

Sivumulâvugut: (Re)Making Inuit Workplaces

By Patricia Johnson-Castle



Sivumulâvugut translation: "We are going forward."
Megan Dicker admiring the siku (sea ice) near Nain. Credit: Patricia Johnson-Castle.



Jane Glassco
Northern Fellowship

Fifth Cohort | Policy Recommendations



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National Indigenous People's Day Kayait Race in Nain. Left to right: redacted, Chaim Andersen, Patricia Johnson-Castle, Kim Oliver, Kristie Howell, Eva Obed, Joan Dicker.

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Patricia Johnson-Castle

Patricia Johnson-Castle is Nunatsiavut Inuk, as well as of German and English descent. Raised proud of her Inuit ancestors and family, she was born in St. John’s, Newfoundland, as a second-generation urban Inuk. Her father, Don, is English and Inuk; he was raised in Mount Pearl, Newfoundland, and Wabush, Labrador. His parents met in Tishialuk, Labrador, his mother's home village, where his father was building a Distant Early Warning Line radar tower. Julie, Patricia’s mother, is a Maritimer of German and British descent. Don and Julie are amazing parents and athletes.

Throughout school, Patricia was hungry to make the world a better place. Starting in high school she participated in Youth Parliament and debating; and volunteered with Amnesty International and Oxfam. At McGill University, Patricia studied African studies and philosophy, and did an MA in

anthropology from the University of Cape Town. An avid member of the Debating Unions at both universities, Patricia debated across the world. She served on the boards of both unions and of the Thethani Debating League which serves students in Cape Townian townships. Coaching debating is a joy for Patricia. She has coached in Canada, the USA, South Africa, Slovenia, Rwanda, and Cameroon.

Living in South Africa was a formative experience for Patricia as she learned the extent to which white privilege impacts and benefits her ability to navigate the world. She is indebted to the Open Stellenbosch Collective, from whom she learned an immense amount.

Patricia is the former Director of Policy and Planning for Nunatsiavut Government in Nain, Nunatsiavut. Living in her ancestral homeland and working for the government of her land claim allowed her to learn to Kayak, gather, and hunt from Nainmiut for which she is immensely grateful. Patricia survived a serious car accident in fall 2021 and is progressing through mobility aids as she relearns to walk. She is currently the co-chair of the Social Justice Co-Op of Newfoundland and Labrador and has been accepted to prestigious PhD programs in Canada and the US as of winter 2022.

Patricia has learned so much from her cohort and mentors as a Fellow through the Jane Glassco program. She applied to expand her Northern horizon and sharpen her policy skills, and is leaving the program with that and a new chosen family.

Introduction

When I joined Nunatsiavut Government (NG) in 2019, I felt overwhelmed and disoriented on a few fronts. I grew up as an urban Inuk in St. John's, Newfoundland. When I moved to Nain, it would be my first time ever living in a rural area. My first time surrounded by Inuit. I was hired into a management position, so my first time being a manager, too. I was supervising a man, slightly older than me, and with a completely different set of expertise to me. He was an engineer, I had a background in social science. I was excited but also intimidated to be at NG, a government created to represent the interests of Labrador Inuit like me and my family.

It was exciting to be in a place where being Inuk was natural and not something foreign or exotic. In previous work I had done, it was sometimes exhausting to have to explain to non-Indigenous audiences ideas or concepts that were obvious to me as an Inuk. By contrast, at the NG, I got a week of "Hunting, Fishing, and Gathering" (HFG) leave in addition to my other time off. Having HFG leave is an example of a difference between working for the NG and jobs I had in southern Canada. However, there also were some similarities between my experiences with the NG and in the south.

It was only three months after I finished my probation period that the COVID-19 pandemic was announced. I started in a very structured office environment where there was an expectation to be in the office from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm, have lunch from noon until 1:00 pm and then return to the office until 4:30 pm, whereas when I worked in Montreal I was allowed to choose the time of my own lunch. COVID-19 meant suddenly NG employees who were previously not allowed to work from home for safety reasons had to work from home. There were conversations about how COVID-19 was going to change the nature of work as suddenly everyone who could work from home had to do so.¹ During the pandemic some employers have called employees back to the office while others have shifted to more hybrid models.² As the pandemic continues, conversations continue about to what extent workers want to return to the office.³

This is where my research hopes to intervene: in the workplace. What makes for a healthy workplace in an Inuit context; what are the challenges for achieving that sort of vision; and can they be overcome? I am particularly interested in this discussion as it relates to Inuit women, who carry so much of Inuit society and, yet, in many cases also face discrimination in the workplace. When I was considering this research, I began reading works by the African-American feminist and abolitionist Angela Davis. She writes:

¹Christina Pazzanese, *How COVID experiences will reshape the workplace* (Cambridge: Harvard Gazette, 2021). Published Feb. 9, 2021, accessed March 11, 2022 <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2021/02/how-covid-experiences-will-reshape-the-workplace/>

²Alex Christian, "Why a wide-scale return to the office is a myth" (British Broadcasting Corporation). Published Jan. 14, 2022, accessed March 11, 2022 <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20220113-why-a-wide-scale-return-to-the-office-is-a-myth>

³Brian O'Connor, "The workers pushing back on the return to the office" (British Broadcasting Corporation). Published June 22, 2021, accessed March 11, 2022.

Black women have had to develop a larger vision of our society than perhaps any other group. They have had to understand white men, white women, and black men. And they have had to understand themselves. When black women win victories, it is a boost for virtually every segment of society.⁴

While Davis is speaking about American society, her comments made me wonder about to what extent the same was true for Inuit women. Inuit women also need to understand Inuit men, white men, white women, and themselves. And if given a chance, our empowerment also offers “a boost for virtually every segment of society.”⁵

In light of this, and seeking to answer the questions above, I interviewed 13 Inuit women from the four regions of Inuit Nunangat⁶ who all manage other staff in organizations created to serve Inuit. What I found in some ways mirrored my own experiences, and in other ways did not. Ultimately, I discovered that all but one interviewee felt that they had been discriminated against during their career, and that many noticed the conflict between Inuit ways of being and the workplace. The incorporation of Inuit culture into Inuit workplaces is governed by a dynamic that

presumes to fit Inuit culture into institutions that are structured in the shape of Western corporate structures. Inuit culture is very focused on family and taking care of one another, with a significant role for Inuit women. This often clashes with the rigidity of institutional human resource policies. The result is discrimination and even assimilation.

This paper is organized in three broad sections. The first is contextual, laying out the reality of colonialism in Inuit Nunangat and its consequences, including a focus on the evolution of work and how Inuit are represented in the contemporary workplace. The second section focuses more specifically on the experiences of Inuit women in the workplace and their experiences with sexism, racism and ageism. Finally, I bring these sections together and conclude with policy recommendations for Inuit organizations and governments that might allow Inuit women to fully craft their “larger vision” for Inuit.

⁴The Culture, “20 Quotes from Angela Davis That Inspire Us to Keep Up the Fight,” *The Culture*, accessed 23 Feb. 2022, <http://theculture.forharriet.com/2016/01/20-quotes-from-angela-davis-that.html>

⁵The Culture.

⁶I have purposefully chosen not to italicize Inuktitut words throughout this paper. While some style guides will recommend italicizing “foreign” words, there is power in who gets to decide what is foreign. For further reading on this topic see: Khairani Barokka, “The Case Against Italicizing “Foreign” Words”. *Catapult*. Published Feb. 11, 2020, accessed March 11, 2022. <https://catapult.co/stories/column-the-case-against-italicizing-foreign-words-khairani-barokka>

Methodology

I interviewed 13 Inuit women from the four regions of Inuit Nunangat who manage other staff. Inuit Nunangat is a word that refers to the Inuit homelands in Canada, namely Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Nunavut and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. I chose to interview women from across Inuit Nunangat for two reasons: first, while we are all Inuit and there are similarities, such as shared culture and related languages, there are important regional nuances. My aim is to draw out the common experiences across Inuit Nunangat to spark conversations across the regions, as well as within them, on this topic.

Furthermore, including all these regions makes it easier realistically to be able to provide anonymity to the participants in my study. Individually, each region is small enough for individuals to possibly be identified through process of elimination; there are not many Inuit women managers. But across Inuit Nunangat, there is a large enough number of possible interviewees that those selected can remain anonymous. I will not be breaking down the proportion of my interviews by region to further protect the anonymity of my interviewees.

Anonymization was important because many (though not all) fear reprisal in their workplaces. People need their work to support themselves and their families. It is a very sensitive area of life. Almost all of the interviewees had experienced toxic workplaces during their careers

or had toxic experiences in their workplaces, including experiencing sexism and discrimination. This climate of fear is not exclusive to working in a land claim organization. Specifically, in the context of sexual harassment, research by Pauktuutit⁷ found that management seeming unapproachable and fear of losing their job were both reasons women cited for choosing to not report incidents of sexual harassment in mining sites.

I will refer to interviewees by “Interviewee” and a randomly chosen number from 1 to 13. The numbers do not reflect the order the women were interviewed in. Women were approached through a snowballing method, where interviewees were selected based on referrals from already chosen participants. When I finished an interview, I asked the interviewee to reach out to other women who are managers or are in charge of staff.

Each interviewee was asked a common set of questions, adjusted somewhat to fit specific contexts but thematically remaining the same. This is a structured interview research approach. That said, there is a semi-structured element to the interviews, as interviewees answered the questions in their own unique ways and added additional thoughts or took the interviews in new directions. The interview questions are included in Appendix A. The interviews were analyzed and transcribed.

⁷Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, *Addressing Inuit Women’s Economic Security and Prosperity in the Resource Extraction Industry* (Ottawa, ON: Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2021), accessed Feb. 23, 2021, <https://www.pauktuutit.ca/project/addressing-inuit-womens-economic-security-and-prosperity-in-the-resource-extraction-industry/>.



Sunset in Hopedale. Credit: Patricia Johnson-Castle.

Part I: Context, Colonialism, and Consequence

Colonialism in Inuit Nunangat

Inuit moved between homesteads where seasonal resources were most plentiful. This lifestyle shaped Inuit culture and values. That changed with the arrival of settlers. Timing of colonial contact varied across the Arctic. There were some differences in approach but, generally, in exchange for allowing newcomers to settle, Inuit were to be provided housing, food, and other basic needs. Instead, as Qallunaat⁸ evolved into governments with a desire for centralization, Inuit were forced to relocate to permanent villages. The killing of sled dogs by government agents such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) took agency away

from Inuit to be able to move and harvest.⁹ Furthermore, colonial government officials did not give Inuit input into where settlements were made, and often little to no choice into where they were settled. Beyond that, there were many extreme relocations such as to the High Arctic from Nunavik and Nunavut or from Hebron to communities further south in Nunatsiavut.

