (1991).

as law on the other derive from completely different cultural perspectives. Thus, *piqujaq* is translated as "Inuit customary law." This translation is useful in the context of the modern law system, but obviously "customary law" is a Western concept that did not exist in Inuit society before the introduction of the Canadian system of law. The back translation of *piqujaq* is "which is asked to be done (by somebody)" and its implicit meaning is "which is asked by an authorized person to be done." Therrien (in Brice-Bennet *et al.* 1997: 253) explains that *piqujaq* "is used as a general concept pertaining to the obligation to respect rules imposed within Inuit society. These rules are orally transmitted and not codified. Only authorized persons have the right to make rules. Rules most often taught by parents concern offering help to the family or the elders, and respect due to animals." In this explanation we come much closer to the meaning of *piqujaq* than in the translation "customary law," but even here it is difficult to avoid terms such as "rules" and "authorized persons" that suggest a much more formalized structure than actually existed in Inuit society. Elders had much authority and were highly respected, but no one was under any obligation to follow their advice. The term "rule" suggests a general principle, which is always applied whereas the term *piqujaq* emphasized the importance of the relation involved: people will comply with what people they respect ask from them. To understand how the principle worked we have to understand the social fabric of Inuit society (Oosten *et al.*, eds 1999: 1-3).

Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit

Nowadays, after more than 30 years of political claims, Inuit elders feel that their own perceptions of law deserve more attention. In Oosten *et al.*, eds (1999), Emile Imaruittuq from Igloolik stated "We should have used traditional practices when dealing with crimes." In the same volume, Mariano Aupilaarjuk from Rankin Inlet acknowledged the very usefulness of Inuit traditions of the past: "When I think about this, I wonder how we can solve the problem. I would like to look at the Inuit *maligait* that we had in the past and compare them with the laws we have today, so we could develop better laws for the future" (*ibid.*: 7). Among the young generation, the same feeling is present. Francis Piugattug from Igloolik, for example, organized cross-cultural workshops for legal professionals in the Eastern Arctic, relying heavily on the input from Baffin elders. He stated that "Qallunaat must have more of an understanding that there's a different way of acting. For us, justice was governed by elders and that was it. It is a relationship based on trust" (in Livingstone 1993: 17). Hence, "that relationship should form a vital part of the northern justice system" (*ibid.*).

Susan Enuaraq from Iqaluit, a member of the Nunavut Law School Society, states that even if the creation of a southern program dealing with a law degree would be exciting, she still believes that if she became a lawyer, she could offer an understanding of Inuit culture and society that a southerner could not (McKibbin 2000). Susan Enuaraq (1995: 261) is very well aware that many changes occurred in this field of justice: "(In the past) [...] the power of the elders and shamans were intertwined together to form a very unique system of justice. For a long time this has

been largely ignored. There is a movement now across Canada trying to utilize 'Aboriginal Justice.' Perhaps some of the traditional aspects of justice will make a comeback, but as for the Inuit culture, it will never be the way it was even just 60 years ago."

While the Canadian court system is now part of contemporary life, modern Inuit culture is constituted of an uneasy alliance between Inuit and Qallunaaq traditions. Most Inuit today are bilingual, immersed in both cultural traditions, whereas most Qallunaaq in the North are monolingual and mainly oriented to Qallunaaq traditions. Obviously, contemporary Inuit worldviews have been deeply influenced by Qallunaaq culture, but modern Inuit culture still preserves and retains important parts and values from the past.

While modern Inuit societies are still adapting themselves to the new lifestyles required by the integration into a global economic market and the life in much larger communities, many social problems affect them such as unemployment, drugs and alcohol, spousal abuses, and suicides (see the various reports and recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples; see also Finkler 1976, 1981, 1982, 1985 and Griffith *et al.* 1995). Many Inuit feel that the modern Canadian justice system is inadequate in dealing with these major problems and wish to turn to Inuit traditions to solve these problems⁸. At the *Qaujimajatuqangit* workshop organized by members of the Government of Nunavut Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Working Group in September 1999, Jose Angutinngurniq stated: "If *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* is properly recorded, it will be very useful to Inuit and to Government." *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, Inuit knowledge, was becoming a key concept in the quest for solutions to social and political problems, and Inuit as well as the Canadian Government accepted that a better understanding and application of Inuit knowledge might contribute to solving social problems in the North.

But what is *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*? In 1998, a working group recommended the adoption of this concept to replace and broaden the concept of Inuit traditional knowledge, noting that "the Inuktitut term encompasses more fully the notion of Inuit knowledge, social and cultural values, practices, beliefs, language and world view" (Working Group on Traditional Knowledge 1998: 5). Introducing the acronym of IQ, the Working Group (*ibid.*: 14-15) defined it in more details as:

- The long practised tradition of passing Inuit knowledge, values and teachings from the Elders down to the younger generations.
- Inuit knowledge in all areas of life.

⁸ The first report of the Traditional Knowledge Working Group was produced for the Government of the Northwest Territories in 1993. The question how to deal with Inuit perspectives became a hot issue at the end of the 1990s when a highly respected elder from Igloodik requested hunters to get him some whale meat regardless of quota restrictions. In 1998, the Conference Report of the Office of the Interim Commissioner's Department of Health and Social Services discussed how the department could best deliver its programs and services in a culturally-sensitive manner. The same year, the Nunavut Language Policy Conference organized by the Nunavut Implementation Commission opted for a suitable language policy for the new territory. Also that same year, the Nunavut Social Development Council hosted the Nunavut Traditional Knowledge Conference in Igloodik in which 120 delegates from government departments, related organizations and elders' societies discussed how Inuit values and traditional knowledge should be incorporated in the future Government of Nunavut policies.

- A philosophy and a way of living and thinking that is difficult to put into a few words in a short period of time.
- The knowledge of wildlife, hunting techniques and an understanding of animal life, biology and migratory patterns.
- A knowledge of survival skill without the use of modern technology, such as, but not limited to making clothing appropriate for the climate, how to make and use traditional tools and weapons, weather forecasting and navigation skills.
- A knowledge of traditional healing and counselling methods and a system of dealing with fellow Inuit who need help that is based on trust and love.
- An understanding of complex family relationships that is explained by Inuktitut kinship terminology. Every family member has a special word or term to explain his or her relationship to each other.
- A system of laws, values and consultations before making important decisions that affect the community.

In the interviews conducted during the Nunavut Arctic College Oral Traditions Project, the dynamic aspects of *Inuit Qaujimaqatugangit* often came to the fore. Traditional knowledge is not static, not something abstract and separated from the context in which it is produced, but always related to the present. In this respect, it contrasts with the modern schooling system, which sets great value on the absorption of objectified knowledge. Elders repeatedly expressed their disappointment with the modern schooling system and wondered whether they had been wise in sending their children to these modern schools which taught nothing about Inuit life and values. They thought the schools played a part in alienating children from their roots (see Oosten and Laugrand 1999: 7).

In the course of the interviews, the elders professed great interest in each other's comments. The point was not so much to come to a common opinion, but to come to an awareness of the existing variations. Variation is an essential characteristic of the knowledge of the elders. As each one has his or her own knowledge, it is absolutely essential that this knowledge be seen as related only to that particular elder. Once the source, more specifically the name of the elder, is lost, the knowledge loses its roots and becomes devoid of much value to most Inuit.

As traditional knowledge is not objectively given, but always produced in relational terms, we must remain aware of the context in which it is produced. In Inuit society, knowledge was always related to practice. That also applies to the transmission of knowledge which is always functional. In this perspective, *Inuit Qaujimaqatugangit* (Inuit long standing knowledge that is still useful) is not only a matter of content, but also of form. It implies an attitude to life, a way of speaking and interacting with other people.

Knowledge is only valuable if it is based on experience. That point was clearly stated in the first volume of the Interviewing Inuit Elders Series:

The elders had no wish to speak about things of which they had no personal experience, but they wished to teach the students by giving an account of what they had heard and seen themselves. Thus Saullu Nakasuk, an elder from Pangnirtung stated: "I am only telling you

about what I have experienced. I am not going to tell you about anything I have not experienced. [...] Even if it is something I know about, if I have not experienced it, I am not going to tell about it" (Oosten and Laugrand, eds 1999: 5).

Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit is shaped in a process of communication and transferred from elders to the younger generations as emphasized by the Working Group presentations. In the Interviewing Inuit Elders series, we therefore introduced a format that presented questions as well as answers. This format shows how essential the interplay of questions and answers is to the shaping of *Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit* in a specific context, and it allows the readers to follow the process of its production.

The acknowledgement of the importance of *Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit* implies a major shift in attitudes towards the value of Inuit culture. Elders, Qallunaat and young Inuit will all have to learn how to deal with a new valorization of *Qaujimaqatuqangit*. Procedures of teaching *Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit* will have to be developed, and it will take time to build up experience. Disappointments can not be avoided. There is a risk that the interpretation of *Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit* itself will become a major issue. Different parties may try to define it in terms of their own interests. We emphasize that it is essential to *Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit* that it preserves its open and dynamic nature. It takes shape in the interaction between elders and younger generations. Without the elders there is no *Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit* and all elders should be allowed to take a part in the development of *Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit*.

Elders and angakkuit

In the two courses on traditional law that were set up by Nunavut Arctic College in Iqaluit in 1997 and 1998, Inuit students interviewed elders from different regions of Nunavut. Mariano Aupilaarjuk and his wife Marie Tulimaaq from Rankin Inlet, Akeeshoo Joamie from Iqaluit, and Emile Imaruittuq from Igloodik, were the elders in the first course. The elders in the second course were the late Lucassie Nutaraaluk from Iqaluit (originally from Kinngait), and Emile Imaruittuq.