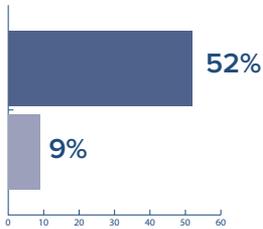
Promises that the government would provide basic services were not honoured. Inuit in Inuit Nunangat live in disproportionately overcrowded homes, as well as struggling with access to basic human rights like food, education and health care services. Inuit live on average 10 years less than non-Indigenous Canadians do. Many essential services are far away from Inuit communities.

⁸“Qallunaat” is the Inuktitut term for white people/settlers; in Nunatsiavut it is “Kallunâk.”

⁹Qikiqtani Inuit Association. *QTC Final Report: Achieving saimaqatigiingniq*. (Iqaluit: Qikiqtani Inuit Association, 2010), 21. <https://assembly.nu.ca/library/Edocs/2010/001453-e.pdf>

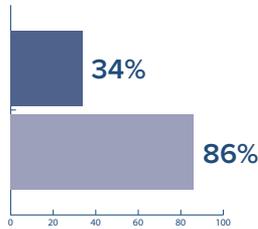
Inequalities Between Inuit in Inuit Nunangat and Non-Indigenous Canadians

Living in crowded homes



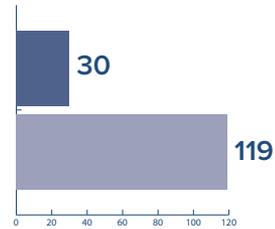
- 52% of Inuit in Inuit Nunangat live in crowded homes¹
- 9% of all Canadians live in crowded homes¹

Earned a high school diploma



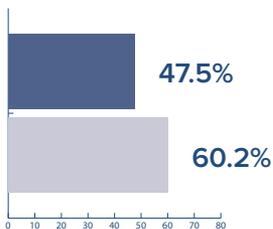
- 34% of Inuit aged 25 to 64 in Inuit Nunangat have earned a high school diploma¹
- 86% of all Canadians aged 25 to 64 have earned a high school diploma¹

Number of physicians



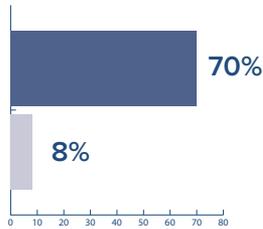
- The number of physicians per 100,000 population in Nunavut⁴
- The number of physicians per 100,000 population in Urban Health Authorities⁴

Employment



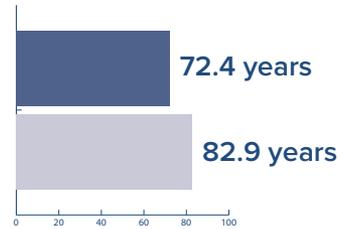
- 47.5% of Inuit in Inuit Nunangat are employed¹
- 60.2% of all Canadian are employed¹

Food insecurity



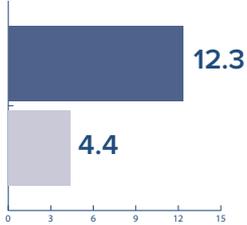
- 70% of Inuit households in Nunavut are food insecure²
- 8% of all households in Canada are food insecure³

Life expectancy



- 72.4 years The projected life expectancy for Inuit in Canada⁴
- 82.9 years The projected life expectancy for non-Indigenous people in Canada⁵

Infant mortality



- 12.3 years The infant mortality rate per 1,000 for Inuit infants in Canada⁶
- 4.4 years The non-Indigenous infant mortality rate per 1,000⁶

Median income



- \$23,485 The median before tax individual income for Inuit in Inuit Nunangat⁷
- \$92,011 The median before tax individual income for non-Indigenous people in Inuit Nunangat⁷

¹Should not be compared with crowding data for previous years. Based on the suitability definition (whether the dwelling has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of the household). The previous figure was based on the number of persons per room definition.

²Should not be compared to previous life expectancy data. The figure is a national 2017 projection of life expectancy for Inuit. Previous figures were for 2004-2008 for all residents of Inuit Nunangat, including non-Inuit.

³Statistics Canada, 2016 Census. (crowded homes: 98-400-X2016163; high school diploma 98-400-X2016265; income: unpublished custom table provided to ITK; employment: 98-400-X2016266).

⁴Grace M. Egeland, *Inuit Health Survey 2007-2008: Nunavut* (Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, QC: Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment, May 2010), 12.

⁵Shirin Roshanafshar and Emma Hawkins. *Health at a Glance: Food Insecurity in Canada* (Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, 25 March 2015).

⁶Canadian Institute for Health Information, *Supply, Distribution and Migration of Physicians in Canada*, 2014 (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Institute for Health Information, Sept. 2015).

⁷Custom table based on Statistics Canada's *Projections of the Aboriginal Population and Households in Canada, 2011 to 2036*.

⁸Sheppard et al 2017. "Birth outcomes among First Nations, Inuit and Metis populations." *Health Reports* Vol. 28. No. 11.

Source: *Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, National Inuit Strategy on Research (Ottawa: ITK, 2018), 10.*

The vast majority of Inuit either attended a residential school or had a parent or grandparent attend residential school. As is illustrated in the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, residential schools were a form of cultural genocide.¹⁰ In addition to the psychological abuse experienced by children, residential schools had high rates of physical and sexual abuse. Only recently have Inuit had input into curriculums, but even that has had limitations. Paul Berger notes:

The schools continue to assimilate students to EuroCanadian culture despite some important changes since their inception. These changes include the hiring of many Inuit teachers at the primary and junior levels, the use of Inuktitut in the early grades, and the development of new curriculum. The assimilation of Inuit students continues because the schools remain dominated by southern Canadian curriculum, resources, and teaching methods, and because the norms and values of Qallunaat¹¹ culture are embodied in both the structure of Western schooling and the ways of being of the Qallunaat teachers, who still comprise the majority of teachers in Nunavut.¹²

Today, attending higher education means leaving to go to southern towns or cities. I cannot overstate the level of culture shock experienced by many Inuit who move south for school or otherwise. As one Interviewee put it:

It's hard for us to get educated. I'm sure if we could go to school [here], like the University of [X], more people [here] would have university degrees, right? It's so traumatizing to leave [home] when you go to school. It really is. I was traumatized when I went to school. I had a sister in [Y] and I lived with her but holy shit. It's traumatizing. [...] if I had to go to a university in [here], I probably would have had several degrees. (Interviewee 10)

Colonialism continues to echo through Inuit life today. In Nunavut, the Social Development Council described the consequences of colonialism as “social havoc...intense...change...abysmal levels of education” and Berger notes that Qallunaat schools share responsibility for cultural disruption and its consequences.¹³ For many Inuit government institutions, schools, and workplaces continue to be sites of alienation. This sense was echoed by Interviewee 4:

¹⁰Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future: Summary of Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's UP, 2015), 54-55.

¹¹As mentioned earlier, “Qallunaat” is the Inuktitut term for white people. Inuktitut is the umbrella name for languages spoken by Inuit. Qallunaat is spelt Kallunâk in Nunatsiavut; it is sometimes referred to as danaluk in the Inuvialuit Regional Settlement Area.

¹²Paul Berger, “Some Thoughts on Qallunaat Teacher Caring in Nunavut,” *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 4, no. 2 (2007), 2.

¹³Paul Berger, 2

We follow these norms that are so, so difficult, and that's why Indigenous people are not as successful as they could be. It's because they always have to follow these colonialistic norms that fit other people, or make other people successful. Because that's in their genetic makeup somehow of 1,000 years of doing things a certain way. But we also have to try fitting their norm instead of them fitting in ours. (Interviewee 4)

Relocations and education are two aspects of colonialism that are tied directly to another: resource extraction. There is alienation here, too, but even more insidious aspects of colonialism. Research done on women's experiences in the mining industry found that many women did not know sexual harassment policies existed or that mental health services were available to help victims. Very few women knew if territorial or provincial support services were available to them in the workplace.¹⁴ There was also a culture of fear that reporting sexual harassment or assault on the work could result in job loss.¹⁵ The women in the mining industry who were surveyed in the study recommended offering more support to Inuit women specifically by offering more culturally relevant supports based in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.¹⁶

¹⁴Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 20.

¹⁵Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 17.

¹⁶Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit means all the extensive knowledge and experience passed from generation to generation, it is often referred to as Inuit traditional knowledge.

¹⁷Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 21.

They wanted supports offered in Inuktitut for mental health and childcare on the mine sites, as well as expanding supports to exist outside the mine site, and providing additional training programs to staff not just for their specific scope of work but also for self-esteem and self-defence.¹⁷

If women are asking for these services it is because they do not already exist. Workplaces (including government institutions and private companies) as well as services provided in Inuit Nunangat are set up according to the dominant Qallunaat culture. There are often aspects of Inuit culture interspersed to varying degrees. The above recommendations represent services that would make the workplace less alienating to Inuit women and more inclusive of Inuit culture. Even then, as one interviewee put it, it may not be enough:

[... h]aving institutions and I don't want to call [my employer an] institutions, but capitalism, workspace, you know, workplaces that all. It's an institution. By default, you're not gonna get all the things you wanted from an Inuit lifestyle in an institutional setting. (Interviewee 6)

Land Claims and Employment in Inuit Nunangat

The consequences of colonialism are multifaceted and complex. In a relatively short period of time, the idea of “work” has changed dramatically from hunting and trapping to an hourly wage. Most Inuit try to participate in both. The clash between providing for oneself on the land and the rigidity of the workplace, as well as the gaps in training for Inuit, make it exceedingly difficult for Inuit to participate both in the cash economy and our traditional lifestyle. If the weather is good for subsistence fishing, going fishing means losing hourly wages, or losing one’s job entirely. In spite of the history of colonialism and its consequences today, Inuit women are a part of the contemporary workforce, and in some cases, in senior positions. However, for Inuit women managers and supervisors to exist, there first need to be Inuit women working in these organizations. Unstaffed positions in Inuit organizations are often filled by non-Inuit. The number of non-Inuit workers in Inuit Nunangat is significant.

Non-Inuit workers either moved north to work or take up fly-in/fly-out work where they live in the south and fly north for work. It is difficult to know how many people are fly-in/fly-out as this statistic is not generally updated by Statistics Canada, and is sometimes not made public. The Northwest Territories (NWT) published an annual benefits report that found 55% of

workers in mining were flown-in from elsewhere.¹⁸ Researcher Barbara Niels found that more than one in five workers in public administration in Nunavut had their residence in another province or territory.¹⁹

There are consequences to our regions for the number of transient workers that are employed. Using transient non-Inuit workers to fill gaps in our regions means it is very easy to keep using Western norms and standards, because it means less adaptation for transient or non-Inuit workers. If there was more emphasis placed on understanding Inuit culture in Inuit workplaces, then Inuit would be more qualified for work. Changing work environments to be more Inuit-centred, and creating on-the-job training for Inuit would both have growing pains but might ultimately allow us to break the cycle of reliance on transient workers.