Various topics were discussed in the courses: rules for dealing with nature (with animals in particular) and the spiritual world, rules and values of family life (ownership, distribution, sharing), rules for dealing with wrongdoers, murder and the sanctions connected to it, the use of stories in guiding the behaviour of members of the community, and the role of elders, campleaders and shamans in guiding people.

The elders were greatly concerned with the social problems of modern Inuit society, notably among the adolescents. They felt the need for a new synthesis of Inuit and Western culture. The elders were not so much interested in punishment as in the correction and integration of individuals into society. Each human being was considered to be potentially valuable to society. But when a person proved unable or unwilling to reconsider his or her position and accept the guidance of elders, campleaders or kinsmen, he / she could be dealt with harshly. He / she might even be killed. In that case, close kinsmen often had to accept the responsibility for getting rid of the unmanageable relative and took care of the killing. The motive of such a killing

was the wish to protect the survival of the community and to prevent further killings (Oosten *et al.*, eds 1999: 3).

Elders, shamans and campleaders all had their own responsibilities in preserving the peace and settling conflicts within the camps. The elders had great authority. As student Kim Kangok states in her essay for the second law course: "The *Innatuqat* were known to have a powerful mind. So powerful that they were capable of changing one's future for good or bad." When they thought people were not behaving correctly they would counsel them, and their words carried great weight. The shamans were particularly important in cases of disease or when the relationship with the game was disrupted. Aaju Peter states in her essay for this same second law course: "The *angakkuq* was not there to judge a person, neither was he there to set the laws. He was there to find out who had broken the *tirigusiit* and get them to confess, but at the same time he held a lot of power since he could kill people with his *tuurngaq*." Finally, the campleaders exercised considerable authority. In Aaju's words: "These great *angajuqqaat* who got their status through their abilities as great hunters, or a combination of both ability and birth-right, held a lot of power. In a world where you depend totally on game, you owe your life to persons who feed you." But if the campleaders went astray, the elders would not hesitate to counsel them (*ibid.*: 113).

The question of *angakkuuniq* (shamanism) came up frequently. It was quite clear that shamanism played an important part in the maintenance of social order in traditional Inuit society. The subject is controversial and even if today many elders still hesitate to discuss shamanism in public, two books on cosmology and shamanism were published by Nunavut Arctic College (Laugrand *et al.* 2000; Saladin d'Anglure 2001). It soon became evident that the generation that has still vivid recollections of its experiences with shamanism is now on the verge of disappearing. Victor Tungilik from Naujaat, Simon Shaimaiyuk from Pangniqtuuq, Lucassie Nutaraaluk from Iqaluit and Rosie Iqallijuq from Igloolik who provided important information about the *angakkuit* (shamans) and their *tuurngait* (helping spirits) died recently. Therefore it was with a sense of urgency that after a few exploratory interviews with four elders in Rankin Inlet in December 1999, we approached Susan Sammons and Alexina Kublu from Nunavut Arctic College, Henry Kablalik from Rankin Inlet, and Scott Clarke and Mireille Provost from the federal Department of Justice, with a proposal to further explore the relation between shamanism and social control, in order to chart out the Inuit worldview that served as a framework for social norms.

Organizing the Rankin Inlet workshop

Main objectives

The Rankin Inlet workshop was set up in close consultation with Alexina Kublu and Henry Kablalik who have a strong interest in preserving Inuit traditions. We based the project on three basic assumptions derived from the second law course we taught in Iqaluit (see Oosten *et al.*, eds 1999):

- Law did not exist in Inuit traditions as an abstract or autonomous body of knowledge that only needed to be recorded on tape to be available. Moral and social principles operating in the maintenance of social order varied in different contexts. Moreover, these principles varied in different areas and changed in the course of time. The elders themselves stressed the importance of the changes they experienced themselves since their childhood.
- The Inuit complex of norms, behaviours, beliefs and values is culturally structured but also very flexible and dynamic. Inuit assume that only useful or efficient traditions need to be transmitted to the next generations.
- An adequate understanding of Inuit practices and beliefs requires that principles of control by outside forces such as game, weather, ancestors and spirits be taken into account. In other words, there is a strong linkage between Inuit cosmology, values and social order.

On this basis, three main objectives were identified.

The first objective was to collect new data on shamanism and to explore more deeply the shamanic complex with the intention to grasp its implications for social control. In this respect we followed the suggestions from the former Nunavut Social Development Council (n.d.: 12), especially their first recommendation regarding spirituality, shamanism and customary law: "Traditional Inuit laws, practices and beliefs, including those pertaining to spirituality and shamanism, need to be researched, recorded and shared. Customary laws of Inuit are not known or respected by government." The second objective was to apply a comparative perspective in order to identify the structural patterns that emerge beyond family variations and cultural diversity, notably in regional variations. Therefore we intended to record the richness of Inuit traditions in their regional variations, avoiding discussions on their relative value and validity. The third objective was then to focus on the views of elders, even if we were aware that they could sometimes be controversial.