The table on the next page outlines the proportion of non-Indigenous people living in the respective territories of Inuit Nunangat. Inuvialuit and Nunavut have the highest proportions of non-Inuit living in their regions.

¹⁸John Last, “Governments lack key data on fly-in workers. Experts say it’s putting them at risk,” *CBC News/North*, posted: March 4, 2021, accessed Feb. 23, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/fly-in-workers-arctic-1.5930216>.

¹⁹John Last.

Name of Region	Date of Treaty/ Land Claim	Population of Inuit	Population of non-Aboriginal identity
Nunavut	1999	30,140	5,030 ²⁰
Nunavik	1975	11,800	1,130 ²¹
Inuvialuit	1984	3,110	1,205 ²²
Nunatsiavut	2005	2,560	205 ²³

The process of creating treaties with Canada means the organizations representing Inuit have had to be understood by the Canadian government, and so these organizations are modeled after the federal government. Thus, settlers with experience in other civil services or with university education are seen as relevant for working in Indigenous self-governments. These settlers impact how administration happens. Glen Clouthard observed when the administration of the NWT was transferred from Ottawa to Yellowknife, the number of employees at the Government of NWT grew from 75 to 2,845, larger than the number of federal employees in the region. In just a five-year period, the population grew 20% from the increased northern bureaucracy created through this

²⁰Statistics Canada, "Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census: Nunavut," *Statistics Canada*, last modified April 10, 2019, accessed Feb. 24, 2022 <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-PR-Eng.cfm?TOPIC=9&LANG=Eng&GK=PR&GC=62>.

²¹Statistics Canada, "Aboriginal Population Profile, 2016 Census: Nunavik [Inuit region], Quebec," *Statistics Canada*, last modified June 19, 2019, accessed Feb. 24, 2022 https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/abpopprof/details/pagecfm?Lang=E&Geo1=AB&Code1=2016C1005084&Data=Count&SearchText=Nunavik&SearchType=Begins&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=2016C1005084&SEX_ID=1&AGE_ID=1&RESGEO_ID=1

²²Statistics Canada, "Aboriginal Population Profile, 2016 Census: Inuvialuit region [Inuit region], NWT," *Statistics Canada*, last modified June 19, 2019, accessed Feb. 24, 2022 https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/abpopprof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=AB&Code1=2016C1005086&Data=Count&SearchText=Inuvialuit%20region&SearchType=Begins&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=2016C1005086&SEX_ID=1&AGE_ID=1&RESGEO_ID=1.

²³Statistics Canada, "Aboriginal Population Profile, 2016 Census: Nunatsiavut [Inuit region], Newfoundland and Labrador," *Statistics Canada*, last modified June 19, 2019, accessed Feb. 24, 2022, https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/abpopprof/details/pagecfm?Lang=E&Geo1=AB&Code1=2016C1005083&Data=Count&SearchText=Nunatsiavut&SearchType=Begins&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=2016C1005083&SEX_ID=1&AGE_ID=1&RESGEO_ID=1.

transfer of power.²⁴ Clouthard links the increase in settler residents in NWT with the lobbying in the federal government to pursue non-renewable resource development as economic development.

This non-renewable resource development leads to discontent and alienation among Indigenous peoples and communities. It demonstrates the way that the presence of settlers can have an impact on the goals of a region. In Northern regions, there are similar trends in the workforce relating to resource development or otherwise, which could indicate that there is value in investigating if the conclusions of my research are applicable in other Northern work environments. Additionally, it demonstrates that the wealth transfer from the north to southern Canada does not only occur through jobs in Northern governments.

Regional Analysis

Each region of Inuit Nunangat has its own nuances in terms of governance, as each land claim agreement created different organizations and structures, each of which have different legislative powers and responsibilities. We share culture and language across our homeland, as well as the fact that government and resource extraction are the two largest industries in our economies. The different histories and geographies of our regions as well as the salaries and benefits offered influence the extent to which there is employment of non-Inuit in our governments. This section breaks down some of the regional nuances through employment statistics to demonstrate the room for growth in terms of attracting, promoting, and retaining Inuit employees by Inuit organizations.

Nunavut

Getting Inuit working for governments was explicitly considered during the negotiation of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement (NLCA), the agreement which created the Government of Nunavut (GN) and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI). Article 23 in the NLCA was to “increase Inuit participation in government employment in the Nunavut Settlement Area to a representative level”.²⁵ This means that approximately 85% of GN employees should be Inuit because Inuit make up 85% the population of Nunavut.

²⁴Glen Clouthard, *Red Skins, White Masks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 56.

²⁵Nunavut, Department of Human Resources, “Inuit Employment,” *Nunavut Department of Human Resources*, accessed Feb. 22, 2022, <https://www.gov.nu.ca/human-resources/information/inuit-employment>.

Of course, that has not materialized. The education gap between Inuit and non-Inuit is often cited as the reason why Inuit do not make up a larger part of the work force in Nunavut. For example, in the *Nunavut Human Resource Strategy 2014-2018*:

Inuit are well-represented in the administrative support and paraprofessional occupations but are underrepresented in the professional and management occupations that require more formal education and training.²⁶

Inuit employment is lowest in professional and senior management positions. We are investing in new programs to bring more qualified beneficiaries into the GN early in their careers and to develop them into skilled public administrators. In addition, we are enhancing programs to develop the competencies of Inuit leaders in the public service. We will monitor our progress and review Inuit employment programs and initiatives on a cyclical basis to ensure that they are yielding the expected outcomes.²⁷

To better explain the state of affairs and also measure to what extent the GN is meeting the goal set out in Article 23, there needs to be information on the labour force. Thus:

... the GN with the participation of the Nunavut Implementation Training Committee (NITC) shall undertake a detailed analysis of the labour force of the Nunavut Settlement Area to determine the availability, interest and level of preparedness of Inuit for government employment. The purpose of the analysis is to assess the existing skill level and degree of formal qualification among the Inuit labour force and to assist in formulating Inuit employment plans and pre-employment training.²⁸

²⁶Nunavut, *Human Resource Strategy 2014-2018* (Iqaluit, NU: Government of Nunavut, 2014), 7. <https://assembly.nu.ca/library/GNedocs/2014/001400-e.pdf>

²⁷Nunavut, *Human Resource Strategy 2014-2018*, 10.

²⁸Nunavut, Department of Human Resources, "Inuit Employment."

Increasing and maintaining the employment of Inuit in GN and NTI is the responsibility of the departments within each organization. With this information, GN and NTI can create pre-employment training plans to increase the preparedness of Inuit to have the right training to enter the workforce. Based on existing data, there has been an 8% increase in the number of Inuit employed by GN in the last 20 years; the proportion of Inuit in each category has remained relatively the same. As of 2019, the percentage of Inuit in each category was:

Inuit employed by GN	%
Executive	40%
Senior management	17%
Middle management	27%
Professional	29%
Paraprofessional	62%
Administrative	85% ²⁹

After 20 years of “inaction,” NTI launched arbitration to ensure the implementation of Article 23. NTI is working with the governments of Canada and Nunavut on the Nunavut Implementation Panel towards the implementation of Article 23.³⁰ Two decades is a significant amount of time to make progress in the education gap, but there are still barriers facing Inuit being hired and retained by GN.

²⁹Nunavut, Department of Human Resources, "Toward a Representative Public Service: Statistics of Public Service within the GN as of Sept. 30, 2019" (Iqaluit, NU: Government of Nunavut, 2019).

³⁰Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., Annual Report 2018-2019 (Iqaluit, NU: Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., 2019), 6. <https://www.tunngavik.com/publications/nti-annual-report-2018-2019/>

³¹Kativik, *Annual Report 2018* (Kuuujuaq, QC: Kativik Regional Government, 2018) 32.

³²Kativik, *Annual Report 2005* (Kuuujuaq, QC: Kativik Regional Government, 2005), 4.

³³Kativik, *Annual Report 2005*, 10.

³⁴Makivik Corp., *Annual Report 2018-2019* (Kuuujuaq, QC: Makivik Corp., 2019), 38.

³⁵Inuvialuit Regional Corp., *Inuvialuit Corporate Group Update 2020-2021*, 26, Issue 1, 19.

Nunavik

The Kativik Regional Government (KRG) and Makivik Corporation (Makivik) are organizations created by the settlement of the James Bay Agreement, the modern treaty which includes Inuit from Nunavik. In 2018, the KRG departments comprise 324 staff (employees and managers), including 227 Inuit representing 70% of the total workforce.³¹ In 2012, the Inuit workforce was down at 63%³² and at 71% in 2005.³³ However, while KRG makes the geographic distribution of their workforce public, they do not share the breakdown of the categories of employment of Inuit in the organization (management, professional, administrative, etc.).

63% of employees who work directly for Makivik Corporation are beneficiaries.³⁴ These statistics were not included in their annual reports before the 2017-2018 annual report. Their annual reports before then tracked the number of Inuit employed in economic ventures by Makivik, although the overall statistics are not displayed together.

Inuvialuit Settlement Region

At the Inuvialuit Corporate Group (ICG), 78% of staff are Inuit overall, and 60% of chairs, directors, senior managers, managers or supervisors are Inuit.³⁵



Inuit (two Inuit) women prepare seal for the community freezer in Nain. Credit: Patricia Johnson-Castle.

Nunatsiavut

Nunatsiavut Government (NG) does not share public information about their staff demographics.

Conclusion

Though information is not available for all regions, we can see that between 20 and 40 per cent of personnel in Inuit organizations are non-Inuit. Interviewee 2 observed that settlers feel comfortable and powerful in Inuit governments, “Those power dynamics between Inuit and non-Inuit in that office and then seeing them at play here today is that a lot of it comes from a place of power and security around that power.” From her experience, Interviewee 2 said when there are possibilities of exploring how to integrate Inuit, “There's a tendency to sort of shut it down, rather than explore it.”

Colonialism is an ongoing experience for Inuit as we deal with the intergenerational trauma of permanent settlement, residential schools, and the dog slaughter, among other events. While all the regions of Inuit Nunangat now have settled land claims, we are struggling to be empowered within our own governments and institutions, given that the lowest percentage of Inuit employment is in senior management positions. The women interviewed for this project are some of the exceptions, who have been appointed as managers and senior managers in our organizations. Their experiences confirm there is still much work to do for us to make our land claim organizations work for us.



Jane Shiwak teaching Patricia to sew slippers in Rigolet. Credit: Patricia Johnson-Castle.

Part II: Voices of Inuit Women in the Workforce

From a general overview of Inuit experiences with work, this section is more specific, and revolves around the experiences of the interviewees for this paper. The first part gives an overview of the larger themes and the frequency of their mention by interviewees. The second part analyzes the themes from the frequency tables.

Interview Themes

As themes arose during the interview process, I made note of them. There were five overarching themes that appeared frequently:

- **Education:** this theme was meant to capture “education” both in the sense of formal Western education, as well as in the need to be educated about how the Western world works;
- **Types of discrimination:** in addition to racism, sexism, and ageism, “difficulty working with non-Inuit” was grouped in this category, as for Inuit to experience racism it has to be come from non-Inuit. Lateral violence is discrimination or prejudice from people coming from a similar background to the person facing the discrimination. Tokenism is a different iteration of discrimination where someone is hired based on an immutable characteristic such as gender or ethnicity. Violence against women is behaviour rooted in sexism.

- **Workplace policies and approaches:**

Inuit women managers almost all explicitly mentioned the need for compassion when working with their staff. Human resources policies such as not having enough medical leave, or policies being inflexible for the needs of staff were common complaints made by interviewees. Inuit women managers saw a tension between how Inuit would like to help their staff compared to how policy has them deal with their staff.

- **Aspects of Inuit Culture in the Workplace:**

this category captures how Inuit culture is incorporated into workplaces: whether interviewees wished they were included, or whether there was an effort to include them. Regardless of the extent to which aspects of Inuit culture have been successfully integrated into the workplace, their mention signals their importance to the interviewees.

- **Miscellaneous:** themes that did not fit into other categories

Table 1: Education	
Sub-Themes	Frequency (out of 13)
Interviewee completed university degree(s)	5
Interviewee dropped out of college/university	3
Interviewee did not attend college/university	3
Unknown/did not reference level of education	2
Perceived need to increase training and mentorship for staff	6
Perceived need to be educated in colonial cultural norms	4

Table 2: Types of Discrimination	
Sub-Themes	Frequency (out of 13)
Racism	5
Sexism	3
Difficulty working with non-Inuit	3
Ageism	2
“Indirect” Racism (“not to my face”/“maybe not racism”)	5
Lateral violence	4
Tokenism	3
Violence against women*	1

*Though this theme was only brought up once by an interviewee, it was included due to its importance

Table 3: Workplace policies and approaches	
Themes	Frequency (out of 13)
Being compassionate with staff	10
Tension between Inuit culture and colonial work culture	7
Issues with human resource policies/leave policies	6
Trusting employees in the workplace	3

Themes	Frequency (out of 13)
Language in the workplace	13
Time for hunting and being on the land	7
Food sharing	4
Hunting and gathering days/IQ days	4
Kullik lighting	2
Elder in residence	2
Inuit art work	2
Sewing workshop	1
Drum dancing/other Inuit dancing	2

Themes	Frequency (out of 13)
Personal choices and responsibilities	4
Adaptability of Inuit	3
Concerns for people of other genders	4

The Workplace as a Colonial Site: Becoming Managers and Facing Discrimination

As noted above (“Colonialism in Inuit Nunangat”), schools, government institutions and workplaces continue to be sites of alienation for many Inuit. This section analyses how Inuit women become managers (which is heavily shaped by their access to education) and the experiences of discrimination they face in the workplace. The Inuit women who participated in my research are working in these environments which can be disempowering to others from our same culture. One interviewee pointed out that there are contexts where Inuit can contribute well in an institution:

[The workplace, i]t’s an institution, so you know you’re going into a place that operates in a specific way and you’re not familiar with it. I’ve seen Inuit, traditionally older Inuit, be strong when they know that they’re there for a specific reason, to provide their knowledge on a particular subject, and they thrive in that. If they know that that is all they need to do, then they feel confidence in that. (Interviewee 9)

However, the converse of this is without the guidance or structure of giving knowledge on a particular subject, traditionally older Inuit do not always feel strong or empowered in workplaces. Furthermore, being a manager means that there are additional expectations in terms of enforcing human resource policies of the institution, for example.

The two main narratives I heard about how Inuit women end up as managers were split along diverging lines of education. Interviewees who attended colonial institutions of higher education were placed in management at an accelerated pace, often while they were younger than the employees they were managing (something I had my own experiences with). Out of 13 participants, five had this experience. Women who were put in management positions in their 20s and 30s spoke about experiencing ageism from colleagues who dismissed their contributions or didn't take them as seriously as those who were older than them. All five participants who were on the accelerated track of management shared the experience of ageism. In many instances, this is in addition to experiencing sexism and racism from colleagues.

Interviewee 13 was promoted to be a director and worked to gain the respect of the employees she was supervising. Most came around, except for one person who was an older man: "he couldn't get over the fact that I was younger than him, a woman managing him and telling him what to do." Similarly, Interviewee 9 found that when she was working with staff from other organizations, including officials such as

technical staff, managers, and supervisors in government, that she struggled to feel valued and heard:

I don't know if it was because they didn't value working with Inuit organization, they didn't recognize the importance of it, but there was that approach, a very obnoxious approach of working together. It doesn't feel very good, because they don't see any value in it, and I think a part of it felt like a part of the reason for that is because they are much older non-Inuit people. Then they look at me, a younger Inuk woman working. It feels very much that it appears they are up here (hand gesture pointing up) and I am down here (hand gesture pointing down). I don't know if it's because of ageism, racism, or sexism. There are definitely elements of that within my experience in my career. It's hard and challenging to work with that. (Interviewee 9)

Ageism in workplaces in Inuit Nunangat can be understood in the context of colonial distortions of Inuit culture, as was explained by Interviewee 5:

We have adopted an unhealthy ageism within our society, because when our society was healthy and functioning well, you had to seek guidance from people older than you, people that had more experience, especially elders. That guidance was very much a part of life. But you were also given your own ability to judge, calculate, to make decisions. So it was within that context, you would seek guidance.

What has happened in interpreting that teaching is that an unhealthy expectation that you listened to anybody who's older than you and whether they have that social responsibility to guide you or not, because it was within a very kind of controlled way that people sought guidance or work-given guidance, within a safe net of your family, extended family or people that loved you. But now we live in communities with different families and different people from different regions. And so that gets

interpreted as like small P politics of if somebody's older than you, then you should listen to them. (Interviewee 5)

The same interviewee goes on to explain the difficulties of navigating the intersection of being young, a woman, and Inuk in a context where our culture has been somewhat distorted by colonialism:

If you're a young professional [respectfully managing relationships with older people] adds a really a complicated aspect to how you carry yourself. To the point where if you're a manager or director, and you're supervising somebody who's older than you, you always have to tread so lightly in how you interact with that person because there's that dynamic of the wall. So, I think that is ageism. That adds complications to workplace dynamics as well as gender. (Interviewee 5)

Acknowledging the layered nature of the specificities of identity is often referred to as “intersectionality.” The concept of intersectionality was developed by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, who argued that courts have repeatedly ignored specific challenges that face black women as a group by treating black women

as purely women (erasing their blackness) or purely black (erasing their womanhood).³⁶ In the context of this paper, we can use this concept to consider the impact of different characteristics on how people experience their work duties and the institutions they are working in. All the participants who were interviewed are surviving in a colonial context and are descendants of survivors of colonialism. We are all working in institutions that were derived or created in the image of colonial governmental institutions.

When considering the experiences of Inuit women, we must be careful not to erase our experiences as Inuit, as women, as well as factors such as age, sexuality, and class background. For example, question 8 (see Appendix A) specifically prompted women to speak about experiences of sexism or racism, and interviewees highlighted ageism, an aspect of their identity that I hadn't considered when shaping my study. We must consider the wholeness of each of us.

On the other hand, interviewees who did not pursue colonial higher education or whose higher education was incomplete tended to have to work their way up to management through multiple positions over many years. There were feelings of inadequacy by interviewees who did not pursue colonial higher education. For example, one interviewee noted:

When I submit my resume, if I want to apply for a new position, I always get embarrassed of my resume because I only have high school diploma. Again, why do I do that? Because it's not our way of life. Not the Inuit way. At times I feel uneducated because I don't have higher education but I have very good experiences. I continue to have a good job and also work with my community and be part of the community and get better at things. (Interviewee 1)

It's common in job ads to require less work experience for people who have completed college or university certifications, and for additional years of work experience being required to meet the qualifications for jobs without these certifications. The embarrassment felt by Interviewee 1 is built into the system because our organizations do imply that people without higher education are less qualified.

Racism was experienced by interviewees with and without university educations. The vast majority of interviewees explicitly mentioned experiencing racism during their careers, sometimes in addition to experiencing sexism and ageism. When asked question 8, about whether she had experienced racism or sexism in the course of her career, Interviewee 6 asked:

³⁶Jane Coaston, "The intersectionality wars," Vox, updated May 28, 2019, accessed Feb. 24, 2022 <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination>

“Does anyone answer ‘no’ to that? Like for real?” which speaks to the perceived pervasiveness of racism for Inuit in our workplaces.

Interviewee 2 spoke about broadly experiencing disrespect from white men she supervised who “[have] a problem with [me] an Inuk woman in a position of leadership,” or from other Inuit who may be jealous or similarly insecure. Inuit lashing out at other Inuit is an example of lateral violence. Lateral violence is when the oppressed turn on themselves, using the same tools and tactics as their oppressors.³⁷ It is another way that staff can be alienated from other staff. Ultimately, Interviewee 2 said it’s important to, “learn to work with people you disagree with, and learn to work with people that you may not particularly like each other. But nonetheless, you got to work together, ideally for a common cause or common good.”

Tokenism was raised three different times during interviews. Tokenism is when an organization hires people from marginalized racial, ethnic, gender, sexuality or religious groups, as a gesture towards diversity without changing policies or workplace cultures that make it difficult for other people from those backgrounds to succeed in that workplace. Most often this either happens by appointing a “token” to a high ranking and public facing job; or by hiring people from “token” backgrounds but not giving them access to the same resources (such as salaries, networking, or mentoring). The problem with tokenism is explained well by Interviewee 2:

What is important is, whatever the issue is, the combination of having people who are responsible for governance and senior management that have the requisite skill set in the field [...]. Absolutely without a doubt, it's possible to have Inuit fill those roles. But it's also equally important to ensure that we don't hurl Inuit into roles without capacity and to tokenize them. That doesn't serve them and it doesn't serve the organization or corporation that they are representing, if they don't have the full sort of knowledge or skill set to take on that role. So, I'm mindful that ethnicity is an important component, and quality for a person in governance or in leadership. But it's not the only qualification.”
(Interviewee 2)

³⁷Aboriginal People’s Television Network, “Lateral violence a ‘colonial hangover’ we need to heal: prof” *InFocus*, Jan. 9, 2020.