Elders are passing away so quickly that their knowledge obtained from personal experiences may be lost forever if it is not shared in time. Elders played a key role in the field of social control, in the shamanic context as well as within processes of Christianization before the introduction of a Western system of schools. Many elders share the views expressed by François Quassa (1995: 11), an elder from Igloodik (see also Inuit Cultural Institute n.d. and Imaruittuq n.d.):

I was never to repeat what I had heard from the people I had visited. We had all kinds of guidelines to follow as children, and even the adults were given lectures if they broke the rules. The elders gathered together with the rule breaker and confronted him about his actions. They never just talked amongst themselves, they took the rule breaker and let him face the consequences, a stiff lecture. When the elders gathered to deal with someone who had done wrong, they made sure the person acknowledged their suggestions. If that person did not show any fear in his face, or he could not answer in any way, it was understood that the person was not going to listen to their suggestions or advice, and he would still do wrong. If he showed embarrassment by blushing, and acknowledged what was being said to

him, then he was sure to be listening to what was being said to him, and that he had a chance to right whatever he had done wrong. The outcome was positive for this person, but one who did not show remorse was sure to repeat the same kind of behaviour. That is what I have heard. The elders were very helpful in this way. Today we have no such leaders. We are leaders only in our homes. Our leaders are the ones who are elected, with even younger people being our leaders nowadays. Elders are not respected now, what a pity! We respected our elders because they were very knowledgeable, and wiser, now we don't show respect for them.

Leadership has passed to a younger generation. Today, the elders often feel left out. They know they can still play an important part in modern Inuit society. There is a need for a synthesis of old and new conceptions of leadership that would take the role of the elders as well as of the new leaders into account.

A new setting

The workshop was held behind closed doors and outside of the community of Rankin Inlet from June 29 to July 6, 2000. It was built on the experience gained in various courses with elders at Nunavut Arctic College, organized by Susan Sammons and Alexina Kublu between 1997 and 2000⁹. Henry Kablalik, from Rankin Inlet, accepted to act as the co-ordinator of the project. Eight elders from different areas were invited: Ollie Itinnuaq, Felix Pisuk, Mariano Aupilaarjuk and Puyuat Taparti from Rankin Inlet, Peter Suvaksuiq from Arviat, Luke Nuliajuk from Gjoa Haven and Jose Angutinnurniq and Levi Illuituq from Kugaaruk¹⁰. The two anthropologists acted as facilitators and the co-ordinator of the project, as well as Alexina Kublu and Lizzie Itinnuaq, also played an important role. Alexina Kublu took care of the translation and interpretation. Her advice about the direction towards which discussions should be continued was often invaluable. Ollie's wife, Lizzie Itinnuaq took care of the cooking and the social setting in which food was served. She created an informal context of general well-being. It is in this atmosphere that even sensitive subjects could be discussed quite openly. A session was devoted to a demonstration of the technique of *qilaniq*, a very old and well preserved divination ritual, and the meeting was closed with drum dances. It soon appeared that according to the elders *angakkuuniq* should not be completely rejected but preserved as a tradition that could suggest solutions for contemporary problems.

The setting of the workshop was of great importance to its success or failure. It took place at Ollie Itinnuaq's camp. He spent much time, money and energy to prepare the workshop and rebuilt and adapted a cabin for that purpose. Sessions took place during the day as well as the evening. Elders appreciated the format very much. Some of them brought tapes and batteries to make sure that the meeting could take place the next day, and some elders taped the sessions themselves to preserve their own records. Collective activities such as games and fishing helped to maintain a good and relaxed atmosphere among the participants. The use of tapes and video was appreciated by the

⁹ See the various books published in two different series by the Nunavut Arctic College Oral Traditions Project: *Interviewing Inuit Elders* and *Inuit Perspectives on the XXth Century*.

¹⁰ See the first chapter of our forthcoming book for more details about their life stories and origins.

elders. Interference from outsiders was another matter. There came many visitors to the camp, and they were welcome between the sessions. Elders and facilitators agreed that during the sessions outside interference should be kept to a minimum, so that the concentration in the sessions should not be broken and the twelve participants would feel free to communicate their personal experiences. Not only did many visitors come to the camp, elders frequently went to the community to visit their relatives or communicate with their families.

The sensitivity of the topics selected generated some apprehension during the first days. The facilitators explained the main objectives of the workshop: preparing a report for the federal Department of Justice and recording the traditional knowledge of the elders so that it should become available to the younger generations. The facilitators emphasized that they wished to record the richness of the traditions, taking account of the great variety of traditions in Inuit culture. Initial uneasiness between elders as well as between elders and facilitators were soon overcome. All elders agreed on the objectives of the workshop and productive discussions involving all participants took place. All elders were willing to share personal experiences when they were convinced of their usefulness for younger Inuit generations.