People who are treated as tokens can suffer by not being respected by their colleagues or being “set up to fail” if they do not have the right skillset or training to be successful in the role to which they are appointed. It is possible that even if Inuit women managers are not just tokens, they might suffer in ways similar to those who are only tokens if our salaries are not as high as our male or non-Inuit colleagues, and if we are not included in networking or mentoring opportunities.

All but one interviewee said that they had experienced at least one form of discrimination. For example, an interviewee noted:

I wouldn't necessarily say racism, but that I've dealt with that “old boys” club. I've, you know, as a woman, I've dealt with that “old boys” club. And it's very difficult. You don't get heard at all. Even if you're leading the file. [...] It's the male conversation, and you end up taking the notes even if you're at that lead position within that particular group. (Interviewee 11)

She went on to explain that she has seen Inuit men be able to relate to non-Inuit men in such a way that the “old boys club” was able to cross the racial line, but continue to exclude her as an Inuk woman. Sexism can present in many different ways. Inuit women face significant issues when it comes to intimate partner violence. Interviewee 10 commented on the ongoing presence of violence against women and the intergenerational nature of it:

There's so much violence against women [...here], it's almost acceptable. You see [a woman] walking around with a black eye once in a while. [...] You can be talking to [her] with a black eye and she'd say, “Oh, it's not [his] fault.” [I ask] “Do you want me to call the cops for you? Do you want me to help you escape?” “No, no, it's not like that. Don't tell anybody.” But [she's] walking around with a fucking black eye. It's really hard to help these people because they don't see it as something wrong, because it's not as bad as what they've seen their father do to their mother. (Interviewee 10)

This violence against women is part of the ongoing enactment of intergenerational trauma. Day Schools and Residential Schools attended by Inuit “were marked by prolonged regimes of sexual abuse and harsh discipline that scarred more than one generation of children for life.”³⁸

The ongoing rates of violence demonstrates that colonialism and colonial attitudes are still alive in Inuit Nunangat.

The frequency with which interviewees second-guessed their experiences of racism or negated their experiences as “possibly not being racism” is an example of the power held by those who are perpetuating racism. Racism is now rarely experienced as individuals explicitly saying “I don’t trust you because of your race.” It has evolved to be subtle and insidious, but the results of having our dignity and agency undermined remain similar. When someone says they have experienced racism, those who have perpetuated it are quick to hide behind excuses. They try to discredit the victims of their racism. This is where the trope of “I can’t be racist because my friend/partner is a person of colour” comes from.

Inuit women are battling on many sides for better workplaces and better futures for our people as a whole. Thinking about the future, Interviewee 7 said “one of the things I’d like to change for our people, to stand up for themselves”. Though along slightly different lines, interviewees brought up this notion of wanting

individuals to feel empowered to do more for themselves or, conversely, that individuals were disempowered by their circumstances in the workplace. Thinking towards the future, Interviewee 1 reflected:

If we want good workers, if we need to make sure our youth strive better than us. This means a good foundation at home, at school. It’s very crucial. Whose responsibility is that? It’s not only the leaders but the homes themselves. This is where I find a lot of healing must take place. (Interviewee 1)

³⁸Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. “Canada’s Residential Schools: The Inuit and Northern Experience” in *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, Vol 2. (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen’s UP, 2015), 4.

Characteristics of Inuit Women Managers and Divergence from Western Norms

There is something going on in workplaces across Inuit Nunangat that stops Inuit from feeling empowered to make change. The section above detailed the ways in which Inuit women are facing discrimination, of any kind infringing on our human dignity. However, not all discrimination is directly between people; there are also forms of institutional discrimination. Policies of organizations based on assumptions that are rooted in settler-colonial norms and expectations favour the people for whom those are the norms. Interviewee 5 gives a very simple example to illustrate the tension between Inuit norms and managerial settler norms:

A lot of managers can be very rule-oriented and focused on the rules, the policies of disciplining or of punctuality. We [Inuit] know we are all family-oriented and life happens. Being very rules-focused sets a really intimidating atmosphere. (Interviewee 5)

Another interviewee describes the power that non-Inuit management have to enforce settler norms at the expense of Inuit cultural values:

I've been in workplaces where I've seen, even where there are Inuit, but where management or leadership doesn't understand, or feel threatened by [Inuit culture or staff], or doesn't support Inuit staff that are working in a place that is culturally different from their own culture. And effectively that person is just a cog in the system. "This is how we do it", no care about what cultural viewpoints or cultural values or how it might be done in a way that is more aligned with the people that you're serving. (Interviewee 2)

The “system” in which people are effectively cogs, according to Interviewee 2, is one step up on these settler-colonial norms. This is one of the reasons non-Inuit managers have the power to disregard Inuit cultural viewpoints because the viewpoints from their own culture are already normalized. Secondly, as management, they have discretion over the enforcement of and possibility of changes to rules.

Some interviewees pointed to the rigidity of the corporate structure in their organizations as exacerbating these issues. Interviewee 5 spoke about the fact that the organizational structures in Inuit organizations are currently directly adopted from the capitalist corporate model of hierarchy which gives more authority to those who are higher up. From her perspective, the

hierarchy in our current organizational structures goes against the set up of Inuit culture, which emphasizes the importance of all people having vital roles in the success of our communities. The tension between contemporary human resource policies and Inuit is well described by Interviewee 6:

I would change with any organization working with Inuit, ... try to create an HR manual that manages our commitments and legal responsibilities and corporate responsibilities but allows enough space and flexibility to work with people where they're at, that brings the best out of them or works with their best them. Because everybody can contribute a lot of good things, but not every work environment creates that. Creating flexibility would be that point. I would argue that HR policies, the way they're currently written with any organization right now, privileges those who have no trauma, so automatically, Inuit at a societal level would be at a disadvantage. (Interviewee 6)

Interviewee 2 echoed the sentiments of Interviewees 5 and 6 by sharing an exchange she had with an Inuk woman manager who didn't feel empowered enough by her workplace to implement Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit:

“You're the manager, why don't you do it?” [I said], and it wasn't something groundbreaking. I was like, “what's holding you back?” It was really shocking that she hadn't realized that she had the power of authority to do this relatively simple accommodation. I would have just presumed she knew that she could do and that literally would have not caused any cost or harm to the organization. It was very bizarre, because there's so much pressure on how things have been done in our communities for years. Inuit, they don't feel as if they even have the ability to bring up things that might be sort of cultural problems. (Interviewee 2)

This is the result of workplace culture that simply doesn't value Inuit culture. It almost appears invisible to any potential courses of action.

Of the 13 women interviewed, ten explicitly noted the importance of being supportive and compassionate with their staff. This referred to comments about making sure they were available to their staff, being a safe place for others to vent about work issues, and understanding the need for accommodations in terms of leave related to mental health, family issues, and grief. Similarly, supporting people to succeed can go beyond compassion to providing training and mentorship to individuals to help ensure that they succeed. For example, Interviewee 4 articulated her desire to mentor an Inuk of any gender to succeed her and that this should be done for all the senior positions:

[...] We need to have mentorships and internships and opportunities. Because it's about the organization, it's about the community, we got to continue mentoring and supporting because once somebody is done, they need to leave behind a legacy. That legacy is the people that they've trained and mentored and interned and educated so that [...] the community can continue to be successful, you got to leave that legacy. (Interviewee 4)

Likewise, Interviewee 1 said "I always tell my staff that one day they must replace me." Interviewee 13 specifically hired and mentored Inuit women who had ambition but did not want to go south to pursue higher education. Being nurturing and compassionate to those younger women was important to her, as she explains:

We're nurturing and Inuit women especially want to make other people feel safe around them. And that environment is inducing inspiration in younger people and, and it gives even the Inuit men inspiration too, because there's a lot of compassion going around. Inuit have so much compassion. I feel like it gives us hope. (Interviewee 13)

The compassion prioritized by managers like Interviewees 1, 4 and 13 is often not the norm. In many workplaces, failing to show up to work "counts against" people. For those struggling with mental health issues within their families or within themselves, consistently attending work will be difficult at times. Interviewee 8 told me a story about a friend who had complex mental health issues and worked in the same department. The guilt about not being able to show up to work sometimes contributed to triggering mental health episodes or magnifying their severity. Their manager changed her employment to one that:

**... gives you no benefits, but it allows you to come in “as and when,” so she wouldn't have to worry about her leave. That way, she wouldn't have to worry, “oh, I have to go to work, but I don't feel good about it.” So, she didn't have that obligation. And it really helped with her mental health.
(Interviewee 8)**

This is a step closer to what might be considered a more authentic Inuit approach to support at work. Ilisaqsivik offers a positive example in situations like these. Ilisaqsivik is a community center in Clyde River that offers culturally relevant counseling and support to Inuit. Malcolm Ranta, the executive director of Ilisaqsivik, illustrates a unique way that the center interacts with their staff:

Ilisaqsivik is understanding and always supportive for its employees and always has its back to lift them up when no one else is there. If someone has something going on their life and they maybe cannot come to work for a few days, they're not going to be at risk to lose their job... in fact we'll send a counselor to their house to make sure they're okay.³⁹

This is very different from the policies referenced by interviewees in my research. If people were allowed to have flexible work schedules and understood all the different kinds of paid leave that they are entitled to (sick leave, family responsibility leave, medical travel leave, etc.), they would feel more valued by their work environments. There would also be less negative feelings of fear, guilt, or shame associated with not being able to show up to work, if it was possible to email your supervisor and work extra time in the evenings to make up for missing a day of work.

Inuit Culture in the Workplace: Now and in the Future (Hopefully)

This section explores how interviewees reflected on the aspects of Inuit culture in their workplaces. Ultimately, what the words of my interviewees reflect is that we want to create workplaces that are deeply Inuit in character, rather than workplaces whose character is the same as in the south, with Inuit aspects tacked on as afterthought. All interviewees felt their workplaces could improve at fostering Inuit culture. Language was the most common way people measured culture in the workplace. Interviewees spoke of increasing Inuit language usage, illustrating how staff were supported to improve their Inuktut, or conversely by pointing out there could be more done to foster and support the use of Inuktut. Many Inuit workplaces have struggles when it comes to the use of Inuktut, Interviewee 2 explained:

³⁹Ilisaqsivik Society, *Wounded Healers*, film directed by Romani Makkik (Clyde River: Ilisaqsivik Society, 2020) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErLuPakgc1s>

I'll give you an example of there being no room for anything that is Inuit. I remember a senior government official at the federal government writing a briefing note for the Inuk minister in Inuktitut and their manager throwing the memo back and saying “write in English! That's why we employ interpreters and translators for.” (Interviewee 2)

This example by Interviewee 2 also demonstrates the power of non-Inuit managers to demote Inuit culture and block it from becoming the mode of operation in our organizations. Interviewee 3 noted the irony that Inuit organizations could take on some programs similar to the federal government to better support Inuktitut, “If you look at the federal government, and you have unilingual speakers either French or English, they're sent away for six weeks to six months, seconded to do language school... people are still paid so maybe we could do something like that [... for Inuktitut].” Employees at most Inuit organizations do not receive the same level of support in terms of pursuing bilingualism as employees in the Federal government learning French or English (depending on their own mother tongue).