An important feature that contributed considerably to the success of the workshop was that most of these elders were related to each other. This facilitated a relaxed context, which allowed the elders to discuss difficult issues relying quite deeply on their own personal experiences. Elders involved themselves wholeheartedly in these issues. One of them, Levi Illuituq, could only participate in the first half of the workshop as he was on his way to Yellowknife to be treated in the hospital. He was worried about his condition and after the divination technique of *qilaniq* had been discussed by the elders, he asked to have it performed on him. After a lengthy discussion, all elders agreed to perform the ritual for Levi. The demonstration showed how *qilaniq* still may be performed as it was frequently done in the past by shamans or non-shamans, and especially by women in several areas.

Descriptions of *qilaniq* go back as far as the 16th Century (see Frobisher's description of *qilaniq*¹¹) and it has been described in detail by many ethnographers. The ritual and the ensuing discussions clearly showed the strong commitment of the participants to the well-being and health of the one for whose benefit the ritual was performed. The elders still consider a health problem as a consequence of past actions. The technique of *qilaniq*, like so many traditional Inuit healing practices, implied a confession of wrongdoings. In these practices a person was dealt with collectively by all participants, helping the patient to bring out the wrongdoings that made him sick. The holistic and collective dynamics of the process contrast with Qallunaq ways of treating an illness as a private affair implying a confidential relationship between a doctor and his patient. Obviously this perception of the correction of individual wrongdoings as a collective responsibility of the community has major implications for the way social problems should be dealt with. The interaction between the community

11 "For when their heads do ake, they tye a great stone with a string unto a sticke, and with certaine prayers & wordes done to the sticke, they lifte up the stone from ground, which sometimes with all a mans force they cannot stir, & sometime againe they lifte as easily as a feather, and hope thereby with certaine ceremonious words to have ease and hope" (Best in Stefansson 1938: 127).

and a wrongdoer was traditionally based on a shared commitment to prevent the community as a whole to suffer from the consequences of an individual action. It required a public confession as well as a shared effort by all members of a community to re-integrate the wrongdoer into society.

Procedures adopted during the workshop

Special procedures were developed to ensure that various sensitive topics could be discussed in the workshop, in order to realize our main objectives. All procedures were discussed with the elders. The general purpose, well appreciated by the elders, was that all of them should be allowed all the time they needed to explain their points of view and give an account of their personal experiences with regard to a specific topic.

All interviews were taped and some sessions were recorded on video. At the beginning of the workshop, these procedures were discussed and approved by the elders. Elders were very much aware of the sensitivity of the issue of shamanism in the community and the fact that some Inuit are against it. In this respect, it appears that Catholics are more open to it than Anglicans and Pentecostals. In a few communities, women are also more reluctant towards it because of the many *tirigususiit* they had to follow in the past. During the workshop, the elders emphasized that their words should not be taken out of context nor generalized. They insisted on recording the *qilaniq* session on video tape as they thought it important that the correct way of performing the ritual was preserved for younger generations. In total, six hours of film were shot, including some of the sessions, the *qilaniq* performance and drum dancing.

Topics were first selected on the basis of shared interests and priorities. In this perspective, Henry Kablalik's help was indispensable. He prepared topics with elders as well as facilitators a few months in advance. Elders used this period to focus their minds on the topics and to think about them, while the facilitators prepared the topics on the basis of the existing literature and their experience in interviews and oral tradition courses at Nunavut Arctic College in Iqaluit. Whereas general topics were planned in advance, special topics were selected each day for the various sessions, on the basis of the flow of interviews, wishes of the participants, and issues raised during previous sessions.

For each session on a selected topic, at least two roundtables were proposed in which all elders could present in turn their experiences and views. After a few days, it was decided that the first speaker would change at every round. During the rounds, the participants confined themselves to short comments or inquiries for more information. After each round, more extensive discussions did take place in which all elders expressed their views.

During the session, the facilitators only asked questions to trigger the memories of the elders or to develop a few points of interest. The main goal was that the elders would discuss the issues themselves without too much interference. After a few

sessions, interventions by the facilitators were hardly necessary anymore. Alexina Kublu and Henry Kablalik contributed significantly to the discussions.

Views on angakkuuniq

The meeting was set up on the assumption that a search for solutions of social problems in contemporary Inuit communities requires an adequate understanding of Inuit knowledge and traditions, particularly *angakkuuniq*. Shamanism is a topic that has been suppressed in Inuit society for a long time. The elders strongly felt that it was part of the essence of Inuit tradition. The topic inspired them very much and they were in favour of exploring various aspects of shamanism further. A wide range of topics on shamanism was discussed in the workshop, such as initiation, *qaumaniq* (shamanic enlightenment), *tuurngait* (helping spirits), and *irinialiutiit* (powerful words).

All elders in the workshop had recollections of the practice of shamanism, but they emphasized that they had never been practising shamanism themselves and that they were Christians. They pointed out that shamanism had always played an important part in preserving social order. They stressed the need to retain what was useful from the shamanic traditions in modern society and were prepared to combine useful shamanic practices with their Christian beliefs. An elder stated: "Being an *angakkuq* can be helpful just as prayer can be helpful. Both have their usefulness. Both can work together well because both the *angakkuut* and the ministers go after good."

The elders were well aware that combining shamanic and Christian traditions is a controversial issue. They did not want to proceed too quickly and agreed that everything should be more deeply considered. An elder stated: "Maybe if some parts of shamanism were to come back, but I don't know how, I think it would be a tremendous help." — "We have to put shamanism and Christianity together if we are really to follow the Inuit way of life." — "We believe in both systems," added another elder. The elders also pointed out the inherent dangers of shamanism. In the past, there was also much fear because of shamans. The elders thought there was a lot of danger in shamanism. There used to be many rivalries and fights between shamans. "In those days, when two people got angry with each other, they hit each other back and forth," an elder said, and he added: "It is through prayer that people no longer have their fears."

The elders emphasized the necessity to broaden the notions of right, order, and law as these do not only concern human beings but also animals and spirits. Thus animals are said to have *tarniit*, shades or souls, just like human beings. They can retaliate. Hunters have to respect animals and not abuse them. In the perspective of the elders, maintenance of social order requires that relationships with animals and spirits are preserved and maintained in the correct way. This belief was essential to the shamanic traditions.

The elders agreed that people should stop considering shamanism as a diabolical or an objectionable practice, and acknowledge that it has been very useful and might still be useful. They explained that it had been very powerful in the past and could still

be used in desperate situations. Elders explained that while you can hide things in a confession to the priest, you can't do it to the *angakkuq*, because of his *qaumaniq* (enlightenment): "An *angakkuq* is capable of getting all wrongdoings out. That is very heavy, being an *angakkuq*." Thus, *angakkuut* played an important role in discerning the causes of wrongdoings and setting out remedies to deal with them.

Angakkuut might also play a part in preventing suicide. They disclosed bad things and thoughts and could heal and cure. The elders emphasized that the healing power of shamanism has to be acknowledged: "Being an *angakkuq* does not cause death if you are trying to help your fellow people. It can help you to think, to search for the right answer." They thought shamanism and Christianity are compatible. While the ministers try to heal the soul only, the *angakkuut* also heal the body.

The importance of shamanism for hunting was stressed. Shamans were important in preserving correct relations with game and could procure game. The elders thought *manilirijut* (providing game) was congruent with Christian prayer.

If Inuit would have recourse to shamanic traditions, they would have to do it selectively. Inuit should benefit from good traditions from the past (such as the divination technique of *qilaniq*), but bad things such as *ilisiinniq* (sorcery and witchcraft) or *isumaluqqittuq* (bad thoughts) should be rejected. In fact, many elders still practised *tirigusungniit* (abstaining from certain practices): no contact for the hunter with a menstruating woman; no eating of fish bones after a death, etc. These rules that were transmitted within families gave the elders a frame of reference in retaining the traditions of their parents or grandparents.

The beliefs and practices of shamanism reflect values with respect to people, animals, and the land. The importance of these values should be acknowledged. An elder stated: "Those of us who are older should rely on what we have known in the past." Another added: "Inuit should not be intimidated about talking the Inuit way of doing things." In this respect elders also share a responsibility: "Those of us who are elders are also to blame because we are not talking to our young people as much anymore." Elders do not just envisage a return to the past. They stressed the importance of keeping their religion: "When we have a belief, we don't change our faith, we hang on to it. We stay with it. I think we should tell our young people this."

Elders are very well aware of the complexity of the relation between Inuit traditions and the exigencies of modern society. They know younger generations face other problems than they did. They do not claim to possess the keys to solve the problems of modern society. An elder stated emphatically: "I don't have any solutions to having a good way of life." In the past, life seemed easier. The elders think that the prearranged marriages of the past provided a more stable marital life. When explaining these marriages an elder stated: "Our way was paved for us, but now it is completely different [...] the future will be very dangerous. Today, marriages may easily break up." Mixed marriages between Qallunaat and Inuit contribute to the complexity of modern life. An elder stated: "We are all in between the Qallunaq way and the Inuit

way," referring specifically to the numerous unions between Qallunaat and Inuit who do not have the same way of thinking.

Whatever the solutions would be, all elders agree that passing traditional knowledge on to the younger generation is of great importance. Shamanic traditions should be preserved so that they can contribute to the health and well-being of the communities.

Findings and recommendations

The elders emphasized their gratitude for the request to share their knowledge. They stressed the importance of a close relationship between the preservation of knowledge and the maintenance of social order in the community. The testimonies, the dynamics of the workshop itself and the performance of the *qilaniq* ritual were very instructive in this respect. Two important structural principles that came up in the workshop should be highlighted:

The importance of taking into account traditional ways of knowledge and experience pertaining to animals as well as spirits. Particularly the necessity to share experiences and to bring them out into the open should be emphasized. Inuit collective confession was as a key element in any healing process and the sharing of experiences is thought to be crucial to maintaining harmony and peace within the community.