The second most common reference to an aspect of Inuit culture was being out on the land. The land and language were both central to Interviewee 6's hope for the future:

We get back to having that closer connection to the land. A lot of what's happened to date has been to manage our access to the land, including the establishment of communities. I know that a lot of people still practice land-based activities, but so much of our being is still more deeply connected to the land. In the future, it's that we spend less time in offices and more time on the land, and that everything's done in Inuktitut. It's no longer only a few that have that knowledge, but it's shared. Doesn't everybody have that dream? (Interviewee 6)

She points to the through-line of colonialism trying to manage our access to the land and positions future healing as strengthening our connection to our land. We can even consider the strict constraints of the “9 to 5” Western work calendar as a contemporary form of colonial control. Some Inuit organizations have special leave for harvesting, as Interviewee 12 explains:

There's always more we can do in relation to culture and supporting and promoting Inuit culture in the workplace. Having hunting and fishing days is really respectful of culture, allowing people to practice and still get out on the land. Especially if you wake up, it's going to be a beautiful day, and your calendar isn't too bad, you can call to say "hey I'm going to take a hunting and fishing day today." (Interviewee 12)

There is also the gendered nature of the relationship to land and hunting. Traditionally, Inuit men would go together on longer hunting trips for larger animals and women would remain to manage the camp. For example, Interviewee 10 spoke about her grandmother needing to hunt partridges and take care of her children while her husband was away. Interviewees reflected on the significant number of Inuit women who have integrated into workplaces structured by the settler calendar. As Interviewee 11 noted, women had significant responsibility to keep homesteads going while men were off hunting. The role of men as providers hasn't transferred as easily. Interviewee 6 points out similarly that the current structures of the workplace marginalize Inuit men from being able to participate. Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit emphasizes the need for balance in all things, and currently Inuit workplaces are not structured in such a way that balance is possible between genders to equally participate in the workforce. Below are three

quotes that highlight this need for considering how colonialism has impacted Inuit masculinity and the need to bridge the gap that has been created for them in the workplace.

[Women have] still maintained a strong purpose within community. Whereas with the men, there's still that difficulty because some of them can't even provide anymore, they can't go hunting and all of that stuff. When I look at our government and the bigger vision, I still think that women are still fulfilling those current roles, the traditional roles have taking care of things. [...] some like boys, young men have kind of lost their place. But at the same time, I still think that the women are still kind of holding their place in society because they still oversaw everything when the men were gone. (Interviewee 11)

We [women] are very outspoken, but men they're more silent, but they have a good, active role. After the dog slaughter that happened years ago, that contributed to their silence. Like their role was silenced, but somehow we have to get them back. (Interviewee 1)

I hope we create positions and create spaces to create opportunities for Inuit men to be just as much a part of our workplaces as Inuit women. Right now, there are some full-time hunter positions in certain communities. My dream would be that like, those are men and women. Same with the workplace. My hope is that in the future, it's men and women, including in elected positions, because women might make up most of the staff but men might make up most of the elected positions. I hope that there's a balance that struck years down the road. Not just binary, they're all different. All different ways of identifying. So, trans spaces, men, women, gender non-conforming... there are issues that are specific to women in the workplace, Inuit women. But those being marginalized from working in our organizations are not Inuit women, they are Inuit men. (Interviewee 6)

work, but it was stopped because of COVID rules. Less frequently mentioned were lighting a Kullik (oil lamp), having or needing to create a space for an elder in residence, the presence of Inuit artwork, doing a sewing workshop at work, and drum dancing or other Inuit dancing through work. In my view, it is significant that interviewees reference clashes with aspects of their workplaces such as human resource policies and hierarchy, because at their core those are hand-me-downs from the structure of western workplaces. In comparison, they spoke about Inuit culture as actions rather than being fundamentally a part of the bones of the operation.

An additional aspect of culture that was frequently mentioned was the sharing of food. This is another example of the way Inuit take care of one another, by making sure we are fed, by sharing what we can. In NG, we used to have brunch together at the end of the month during



Inuit women setting up a tent in the Fraser Canyon. Credit: Patricia Johnson-Castle.

Part III: Policy Recommendations

Based on the responses from the 13 interviews as well as related secondary research conducted, I have an overarching call to action and four specific policy recommendations for Inuit governments and organizations.

A Call to Action: Shaping our Institutions using Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and Inuktut

As noted in the introduction, interviewees recounted how the organizations they work for incorporate Inuit art and aspects of Inuit culture that can be fit into Western corporate work structures, but there is a failure to implement

cultural practices beyond those at a surface level. We need to be bold and unapologetic about the use of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in Inuit organizations. As I was asked by an Interviewee: “why, why are we doing it this way? Who said we had to run our government this way? If we're in charge of our government? How come we're running it in a way that doesn't suit us?”

Inuit cannot dissect our work lives from our personal lives the way human resource policies expect us to. As Interviewee 2 put it, “in our communities everything's pretty much interconnected and interrelated.” Settler culture

“tends to divide aspects of life into pieces that can be dissected, isolated, and studied” while Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is “a way of thinking, connecting all aspects of life in a coherent way.”⁴⁰ I was advised by Interviewee 2 that “Often, if you're going to tackle things then you really do need to understand how they're interconnected and interrelated.”

There are four maligarjuat (literally meaning “big things that must be followed”) that Karetak and Tester note, related to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit:

- Working for the common good and not being motivated by personal interests or gain;
- Living in respectful relationships with every person and thing that one encounters;
- Maintaining harmony and balance;
- Planning and preparing for the future.⁴¹

The work of Karetak, Tester and Tagalik in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in 2017 details traditional knowledge from Nunavut. Each region of Inuit Nunangat has its own Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit that shares core similarities. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit “is more than a philosophy. It is an ethical framework and detailed

plan for having a good life.”⁴² Inuktut holds and passes on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. Reclaiming Inuktut and empowering Inuktut in workplaces empowers Qaujimajatuqangit. I was told by some interviewees that the organization they worked for refused to let staff spend an hour a week learning Inuktut because it wasn't in their job description. Inuit organizations should empower Inuit. Yet some won't even excuse employees from work for an hour to learn or improve their Inuktut. It is shocking.

Inuit workplaces, either workplaces created by Inuit land claim settlements or workplaces with significant Inuit staffing, are an opportunity to counteract the colonialism we experience. As Inuit, part of our healing journey is our collective need to resist the implicit supremacy of settler culture: that the Settler or Western way of doing things is the “best” way to do things. As articulated by Martiniquan-Algerian philosopher Frantz Fanon, “Imperialism leaves behind germs of rot which we must clinically detect and remove from our land and our minds.”⁴³

The colonial encounter is a collective trauma carried by Inuit, as Karetak and Tester note. “Attempts to colonize both the lands and minds of Inuit has sometimes resulted in shame, confusion, cultural denial, loss of cultural identity, and low self-esteem.”⁴⁴ They go on to say, “It is now time to learn, recognize, and think about this

⁴⁰Joe Karetak, Frank Tester and Shirley Tagalik, eds, *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: what Inuit have always known to be true* (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood, 2017), 8.

⁴¹Karetak, Tester and Tagalik, 2017, 3.

⁴²Karetak, Tester and Tagalik, 2017, 3.

⁴³Frantz Fanon, 2002. *les damnés de la terre*. Paris: La Découverte/Poche, 239. Translation of quote by author. In the original French: “L'impérialisme, qui aujourd'hui se bat contre une authentique libération des hommes, abandonne çà et là des germes de pourriture qu'il nous faut implacablement détecter et extirper de nos terres et de nos cerveaux.”

⁴⁴Karetak, Tester and Tagalik, 2017, 9.

colonial experience and seek the best ways for Inuit to meet responsibilities to each other, the environment, children, and the future.” Land claim organizations have the power to create workplaces that can build up the self-esteem of Inuit, create pride in our culture, and bolster our Inuit identity. Giving priority to our Qaujimajatuqangit and ways of organizing things in our internal policies is how we achieve that.

Integrating Qaujimajatuqangit into workplaces is happening in wonderful ways across the North. Interviewees mentioned some structural integrations of Qaujimajatuqangit in their workplace, such as going off as staff to go fishing for the day (during a workday); some organizations have extra vacation days for harvesting and gathering, and additional holidays to celebrate their region and/or National Indigenous Peoples Day. Structural here means enforced by policy. Policies such as having greater flexibility for workers are in line with Qaujimajatuqangit because Qaujimajatuqangit understands all aspects of our lives as being connected. People who have significant responsibilities at home (for example, taking care of aging parents, children, or dealing with mental health struggles) need additional flexibility to be able to maintain harmony and balance in their lives. Pijitsirniq (serving and providing for family and community)⁴⁵ will sometimes mean employees have to take an hour off to bring a friend to a clinic. They would be supported by policy to work for an hour from home later that day, instead of taking time off.

As an example of a surface-level insertion of Inuit culture, some workplaces offer bonuses to staff who are bilingual in Inuktitut, ranging between \$1,500 and \$5,000 per year.⁴⁶ The best-case scenario of a \$5,000 bonus for someone who works full time is a pay raise of approximately two dollars an hour when divided hourly across a full-time position. Two dollars an hour is not equal to the value of the extensive knowledge held by those fluent in Inuktitut. If Inuktitut fluency was the equivalent to holding a post-graduate degree, it would likely bring salaries up by closer to \$10,000. Considering fluency in Inuktitut as an advanced degree could make it clear that fluent speakers are qualified for a senior management position.

This call to action challenges Inuit governments and organizations to take Qaujimajatuqangit seriously. How can deputy ministers, directors, and managers make long-term structural changes to allow individuals and communities to grow and thrive? How can we change human resource policies so that Qaujimajatuqangit is baked into their foundation? How can we clinically detect the germs of rot that imperialism leaves in our minds so we can detect and remove them? How do we stop using a settler-colonial standard to hold ourselves against? Honouring Qaujimajatuqangit means putting that which we know to be true first, above settler ways of knowing. Our land claims give us the power to do that. We should use them to that end.