The importance of the involvement of all the members of the community in the process of consultation. Social problems concern the whole community, not only individuals. Both the offender and the victim have to be listened to. In dealing with wrongdoers the community has to find ways to prevent itself from falling apart and to reintegrate wrongdoers. The first responsibility should be with the community. The court system is perceived by the Inuit as an external agent. Community and court system should have complementary responsibilities:

- a) To give more space to the Inuit views and community initiatives. Community Justice Committees should be strengthened and have more responsibilities in dealing with minor offences and domestic violence.
- b) In cases where the community can no longer deal with problems, and in cases of major offences, the court system has an essential role to play.

Elders feel that there is great continuity between the past and the present, tradition and modernity. Inuit have always known how to adapt to new contexts. They do not just want to go back to the traditions of the past, but they wish to apply Inuit traditions that have proven their value to solving modern problems. They wish to integrate the good and useful traditions from the past into modern institutions. More specifically, they want to keep in touch with their traditions in order to incorporate Inuit values into

the justice system to improve its effectiveness. The elders emphasized the importance of five specific recommendations:

1) Imprisonment, any form of isolation of an individual, or taking a person out of the community as a punishment has a negative impact on the community itself as well as on the individual, especially in a long term perspective. An elder stated: "No solution in incarcerating an offender." It has to be a last resort. Communication has to be developed and preserved as long as possible.

2) Instead of isolation of an individual, Inuit emphasize reconciliation, if necessary healing, and reintegration of that individual into the community. More programs should be developed to facilitate these processes. Youngsters should be involved in small groups in such meetings and be brought into contact with elders. "Young people should be brought out hunting instead of doing anything in the community. You can teach them and give them skills; when you talk to them without scolding them it is so much better for them." Young people should work with elders to help them begin to think more and keep harmony in the family.

3) Knowledge should be transferred from the elders to younger generations: "There are many things that our young people need to understand to know more about the Inuit way of life." "If we were to impart some of our knowledge, not all the *miligait*, it would really improve this disposition of the young people. Elders have not imparted their knowledge enough to the young people. If we started telling what we know to them, I think the number of offences would go down. We seem to have been hiding our knowledge. We have done that on the basis of our thinking that it was conflicting with religion."

4) Confession should play a part in preventing and healing wrongdoers. An elder explained the relation between mind, soul and body: "If my mind is good, my soul will be better. If my soul is more at ease, my body will be more relaxed." "Young people should confess more (*nakaksirniq*). It makes the body feel lighter, and so the *tarniq* feels better as well. The soul really feels the wrongdoings that your body has done; not disclosing wrongdoings affects you, it can make you sick and even affect future generations."

5) The elders emphasized the importance of counselling. They think that both the accused and the victim should be involved in the consultation process. Reconciliation and integration of the wrongdoer in the community, not punishment should be the main goals. "Now there are Justice Committees but this is a Qallunaaq way of doing things [...]. They don't rely on the Inuit way of running it." Elders would prefer that except for very serious offences, wrongdoers should not always have to go through the court system. "Some offences should not go through the court system" said another elder, "they should be dealt with by the community." In the past, in case of a serious incident, elders would get together and they would talk to the person so he or she could correct his / her behaviour.

The recommendations of the elders emphasize the close relationship between the community, game, spirits and land. The elders feel that they can play an important part in the process of preventing wrongdoing and integrating wrongdoers into the community again.

The elders are well aware of their limitations. They acknowledge that modern society demands new skills and different lifestyles. They are aware that their values are not necessarily those of the younger generations. In this perspective, the discussion of women's shelters was instructive. All elders opposed the establishment of such shelters as they thought them detrimental to family life. Yet, these shelters are part of modern life and they reflect new values and priorities in a changing modern society. The elders are also aware that social and economic factors outside their control are at the root of many social and economic problems in modern Inuit society. It is obvious to them that economic development and the creation of jobs are essential to solve many of the social problems of modern communities in Nunavut.

New strategies for dealing with social problems should not imply an uncritical application of traditional values to modern society. They require a dialogue between tradition and modernity, elders and younger generations. The development of new programs to prevent wrongdoings and integrate wrongdoers again into the communities will take much time. No immediate success can be expected. Communications between elders and younger generations will unavoidably create misunderstandings and disappointments. Only by working on these programs with patience and by building on earlier experiences can success be expected.

Acknowledging the values of Inuit culture and society will contribute to the building of a new pride for Inuit and a new self-confidence in communities, where these qualities are too often lacking and too many young people feel useless.

General recommendations

At the end of the workshop, four recommendations were collectively suggested for the future. Elders stated that these would be much stronger if more workshops like this would have been organized. We present these views *in extenso* here (see their Inuktitut version in Oosten and Laugrand's forthcoming book).

Recommendation 1

When the elders looked at the good of both Christianity and *angakkuuniq* they did not perceive any conflict but a common goal of helping people. In this perspective, knowledge of *angakkuuniq* should be passed on, not to replace Christianity but to be acknowledged for its value in the past. Specific knowledge that could be used in a bad way should not be made public but only be passed on to trustworthy persons in which elders have complete confidence.

Recommendation 2

Elders should take their responsibilities seriously and be more deeply involved in the passing on of Inuit knowledge and counselling of wrongdoers. It was emphasized that the court system constitutes a last resource and that the correction of wrongdoers should be as much as possible the responsibility of the community and especially the elders. Elders stress that both parties in a conflict should be counselled. Talking to an elder or going out on the land with him appear as crucial actions in this context. Instead of taking individuals out of the community by imprisonment, which will make their return more difficult in the future, Inuit elders prefer to concentrate on re-integrating wrongdoers immediately into the community. Therefore, land programs should be more developed as alternatives to jail. Wrongdoers should serve their sentences as much as possible not outside the community, but within it; not within the Court system but outside of it. Skilled elders are considered the best persons to help the wrongdoer deal with the consequences of his or her actions. Inuit elders emphasize advice, love, care, communication, counselling, reconciliation, and healing as central values contrasting with the dynamics of the present justice system which tends to the isolation of offenders, a procedure that is considered inappropriate for Inuit.

Recommendation 3

During the meeting, it was constantly emphasized that every participant should express his / her knowledge in order to assess the richness of regional variation. Variation has always been a striking feature of Inuit knowledge. Each family has its own traditions in this respect. Elders recommend that the importance of maintaining this variation is acknowledged and that we should not try to establish a body of Inuit knowledge thought to be acceptable in the same way to all Inuit communities.

Recommendation 4

During the meeting, Inuit knowledge was explored by elders of different communities. The resulting exchange of knowledge was thought to be extremely fruitful by the elders. Elders strongly recommend that meetings of this sort should recur more often in the near future. Further exploration of Inuit tradition and communications between elders of different areas are seen as essential to the application of Inuit traditions to the problems of modern society.

Conclusions

As an instrumental tool, the notion of *Inuit Qaujimaqatunqangit* borrows elements from the modern world, it is a product of Nunavut in that respect, but at the same time, it provides the best context to incorporate more deeply and openly the Inuit values and principles that are essential to restore Inuit pride and increase individual self-esteem.

The Rankin Inlet workshop was set up from an anthropological perspective to record the views of Inuit elders on shamanism and social control. In many respects, the results of our workshop confirm current trends and efforts to strengthen the

involvement of Inuit communities in the judicial processes, especially with respect to minor offences (see Nunavut Social Development Council 1996, 1998). Today, in many communities, programs are developed to facilitate the transfer of knowledge from elders to younger generations, to take young people out on hunting trips with experienced hunters, to teach traditional Inuit skills and techniques to young Inuit, and to involve communities in Justice Committees and in the re-integration of young offenders into society. During the workshop, there was general agreement that this is the right course.

But there also was considerable concern that the traditional knowledge of Inuit societies is rapidly eroding. New romantic ideas about Inuit culture of the past can easily emerge when the elders who experienced that culture are no longer there. *Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit* should provide a useful context to introduce more deeply Inuit principles and values in contemporary modernity. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that now that the great value of that tradition is acknowledged, it should be recorded with care, paying attention to its richness and variation. Similar workshops should be set up elsewhere. It would also be important to involve more women in them.

The nature of Inuit knowledge is neither esoteric nor hidden. The fact that the workshop was set up in a cabin on the land does not mean that there was any intent to hide what was going on. The format was chosen to create a context that favoured an open communication between the elders on difficult and controversial issues. At this stage, elders were not yet willing to discuss all aspects of shamanism. They agreed on sharing experiences but only those that could be useful for the next generations. They insisted that all the results of the workshop should be made public.

There is an urgent need to organize these workshops at short notice. Not only because of the urgency of the problems we are dealing with, but also because many knowledgeable elders who grew up in the pre-Christian era are passing away now. As Myriam Aglukkaq stated in a report of the Nunavut Social Development Council: "[...] These elders who know of the traditional life are passing away very quickly. One of my major regrets is losing my Elder Advisor last year. Right away I had no one else to turn to. With this in mind, for the Elders here and at home, let us record their knowledge now. Many of us do not know the wisdom and knowledge of these Elders" (Nunavut Social Development Council 1999).

Even though *angakkuuniq* is often considered as a memory of the past, now that Christianity is deeply rooted in the Arctic, it remains central to the Inuit cultural heritage. Many Inuit elders believe that it belongs to the traditions of the past that have to be carefully documented and passed on to younger generations. The Rankin Inlet workshop demonstrated how much knowledge elders still have. To record and preserve their knowledge for the future is a daunting task and a big challenge to Inuit as well as to anthropologists.

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