⁴⁵Nunavut, *Human Resource Strategy 2014-2018*, 4.

⁴⁶Nunavut, Department of Finance. *Inuit Language Incentive Policy*, (Iqaluit, NU: Government of Nunavut, 2017), 3.

**Recommendation One:
Make Workplaces Flexible**

My first recommendation is for making workplaces more flexible. We need less hierarchy and rigidity in the workplace. Interviewee 5 described the organizational structure of her workplace as “limiting and suffocating corporate structures.” She identified rigid adherence to the rules as causing an intimidating work environment. Workplaces can change when there is a compelling enough reason for change as we learned during the COVID pandemic when employees needed to work from home for public health reasons. This is an ideal time to make some of those “temporary” changes permanent.

In terms of rigidity, we should give employees more control over when and where they work their hours. Allow them to flex their hours, and allow them to work from home when possible given their line of work. Some individuals who work in Human Resources seem to have a distrust of employees. They fear that if employees are allowed to work from home that they will “waste” work time, they will spend time on social media, etc. Interviewee 3 noted that her workplace during COVID had people working from home, but that there seemed to be distrust between Human Resources and staff as though there was an assumption that for some staff, working from home would be slacking off. She explained: “If we’re good employees we’re taken to task for then penalized by the actions of bad employees. It’s morale busting as opposed to morale boosting.”

Distrust in employees has an impact on workplace culture:

Without a foundation of trust, people in the organization may comply outwardly with a leader’s wishes, but they’re much less likely to conform privately—to adopt the values, culture, and mission of the organization in a sincere, lasting way. Workplaces lacking in trust often have a culture of “every employee for himself,” in which people feel that they must be vigilant about protecting their interests. Employees can become reluctant to help others because they’re unsure of whether their efforts will be reciprocated or recognized. [...] In management settings, trust increases information sharing, openness, fluidity, and cooperation. If coworkers can be trusted to do the right thing and live up to their commitments, planning, coordination, and execution are much easier. Trust also facilitates the exchange and acceptance of ideas—it allows people to hear others’ message—and boosts the quantity and quality of the ideas that are produced within an organization. Most important, trust provides the

opportunity to change people's attitudes and beliefs, not just their outward behavior. That's the sweet spot when it comes to influence and the ability to get people to fully accept your message.⁴⁷

When human resources departments refuse to let people work at home, it signals to employees that they are not trusted. Without trust, workplaces miss out on the quantity and quality of ideas from employees. Employees are less likely to create a team environment if they're all looking at things individually and are constantly acting in their own individual best interest. Trust in employees has other benefits like improving job performance, increasing employee engagement, and encouraging employees to speak positively about their workplace to others (which could help in recruiting new staff or spreading the word about services provided by the organization).⁴⁸

Many Inuit have experienced racism as a form of distrust, that is, that we are lying to people in positions of authority such as teachers, health-care practitioners, supervisors etc. For jobs that can be done from home, organizations should allow employees to work flexible hours between their home and office when possible. For example, a woman could leave work at 2:30 pm to pick up her kids from school and

mind them until her partner finished work, then do work from 9 pm to 11:30 pm after her kids were in bed. She would be working the same number of hours as her colleagues, just not at the same times. It is not possible for all jobs to be accomplished at home. Some people are living in overcrowded homes and do not have an appropriate workspace in their house. Other work needs to be done in person. However, for work that can be done from home, we should allow flexibility in when the work is done.

Recommendation Two: Work Fewer Hours

Women tend to be the primary caretakers for their immediate family as well as taking on other responsibilities or extended family or in our communities. Some of my interviewees had kids on their laps while they were speaking to me, others couldn't make time for an interview at all because of their childcare responsibilities. My first recommendation is that Inuit governments should shorten the work week, either by having a four-day work week or six-hour work days.

Interviewee 4 spoke about how the COVID pandemic taught us it was possible to do things differently. At the same time, she describes the difficulties of being a woman in the workforce, and how we could make structural changes to make it easier on women:

⁴⁷Amy J.C. Cuddy, Matthew Kohut and John Neffinger, "Connect, Then Lead," *Harvard Business Review*, July-Aug. 2013, accessed Feb. 24, 2022, <https://hbr.org/2013/07/connect-then-lead>.

⁴⁸Claire Lew, "The 5 bottom-line benefits of building trust in the workplace," *Know Your Team*, last modified Feb. 1, 2019, accessed Aug. 12, 2021, <https://knowyourteam.com/blog/2019/02/01/the-bottom-line-benefits-of-building-trust-in-the-workplace/>.

We can work from home and get things done. [...] Women are always challenged with childcare, with babies, with the home, the cultural norms, and trying to fit into the modern world and still maintain a traditional lifestyle, it's really difficult, especially for a woman, an Inuit woman. We need to look more at what is the success of that work plan, the interactions that you have, rather than the time that you spent at work needing to be 8:30 to 17:00, maybe we can look at flex hours, maybe we could look at working from 13:00 to 19:00, maybe we could look at part-time roles. Half time, in the morning at home and afternoons at work, or in the morning at work or afternoons off, we need to be more flexible, especially for women. If you want children to grow up in a healthy community lifestyle, going to school every day, then I think we need

to support the family and supporting the woman is key. (Interviewee 4)

Moving away from needing to be at the office from 8:30 am to 5 pm is becoming more normal. Around the world, companies and countries are experimenting with new approaches to work. Some places are trying a six-hour work day, others are opting for a four-day work week. The studies completed on the four-day work week are finding that productivity remains the same or goes up.^{49, 50, 51, 52, 53} There is nothing stopping Inuit Nunangat from becoming visionary for work-life balance by setting workweeks as four days long. By having an extra day in the week, people would have more time to spend with family, help others with childcare, harvest, follow creative pursuits, or volunteer in the community.

⁴⁹BBC News, "Four-day week 'an overwhelming success' in Iceland," *BBC News*, last modified July 6, 2021, accessed Feb. 24, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-57724779>.

⁵⁰BBC News, "Unilever explores four-day working week," *BBC News*, last modified Nov. 30, 2020, accessed Feb. 24, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-55139079>

⁵¹The Guardian, "Spain to launch trial of four-day working week," *Guardian Online*, last modified March 15, 2021, accessed Feb. 24, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/15/spain-to-launch-trial-of-four-day-working-week>.

⁵²BBC News, "Microsoft four-day work week 'boosts productivity'," *BBC News*, last modified Nov. 4, 2019, accessed Feb. 24, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-50287391>.

⁵³Verity Stevenson, "The 4-day work week is already a reality in some Quebec workplaces. This is how it's going," *CBC News*, last updated July 19, 2021, accessed Feb. 24, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/4-day-work-week-quebec-workplaces-1.6107602>

Recommendation Three: Reorganize the Work Calendar

The Inuit calendar is different from the Western calendar. Inuit organizations should organize our work schedule to be in line with our seasons. For example, Eeyou Istchee Cree School Board has a Goose Break, which is an extended break in the spring to allow children and parents to go geese hunting.⁵⁴ There are many possibilities for how to reorganize the work year. Many Inuit organizations have a Christmas break, when everyone gets days off in addition to their allotment of annual leave. We could have a spring and fall goose break in addition to Christmas break. We could have a salmon break when the salmon start going good.

Combining this with the previous recommendation, we could work four or five days during shoulder seasons. In Nunatsiavut shoulder seasons are in June, when the ice is no longer safe to travel on by snowmobile or in December when the sea ice has not settled yet. But then, the number of workdays could be decreased when the ice freezes up and people can go harvesting.

Recommendation Four: Train Inuit for Permanent Jobs

As noted at the beginning of this paper, there is a high number of transient workers in Inuit Nunangat. Inuit, as the permanent occupants of Inuit Nunangat, are not as transient from our homes. However, there are still many senior positions in our organizations that are not filled

by Inuit. We need to figure out how we can provide opportunities for on-the-job training and professional development to empower Inuit to move up the ranks within our organizations.

When I left, I told my boss that one thing that _____ doesn't do well is train people from the bottom up. They expect people to come in and be able to do the job right off the bat. With most Inuit not having degrees, with our low high school graduation rates, with our low post-secondary rates, to expect Inuit to have the qualifications to get a _____ job that's permanent, that provides housing, is very low.

I was telling my boss that before I left, that _____ should start hiring people at a lower position and train them to do other jobs. Then when those jobs become available, they can move into those positions. In my entire time there, seven years on and off, the same Inuit worked there but they were all at receptionist level positions. They [were in an employment status where they] weren't even they were building up all of their benefits. When you're

⁵⁴Patrick Quinn, "Cree School Board adapts instruction to deal with new reality," *Nation*, last modified April 4, 2020, accessed Feb. 24, 2022, <http://nationnews.ca/community/cree-school-board-adapts-instruction-to-deal-with-new-reality/>

a casual, as soon as you stop working for _____, you lose all the benefits. [...] When I quit, all of my benefits stayed, in terms of pension, etc., so that it can be kept building. If I were to go back, I'd still have those benefits within the [organization], whereas as a casual everything you've built up, there's one casual [there] who's been working there for 20 years as a casual. Once they quit, they don't get pension, they don't get anything. And they work there for 20 years.

My biggest frustration is they have so many capable Inuit that they keep at a receptionist level position. Why aren't they training them to do the policy work, accounting work, all the work that they're already kind of doing, but give them instead of expecting Inuit to already fit their standards, you know. That's a backwards way of looking at it when you know the systematic issues that prevent Inuit from having that level of education that they're expecting. Just thinking about residential schools alone, there's so many families that don't even want their kids

to go to school or don't even care if their kids go to school, because they hate schooling, they hate [Settler] education. So, kids, how do you expect anyone to thrive if you're not going to give them the proper opportunities to do that, even within their governmental system, which is supposed to benefit [...] Inuit. (Interviewee 8)

As Interviewee 8 articulates well, many Inuit are not given the support or training to advance in their careers. Few Inuit have university degrees, which means many take casual or call-in work and low skilled jobs. If workplaces used professional development not just to improve people in the job they are hired for but also to train people to expand their skill set, it would allow Inuit to access free training to improve themselves. For example, if someone started as a call-in secretary, but they could sign up for any training offered, it would mean they could train towards working in payroll or something more specialized than call-in secretary. This would expand the scope of jobs they could apply for, making it more likely they can advance in the workplace.

Mentorship can be another technique used to overcome the skills gap. Inuit placed in executive positions, could have an “advisor” who is an experienced person in the sector willing and able to mentor, but not a boss or superior. This would leave all decisions and determinations to be made by the Inuit executives. Mentorship

has been a technique used occasionally by GN.⁵⁵ However, mentorship requires deep commitment, buy-in, and mutual respect from all parties. People who have the “right” experience also have the right personal qualities or capacity to be a good mentor which can make identifying mentors difficult. Furthermore, though in true mentorship when a mentee has decision making power there can be issues of power dynamics between mentor and mentee.

Job permanence is important if Inuit are to become more able to access mortgages and other loans. For example, banks are very reluctant to give mortgages to people who do not have full-time permanent employment. If individuals are not able to access loans from banks, they have to resort to higher interest payday loans. We have the power to define what permanent means in our own terms. By giving Inuit permanent jobs they can access bank loans rather than payday loans.

Until Inuit fill senior positions, as Interviewee 8 expresses it, our resources end up being drained to the south:

I hope that Inuit in the future are in the positions that feed our economy, because one of my biggest pet peeves is with the transient workers. I personally am not mad in the fact that people come up here to work. I do get frustrated that people come up to here to work and then disrespect people like that. That's a different level of transiency. I think Inuit should have those positions, and should be working within our economy and our government systems and our organizations. If Inuit were to have those positions, if more Inuit filled the positions, any position, then all that money would stay [here], and I feel like, without us having those positions, we're always going to be in the poverty line, we're always gonna have housing issues, social inequality issues, we're always going to have mental health issues. (Interviewee 8)

Training Inuit for permanent jobs will build a sustainable, stable future for our people. We need to empower each other to solve our own problems. There are gaps in education, but these can be overcome. We need to think creatively, and adapt, as we have always done.

⁵⁵Carol Rigby (former communications advisor, Nunavut Department of Education), personal communication, Feb. 25, 2022.



Pitsik drying at sunset in Tikkoatokak Bay. Credit: Patricia Johnson-Castle.

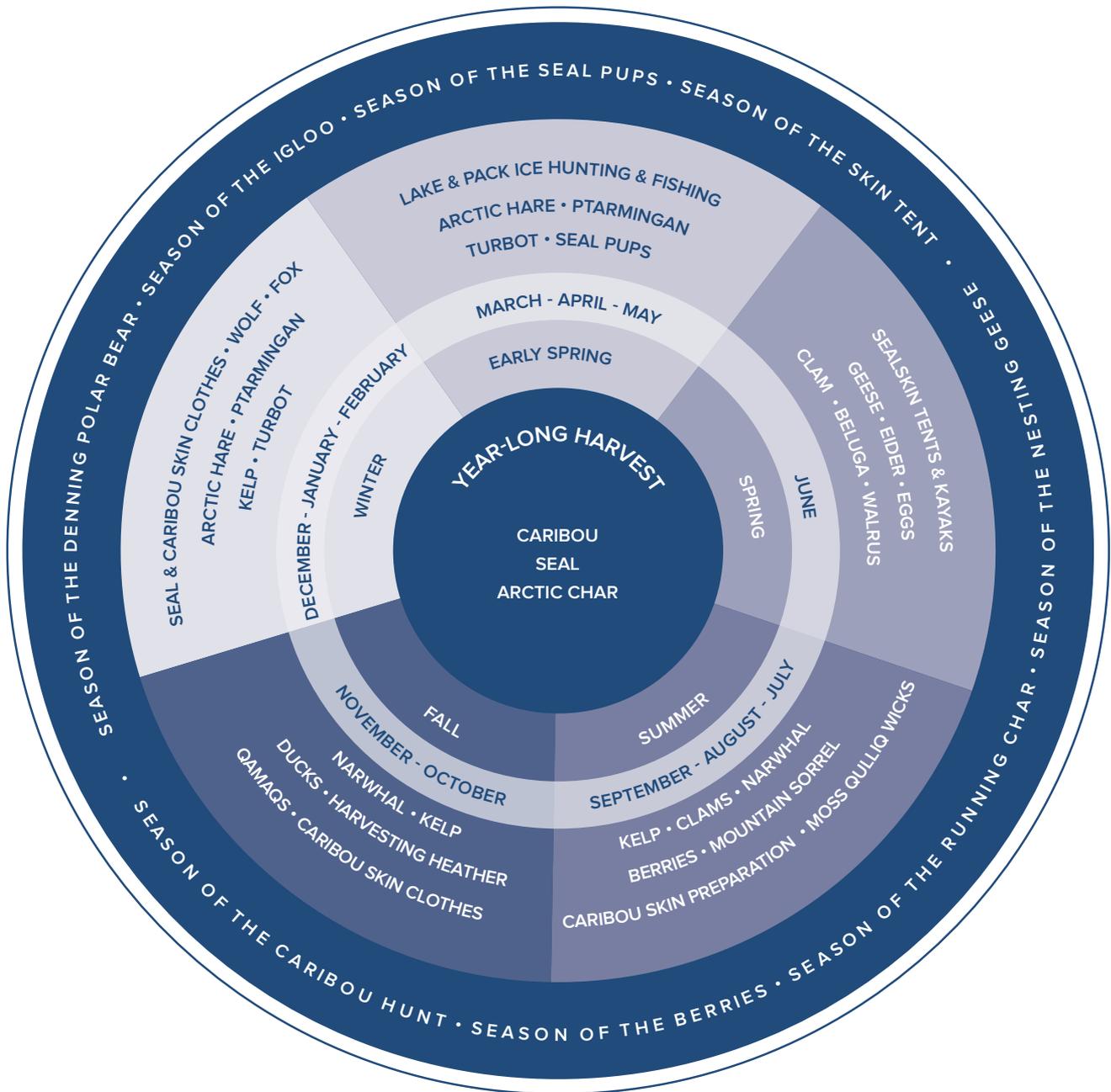
Conclusion: On Our Own Time, In Our Own Way

I imagine a future for Inuit where we have reshaped our institutions (governments, schools, workplaces, etc.) so that they exemplify our calendar and values. The policies we create and enforce have a huge amount of power. They structure our days, weeks, months. Currently, institutions in Inuit Nunangat remain structured around settler cultural norms. The Monday to Friday, nine to five work schedule

was inherited from the south. The September to June school year was inherited from the south. This paper asked: how can we create workplaces that honour Inuit *Gaujimajatuqangit*?

To truly honour Inuit *Gaujimajatuqangit*, we have to be prepared to have discussions in which all different types of views can be aired and considered. We cannot use something being “not Inuk enough” or not being “an Inuit way” as a reason to not consider an opinion, as is explained by Interviewee 2:

The Inuit Year



This work, *The Inuit Year*, is a derivative of *Inuit Grocery List* by Mike Beauregard (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/31856336@N03/5948955805/>), used under CC BY 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>).

It bothers me tremendously when someone uses indigeneity, or Inuit, or Indigenous culture as a way to shut people down or shut people up, and it really does bother me. It's not good governance, and it's not respectful. It's very manipulative. There's a lot of gaslighting that can happen around someone who is trying to impose or dominate their view, as "this is the Inuit way... you're not Inuk enough... This is not how we [Inuit] do it." I've seen a lot of that. Over the years I've learned to recognize, as well as having talked to elders and to others that people sometimes have different opinions, we are complex and complicated individuals. When you work as a collective you're going to have to work through these. Ideally you work through them in a respectful way, not in a dominant, manipulative, counter-productive way. (Interviewee 2)

We are highly adaptable people. We have learned to survive and thrive in the harshest climates on earth. To continue to adapt and thrive, we need to work together. Successfully working together means people need to feel valued, and when people experience lateral

violence it is the opposite of being valued. We cannot continue to colonize ourselves by hurting each other in this way. Our leaders who settled our land claims have handed our generation powerful tools. We need to step into the power they give us. As Interviewee 8 told me:

We need Inuit leaders to get into those positions and to ask those tough questions. And to make those tough decisions be "we're gonna change this, it's gonna be really hard. Because we have to now. We have to take all that baggage, and figure out how to rework it to make it work in a way that works for us." (Interviewee 8)

Leadership can refashion our institutions. In Inuit culture, children and family are extremely important. Institutions built around the settler calendar do not facilitate *inunnguiniq* ("making a human being who will be able to help others with a good heart").⁵⁶ Women make up the majority of public servants across the North and tend to be primary caregivers in families. Implementing a four-day workweek would facilitate working parents having more time with their children. Four-day workweeks are already becoming increasingly popular across the globe. Chaining people to office desks does not guarantee their work will be completed.

⁵⁶Atuat Aktittiq and Rhoda Akpaliapik Karetak, "Inunnguiniq (Making a Human Being)" in *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: what Inuit have always known to be true*, 112.

There are Inuit organizations that close for a Christmas break. Why not have a goose break like the Eeyou Istchee Cree School Board?⁵⁷ A beluga break? An akpik break? These breaks do not need to be set in stone like Victoria Day or Thanksgiving, but instead could float. When akpik are ripe, the government could close for a few days so people could go berry picking before the sun fades them. This is not unprecedented: the Easter holiday already changes from year to year.

During COVID-19, the world briefly came to a standstill and then readjusted to a new normal. We learned that with some adjustments, many of us are able to successfully work from home. Given we know we can work from home, I see a future where women are able to take a couple hours off in the afternoon to pick up their kids and mind them, then work for a couple hours in the evening when they are in bed.

I hope that we use the power in our land claim agreements to create workplaces that work for Inuit.

⁵⁷Quinn. <http://nationnews.ca/community/cree-school-board-adapts-instruction-to-deal-with-new-reality/>

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Let's get to know each other. Can you tell me a little about yourself and where you're from? Or as we say where I grew up, who knit you?
2. Tell me the story of getting started in the workforce. How did you progress into the position you currently hold?
3. Can you describe your role (or previous role, if speaking about former job)? What are your responsibilities? What does your day-to-day work look like?
4. Do you think being Inuk impacts your management style; do you find your style of management differs from your colleagues who are non-Inuit?
5. Do you feel the employees who report to you respect your instructions and tasks assigned to them? But also, do you feel valued and respected by your supervisor/ the person you report to?
6. Does the organization you work for integrate Inuit culture into the workplace? If so, can you tell me about some examples? Are there barriers to accessing culture in the workplace?
7. How do you bring your culture into your work?
8. Have you experienced instances of racism or sexism in the course of your career, and if you are comfortable, can you speak to them?
9. If you could change anything about your workplace, what would you change?
10. Do you think culture could be integrated into your workplace to create success for Inuit women in the future? What would you hope the experience of Inuit women is like in your workplace in 50 years?
11. Do you think that your hopes for Inuit women in your workplace is connected to a broader vision for hopes and dreams for our descendants (future Inuit) in general?

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